

Prayer for the Knowledge of Christ, part 2

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[0 : 00] All right, let's open to Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1, we're going to read verse 9 through 12. And last week we looked at verse 9, and we just looked at one phrase to be filled with the knowledge of God's will.

And we talked about that being God's will of demands, or things that He has revealed, things He's commanded us to do so we know how to live our life. And here's what happens as we read, here in just a second, I want you to notice the purpose for which He tells us this.

He's praying that they're filled with the knowledge of God's will so that two things would happen. So I want you to look for those two things. And then, as we keep reading, I want you to notice that as He's praying for this one thing, He's praying for other things that basically form the things that are supposed to happen in a Christian's life.

There's four of them. And these things are things He's praying that would be there, and also it's something you need to make sure is there. So it's both something to pray for and something to be sure that is there.

So look for those things as I read the passage, beginning in verse 9. He says, He says, Let's pray.

[1 : 57] Father, we give you praise for your mighty strength, for your power. The very power that separated the seas for the Israelites to walk across is the same power that said to the storm, Be still.

It's the same power that works in us and tells our hearts to be still. And we praise you for your strength. We praise you for your power. And we pray now that as we look at your word, by your spirit, you would work in power to convince us of the truth, that you would work in power to help us to love the truth.

And Father, by your power, you would help us to live out these truths. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. One of the things about being a grandparent is that your grandkids please you pretty much no matter what.

Your children, that's a different story. Grandkids, though, recently, our grandson in Colorado, about 14 months, has begun to do this thing where he's sitting there and just will all of a sudden raise his head up, close his eyes, open his mouth, and roar at the sky without a sound.

I have a picture on my phone. I love this picture of him raising his head up and just silently roaring.

[3 : 36] I am so pleased with that. It is the best thing. If your grandkid did this, I would question them. But this is my grandkid, and I am super pleased with him.

And it's that sort of attitude that sometimes I think we as Christians believe that God is more like a grandparent, and he is just automatically pleased with us no matter what.

But God is not our grandparent. He's our Father. And he's not just pleased with us no matter what. He tells us that if we're his children, how we ought to live.

And here in our passage, Paul gives us four words. They're all parallel in the Greek. I won't bore you with the details of that, but he means for these four words to be parallel with one another.

Bearing fruit, increasing in the knowledge, strengthened with might, giving thanks. Those are all exactly the same, and they form up for us then what we're going to look at this morning.

[4 : 41] Because as Paul prays for them to be filled with the knowledge of his will, he wants them to be filled in the knowledge of the will so that they might walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

They need to be filled with the knowledge of God's will so that they can please God in every respect. And so these four things form up four things that ought to be in our lives if we're going to please God.

In other words, you say you're a Christian and you want God to be pleased with your life, you want to walk in a manner worthy of God, these four things need to be in your life if that's the case.

I think there's more throughout Scripture than just these four things, but these are four things that Paul talks about here. And I would say it this way, without these four things, we're not pleasing to the Lord.

And so we need to listen carefully this morning to see what this really is and how we live it out. The first one is bearing fruit. Bearing fruit.

[5 : 46] We see that in verse 10. Verse 10 begins with that purpose phrase, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord to please Him in all respects. And then it says, bearing fruit in every good work.

Let's talk about that phrase. Bearing fruit in every good work. You have to understand fruit is a direct effect of a root system of the tree. If the root system is bad, the fruit will be bad.

If the root system is good, the fruit will be good. God wants us to bear fruit because He has done something to our root system to change us so that we bear good fruit.

The second thing about this is God expects fruit in our lives. As a Christian, if He's changed you, if He's saved you, if He took you from the kingdom of darkness and transferred you into the kingdom of His dear Son, He expects to see fruit in your life.

Matter of fact, the words here would remind you of creation when God looks at all creation and says, Be fruitful and multiply. That's what we as Christians are to do.

[6 : 56] We are to bear fruit. But Paul says we're to bear fruit in something specific. That specific thing is in every good work.

Now that is something we need to talk about. Because a good work is not something I've decided is a good work.

