

Colossians: The Supremacy of Christ (Col. 1:9-14)

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[0 : 0 0] Being Mother's Day, I'm sure mothers and fathers, grandparents can remember that when we, and all of us can observe this, when we spend time around children, one thing that is evident! of children is that they want to grow. They want to grow. They want to grow up. They want to learn new things. They want to try new things. They want to explore new places. They just want to grow. And it warms our heart when we hear things like, Daddy, Mommy, I learned to count to 10.

I learned my ABCs. I learned to ride a bike. I learned to bake cookies. I learned John 3.16. And they recite those things. And it's one thing that's evident about children is they want to grow.

And we can easily measure physical growth and emotional growth is a little more difficult. And we can, but how does one measure spiritual growth?

Should we measure it by church attendance heading into summer? Maybe I like that one. Yeah, maybe we measure church attendance. Do we measure spiritual maturity by church involvement of how many ministries somebody may be involved in? Or do we measure how much someone gives things like this? These things can be measured, but they miss the heart of spiritual maturity altogether. And one of the things we're doing is we're walking through, we're studying the book of Colossians, and we are, Paul is giving us a measurement of spiritual maturity, but he does that in the form of a prayer. Last week we saw that in Pastor Jay's message in the previous text, we saw that these Colossian believers have this faith in Christ that is beautiful, that is good. And Paul is commending them. He knows, he heard a report from this gentleman whose name is Epaphras that he heard of their faith in Christ. And that faith in Christ fostered a love for the saints. And they were assured of their eternity in heaven. And that motivated them.

And Paul now continues. And that report that he heard from Epaphras and this maturity that he sees in the believers that he's encouraged by, he now prays. And what's interesting is that we're going to read a prayer of Paul for the church at Colossae. And we're going to hear, he's going to encourage them into their prayer, Lord, would you do this in the heart of your people? And so we can get a little essence of what spiritual maturity may look like because of what Paul is praying. And so that's the heart of the message today. That's where we're going to go. And one of the things I want to make mention of is it is often easy to pray for those who we know who are hurting. It is often easy, oh, when they, when we know they have need. But I want you to notice in the, the Colossian church is relatively mature. There's really no indictment against the church at Colossae.

[3 : 0 7] We know that there's some false teaching going on, so he's going to try to correct some things. But they're generally a mature people. And so what I love about this prayer is it's for all of us, whether you're spiritually immature, whether you're spiritually mature, this is a prayer for all of us.

And it's a, it's a prayer that Paul prayed for the church at Colossae. Would you read this prayer with me? If you have a Bible with you, if you turn to Colossians chapter one, we're going to begin reading in verse nine, nine through 14. And this is what our text, this is the word of Lord today. Colossians 1 19. And so from the day we heard it, we have not ceased to pray for you. And here's the content of Paul's prayer, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and understanding so that you walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, praising him, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of these saints in the light and has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And that is Paul's prayer.

I want us to look at this, what does spiritual growth look like? Well, again, it's evident in children, they want to grow. Well, what does spiritual growth look like for us who are saints in the Lord?

In Paul's prayer, we see that growing in the knowledge of who God wants us to be is the first thing. Look with me in verse nine, growing in the knowledge and growing and knowing who God wants us to live or how God wants us to live is the first point. Look with me in verse nine. And so from this day we heard it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding. God, what does it mean to be filled with the knowledge of his will? Paul does not mean that he wants you to know whether you should take a different job or not, or who you should marry, or if you should marry that particular person. Rather, he is asking that they may know God's moral will that he has been revealed in his word. God's moral will that is reflected of his holy character. Paul prays for these believers that they would grow to know him as he has revealed himself to be in his word.

[6 : 06] The one, one of the words that I want to draw your attention to, he says in verse nine, they're asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will. The word filled. The word filled here means to be controlled by something. So for example, or it illustrates to be controlled by something. For example, we read in Ephesians, do not be drunk with wine for that is debauchery, but be filled with the spirit. What is that issue here is what is it that's going to control you? Is it going to be that with the wine that's going to control you? Or is it going to be the spirit that controls you? And so we'll notice here what Paul is praying. He says, I'm praying for you, church at Colossae, asking that you may be filled or controlled by the knowledge of his will. That's what Paul is praying.

