

DEADLY DEISM OR THANKFUL THEISM?

**‘From him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen’ [Romans 11:36].¹**

Peter Adam

1. DEISM OR THEISM?

Deism: God created the world and the universe, and set it functioning with some inbuilt laws of operation, by which it continues to exist. God is not himself now active in the universe: his work of creation was completed at the beginning.

Theism: God not only created the world and the universe; he also constantly sustains it in his sovereign and gracious power. He does so not only with regular patterns of activity, but also, at specific times, acts in unusual ways to achieve his purposes. He is transcendent over his creation, immanent within it, and active through causality of all things, including using the lesser causality of creatures to achieve his good purposes. In Calvin’s words:

But faith ought to penetrate more deeply, namely, having found his Creator of all, forthwith to conclude he is also everlasting Governor and Preserver – not only in that he drives the celestial frame as well as its several parts by a universal motion, but also in that he sustains, nourishes, and cares for, everything he has made, even to the least sparrow.²

Yet when that light of divine providence has once shone upon a godly man, he is then relieved and set free not only from the extreme anxiety and fear that were pressing him before, but from every care.³

God’s goodness in his creation will lead us to thankfulness and trust ... It is to recognise that God has destined all things for our good and salvation but at the same time to feel his power and grace in ourselves and in the great benefits he has conferred up on us, and so bestir ourselves to trust, invoke, praise, and love him.⁴

¹ The NIV11 translates these words as ‘For from him and through him and for him are all things’. I use NIV11 and ESV interchangeably in these pages.

² John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 1, Ch. 16, Para 1.

³ Ibid, Book 1 Ch 17, Para 11.

⁴ Ibid, Book 1, Ch 14, Para 22.

[I]f you pay attention you will easily perceive that ignorance of providence is the ultimate of all miseries; the highest blessedness lies in the knowledge of it.⁵

A Biblical and healthy view of God's Providence includes not only his sovereign power and control, but also his constant provision, care, grace, kindness, and gentleness.

God constantly at work, sustaining all things that he has created: 'In him we live and move and have our being' [Acts 17:28]; 'From him and through him and to him are all things' [Romans 11:36]. Jesus Christ is also constantly at work, sustaining all things he has created: 'by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth ... all things were created through him and for him ... in him all things hold together ...' [Col 1: 16,17]; 'he upholds the universe by the word of his power' [Heb 1:3].

God works in and through humans, whether they are conscious of it or not. By him we are held together, our brains, our lungs, and our digestive and nervous systems function, we see, hear, smell, taste, eat and drink, we work, we reproduce. God gives us the 'dignity of causality' [Pascal].

God works in us and through us. Sometimes he works against our will, our causality. In Joseph's words to his brothers: 'you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good' [Gen 50:20]. 'The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he wills' [Prov 21:1]. 'The Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!' [Luke 22:22].

God works in believers. As we 'work out' our salvation, 'it is God who works in in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure' [Phil 2:13]. God produces in us 'the fruit of the Spirit' [Gal 5:22]. We die to sin and live to righteousness, because of our union with Christ: 'We were buried therefore with him by baptism into his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life' [Rom 6:4]. We are God's workmanship, 'created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them' [Ephes 2:10]. It is the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, by the blood of the eternal covenant who will 'equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight' [Heb 13:21]. If we cleanse ourselves from what is dishonourable, we will be 'ready for every good work'; and all God-breathed Scripture is able to make us 'complete, equipped for every good work' [2 Tim 2:21, 3:16].

God works in gospel ministry. Jesus said: 'No one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' [Matt 11:27]; and, 'All that the Father gives me will come to me ... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him' [Jn 6:37,33]. Paul wrote: 'I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants or he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth' [1 Cor 3:6,7].

⁵ Ibid, Book 1, Ch 17, Para 11.

Of course, we may not be aware that God is at work in transforming us or in helping others. Unconscious godliness and good works are wonderful signs of the depth of God's work in us! Sometime we know that God is at work and sometimes we don't know. Sometimes we work to open one gospel door, and God opens another door instead!

The Puritan Stephen Charnock famously wrote of the danger of 'Practical Atheism', in which people profess Theism, their belief in God, but in fact live in practice as atheists. I think that many Christians, and many gospel ministers, live as Practical Deists!

BIBLE TIMES	NOW	WHEN CHRIST RETURNS
Theism	Practical deism	A return to theism!