A good work is something that God has said is a good work. Or let me say it this way. There's a lot of things that we could do in this life that are good that God has not necessarily commanded us to do.

I'm not saying you shouldn't do them. But I'm saying that's not the kind of good work that we're to bear fruit in that then pleases the Lord. A good work is something that God Himself has commanded.

It's not something we've conjured up in our own mind to say, Well, this is the thing I'm going to do in order to please God. In May of 2018, the Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary put out a statement.

[8 : 05] I have no idea what the Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary is except it's related to the Catholic Church. They put out a statement that said anyone who would visit a relic and venerate that relic, a relic is something, some ancient artifact connected to somebody from the Bible, an apostle or somebody like that.

If you were to come and venerate this relic, you would get time off in purgatory for sins that you had already confessed. In other words, God would be pleased with you.

You would be walking in a manner worthy of the Lord if you went and visited and venerated a relic. That is not a good work.

That is something conjured up out of the minds of men and never commanded by God. We have some very simple things that God has commanded. Let me give you a real simple one.

Honor your father and your mother. Right out of the Ten Commandments, very clear, very precise. As a matter of fact, honoring your father and mother is the foundation of all society.

[9 : 17] How is that? Because God's told you to obey them and then they tell you, listen, you're going to go to school. You need to do what the teacher says. Hey, you're going to get out there in life and drive a car. You need to obey the speed limits and the law.

Hey, you're going to get out there and you're going to have a boss. You need to listen to what your boss says. It's from parents that we learn obedience to all the other authorities in our lives. So if we want to be pleasing to the Lord, we are to bear fruit in good works and being honoring to your father and your mother, obeying authority is a good work.

It is a good work. Paul wants the Colossians to bear fruit in the realm of good works. He wants their life to blossom with obedience to the commandments of God from his word.

That's what he's praying for and that's what should be in a Christian's life. Our life should be adorned with good works, with obedience to God.

Now, I have to say this here just to be sure that we have the one caveat that as Baptists we always have to say, you don't do good works to become a child of God.

[10 : 34] You are a child of God so you ought to do good works. You don't do good works to get into the family. You're in the family and therefore you're supposed to do good works to demonstrate that you're in the family.

Do you understand? We're together here? Great. Good. So, how do you do this? How can you bear fruit in every good work? Let me just suggest that you do this. Start with the Ten Commandments.

Start with the Ten Commandments. Ask yourself, what is this forbidding? What does it forbid me to do? Ask yourself this question. What does it positively want me to do?

And then begin to obey it and then you have good works in your life. When you're done with that, when you've got the whole Ten Commandments all lined out perfectly, okay, then you can move on to some New Testament commands.

You see what I'm saying? Like, we're never going to run out of good works to do. We are to bear fruit in doing good works. But listen, here's the thing.

[11 : 37] I just need to go back to this because there are some people who are going to believe that if they do just enough good things, God's going to be pleased with them to the point of letting them be in the family.

But you can't ever earn from God anything. And so, if you're not a Christian, you've got to turn away from your self-reliance on your own good works, recognize yourself as a sinner, and turn to Christ.

So that's the first thing. We need to bear fruit in good works. The second thing is to increase in the knowledge of God. Verse 10 again says, increasing in the knowledge of God. This increasing is the idea of growth.

There's to be growth. You can imagine a bloom on a plant. That bloom comes up and inside there's a little fruit and over time that fruit begins to grow and get bigger and bigger and bigger until it's time to pick it.

Right? That growth is what we're talking about here. We are to grow in the knowledge of God. As a Christian, you say you're a Christian, okay, you need to be increasing in, grow in, your knowledge of God.

[12 : 47] That includes two parts to that. Number one, it means that we need to learn things about God. We need to learn things about God. We need to know what God thinks.

We need to know what God says. We need to know what God has done. All of that's from the Bible. Right? So we need to learn things about God but we also need to relate to God.

We need to be able to relate to God as we learn about God. So we learn things about Him so that we can relate to Him. Let me just give you one example.

The Bible talks about God being immutable. Alright, everybody say the word immutable. Immutable. That is just such a big old word. You know what it means? It means that God does not change.

