

1Tim 23-12-03b

We're going to resume our study here and pick up our pace a little bit. We're looking at this idea of where our righteousness comes from and secure in that we are ambassadors of peace, of a calm and quiet life, of unity, of unity, and being non-confrontational to the extent that we see that such a confrontation, or taking a stand, distracts from the issue of Jesus Christ and salvation in Him. Paul has stressed in the first chapter and stresses again in the second chapter that Christ Jesus came to save sinners.

There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. We are not here to mediate somebody's opinion about a political issue or a conflict in the global sphere. We are here as ambassadors for Christ, as reflectors of God's glory.

That has to be our focus, our identity, our goal, and our purpose. And if we find anything deflecting and distracting from that, if somebody's first thought of me is, oh, he's a fill-in-the-blank supporter, a political candidate, or a social issue, or a global conflict issue, oh, that Sam, boy, you can't talk to him 30 seconds without this coming up, and he's in favor of this and against that. That's bad.

That's against the goal. So we should be living in tranquility and calmness. We should be notable as people who represent and reflect this peaceability and quietness.

This quietness is calmness. And once again, we saw this in 1 Thessalonians 4.11, leading that quiet life, minding our own business, working with our own hands. Notice that the focus is on what I can control, what is going to reflect my goals and values and priorities, and the outcome is evident in my work product and in the tranquility of my lifestyle, my speech, my effect on my surroundings.

This is excellent and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, because it contributes to his goal. His desire is that all men be saved and come to epinosis of the truth, experiential acknowledgement of the truth. Well, this is part and parcel of salvation.

It's not just a ticket away from the lake of fire, but to enter into eternal life beginning now. And the knowledge of the truth is what allows us to experience God's power and God's presence and the eternal life that is our future hope. We experience it now and we reflect it and shed it abroad from our hearts through the presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of the word.

So this epinosis idea is found throughout Paul's letters, and you can see from the context what this experiential knowledge is. So for example, Philippians chapter one, verse nine, Paul says, this I pray that your love may abound still more and more in epinosis, in knowledge and all discernment. What is discernment? It's separating essentials from non-essentials.

If somebody disagrees with me about some particular issue, is that essential or non-essential? If they think Jesus Christ is a big myth and people who follow him are fools, that's an essential. I will separate over that. If people have an attitude about something in the Middle East or something in the global conflict realm or some social issue or a political candidate or a party platform or some other issue, environmentalism, electric cars or whatever else it may be, that's a non-essential.

Am I going to take up a sword or tilt at a issue that is eternal in its consequence? If I become a champion for an issue or an identity, if I run around with a feather in my hair saying I'm a Native American or I grab a cocked hat and say I love Napoleon because I'm part French or pick any other identity, you see people that soak themselves in an identity. It can be their hobby. It can be an adopted cause.

It can be an ethnicity or some strand of heredity. It can be any number of things. What is the first thought that people ought to have when they think of us? Well, that's someone that has really dedicated their life to Christ.

They really love to study the Word of God and try to implement it in their lives. They are people of prayer. I love knowing them.

They pray for me. I don't even believe in God and don't believe in prayer, but I appreciate the fact that these people care enough about me to lift me up to their God. That's a generous spirit.

That is a loving heart. And that is the kind of thing that God can use to draw people to himself. And so people know what we pray about.

That's what lifting up these holy hands in public is designed to convey. So you have that in Philippians 1.9, that love comes through knowledge and practice in the truth. Colossians 1.9, for this reason we also, since the day we heard it, did not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the epinosis, the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

What a wonderful prayer to pray for fellow believers. Colossians 1.9, as soon as we heard that you had come to faith, as soon as we heard that you became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and committed your lives to him, we do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. What a great prayer.

Please pray that for me. Please pray that for every believer you know. Lord, please fill my brother or sister in Christ with the knowledge of your will, with wisdom and spiritual understanding.

What a great prayer. What a wonderful objective. Colossians 2.2, what is the goal? That their hearts may be encouraged, knit together in love, not divided by opinions and

politics and issues.