That the knowledge of his will would determine the decisions of one's life. One would be controlled by the knowledge of his will. Every day we are making decisions.

We have circumstances that come into our life. We have heartache that comes into our life. We have disappointments that come into our life. Is it the knowledge of God's will that controls how you think or consider or behave with regard to those circumstances? And that is what Paul is praying.

The knowledge of God. But notice that this knowledge of God's word is explained by two other circumstances here. It says in verse 9 that you may be filled with the knowledge of the will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. The word spiritual is in the emphatic position and so it means with all spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Spiritual wisdom and understanding come from the spirit and they stand in contrast to the world's teachers. Wisdom in the Old Testament concept is the idea of wisdom is a word that is that can relate to skill.

[8 : 11] So the book of Proverbs, this book of wisdom is what are all these Proverbs sharing with us of how to live a skillful life. How to live skillfully. For example a skilled furniture maker can take a log let's say black walnut that's beautiful wood by the way and you want to make a tabletop or a table of black walnut well a skilled carpenter or furniture maker can take a black walnut tree and make it into this beautiful table that's skilled in that way.

Well to liken it to a wise person is able to take the rough elements of life like just a raw tree and shape them according to God's plan into something beautiful into something useful.

Romans says it this way so let's take suffering as an example and these verses may be on the screen Romans 5, 3 through 5 says this not only that but we rejoice in our suffering knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

What is Paul saying here? This element of suffering that has entered this person's life Paul is saying but how do you how can a skillful wise person with understanding take this suffering that does not look like it can be redeemable it does not look like it is profitable in fact only in our world and fleshly understanding is it looks like this thing can only be harmful but Paul says rejoice in your suffering.

Why? How does he take this rough log of suffering and turn it into something beautiful? Well suffering produces endurance endurance character and character hope and this hope does not put to shame and so this is what Paul is saying in the Old Testament there's a prophet that I enjoy reading from time to time and that is the prophet of Jeremiah he's a prophet in Judah he is known as the weeping prophet he was called to be a prophet at a young age likely late teens early 20s and his family didn't like him in fact he had family members turned against him in fact they plotted against even to kill him good family the the king he was whipped he was put in stocks he was attacked by a mob he was threatened by the king he was ridiculed constantly under King Zedekiah the princes of

[11:11] Judah at the time wanted Jeremiah to be arrested he was beaten he was accused of treason thrown in jail he was thrown into a deep cistern left to die but by a miracle he was saved from that when Jerusalem was sieged under Babylon Jeremiah was there and then he was one who was taken off into Babylon and he lived in exile and Jeremiah just kept preaching to Judah repent and all of these circumstances were occurring to him and to top it all off the Lord told Jeremiah do not take a wife and do not bear sons and daughters so he had to do it all alone nobody liked him and he had to do it alone what an assignment to be a prophet like Jeremiah telling the people of Judah repent repent and so how would Jeremiah take this circumstance and redeem it with all spiritual wisdom and understanding he later goes on to write

Lamentations and aren't we grateful that he wrote and look how he took this life of suffering nobody really cared for him and look what he wrote Lamentations 3 22-24 read this the words of Jeremiah the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases his mercies never come to an end they are new every morning great is your faithfulness the Lord is my portion says my soul therefore I hope in him Jeremiah crafts this suffering and with wisdom and spiritual understanding says I can make something beautiful out of this and oh the Lord has been so good to me so I have a concern I have for concern for many in the church today who what I call have sentimental faith a faith that feels good a faith that comforts you a faith that has a bit of nostalgia in it a faith that is that makes honestly a good church person because they're faithful in attending church they all they know all the familiar songs and they like them because they remind them of the days gone by and where they serve in the church because that is just habit and that's what you do and the problem with the sentimental faith that leaves you bankrupt when life trials come it's a faith that is not rooted in the person of Christ but maybe on tradition and when you need spiritual wisdom and you need spiritual understanding to navigate difficult waters you are left wanting and if worse disillusioned and so Paul is praying for the church at Colossae listen church

I ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and all spiritual understanding and that's how Paul opens his prayer for the church next growing what does spiritual growth look like growing in the knowledge of how God wants us to live secondly living worthy of the Lord and seeking to please him in all things let's look at verse 10 and so walk in a manner worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to him so the rest of the message now I'm going to look at four ways that Paul prays for what is walking in the a manner worthy of the Lord look like and what is it to be fully pleasing to him and what ways did Paul pray this well let's look firstly at this walking worthy of the Lord is when we bear the fruit of good work walking worthy of the Lord when we bear the fruit of good work look with me in verse 10 so walk worthy in a manner worthy Lord fully pleasing to him bearing fruit in every good work how do we find how would I define the fruit bearing fruit in every good work

I think of three C words just for alliteration sake the first one is character the character is the strength of one's moral fiber the excellence of gold is in its purity the excellence of art is in its beauty the excellence of a man is his character so a man or a woman's character is noted by his honesty his ethics his charity because when we think about a person who tends to behave dishonestly unethically and uncharitably we think no that is not a person of character so does your life give evidence of one who is filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding because you're a person of character and that is part of the bearing of good fruit but that character has an outworking and so it comes to the second letter C word of conduct character conduct that is one's character and one's moral fiber has a way of working out in one's behavior where one is charitable one is generous one is honest and so that character has an outworking into conduct and the conduct is careful what one's eyes looks upon what ears listen to what words come out of their mouth what actions that affect relationships

Marie Owen is probably genuinely she's a 91 year old woman who often sits here she has a walker that often sits in the in the aisle here she suffered a stroke about a week week and a half ago and she is not well in fact she may not even survive today she may go home to be with the Lord today what as I've been Pastor Jay has seen her and others are attending to her and Jack and Carolyn White Jack is here Carolyn is not because Jack's wife Carolyn is caring and being with and ministering to Marie in her last hours what blessed me when I think about character having a working out into conduct is I was visiting with Jack and Carolyn and asking about Marie and they said well we've instructed the doctor to have hospice set up in our home because we would love we would consider a privilege to care for Marie in her last hours if she survives the hospital

[18 : 20] Marie is not biologically related to Jack or Carolyn she's just a member of the body of Christ character has a way of working out in our conduct where it's evident and Paul is praying walk worthy of the Lord and bear fruit in good work this is just one example that just became evident to me this week as I was visiting the third C of what does good work look like character conduct the third C is converts we all are to do the work of the evangelist disciple making is why we exist as people of God to make disciples that's our assignment sharing Christ with non-believers an aspect of bearing good work bearing fruit in every good work is seeing converts those who do not know the Lord place their faith in Christ and know the Lord Pastor Jay and I are considering this fall teaching a class of Christianity Explored and it is a class where we are going to host here at the church and one's entry fee to attending that class is you have to bring someone who does not know the Lord so I have someone that I'm going to be extending an invitation to and it's a video series video curriculum we're going to have a dinner and a conversation around and if you're interested and say I am burdened for someone who does not know the Lord in my life and perhaps that may be an environment where we can invite them to come watch a meaningful series to hear the gospel share a meal around others that don't know the Lord and you are to come with that person I welcome that we want to see more people come to faith in Christ and be baptized second when we walk worthy of the Lord we are pleasing to him when we bear fruit in every good work secondly when we increase in the knowledge of God look with me on the latter part of verse 10 so walk in a manner worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to him bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God the Psalm 119 says this verse 97 the psalmist writes and he says oh how I love thy law oh how I love your law it is my meditation all the day it is my meditation all the day I recently a few weeks ago I preached a sermon on Philippians chapter 4 verse 8 finally brothers whatever is true whatever is honorable whatever is just whatever is pure whatever is lovely whatever is commendable if there is anything excellent if there is anything worthy of praise think about these things so I've been memorizing that verse and the last line if there is anything worthy of praise think on these things so I've been trying to discipline my mind when I have unfortunate circumstances happen to say okay Scott how can you take this raw log of what just happened and turn it into something beautiful how can I think on something that is worthy of praise when circumstantially that is not where my mind is let me illustrate a few weeks ago I was walking just down the street to go out of my office just to get some sunshine on my balding head and so I figured it would feel good and I went to a convenience store to get myself a little caffeine and on my way over there I heard a truck roaring with the engine revving and it was diesel black smoke was coming out of the muffler and there was two teenagers were in the rig and I remember those days so that's not anything big but they were swerving toward the sidewalk that I was walking on and then one person threw a cup of liquid out their window and I moved and it splashed on the ground beside me and I just thought in my mind I was not thinking oh how wonderful these people are and that's not where my mind went but I recognized here is your opportunity Scott here it is whatever is worthy of praise think on these things so in my mind I caught myself of what I was doing and I thought I remember I got saved when I was 19 years old I remember being a young man who did ill toward others and laughing and wanting the approval of my friends I am no if it were not for the Lord there go I and I could easily be those guys if not much worse and I began to think Lord thank you for my salvation thank you Lord I don't know where I would be and so that dumb circumstance turned in an opportunity to praise the Lord for my own salvation and then I began to pray for their salvation saying Lord I don't want their end to be politely where they are headed I don't know their state of salvation but