God does not change. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. He may change how He deals with us. That's why we don't do sacrifices from the Old Testament anymore.

[13 : 48] But that's not a change in who He is. In His essence, in His being, He does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

So when we learn such a truth, now we can relate to God as this being who is one who is always steadfast, His love, His grace, His justice, we can count on Him because He never changes.

He is the same today as He was yesterday, as He was a thousand years ago, as He will be a million years into the future. He does not change.

He doesn't change with the changing culture. He doesn't change with the changing winds. He is always the same. Now that's the truth that we learn about God. How do we relate to God in this way?

When we were having our second child, our son, he was born at home with a midwife, and one of the things that happened in that birth is the cord was wrapped around his neck, and he was blue and unmoving when he was born.

[14 : 57] And in that moment, in that moment, God was immutable. God was still a God who didn't change.

It wasn't as though all of a sudden He was off of His throne and our life was in chaos. It wasn't as though all of a sudden He was uncaring about our situation and we had to deal with this on our own.

It wasn't as though He was all of a sudden too busy for us to cry out to Him. It wasn't as though all of a sudden He was less powerful and unable to help us. It wasn't as though there was anything about God that had changed.

We could depend on Him just like we could the day before. And so through tear-stained cheeks, we trusted in Him and our son breathed and is doing great.

We experienced God's unchangeableness in that moment. We had this moment of dependence upon Him because we can't do anything. And we never once had this thought, but what if God's not the same?

[16 : 06] What if He's changed? What if He doesn't? We understood He is a God who is immutable. And my question to you is, do you seek to learn God this way?

Do you want to know about Him? Do you want to know all that you can know about Him? because Paul prayed for the Colossians that they would be pleasing to God and they were going to be pleasing to God because they were going to increase in their knowledge of God.

God, if we're not seeking to learn more about God, if we're not seeking to grow in our understanding of God and our relating to God, then it doesn't matter how much pleasure you feel that God has with your life, He's not pleased.

God is So how do we grow in our knowledge of God? We know who God is by His Word.

You must read the Word. You must study the Word. You can read your Bible, you can come to Sunday school, you can come midweek Bible study, you can study the Bible on your own, you can read good books that help you to study, but it's going to take effort and it's not going to be by osmosis.

[17 : 27] And the second thing is you have to lean on God in prayer every single day. You have to ask Him, God, show me more of you. Help me learn about you from your Word.

And then as we encounter all the things in life, you'll begin to see how you relate to Him as you've learned who He is. But here's the thing, if you're not a Christian, one of the things to know is that the knowledge of God is eternal life.

And what I mean by that is this, John chapter 17 verse 3 says this, this is Jesus praying to His Father, and He says, this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

And so if a person does not want to know God, then they don't want eternal life. To have eternal life is to know God, it's to pursue Him, it's to learn more of Him.

What do you think heaven is going to be? Heaven is not about a family reunion, heaven is not about babies and diapers and harps and clouds either. Heaven is about coming to know God more.

[18 : 41] I mean, think about this, He is infinite, which means that His love is infinite, which means that when we are in heaven and we're trying to learn something about the love of God, we will never find the bottom of the bottomless pit of the infinite love of God.

To love Him, to know Him, this is eternal life. If you do not know Him, then you don't have eternal life.

And today you ought to humble yourself and call upon Him. the third thing He says is to be strengthened with His might. This is going to take us just a little bit more, not much.

But look at verse 11, just read it. He says, strengthened with all power according to His glorious might for the attaining of steadfastness and patience. A couple things about this.

Number one, this is a description of what Paul wants for you. He wants the strengthening with all power according to the glorious might for the attaining of steadfastness and patience.

[19 : 53] He's praying that for the Colossians. It's something that He wants for us as well. This is something that we should want for ourselves. This is something we should be praying for ourselves and praying for one another, to be strengthened.

The second thing is that this word strengthened is necessarily both passive and active. active. It's both passive and active. And here's what I mean. To become stronger in your muscles, you must do an active thing.