Hearts are encouraged, knit together in love, attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge, the epinosis of the mystery of God, both the Father and Christ. What a wonderful objective. What a great place to be to come to experiential knowledge of the mystery of God as it pertains and relates and encompasses the Father and Christ.

Colossians 3.10, having put on the new man who is renewed in epinosis, put off the old man with his lusts and desires, put on the new man renewed in knowledge according to the image of the creator, the one who created him. We become Christ-like. We become godly, living a life of godliness.

Once again, those passages are Philippians 1.9, Colossians 1.9, Colossians 2.2, Colossians 3.10. If you want to understand what epinosis is, look at the use of that word in context in those verses. When we're going to come to 2 Timothy 2.25 down the road, Paul says to Timothy, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance so that they may know the truth. In humility correcting those who are in opposition.

What kind of opposition? Not political, not social, not global conflict. This is misunderstanding God's truth. Construing and practicing a false form of Christianity.

Deconstruct, reconstruct, progressivism, denying the inspiration of scripture, pursuing the notion that if we build it, he will come, and so on. In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them change of mind. Now what does this mean? That God is going to change their mind? It is the presence and power of God that we focus on.

It is the truth of God that we communicate and speak in love, and that exposure to God through his word and through his truth will catalyze and bring about a change of mind. They are still in full possession of their decision maker. God granting it is granting the opportunity, granting the exposure, the witness, and the clarity from his word so that they may know epigenosko, the truth.

A person can learn a lot of stuff and it's just intellectual knowledge, but you don't come to a recognition that causes you to appropriate that truth and apply it, and have it produce effects in our life. So 2 Timothy 3, verse 7, these who are always learning and never able to come to knowledge of the truth, it's possible to learn academically, but it doesn't translate into changed attitudes, changed priorities, and so on. So the partial knowledge and full knowledge, academic knowledge and experiential practical knowledge, you find this in 1 Corinthians 13, 12, now we see in a mirror dimly or darkly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I am known. A difference making knowledge. There's something wrong if looking at the scripture and coming to an understanding of what it says and what it means doesn't change us.

Change of mind and an experiential knowledge. Because of what I know, I'm going to act differently. I'm going to think differently.

I'm going to behave. My attitude, my contact with others is going to be different because I know something now that makes a difference in my thinking, my speaking, my acting. So the purpose of this prayer, without distinction for rank or race or nationality or station in life is that they may be saved and that others may be saved, that these people will not be an impediment, that their example or their books or their podcasts or their social media posts don't obstruct the truth because God's goal is that everyone be saved.

You can pray that someone who's got a very persuasive and yet false point of view doesn't prevail when they communicate. That God will protect vulnerable souls from their divisive and corrosive message. That people will not be swayed, that they will not be blinded by this ledger domain and sleight of hand that people do with their polemics and their argumentation.

Our goal when we pray for all kinds of people in all kinds of places is that they be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Lord, don't let these things obscure and throw a basket over the light that people need to see. And that matches God's desire.

So is God going to answer that prayer in the affirmative? Yes, he is. We pray in line with his desire. And then you have this role of the Lord Jesus as mediator.

And remember in this day and age, in Ephesus, where Timothy is, and in the Greek and Roman culture, there were many gods. And this was a distraction and a cultural phenomenon that led a lot of people astray. And to be representatives of the truth, that there is one God and one mediator between God and men, this was a difference.

We are not polytheistic. We're monotheistic. There is one God and one mediator between God and men, and it's the man, Christ Jesus.

And this is anthropos. He is representative of the human race. When we get down to the men praying everywhere in verse eight, that's going to be a different word.

That's not people everywhere. Anthropos is a human person. So there is one God and one mediator between God and human persons, non-gender specific.

One mediator between human persons, the human person, Christ Jesus. Anthropos, a human person. It doesn't matter, young, old, male, female.

We're going to get down to verse eight, and that emphasis is going to change. The Lord

Jesus establishes peace, and He reveals peace. And this peaceable life is to represent the peace that the Lord Jesus creates as mediator.

You want to talk about conflict and ending a conflict, separation and ending that separation, rejection and distance? You can't fix it in the world, but the Lord Jesus has fixed it between God and people. That's what counts. That's the issue.