[24 : 22] I know the end of where their actions will take them and I want them to be spared from that especially that they may know you thank you Lord oh how I love your law it is my meditation all the day that we would increase in the knowledge of the Lord and have a deeper regard and love for his word that is what Paul is praying for the church at Colossae and I long for it for us Paul thirdly says walk in the way of the word of the Lord pleasing to him what does it look like thirdly is that when we are strengthened by his power to be steadfast and patient look with me in verse 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy being strengthened this is a beautiful verb it's a present participle that meaning that it significant it signifies continuous action so this you're you're and it's let me say it this way God's strength is not like a booster rocket that launches you and gives you all this kind of strength and then just lets you go the booster rocket has expended its fuel and now it's kind of just up to you to coast through life

and you can expect no more strengthening from the Lord that's not the word strengthening it's a continual action he's constantly strengthening you being strengthened with all power and you say oh Scott

I'm getting tired I'm getting tired I'm getting tired I'm getting weary what would I say to you oh you are continually being strengthened and you let us understand the source of his power notice in the verse being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might you are being strengthened Paul is praying to the church at Colossae and it's my prayer for us let us be strengthened with the with all power according to his glorious might does God tire in giving strength does he grow weary you and I do not understand the limitless power of God himself and that limitless power of God himself is what he gives continually to for us to be strengthened with all power and it's the latter part of the verse that bothers me

I hope you're bothered sometimes by scripture and so I'm just letting you know where my my tension came this week strengthened with all power and his glorious mount for all endurance and patience with joy here's how I want to here's how I would want to read this verse but scripture does not allow me to do this but here's how in my flesh I want to read this well if I'm then strengthened by his continual power and it's a limitless power well then then when I pray I want my prayers to be answered instantaneously I want to see people miraculously here healed by through prayer I want to see marriages restored instantly I want to see children's abuses and trafficking come to an end immediately I want to see dead raised and demons flee I want to see all of that but notice what this strength continual strengthening with all power according to his glorious limitless might is for all endurance and patience with joy his power is to be steadfast and patient steadfastness is often associated towards circumstances what circumstances in life do you need to be assured of and strengthened by his power and of his glorious might and patience is often associated with people to be steadfast to endure trials to have patience to bear with difficult people to long suffer with people and that is what

