

Praying for One Another- Part 2

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[0 : 00] Colossians chapter 1, and we'll be reading verses 1 through 14.!

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of this you have heard before in the word of the truth.

The gospel, which has come to you, as indeed the whole world, it is bearing fruit and increasing, as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, he is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

[1 : 32] And so, from the day we heard it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to 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, 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 the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Thank you very much, Faye, for reading for us. I'm sure that many of you, like me, have had people say to us in conversation, keep me in your prayers.

And oftentimes when they do that, they don't tell us how to keep them in our prayers. Perhaps even in conversation they have mentioned a trial they're walking through, some difficult circumstance, maybe a decision they need to make about their career or their business.

But they still don't tell us how we can actually be praying for them. And sometimes we engage brothers and sisters, and they don't share a particular burden or concern with us, but we get the sense there's something weighing on their hearts.

[3 : 35] We get a sense that we need to be praying for them. I think the question is, how can we pray for such people, those who don't tell us how to pray for them, and those who we sense carry a burden, but we aren't sure how to pray for them?

How can we pray for them? Well, this morning as we continue our sermon series titled Praying for One Another, we come to a passage in which we find the answer to this question.

We come to a passage that serves us very well in terms of how we should be praying for those who don't tell us how to pray for them, or those who we're just not sure how we should be praying for them because we don't have specifics on how we might do so.

The Apostle Paul, in this prayer that we're considering this morning, models for us how we can be praying for one another in an ongoing way. And I want us to consider it in our remaining time.

So let's take a moment to pray and ask the Lord to help us. And Father, we are grateful that we can gather this morning. And Lord, as we desire to grow in how we can be praying for one another in an ongoing way, I pray that you would draw near to us.

[5 : 19] I pray that you would speak to our hearts as we open your word. Lord, you have commanded us to pray for one another.

We pray now that in the preaching of your word, you would instruct us how to do that. Lord, we ask for grace in the proclamation and in the hearing of your word.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, our attention this morning will be confined to verses 9 to 14, but we read from verse 1 to provide the context for the sermon.

And the context that we find in verses 1 to 8 is that the Apostle Paul has great concern for the Colossian church, but what we see in these opening verses is this is not a church that Paul established.

This is not a church that Paul had a fatherly and a personal relationship with, and yet what we see is Paul has great concern for this church.

[6 : 33] In verses 3 and 4, Paul tells them that since today he and Timothy heard of their faith in Jesus Christ and their love for the saints, they have been praying for them.

In verse 7, Paul credits his fellow servant, Epaphras, as the one who was instrumental in bringing the gospel to the Colossians and enabling them to come to saving faith in Christ.

and yet two times in verses 4 and 9, Paul tells the Colossians that since the day he heard of their faith, he did not cease to pray for them.

I think this is pretty remarkable when we consider the Apostle Paul and all the burdens that rested on his shoulders for the churches that he was concerned about.

He took an interest in this church that he did not establish. but his fellow worker, Epaphras, did, and Paul prayed for them in an ongoing way.

[7 : 42] And Paul writes to them, he tells them not only that he has been praying for them in this ongoing way, but he tells them how he was consistently praying for them. And we see in verses 9 to 12 how Paul prayed for them.

But as we look at these verses, verses 9 to 12 closely, what we see is that the petition that Paul makes is a single verse.

It's verse 9. Let's look at it again. He writes, So Paul's prayer for the Colossians is that God would fill them with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

In short, in verse 9, the apostle Paul is praying that the Colossians would know God's will. That's what he's essentially praying in verse 9.

And in verses 10 to 12, we see what can rightly be described as the purpose for Paul's prayer. It starts in verse 10.

[9 : 09] Look again to what he says. So as to, or so that, you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him.

So Paul says, since the day we heard of your faith in Jesus Christ, we have not ceased to pray for you that you would know God's will so that you'd walk in a manner that's worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him.

Now notice in verse 10 that there's a colon after the first part, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him. It ends with a colon, and that tells us, it signals to us that after the colon, Paul is going to explain what he's written before the colon.

And what he does is he lays out what a life that is pleasing to the Lord looks like.

If I were to summarize verses 10 to 12, I think a faithful summary is that Paul is praying, the purpose of his prayer is that the Colossians would do God's will.

[10 : 31] So first he prays that they would know God's will, and then he is stating the purpose of his prayer, that they would do God's will. And so following this structure that we see in this prayer of the Apostle Paul, I want us to consider two general ways that we could be praying for one another in an ongoing way, even when we don't know specifics.