And salvation was not accomplished only for the Jews. Jesus was a Jew, but He didn't die only for Israel. The apostle could have said, there's one mediator between God and people, the Jew, Christ Jesus, but He doesn't.

He is Anthropos. He is the Savior of all men because He represents and representatively died for all. So He gave Himself a ransom for all.

And in Titus 2.14, Christ gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself, His own special people, zealous for good works. The separation of people doesn't happen before salvation. There is a division and a distinction after salvation.

It is available to all. Those who avail themselves of it now become a special people, unlike and distinct from the rest of the world. And that is the realm in which you have the one and others.

And if you have done it for the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me, God's people. And in this age, Christ's people. And Paul has come to bear testimony to that in due season.

And we talked about this last time. So Paul is a chosen vessel to bear Christ's name. This is Acts 9.15. He is a chosen vessel of mine, the Apostle Paul, to bear my name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

But notice the order and the priority. Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Chosen vessel.

Acts 22.15. You will be his witness, Paul, to all men of what you have seen and heard. Remember again, all men. This is all kinds of men, regardless of Jew or Gentile, regardless of high or low station, slave or free.

We have this witness to the mystery. Acts 22.21. Jesus said to Paul, Depart, I will send you far from here to the Gentiles. I will send you to the Gentiles.

Acts 26.17. Jesus tells Paul, I will deliver you from the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles to whom I now send you to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me. We share this opportunity.

We reflect this purpose and this goal and this ministry.

Once again, if you missed any of the rest of those, Acts 9.15, 22.15 and 22.21, but 26.17 and 18, this is a close parallel to our passage. Once again, there will be deliverance. We will be delivered in this present evil age out of the hands and the persuasive powers of those who resist and oppose.

I will deliver you from the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles to whom I now send you. And what is the purpose? What should we be getting from these epistles? Open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me. This is not just saving faith.

This is living faith. This is daily faith. It cleanses us.

It sanctifies us. It sets us apart. Sanctification is set-apartedness.

And we ought to be set apart. When people observe us, there's something different. We're not divisive.

We're not corrosive. We're not argumentative. We're not somebody to try to stay away from.

Quiet and peaceable life, godliness and reverence, praying for everyone. Not that they will see the light and come to my side of an issue, but that they will come to Christ and receive a knowledge of the truth. That's our goal and our identity.

So we saw that Paul's appointment to this had been called in question even in his own day, and much more today, where they say these letters weren't even written by the Apostle Paul, and he never saw Jesus Christ, etc. You go to Galatians 1 and 12 and find that Paul says, I didn't get this gospel by inventing it, and it wasn't handed to me by somebody else. It was a revelation of Jesus Christ.

But we see that same attack today, where liberal scholarship wants to undermine and dismiss the content of these scriptures, and yet this is the exact information we need. You can't live a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and reverence without knowledge of this truth, the mystery that is revealed to us through the Apostle Paul, specifically commissioned. People say, well, he just commissioned himself.

He made it up. He had an epileptic fit on the road to Damascus. If you go back and read, we don't have time to look, but look at the testimony of John the Baptist.

Nobody saw John appointed by a divine ball of fire. John gave his own testimony that God had communicated to him and designated him to be the voice crying in the wilderness from his birth, that there was prophecy at his birth. They only had John's word to take for

it, but they all considered John a prophet because they didn't disagree with the message.

He had a message of good news. Here comes the kingdom. So Paul is a herald of this truth.

So now we move to verse eight. Paul has made clear that prayers must be offered for all kinds of people. Who is going to offer these prayers and what kind of spirit should they be offered in? Oh Lord, rain down fire on these heinous rascals so that they will stop doing their bad activities is not it.

So these prayers should be offered first of all by men. The word men in verse eight is not the same as we saw in verse five. This is on air and it is specifically the gender male.

This is often translated husband. When it says the husband of one wife, later on qualifications for an elder, this is a one woman on air, one woman man. So men are to offer these public prayers and all of these kinds of prayer that were mentioned in the first verse, supplications, intercessions, giving of thanks, prayers.

Men are to represent the church in the public arena. It doesn't mean that women can't pray. It doesn't mean that women can't teach.