Paul is praying that the that the church at Colossae that we would be a people that would be strengthened perpetually with all power according to his glorious might fourth and lastly when we walk worthy of the Lord I'm going to review just so we have them in order number one that we would bear fruit in every good work number two when we increase in the knowledge of God when we're three when we are strengthened by all power to be steadfast and patient this is what maturity looks like and then we also walk worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to him fourthly when we joyous joyously give thanks to him for his great salvation look with me in verses 12 through 14 to the end giving thanks to the father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his saints in the light he has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins you know oftentimes we say the gospel is for those people who do not know the Lord but notice Paul is praying that the church at Colossae would be reminded of the gospel the gospel is for us as well to remind ourselves what God has done on our behalf and you say well Scott what has God done on our behalf we have to remember our desperate condition in which we were found remember it says remember where we came from we were in the dominion of darkness ever since the garden of even Eden when Adam and Eve have sinned they began Adam and Eve began what I call operation fig leaf where we try to hide from our sin we hide from our shame we hide our guilt we hide from God we do this through blaming others it's the wife you gave me and we do this by blaming God you gave me this wife humanity is full of all kinds of ways that we suppress guilt we ignore our guilt and yet there is still something gnawing at our soul that says the Lord exists and you don't know him and operation fig leaf is still very active today God sees right through it he knows our state he knows that we are separated from him and God knows that we are hopeless and what is called here the dominion of darkness and you say well what is that dominion of darkness well we're aided by what the [31 : 52] Lord said when he spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus when he's shown that bright light and then we pick up the text here in Acts 26 verse 15 and we hear what the Paul says to the Lord he says this who are you Lord and the Lord answered him and said I am Jesus in whom you are persecuting but rise and stand upon your feet for I have appeared to you for this purpose to appoint you as a servant and a witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you deliver you from your people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you to open their eyes and now listen so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God what is the dominion of darkness is where the dominion of Satan is under

the power of Satan there is no middle ground there is neither there is either sorry there is either the kingdom of Jesus under his lordship or people under the Satan's dominion under his authority the dominion of darkness there are only two options in our modern day we have information now that we understand how terrorists operate terrorists operate they by force take people they blindfold them they put them in a room all by themselves they strip relationships away from them so that the only communication they have with people or the outside world is with their captors and their captors somehow become also while they are also the source of much harm and pain to those being who are taken they the captors are also this source of life to them because they are the ones that bring food they are the one that bring them any information from the outside world and so you as a cat one who has been taken captive you you can begin to have some affinity for the captor and what is interesting is now there's a psychological condition called

Stockholm syndrome where the terrorist victims begin to even sympathize with those who and defend their captors because of these circumstances okay isn't that though where those in the dominion of darkness are they're lost they're blinded they're enslaved to sin free to only do what Satan wants them to do they can't follow God because they are chained by their sins those sins have alienated them often from themselves or family or friends and relationships and those relationships are strained or maybe even severed sometimes they're even miserable unable to live as God has created them to live and yet when you talk to them about Christ and the freedom that they he offers they often defend their evil captor of the misery that he has even brought them and a hostage state situation has shown us that it is no easy matter to rescue people who has been who are being held by terrorists some rescue operations succeed and we rejoice but all too often they fail and the hostages are killed spiritual salvation is not a human operation we cannot rescue lost they cannot rescue themselves only God can do this and in order to be forgiven by God we must see our desperate condition and we also may must lay hold of God's only solution it says in verse 13 he has delivered us he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and he has transferred us he has done this he has transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption salvation the forgiveness of sins the only way for one person who is in the kingdom of darkness of darkness to to get out of that state is trust the Lord who is the only one that can deliver that person from the kingdom of darkness and to the kingdom of his beloved son where there is salvation and the salvation is because there is now forgiveness of sin by believing in the person of Jesus Christ being fully God and fully man and his work that is his sinless life his death for sin and resurrection from the grave and anyone who places their faith in Christ, trusting him and his person, Jesus, and this person in his work can be saved and transferred from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved son.

And Paul is praying for the church at Colossae. This is the last thing I want to pray for you for now, but that you would know this and be so grateful. And that is a part of what spiritual maturity looks like, is being reminded just where we came from. Would you pray with me?

Lord, we want to be a people who walk worthy, fully pleasing to you. We thank you for your word this morning. Lord, I pray that we would be a people who desire to please you.

And we would bear fruit in keeping with good work. We would be a people who would increase in our knowledge of God. Not that we would be a puffed up people with just knowledge, but that knowledge would motivate us to live for you. And we would be a people who would be strengthened with your power to be a steadfast and patient people. May we bear long with others, trusting you for their salvation, trusting you to redeem a situation. And would we be pleasing to you by giving you thanks for your so great a salvation. We love you and we thank you for this morning.

[38 : 23] Amen.