You've got to lift weights in order to tear the muscles. You've got to eat protein in order for that protein to go to the tear and build up muscle. The active part is lifting and eating protein.

The passive part is the body and the chemistry working in such a way as to send the proteins to the right place and do the right thing to build the muscle. It's both active and passive.

This strengthening from God has an active part. There is a part we play, but there's a massive part that's passive in what God does in us. He's the one who strengthens us.

[21 : 03] Next thing I want to think about is that it's a strength that comes from God. We know that, but look what it says, according to his glorious might.

According to his glorious might. We understand might, it's power, strength. What is glorious? Glorious is not just bright or majestic.

But if you were to take all the attributes of God, glory is a summary word. word. We use this word to refer to God in his totality. In all that he is.

So if you were to take his love and his mercy and his grace and his compassion and his kindness and his justice and his holiness and his righteousness and his wrath.

If we were to take his eternity, his infiniteness. If we were to take his wisdom, his power, his strength. If we were to take his sovereignty. If we were to take all that he is and compact it together and look at it, it would be glorious.

[22 : 09] Glory is the sum total of all that he is. And the way we are strengthened is that we are strengthened by the resplendent majesty that is God.

Now hold that thought. I'm going to come back to it. The fourth thing about what he's saying here is that the outcome of this strength is steadfastness and patience.

Steadfastness and patience. Now what's the difference between these two? Well let's do a little experiment here. So I've got a dumbbell right here and I'm lifting the dumbbell.

It's a hundred pounds. Right? So can I lift a hundred pound dumbbell? Probably not. But let's just assume we can. Okay? Some of you might could because I know you're just that way.

But you know, anyway, so here's a hundred pound dumbbell. And let's just say that I can lift it. And if I could lift it, it's probably going to take me longer than this to do it.

[23 : 14] It's probably going to take me, let's just say, an hour to do it. Okay? So I'm sitting here working for an hour trying to lift a hundred pound dumbbell. Maybe I'm the dumbbell.

But I'm trying to lift this dumbbell. An hour's going. Steadfastness is making it all the way through the hour. Okay? I make it to the end. That's what steadfastness is.

I get all the way to the end. Patience. Patience is a peace and a tranquility. Okay? So you're sitting there and you've got your hundred pound dumbbell and you're trying to work on lifting this thing up.

and you've got an hour to go to get this thing going and your younger brother comes in and is annoying. So you yell at them.

Maybe you cry a little bit. Maybe you're grunting. Maybe you're just like, this is dumb. I just can't stand this. Or maybe you say nothing because you're a stoic. But it's all in your head going like, you just come over here closer.

[24 : 18] I'll just smack you with this dumbbell. Peace, patience, tranquility is not having all of that turmoil going on inside of you.

See, here's the thing. I think a lot of us think that we're peaceful, patient people because we say nothing out loud. But the truth of the matter is that you're not a peaceful, patient, tranquil person if you've got the stuff going on in your head and in your heart.

That's the important thing. If you're quiet as a mouse, which most of you are because you're Texans, so when you endure difficulty, you're quiet, but your mind is still racing, your heart is still racing, and it's not at peace within you.

What Paul is saying is that the result of being strengthened with the glorious might of God is a steadfastness getting to the end of the thing and having a tranquil, quiet, peaceful heart and mind through that thing.

Wow, that's what I would like. But here's the pathway. Okay, so as Paul's praying these things, these all stack on each other.

[25 : 29] Okay? And the whole reason that I've been trying to get detailed about like the knowledge and all these things is that what happens is that you're to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, which means we've got to know what his word says.

As we know what his word says, we know how we ought to live because that's where the good works come from. So we bear fruit in doing good works because we're reading his word. We know what his word says.

And as we're reading his word to see that, we're also increasing in the knowledge of God. You can't see the things he wants you to do without you understanding something about who he is. And as we increase in our knowledge of God, it is that knowledge of God that he uses as the glorious might to strengthen us.

In other words, what we know about God gets turned in by God as his glory and his might to put strength in our bones so that we can be steadfast and endure or have patience in the things that we go through.