This context now is all the public outsider perception of an assembly of believers. This is critical to understanding the distinction in gender roles within the assembly. It has nothing to do with capability.

It has nothing to do with quality. It has everything to do with the impression that is left with those who observe on the outside. They can find no fault.

They can't be dismissive of the group because of the way they dress or the way they act or the way they talk. And that's what this next section is going to talk about. These exhortations and these standards are set so that our good is not spoken of as evil and that the divine structure that is behind these exhortations is the issue.

We do these things because we honor God. He is the God who gave us these standards and we follow them. Old Testament Israel, our priests are Levites because God said so.

Our kings come from Judah because God said so. Our clothes look like they do. Our diet is what it is.

Our practices are what they are because God told us so. Are there other ways that other people do it and it seems to work and they tout the benefits? Perhaps. But the issue here is not what we do and that it ought to have some practical value and if it doesn't, why would you do it? It is that we do what we do because it reflects our respect, our love, and our obedience to the God who saved us, to the God who created us.

And in the same way that our prayers are not designed to sort issues and accomplish

goals. Oh Lord, please build the border wall. Oh God, please overturn Roe v. Wade or please eliminate all abortions everywhere.

Oh God, please fix the economy. That makes an issue out of those problems. Instead, we pray for everyone everywhere on any side of an issue that the outcome will be salvation and the outcome will be deeper and more widespread knowledge of the truth, experiential knowledge of salvation from God through Christ.

That's my goal in praying. I'm not trying to solve an earthly problem. I am trying to point people's attention to salvation from God through Christ.

If you understand that, this next section makes perfect sense. These prayers are offered in public and you get the idea that some of these false teachers that Paul has already mentioned were bringing in outside ideas from the secular Ephesian culture and from the kind of worship that was practiced for these many gods, these polytheistic attitudes and temples to Athena and Jupiter and these others. And so women were priestesses and prostitutes in temples.

And so what contrasts with that? What ensures that nobody is going to think that women in an assembly of believers in Jesus Christ are like these prostitutes? Well, for one, they're not dolling themselves up and making themselves attractive in the physical sense with adornments and cleavage and immodest appearances. When they come to a worship assembly, these standards are specifically when they come together for worship. The purpose of the worship is not to distract people with how great I look.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with braided hair, with gold jewelry, with pearls or costly apparel. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with it. What effect does it have if you employ it when you come to a worship service? Well, it has the same deleterious effect as if men come together and instead of praying with holy hands, they reflect anger.

Oh Lord, please call down fire on Caesar and all of these oppressive Romans. We are victims here. And as victims, we are righteous and we have the just cause.

So rain down fire upon their heads, oh Lord. Hem them in, dismiss them, make them suffer the consequences that they have been consecrating all over us. Let them have a taste of their own medicine.

Oh Lord, vindicate us, raise us up, cast off our chains. That is anger and disputation. If men do that, A, God is not going to hear and answer that prayer.

B, the group becomes known for a rebellious attitude and a divisive spirit and an oppositional and vitriolic attitude toward the government. And this now makes them an object of attention, perhaps of genuine suppression, because you're a danger to the state. You've made yourself odious to the very authorities that God says, I put these guys in place.

I've allowed them to come to their place. And whatever they do, isn't your problem. You pray for them and pray toward the goal of calmness, quiet, non-divisiveness.

You hear the old Beatles song John Lennon wrote, all we are saying is give peace a chance. All Paul is saying is give the gospel a chance. Don't obscure it and don't mask it with petty, seemingly important causes that divide and polarize and cause people to not even give a hearing.

We do what we do so that people can hear about the Lord Jesus Christ and come to a knowledge of the truth. If God will grant them this opportunity for repentance, we want to be conduits for that. So the presence of women in the assembly, this was something of an innovation.

Remember in the Jewish synagogues, the women were segregated off. In the early church, they were mixed in. And that is a symbolic acknowledgement.

God never said in the Old Testament, don't let the women sit with the men. When you get together to worship, people could come as families into the temple precincts, into the tabernacle precincts. God never said, keep the women separate.