Here are some symptoms of practical Deism

- Treating the Bible as a book of rules, not the present powerful self-revelation of God.
- Using expressions such as, 'I felt that all I could do was to pray'.
- Not ever praying 'give us this day our daily bread', except in the Lord's Prayer!
- See ministry as many activities, but not praying.
- Not praising or thanking God for his constant provision, his gifts of creation and salvation, his gracious work in your life, his gracious work in the lives of others.
- Praying small prayers for the things we think God can manage, but not big prayers which challenge our faith.
- Working for God, not with God: forgetting that God is working in us and through us.
- Not putting sin to death, or living a new life by the power of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Not expecting to be gradually transformed into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another.
- Thinking of "success" or 'failure' in ministry solely in terms of personal achievement.
- Talking of God 'intervening' in his universe, when he is constantly at work!
- Blaming yourself or others for your lack of 'success' in ministry.
- Generalised or specific anger and frustration about yourself, your life, your ministry.
- Dissatisfaction with life and ministry, leading to idolatry.
- Feeling defeated and powerless when things go wrong.
- Making decisions, without praying first.
- Lots of worrying.
- Feeling defeated by the sin, anger, tricks or attacks by others.
- Despair at the state of the church and the state of the world.
- Trusting in perfect theology for 'success' in ministry.
- Trusting in exceptional exegesis for 'success' in ministry.
- Trusting in hard work and long hours for 'success' in ministry.

- Trusting in management, leadership, or professional competence for 'success' in ministry.
- Trusting in maximum out-put, achieving kpi's, and efficiency in ministry for 'success' in ministry.
- Little personal prayer, prayer in marriage, family life, with friends, in churches.
- Little prayer with church leaders, with other staff, with people, in sermon preparation, for people.
- Small prayers, not big prayers, such as for world evangelisation!
- Little expectation that God will do what he has promised to do.

Here are some remedies!

Praise God and thank God, trust him, and depend on him. [We praise God for who he is, and thank him for what he has done. We trust him, so we can depend on him.]

Praise and thank God for his constant care of his universe, his world, and our lives, for his daily gifts of creation, and for his daily gifts of saving grace in Christ Jesus.

Praise God for daily food and water, for air to breathe, for food to eat, for a bed, a place to live, for people to love, for neighbours to love, for things to learn, and things to do.

Confess the serious sin of not glorifying God and giving him thanks [See Romans 1:19].

Receive God's forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of his Son.

Think of three things each night for which you thank and praise God, and ask him to make you more aware of things to praise and thank him for tomorrow!

Ask God to prepare you and enable you to do every act of ministry, and remember to thank him for what he has done.

Spend half your sermon preparation time for your sermon praying through the text, and working out what it means: spend the second half of your preparation time praying for the people who will hear it, and thinking how you can shape your sermon to love and care for them.

When you have decisions to make about ministry plans, pray for God's wisdom before you plan. Don't plan first, and then ask him to bless what you have decided to do!

Take every opportunity to pray during your day, and to pray with anyone you meet with during your day.

When you read the Bible alone or with others, make sure that you respond in pray to what God has said to you through the Bible, before you turn to pray for other things.

Decide to trust God in difficult situations, and entrust them to God.

Decide to trust God for people in need, and entrust them to God.

Do your ministry as an offering to God, not out of habit, or to meet your own needs, or the needs of others.

Keep reminding yourself, and keep reminding others, that if the Lord God is not work, we will not achieve anything of value.

Whenever you pray for someone, thank God for them first, as St Paul does in his letters!

When tragedy strikes, don't panic, but pray urgent and trustful prayers to God that he will work out his good purposes in this situation.

Turn to God first for the consolation and comfort that only he can provide – not to drugs or other people or other activities!

Take every opportunity to remind others how constantly we depend on God's goodness and faithfulness for all we have and all we are.

Thank God for every day God gives you, and for every opportunity love people and serve them.

Praise God every day that one day every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

**'From him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen'.**

Gracious God, we praise and thank you that from you, and through you and to you are all things. To you be the glory forever, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

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2. TRINITARIAN PRAYING: OUR GRACIOUS, PRAYER-ENABLING GOD.

GOD THE FATHER

God the creator created and sustains all things, and is everywhere present in his power and gentleness in his creation.

‘Let there be light’ ... ‘Let us make mankind in our image’ [Gen 1:2, 26]. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth [Ps 33:6]. You, LORD, preserve both people and animals [Ps 36:6].

God causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous [Matt 5:45]. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care [Matt 10:29].

God speaks to relate to humanity made in his image, to reveal himself to us, and to teach us how to live for him and speak to him.

The LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your father’s country, your people, and you your Father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you’ [Gen 12:1,2]. Be holy, because I the LORD your God am holy [Lev 19:2]. God spoke all these words, ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, You shall have no other gods but me’ [Exod 20:1,2]. I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you with unfailing kindness [Jer 31:3].

God loves his people as their Father, and protects and provides for them, and loves to hear their prayers of thanks, praise, need, confession of sin, grief, lament, and promise.