Perhaps the Lord just brings someone to mind and we can pray for them. That happens. I was saying to Alexei in coming this morning as I was getting dressed, the Lord brought my mother to mind.

And sometimes the Lord does that, brings people to mind, not just people who have gone on to be with the Lord, but those who are still with us. And I think from the Apostle Paul's prayer, we can see these two general ways that we can be praying for one another in an ongoing way when we don't have specifics.

So first, let's pray for one another that we would know God's will. Again, this is Paul's petition in verse 9.

Paul prayed to God for the Colossians, asking God to fill them with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

[11 : 57] It's easy to miss it, but we should not miss the extent of Paul's prayer. Paul is like pressing to the limits of what he's asking for the Colossian believers.

He says, God, I want you to fill them with the knowledge of your will. In all spiritual wisdom and understanding. immediately, we should see from what Paul is praying that this doesn't happen automatically.

If this happens automatically, Paul doesn't need to pray. What Paul is praying for does not happen as the sun rises and sets.

Paul is praying for something asking God to grant something that would not come without petition, without specific prayer.

He is praying that they be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

[13 : 10] Paul wants them to know God's will, but he wants them to be accompanied with spiritual wisdom and understanding. Now, when you think of God's will that Paul is praying for here, what comes to mind?

What is this will that Paul is praying that God would fill the Colossians with? God's will is his decretive will or his will of decree.

And it includes all that God has ordained to come to pass and everything that God has ordained to come to pass will come to pass without exception to the smallest detail.

That's God's will of decree, his hidden will. Some examples of God's hidden will or his will of decree that we find in Scripture, for example, in Isaiah 14, 24, the Lord of hosts has sworn, as I have planned, so shall it be, as I have purposed, so shall it stand.

And then in Proverbs 21, 30, these are just selective. There are many others I could have selected. No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord.

[15 : 02] Ephesians 1, 4 through 5, that reminds us of God's gracious electing purposes is part of his decretive will or his hidden will.

even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will.

The common feature of God's hidden or decretive will is that it comes to pass without exception. but God's revealed will is different.

God's revealed will also called his perceptive will or his will of precept tells us what is pleasing to God. It's God's will revealed to us to show us how we ought to live.

It is his moral law that lays down for us how we should live and how when we live in this way we are pleasing to the Lord. So for example, the whole Ten Commandments that is God's revealed will for us.

[16 : 25] Other examples, Micah 6, 8 He has told you, O man, what is good and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

Galatians 5, 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

One scripture that brings into focus very clearly both God's hidden will and his revealed will side by side is Deuteronomy 29, 29.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God but the things that are revealed belong to us and our children forever that we may do all the words of his law.

So the secret things are God's hidden will and the revealed things are his revealed will. It's not our duty to try to pry into God's secret will.

[17 : 42] It is our duty to seek to do his revealed will. Now I think it should be clear to us when we consider verse 9 which of these wills the Apostle Paul is praying that the Colossians would be filled with with spiritual wisdom wisdom and understanding.

Clearly it is his revealed will. It is his perceptive will. It is his will that tells us how we are to live and how when we live in this way we are pleasing in his sight.

Now perhaps you might be thinking well we know his revealed will because it's in the Bible. so that's not something we need to pray about because it is already revealed there for us to know.

But again Paul is praying for something more. Paul is praying for something more than just an awareness. He's praying for something more than that is academic and just head knowledge.

Praying for something much deeper. Let me try to illustrate. I think it's fair to say that all of us know that God's word tells us that we should not seek revenge against those who wrong us.

[19 : 17] I think we all know that. You may remember we were memorizing this as one of our scriptures scriptures. Think last year in Romans 12 19 to 21.

Beloved do not avenge yourselves but leave it to the wrath of God. As it is written vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy is hungry feed them if he's thirsty give him something to drink and in so doing you'll heap coals of fire on his head.

Do not be overcome with evil but overcome evil with good. We memorize that. We know that. I'm not going to ask for a show of hands but I'll ask you in the quietness of your own heart have you fully obeyed that command?

You know it. We know it. Have we fully obeyed that? You know sometimes I think the way we would approach a command like that is we would not do anything actively against the person but the command calls us to do more than that.

It calls us to proactively do good to them. If they're hungry feed them if they're thirsty give them something to drink. Paul is praying that we become so filled with the knowledge of God's will and that it is accompanied by spiritual wisdom and understanding that we obey God's will because it's more than just information in our head.