This was a Jewish custom that arose up over the centuries. It was taking the idea that the man is representative of the household and that he is the one to offer the sacrifices, and they just extrapolated that out to say, well, women should be seen and not heard and perhaps not even seen. We're going to put them in a side room and maybe they can hear what's going on, but it's all about the men.

That was a Jewish custom. The church, the early church corrected that. Men and women came together.

However, in order to not invite criticism or misunderstanding, God assigned roles. The men were to lead, to represent, and to pray. And this reflected proper divine authority in the household of God.

It is the men who are accountable and therefore responsible for things being done decently and in good order. Men were appointed pastors and elders in the church. And that leadership role is a reflection that in the household of faith, where there are brothers and sisters and there are elders and younger ones, that the men reflect a proper, godly, graceful leadership.

Not oppressive, not vindictive, not implacable, not abusive, but responsible, ensuring that things are done decently and in good order. So these men pray, lifting up holy hands. They can't be convictable for wrongdoing.

And you're going to have an explication of this later on in chapter three, but holy hands. And they should not be agents of anger or disputation. Dialogismos, we saw that last

time.

In like manner also. Verse 9. Notice, in like manner also. Why does he say that? Why is it in like manner? This is a testimony.

If you want to talk about being a witness for Christ, having a testimony for Christ, it's not traveling around talking about, I was lost in sin, but Jesus took me in. And I was, here's all of my failings and faults. I was a drunkard.

I was an abuser. I was this, that, and the other, but here's my testimony. Now I'm doing great things for God.

The testimony is the orderliness of one's personal household and the orderliness of the household of faith when it comes together. It is structured. There are assignments that are fulfilled in humility and in faithfulness.

There is calmness and quiet. Remember when Paul said, even in the days of speaking in tongues, only one or two persons ought to do that. And it ought to be immediately followed by interpretation.

What if somebody walks in and they think you're babbling incoherently and it's chaos and confusion? That is not the testimony the group is supposed to have. Same thing in a church assembly. You've got a bunch of mayhem going on.

That is not a good testimony. It is to be orderly. There is to be quiet when one man lifts up his hands and prays on behalf of the group in public and he prays for the government, prays for the authorities, prays that the opportunity will continue for these characteristics in like manner also.

The women are going to contribute to this testimony and to this impression that is given to the outside world in like manner also. Don't miss that phrase. You can't understand what he's about to say.

What is the purpose of these standards? What is the purpose of these exhortations? Like manner also. Peaceable and quiet life. Godliness and reverence.

This is what the world will see and respect and find amenable and treat as an invitation and something that draws and is attractive. In like manner also, the women adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation. Propriety and moderation.

Why? You can dress up in the world's gaudiest, most expensive outfit and if you never leave your living room and nobody sees it but you, you don't turn on the camera on your phone and post it. Have you done anything wrong? The whole notion of adornment and apparel is its effect on others and if you are wearing the kind of clothing that distracts people in whatever way, young men can't think about anything but how form-fitting or

revealing your outfit is or what kind of physical body is underneath it, if they are attracted by what you expose or what you make an issue of, that is the opposite of the mission. When they group assemblies, is this the impression you want? Well, that's a bunch of loose women getting together there.

They talk at a turn. They overrule and talk over the men. They do what they want.

They've got this apparel. What's the other thing that costly apparel does? Many of the believers in the early church were slaves, people of low estate and it creates awkwardness. Well, I don't want to get near them because I'm going to suffer by contrast.

Look how fine their adornment is and how rich they are. I am poor. I don't look like I am a part of the group.

The virtue of modest apparel is if everyone wears it, it's like school uniforms. Nobody gets to show off their class or their possessions or their origins or their inheritances or their accomplishments. We are here and we look like a group that belongs to each other.

It's the purpose of military uniforms. We're all in this together. We're Marines.

We're Army. We're Navy. We're Air Force.

We're Coast Guard. We are Space Force. I don't know I could identify a Space Force uniform.

I have to look that up. But this is uniformity. Rich people can dress modestly.

Poor people can't dress richly. So who's going to move in the interest of unity? Leave your pearls and your gold at home. Wear them on other occasions, but not in the assembly.

This is sensitivity to the people around you. This is like on Easter Sunday. I used to go to the Methodist church and the pastor would always make a big deal out of women don't wear these broad brimmed hats.