Does that make sense? This strength doesn't come because you psych yourself up. This strength comes because you have the knowledge of God.

[26 : 42] God gets the God. Because you understand something about him. But here's where we as Christians, I think, get a little confused. Because we get confused over what strength is supposed to feel like.

It's as though we think that if God's going to strengthen us for this suffering that I'm enduring, what that's supposed to feel like is that I can get back to life as normal or that things don't have to change too much or I don't have to experience a ton of negative emotions.

And that's sort of what we think is strength from God. But that is not what strength from God feels like. Strength from God doesn't feel like avoiding negative emotions or having a normal life.

Strength from God feels like I don't have to be, I can be peaceful and I can get through the thing. Hold on, there's more here. We also struggle with the duration of strength.

Right? We have a tendency to think of ourselves as rechargeable batteries. That we come on Sunday, we plug in, we get topped off, we go back out in the world for a week and we think that's enough strength to make it through the suffering we need to get through for the week.

[27 : 58] But we're not rechargeable batteries, we're corded drills. You've got to stay plugged in the whole time. Because what happens in suffering is that in this moment right here I'm trusting in the Lord, I understand something about Him, I'm being strengthened by His glorious might and in five minutes I need it again.

Because something else gets added on top. You ever notice that? Like that's the thing that happens in our lives. We're having one thing that we're suffering with and then we get four phone calls that just pile on it. Like I just don't even understand that.

But it's wave after wave after wave. So we are not rechargeable batteries. The strength that God gives doesn't last for a week. It lasts for a moment.

And I have to be plugged into Him every single moment. That's why Paul I think says things about praying without ceasing.

But there's one final thing I think we mess up and that's the purpose of strength. I think we don't understand why we're being strengthened. I think that we tend to think that the purpose of being strengthened by God is to be able to spend it upon our wishes and reputation.

[29 : 27] We want life to go back to normal. We don't want anyone to know what we're struggling with because we're afraid to ask for help. We don't want to be a burden to somebody so we don't talk about it to anybody.

And so we want this strength from God so we don't have to bother somebody else. We want this strength from God so we can go about our normal life. And it's almost as though we think that what God wants for us is what we want for ourselves.

And the reason that He gives us strength, look at it, it comes from His glorious might. He gives us strength so that as we are steadfast, get to the end, and we're patient, peaceful, calm, tranquil in Him, it's not about so people can look at us as heroic figures and say, man, they never said a cross word when they were suffering.

It's so that He is displayed. It's so that He is exalted. Let me say it this way. The suffering that we go through, the strength that God gives us to go through that is meant to be a discipleship moment to teach others about Jesus or it's meant to be an evangelistic moment in order to share the gospel with someone who's lost.

That strengthening is to keep you steadfast in Christ. That's why sometimes when we go through difficult things and we're asking God for strength, we sometimes wonder, is He really strengthening us?

[30 : 58] But listen, after a long series of sufferings, if at the end of that, at the end of that, one morning you get up and you throw your foot on the floor and you look up and you say, well, God, I still believe that you're there, I still believe you're good, and I'm still trusting in you.

That is the result of His strength. That's the result of His strength. So that maybe at the end of the day, in a quiet way, I might say, it is well with my soul.

It's okay, God. I just want you to be glorified. I just want you to be honored. I just want you to be magnified. Strengthen me so that I don't abandon you. Strengthen me so I keep my faith in you.

Strengthen me so I display that you're glorious. Strengthen me so that others can see the gospel in me. That's what we're to be strengthened as.

So yes, pray. Ask God to strengthen you. But just know that it doesn't come apart from that increasing in the knowledge of God. The fourth thing then, it really does follow.

[31 : 59] It's there, kind of verse 11 and 12, joyously giving thanks to the Father who's qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Paul's been praying that we would be filled with the knowledge of the will of God so that we might please the Lord.

And one of the ways to please Him is to give thanks joyfully. You know, two questions come up. Why is joyfully giving thanks attached to this prayer? Because if we've been filled with the knowledge of His will, if we have good fruits, if we're increasing in this knowledge, and if that knowledge is strengthening us, gratefulness is the next step.