[21 : 07] It's more than just something that's academic. Paul is praying that God would do for us what only he could do and that is to open our eyes to see the extent of his will and to have the wisdom to be able to embrace it and to understand it for our lives.

Enabling us to obey it. Paul is praying for something on that level. And I trust that you see that this morning. He's not just praying that we have information in our head, that we know our Bibles, we know what we're supposed to do.

No, Paul is praying that we would be able to do that and it's a God enabling effect in our lives and on our actions.

The spiritual wisdom and understanding that Paul is praying that the Colossians would have, this is not just ordinary human wisdom.

This is to have divine insight and divine understanding and it is when we have that that we are able to do what God has called us to do in a way that pleases the Lord.

[22 : 20] We can't do this with our own strength. We can't do this with our own wisdom. Listen to how the Apostle James talks about ordinary wisdom versus God's wisdom in James 3, 13-15.

He writes, who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in meekness of wisdom.

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly and unspiritual and demonic.

I think we've all, those of us who know Christ, we've served the Lord long enough to identify those times when we were not walking in divine wisdom.

Our view was hazy. We weren't seeing clearly as we should. We didn't see the situation for what it truly was, and we acted in a way that wasn't pleasing to the Lord. It is only when we have divine wisdom and divine understanding, and God is filling our hearts and our understanding with His will, that we even see it as attractive as something that we ought to do.

[23 : 46] Paul prays for the Colossians that this would be their reality, and likewise, brothers and sisters, we need to be praying for one another that it would also be our reality.

We need to be praying for one another that we would be filled with the knowledge of His will that He has revealed, and that we would have spiritual wisdom and understanding that enables us to see this is right, and this is good, and this is what I will do, though it's contrary to the ways of the world, and even sometimes contrary to our own flesh.

will. This is prayer that we can and should pray for others when we don't know specifically how we should pray for them.

Let's pray that they be filled with the knowledge of God's will, that they would have spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that they would be able to please the Lord.

it's a prayer that we all need. As we obey the command to pray for one another, we can be praying that.

[25 : 18] How wonderful that would be if, as a congregation, we're just regularly praying for another, Lord, fill my sister with the knowledge of your will. give spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Fill my brother with the knowledge of your will, with spiritual wisdom and understanding. Well, that's the petition of Paul's prayer.

What is the aim or the purpose of praying that we do God's will? Well, clearly, it would be that we know God's will.

Clearly, it would be that we do God's will. Which brings you to my second and final point. That we do God's will.

will. God's will is the same as living in a manner that's worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing to him, which is what Paul refers to in verse 10.

[26 : 33] And I think this raises the question if we take these words seriously. how can we live in a manner that is worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing man?

How can we do that? How can people like you and me who battle indwelling sin every day, who live in a fallen world, how can we live lives that are worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing to him?

The question is can we do that? Can we sinful, broken people in a fallen world, can we do this? But the Apostle Paul states as the purpose of his prayer for the Colossians that they be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that they are able to live a life that's worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing to him?

Fully pleasing to him. Worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him. The answer is yes. The answer is yes, we can live in this way.

And the reason we can know this is because the Apostle Paul was not praying, for an impossibility. He wasn't just putting something that is way up on the top shelf that we can never reach.

[28 : 15] He's not praying for an impossibility. And the second reason we know that this is possible is that the Apostle Paul is praying that we live lives that are fully perfect in God's sight.

He's not praying that because if he's praying that, that would be an impossibility because none of us can actually fulfill that. what the Apostle Paul is praying is that we would walk in a manner that's worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him.

I think the simplest way for us to understand this is to accept that the Holy God of the universe, the one who sent his Son into the world to redeem sinners, whereby he might adopt them as sons and daughters, has chosen to be pleased with their less than perfect efforts.

He has chosen to be pleased with his less than perfect children as they sincerely and faithfully seek to live their lives in a way that's pleasing to him.

This is the God of the universe, the perfect holy one, has chosen to do. I think parents are well positioned to understand this.

[30 : 02] As parents, I think we have the ability in our children, even when they are not meeting the full extent of our expectations, there's a way that we can be pleased with them still.

There's a way that we can just have pleasure in them, even though they're not meeting the full standard of what we may expect of them. One of the ways we see it is sometimes a child might draw something for their parents, a stick man or a stick woman or something that is so far from reality, and the parent takes pleasure in that.