Call on me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you, and you will honour me [Ps 50:15]. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to your prayers [2 Chron 7:15]. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry [Ps 34:15]. LORD, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Saviour [Ps 38:21,22]. Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise, in the

city of our God, his holy mountain [Ps 48:1]. Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, in you I take refuge [Ps 57:1]. Lord why have you rejected us forever? Why does your anger smoulder against the sheep of your pasture [Ps 74:1]. Come let us sing for joy to the LORD, met us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation [Ps 95:]. I lift up my eyes to you, to you who sit enthroned in heaven [Ps 123:1].

GOD THE SON

How do we think about our salvation in Christ? guilty - forgiven; dirty - clean; captive - free; shamed – glorified; damaged – restored; diseased - healed; enemies - friends; lost – found; dead – alive; blind – sight, etc **And, far away – brought near.**

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him [Luke 15:20]. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ [Ephes 2:13]. We have this sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf... [Heb 6:19,20]. The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God [Heb 7:18,19].

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water [Heb 10:19-22].

Christ is seated at God's right hand in glory.

He is our high priest, who has offered his perfect sacrifice, so that we can draw near to God.

Christ entered ... into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf ... having been offered once to bear the sins of many [Heb 9:24,28].

He is our high priest, who constantly prays for us.

So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD [Exod 28:29 {39:14}]. Since we have a high priest over the house of God...[Heb 10:21]. He is able to save to the uttermost, those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them' [Heb 7:25]. Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding

for us ...[nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus' [Rom 8:34,39].

Christ our high priest, our mediator, at his Father's right hand, speaks our prayers from his own lips, to his Father.

Until now, you have asked nothing in my name, Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full [John 16:24]. Through him let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name [Hebrews 13:15]. Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father through him [Colossians 3:17].

John Calvin wrote, 'God our Father hears our prayers as it were from the lips of his Son'.⁶

What does Jesus pray for us?

Here are some clues from Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one ... My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified ... My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world [John 17:6-24].

'If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me' – Robert Murray M'Cheyne.

Praise and thanks!

Lord Jesus Christ, you are our high priest who has opened our way into the presence of our Father. Lord Jesus Christ, you are our forerunner who leads us into our Father's presence. Lord Jesus Christ, by your blood shed on the cross, you have brought us with you into the presence of your Father, so that we can come near with full assurance of faith. We thank you and praise you!

Lord Jesus Christ, our high priest, seated in glory at your Father's right hand, you constantly pray for us, so that you may save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through you. We thank you and praise you!

Lord Jesus Christ our high priest, our mediator, seated at your Father's right hand in glory, you speak our prayers from your own lips, to our Father. We thank you and praise you!

⁶ John Calvin, *Catechism*, Question 252.

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

God the Holy Spirit lives within us and leads us, and ensures our adoption as God's children, and witnesses to us that we are God's children, and by him we call God our Father.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ [Rom 8:14-17]. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out Abba, Father [Gal 4:6].

God the Holy Spirit within us prays for us, to cover the ignorance and weakness of ourselves and of our prayers, and echo our groaning.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies ... In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God [Rom 8:22,23,26,27].

God the Father hears our prayers, enables us to come into his presence through his Son, teaches us what to pray and prompts us and helps us to pray through his Spirit.

'Prayer works' in that as God graciously speaks to through the Bible, he also graciously hears and receives our prayers. However, there is no magic prayer formula that we can use to force God to give us what we want, to make him our servant!

A praise-filled Creed to say to encourage us in our praying:

Heavenly Father, we praise you because you created us to know you, depend on you, trust you, and love you, and because you love to hear our prayers, and receive us as your children adopted into your family by your grace, through your Son.

Heavenly Father, we praise you because your ears are always open to our prayers, and that you can and will do more than we ask or imagine.

Heavenly Father, we praise you because you hear every prayer as an act of trust and worship, that you join together all the prayers prayed by all your saints, so that we never pray alone.

Lord Jesus, we praise you because you died, rose, and ascended to heaven, so that we can enter the presence of God with full assurance of faith.

Lord Jesus, we praise you because you died for our sin, and you are always praying for us at the right hand of your Father.

Lord Jesus, we praise you because you are our Great High Priest and Mediator, and so you present and pray our prayers to your Father, so that he hears our prayers from your lips.

Holy Spirit, we praise you because you teach us who God is and how to pray, through your inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

Holy Spirit, we praise you because you prompt us to pray to our Father.

Holy Spirit, we praise you because you dwell and pray within us, covering our weakness and ignorance in praying.

Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, please forgive us when we do not pray; prompt and cause us to pray; and trust and love you when we pray. Help us to ask, confess, intercede, lament, praise and give thanks to you with a full heart and great faith, trusting your compassion, faithfulness, grace, kindness, power, and steadfast love. Amen.

Gracious God, we praise and thank you that from you, and through you and to you and for you are all things. To you be the glory forever, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

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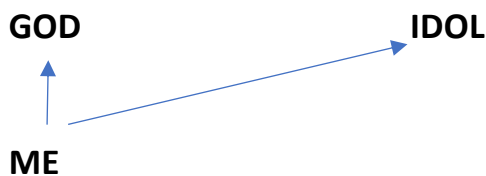
DEADLY DEISM OR THANKFUL THEISM?

3. TRINITARIAN GOD-SHAPED LIVES AND MINISTRY

Martin Luther: 'curved in on ourselves'... self-obsessed, ignoring God and ignoring others.

Our society ... our Christianity ... our ministry ...?

Who do you live for? Whose happiness do you seek? For whose benefit do you do your ministry? From whom do you seek comfort and encouragement? Whose affirmation and approval do you seek in your life and ministry? Who do you serve?



‘From him’

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth [Gen 1:1].

Praise be to you, LORD, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things.

In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name ... Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand [1 Chron 29:10-14].

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else ... For in him we live and move and have our being [Acts 17:24,25,28].

‘Through him’

Notice the interweaving of these themes: God will do it; Jesus will do it through his death and resurrection, and in his ascended power as Lord, Head and Saviour; the Holy Spirit will do it, and do it through the Bible.

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life [Rom 6:4].

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants or he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth’ [1 Cor 3:6,7].

Jesus replied, ‘You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God ... have you not read what God said to you, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead but of the living’ [Matt 22:29,31,32].

You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life [Jn 5:39,40].

‘No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: “They will all be taught by God.” ... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world’ [Jn 6:44,45,51]

Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ [Jn 11:25,26].

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me [Jn 15:1-4].

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work [Eph 4:11-16].

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless [Eph 5:25-27].

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen [Jude 24,25]

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this? [Est 4:14].

[Moses] was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us. [Acts 7:38].

So, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion [Heb 3:7,8].

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit [2 Cor 3:18].

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do [Ephes 2:8-10].

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb' [Rev 5:9,10].

God will use us, our choices, our prayers, our works of ministry. Again, notice the interweaving themes.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus ... Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord ... Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys ... Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord ... Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord [Rom 16:3,8,9,12].

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work [1 Cor 12:4-6].

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen [1 Pet 4:10-11].

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose [Phil 2:12-13].

We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins [Col 1:9-13].

He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many [2 Cor 1:10,11].

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God [Ephes 3:14-19].

[Christ] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me [Col 1:28,29].

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains ... Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured [Col 4:2,3,18].

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones [1 Thess 3:12,13].

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through [2 Thess 5:23].

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight [Heb 13:20,21].

God will judge and evaluate us when Christ returns

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done [Matt 16:27].

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth [Mt 24:45-51].

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' ... Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! ... And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' [Mat 25:14-21,24,26,30].

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad [2 Cor 5:9,10].

God will not only use us, but also bring glory to himself through us!

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to

sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory [Ephes 1:3-14].

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen [Ephes 3:20-21].

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed [1 Pet 1:3-7].

'To him, for him': life and ministry

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship [Rom 12:1].

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace [Acts 20:24].

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth [2 Tim 2:15].

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen [1 Pet 4:10-11].

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might forever. Amen [1 Tim 6:11-16].

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away [1 Pet 5:1-4].

Prayer.

Gracious Heavenly Father, we praise you that you are at work to complete your great gospel plan for all nations, and that we can trust you to achieve all your purposes for your creation in Christ Jesus.

Gracious Heavenly Father, we praise you that you make us, your creatures, made in your image, to be transformed into the image of your Son, our Saviour and Lord, by the power of your Spirit.

Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you use humans in achieving your plans for your world. And we thank you that in your gospel economy, you waste nothing. You use every life, every prayer, every obedience, all faith, love, and hope, every prayer, every sacrifice, all endurance, patience and suffering; You bring glory to yourself through us in Christ Jesus.

Gracious Heavenly Father, please help us to stand in your grace, live in your love, grow in your wisdom, walk in your ways, and serve in your strength. Keep us in your mighty power, protect us from Satan and all evil, and present us with all your people to yourself on the last day, kept by your power and grace in the Lord Jesus.

Gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. we praise and thank you that from you, and through you, and to you and for you are all things. To you be the glory forever, Amen.⁷

**‘From him and through him and to him are all things. To him
be the glory forever! Amen’.**

⁷ For more ideas and prayers, see peteradam.org