But this passage is interesting because what are we thankful for in this passage? I mean, there's a lot of passages you could go to and the Thanksgiving is all about, you know, be thankful in everything, be thankful about everything, and it's pretty broad in general.

This passage is very specific. We're to be thankful that the Father has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

What is that? Let's start backwards. Saints in light. This is all Christians. All Christians who have a part in the light of God. This would be our salvation full and free.

[33 : 21] This is the salvation that God's given to us. This is the inheritance we have that we share with others. We have these other saints that have salvation full and free. It's the salvation we have here. It's the salvation we have there.

It's the reward one day we're headed to. It's the salvation we can have right here and now. It's all of these things. It's the saints in light. This is who we are. It's all Christians who have this. Then it says to share in this inheritance.

Which means there's enough of this inheritance to go around. It's not as though we're going to come to the end and somebody's going to have just a little bit less of an inheritance than somebody else. As a matter of fact, let me say it this way.

You will get to share and get an equal share with the Apostle Paul in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's not going to give Paul one thing and then you guys go like, well, you know, you were from Medina, so here you go.

No, we get all the inheritance that's promised to us. We get to share in that. But here's the kicker. God the Father qualified us for that inheritance.

[34 : 25] We shouldn't be getting that inheritance. We don't deserve it. We didn't earn it. We earned death, hell, judgment, and damnation.

But God the Father qualified us to graduate college with a bachelor's degree. Basically, you need about 120 credit hours and if you don't get 120 credit hours, you don't qualify to graduate.

If you are going to be a district champion and go on to the next place, you got to be able to qualify to get to the next round. If you lose the game, you don't qualify, you don't go on.

Paul is telling us that we did not qualify. We did not qualify to be in heaven with God forever because the qualification is perfect law, righteousness.

It's to have never sinned in thought, word, or deed from birth to death. And none of us qualify. But God qualified us himself through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[35 : 42] Paul is saying that our salvation is so much the work of God that we should be thankful that we're saved.

I mean, we were lost and he found us. We were enemies and he adopted us. We were sick and he healed us. We were hateful and he loved us.

We were wicked and he transformed us. We were blind and he opened our eyes. We were dead and he raised us. We were unqualified and he qualified us.

It is not mine because of what I've done. It is mine because he has qualified me. And I'm just going to say, as a Christian, our constant refrain ought to be a joyful gratitude that God has saved us when we did not deserve that.

We can't be thankful to him for that, though, if we think we deserve it. I say all the time when people ask me, how are you doing? I said, I'm doing better than I deserve.

[36 : 49] And I'm just looking at you here today. All of you are sitting right here. You're breathing. You're looking at me. Most of you. You are where you are right now.

And this is better than you deserve. Right now, every one of us deserve for hell to open up and for us to fall in and burn for all eternity.

See, that's what every single one of us deserves. And none of us are getting that right now. Even if you're even if you're a lost person, you're not getting that right this second.

And that's mercy. But but I can't be thankful that God saved me if I think that I kind of halfway deserved it. I mean, I kind of did the right thing.

You know, at least I was humble enough to say I needed Jesus. I mean, some people are not even that humble, but I'm saying to you that you can't really be thankful if you think that way. The only way you can be thankful, joyfully thankful for what God has done is for you to believe deep down.

[37 : 52] I deserve nothing but death and hell. And listen, you know, you don't want to believe that about yourself. That's fine.

I'm going to tell you this, though. That's all I deserve. That is all I deserve. Why? Because I broke his law. What's the greatest commandment?

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. Has there been one moment in my life or two moments that I've not loved God with all my heart, soul and mind?

Oh, yeah. A lot of moments. Am I proud of that? No, I'm not saying look at me. I'm saying I deserve death and hell. But God, but God, but God, rich in mercy, but God, great in love, but God, full of compassion, qualified me.

By the Lord Jesus Christ. See, that's good news. That's good news. Paul, he is praying for them to grow.

[39 : 01] And this growth must include all of these things. Let me ask you, how thankful to you, how thankful are you to the Lord that he saved you?