They're so far from perfection. That's what the Lord does with us. And see, this is grace, brothers and sisters.

This is grace to be able to see the shortcoming, to see the shortfall, but still be pleased because there's sincere effort.

There's a true desire to seek to please the Lord, even when we fall short. I recall when I was in primary school, we used to get two grades.

[31 : 29] In addition to a performance grade, we used to get an effort grade. And it was not unusual to get a C for performance, but the teacher would say, you get an A for effort.

And thank God for those A's for effort. They assessed the amount of work that you put into it. They assessed the attitude that you had towards it.

And I think the issue here, brothers and sisters, in terms of what Paul is calling for, what he's praying for, this way of living, is sincerity and not hypocrisy. It is faithfulness and not unfaithfulness.

It is this desire day by day to please the Lord. We aim to please the Lord even when we fall short. brothers and sisters, we should be encouraged by this, that we can live lives that are fully pleasing to the Lord by his own choice, by his own design, even though our lives are not perfect.

That the honest assessment of our lives would still generally be that we are living a life that's worthy of the Lord. Perfect? No. but worthy of the Lord nonetheless.

[33 : 04] And again, this is because of the grace of God. It's one thing to make a declaration about someone that is not based on all the information, and so we may come to a conclusion that maybe we wouldn't come to if we had all the information.

God has all the information. Nothing is hidden from his sight. And yet still he tells us that we who are imperfect can live a life that is fully pleasing to him.

And that's what the apostle Paul prays for. May we be a congregation of people who, though not perfect, it is true of us that we are living in a manner that is worthy of the Lord fully pleasing in his sight.

That is our aim. That is what we strive for. And may it be true of us that we get A for effort. The apostle Paul is praying for this.

And we should likewise pray the same for one another. In verses 10 to 12, Paul lists four characteristics of what a life worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing to him looks like.

[34 : 36] These are some common traits that should mark all of God's people's lives. Now, what Paul lists here is not exhaustive, it's not the complete list of things that he could say that should mark the lives of believers.

But these are four that he highlights as he writes to the Colossians and wants to consider them as I conclude. First, bearing fruit in every good work.

That's the first characteristic. We bear fruit in every good work. Now, in context, the fruit that Paul is referring to is gospel fruit. He refers to this fruit earlier in verse 6 when he highlighted how the Colossians had come to the truth and how the gospel was bearing fruit among them.

This is gospel fruit. And it reminds us of the far-reaching effect of the gospel in our lives, the far-reaching effect that the gospel should have in our lives.

Any endeavor that we engage in, any good endeavor that we engage in, rather it is going to work or being a husband, being a wife, whatever the work is, whatever the endeavor is, that there's gospel fruit attached to it.

[36 : 06] There is the result of and the effect of the gospel on that endeavor. And this is the way it should be, brothers and sisters. whatever we were before Christ, after we become in Christ, there should be evidence of that.

And the gospel produces that. The gospel is the reason for that. Paul says first, this life that is fully pleasing to the Lord, God, this life that is being lived in a manner that's worthy of him, it's marked by gospel fruit.

And the heart of the gospel is the grace of God, and it speaks to a gracious life, it speaks to a life where evidences of the grace of God are open and observable.

Our lives and our endeavors should be marked by the grace of God. Second, he says it should be marked by growing in the knowledge of God.

This is in verse 10. living a life that is worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing to him is marked by growth in the knowledge of God.

[37 : 37] And this is more than just acquiring biblical data. It certainly includes that, it includes growing in our knowledge of God's word.

But fundamentally what Paul is addressing here is growing in our personal knowledge of the Lord, growing in our relationship with the Lord in a personal way.

It's knowing him more through his word, knowing him more through prayer, knowing him more through fellowship with other believers. The current memory verse that we are memorizing, and Proverbs 9, 10 speaks to this, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

and the knowledge of the Holy One is in sight. See, to fear the Lord is to know the Lord.

If we don't fear the Lord, we don't know the Lord. Evidence of knowing the Lord is that we will fear him, we will reverence him, we will seek to please him, because he's not our equal.

[38 : 56] The third characteristic that should mark our lives that the Apostle Paul lays out is in verse 11, that we would be strengthened in a life of endurance, patience, and joy.

And here Paul gets to one of the realities of the Christian life, that one of the realities of the Christian life, is that it is filled with trial and trouble and tribulation. And he says that this life that is fully pleasing to the Lord is a life that is strengthened by God's power, that we might endure life's trials, and we may persevere with patience and with joy.