That's back in the days where men and women wore hats. I used to have a hat. I wore to church when I was a little guy.

So cool. I'm so sorry that custom ever went away. It's very practical.

Military understands this. But to have a cover and wear it. But these women would come on Easter Sunday and wear these big broad brimmed hats all full of flowers and stuff.

Well nobody can see the front. You can't see the choir. You can't see the pastor.

You can't see anything. And it's inconsiderate to wear a broad brimmed hat when there

are people sitting behind you that need to see. Well this is the idea.

Being considerate. Being thoughtful. Having an outlooking attitude that says I'm not going to be shabby but I will be modest.

It can be nice without being flashy. I can be properly appareled where I'm not making an issue out of myself and my real or imagined beauty. I'm toning that down in the interest of blending and being perceived as a group.

Unity. Fellowship. Brotherhood.

That's the idea. This is why in verse 10 what is the proper adornment and decoration for women professing godliness? Good works. Do people come away from observing the group or even participating in the group saying wow did you see that? Did you hear that? Or you know I just saw Lydia down there in the prayer meeting by the river.

She encourages these young ladies and these older widows and such. She's such a wonderful outlooking charitable woman. Lydia was a seller of purple.

Evidently she was not a wearer of purple. Did you notice? She's sponsoring the women's prayer meeting down by the river and they get visited by the apostle. What a joy.

What a privilege. I personally think Dr. Luke may have taken up with Lydia because the we section of Acts ends at that point and Paul goes on alone evidently. I think Luke stuck behind because maybe he was smitten with her.

I don't know for sure but I like the theory. So the adornment, the impression that you leave with those who are on the outside is that charity, that genuine love, that willingness to pray for anyone and everyone irrespective. So then in verse 11 let a woman learn in silence with all submission.

We'll get to this next time. It deserves a session of its own. But just remember this is the setup.

This is the context. How are you perceived from the outside? There is one God and one mediator. We are not like these other religions and most of the other religions.

There were these priestesses. There were these temple prostitutes. There were these women who sort of operated the thing.

You don't hear about the priest of Athena or the priest. It's always these women who are running things and to stand out and somebody says well why don't you have priestesses? Why don't you have convenient women here for the taking at your worship? Well because we serve the one God and it is because he sets this standard, because he makes this exhortation. I do it out of love and respect for him and that puts the issue squarely back to repentance and change of mind, salvation and knowledge of the truth.

Not being an impediment, not making an issue out of women's rights or women's equality. Do women have rights and are they equal? Of course. But to enlisted men and officers, priests in Israel, there is a designated function.

Doesn't speak to quality but it does speak to respect for the authority that ordains these roles and says you're a factory floor worker. You're an executive. You are an officer.

You're a warrant officer. You're senior enlisted. You are junior enlisted.

We have a system and we have a structure and officers are no better than enlisted in my experience, often the reverse. But these are assigned roles and out of respect for the organization and its ethos and its functions and its goals and objectives, I serve and I submit when I need to submit. I salute when I need to salute and it reflects my loyalty to larger things.

I don't individualize. I don't take sides. I don't get into identity politics.

Why should I salute if this person is of one color and I'm of another? This person is of one gender and I'm of another. This is a woman officer and I'm a man enlisted guy and I don't believe women ought to even be there and I have to salute her and you just gum up the works. God desires all men everywhere to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Whatever I can do to be a part of that and not an impediment, I want to do that because I love the Lord God and the love of God is shed abroad in my heart. That's the purpose of these exhortations and we'll see the detail of it next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, we do thank you for the privilege we have of representing you, representing the Lord Jesus Christ as his body on this earth and not only having the responsibility but also having the guidance that you have given us through the Apostle Paul on how to represent and how to symbolize and communicate to others your grace, your salvation, your truth.

We pray that as we reflect on these things we will see their pertinence and their application in our immediate circumstances, those that we have contact with, those who observe us both individually and as a church, as a group, that the light of the Lord Jesus Christ will shine brightly in us and through us so that as we think of and interact with each other and as we come in contact with the outside world, that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified and your plan and purpose will be accomplished, that all men everywhere be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.