And joy is not something that is circumstances, not happiness. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. Joy is a steady delight in God and His promises, and it enables us to delight in Him and His promises, even in the midst of difficult and changing circumstances.

The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 6, 10 talks about being both sorrowful and yet always rejoicing.

And then fourth, the final characteristic that Paul highlights of this life that is fully pleasing to the Lord, one that is walking in a manner that's worthy of the Lord, is a life that is marked by thanksgiving to the Father for our salvation.

[40 : 44] If we're living in a manner that's worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, we will be giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

as I reflect on my own life, as I reflected, as I prepared, and I came to this particular point, I had to confess that I don't think about my salvation enough.

I don't think about the wonder and the amazement of what God has done in saving me enough. because if I did, I believe I would be giving thanks to God more than I do for the great salvation that He has given to me.

That's what Paul is highlighting in this last characteristic in verse 12. giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

This speaks about the transformation of the gospel. This speaks about what God has done bringing us out of darkness, bringing us into His light. It speaks about the mercy and the grace of God.

[42 : 25] When we think of our former lives, darkness, objects of God's wrath, and He has brought us into light and made us objects of His mercy.

God's love. Imagine I'm not alone this morning in not thinking enough about the amazing grace of God that has come to us in salvation.

And Paul seems to be magnifying that in this letter. Paul is writing to the Colossians because this amazing thing that has happened to them, and He wants them to understand it.

He wants them to know it. He wants them to know how this is supposed to affect their whole life and all that they do. And so the prayer that Paul prays properly ends in verse 12.

Excuse me. It ends in verse 12, but it seems like Paul is magnifying this reason that he was giving to them.

[43 : 30] in verses 13 and 14, he's magnifying this reason for giving thanks, magnifying the reason for living a life that's worthy of the Lord.

Look again at what he says in verses 13 and 14. Notice now he's not, he's through praying, and he's now even including himself in these words.

He says, he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, forgiveness of sins.

Paul is essentially saying, you're not the same. You're not what you used to be. You're not who you used to be. Your life is different. You've come out of darkness. You're now into the kingdom of his dear son.

And your life should give evidence of that. and you should be thanking God for that. Brothers and sisters, there is no, there's no greater act of God than the act of him sending his son to this earth, to live a life that none of us could live, and then to become a substitute and die the death that we all deserve to die so that we may be forgiven, so that we may be reconciled to God.

[45 : 13] there's no greater act in all of God's acts than that. Recently, I read in one of the Table Talk devotionals that there are about 200 billion trillion stars that God has created them.

It's the vast of his universe. And brothers and sisters, the act of redemption is grander than that, is greater than that, that a holy God has made a way for rebels like you and me to be reconciled to him.

And Paul's point is that this changes everything. It changes the way that we live. And he says it should be our preoccupation and we should give God thanks for it. We should be thanking God for this amazing work of grace that he has given to us that we now are citizens of the kingdom of his dear son.

kingdom. An everlasting kingdom, a kingdom that cannot be shaken, a kingdom that will have no end. That's what he has done for us.

You know, as we sang this morning, all I have is Christ. The truth is Christ is all that we truly have. There's nothing else in this life that we have.

[47 : 03] We don't have our breath. there's nothing in this life that we have that is permanent. The only true lasting possession that we have is Christ.

And that is because God has promised that he will give us Christ eternally and he will hold on to us eternally. And when we think about this, we want to give him thanks.

And we also want to live lives that are worthy of the Lord. seeking to be pleasing in his sight. This is how we can and should be praying for one another when we don't know how to pray.

We can be praying this grand prayer. And here's what I know. If we pray in this way, we're going to capture those other things that they have in their hearts. We're going to capture whatever that burden is, whatever that desire is, because essentially we're saying, Lord, let you will be done in it.

And let them see your will. Let them embrace your will. May the Lord help us, not just to desire to pattern our prayer after Paul's prayer, but may you also give us the grace to pattern our lives after his petition and his purpose and his purpose in this prayer.

[48 : 36] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the amazing work of grace that you have displayed and given to us through Jesus Christ.

We thank you, Lord, that because of the work of Christ, we can be filled with the knowledge of your will, with all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that we may live lives that are worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing in every way.

would you help us, O Lord, to be faithful, to pray for one another? Would you help us, O Lord, to desire to live out the words of these prayers?

Would you do this, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Let's stand for closing.