

Walk Worthy of the Lord

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could turn back together to a reading in the first chapter of Colossians. Colossians chapter 1.

And we're going to look at in particular verse 9 to verse 12. Just read these verses again. Colossians chapter 1 at verse 9. And so from the day we heard, 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.

May you be 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.

Paul here speaks about living a life pleasing to God, being filled in this manner, a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him.

And it's that I want to focus on for a time this evening. It's been a time of firsts over these last few weeks for me and for you as a congregation, as it's a privilege to minister to you as a congregation on Sunday morning together, to start to see faces and to get to know people.

[1 : 38] And this evening is no less a privilege, our first time coming together in prayer in this way, we join together in prayer and worship. It's a delight always to worship God together.

And as we seek to serve him together as a people, our focus can often be guided towards thinking about those who are outside of the church at the moment, those who are strangers to God's grace.

It's a real burden we should have as a people when we know the great love of God towards us as a people, that we would have a longing and a desire that others would come and know that great love for themselves.

We always pray that the lost will be found, that they will come to be saved. But together as a people, that shouldn't be our only desire.

Of great importance too is that as a people, we seek to grow together in our own knowledge and understanding of the Lord, to come and understand more of his grace for ourselves, to understand more of his love towards us as a people.

[2 : 50] Because the more and the deeper our understanding, the more we are able to express that and to share it with others. So that is going to be our focus together as a people as well.

We have a great burden for the lost. We will have a great burden for one another to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God and his love towards us through his son, Christ Jesus.

And as we look at this passage this evening, as we look at Paul's letter to the Colossians, and indeed as you look at other parts of scripture where Paul writes to the church in different parts, whether it's in Ephesus or Philippi, Thessalonica, when you read through his letters, they've got a real sense of pastoring care towards his people, towards God's people.

They are rich and deep in theology in so many ways, but it's a theology that the people long to grasp and to know more of.

And so you see there's the two going hand in hand together to learn the depths of the riches that we have in Christ, but to do it in a way too, as we see with Paul, that shows a love and a pastoral care for the people, longing to take all along with them.

[4 : 10] And so it's good for us just to look at these letters and to learn of the riches, but also to learn the way in which we are to share of these riches together and with those around us.

And he begins this letter by giving thanks, giving thanks for what has already taken place among the people of Colossae, how they have already come to faith and come to know the love of God.

And the love that, as it says in verse four, that they have for all the saints as they have this hope laid up in heaven for them. He is giving thanks for everything that has happened in the past for them.

He's giving thanks for what they are. And even as we come together here tonight, we're so thankful. And as the men were praying, they're thankful for ministries that have gone on.

Thankful for everything that has happened here. Thankful for everyone here tonight and the work of the grace of God in your lives. For the faithfulness you have, for the desire that you have to show your love and worship towards the Lord.

[5 : 26] We're always thankful for what God has done. And as Paul is saying here, he begins with a sense of thanksgiving for what they are, what they have come to be through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But then he goes on to speak about and pray for them in another way. And now he's praying more for what they will become. Because the Christian life is never one while we are here on earth that has an end point, where we say, we've made it.

We've reached our goal. I've learned everything that I can possibly learn of the Lord and his love towards me. We will never come to that point.

We will never reach that point in this life, where we say, that's it. I know everything there is to know of God. And so Paul is praying here for the people in Colossae, just as we should be praying as well, for what we will become.

What has already been done for us in Christ, but also this desire to go on, to go on individually, to go on collectively, seeking to know more of this.

[6 : 45] And as he says here, it's knowing this in a way where we come to live a life in the manner worthy of the Lord, to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

And perhaps we always, well, we ask ourselves from time to time, am I living a life, a walking in a manner worthy of God?

Am I living a life pleasing to God? It's not just at a communion time that we're to ask these questions, to examine ourselves, but to do it on a regular basis, to examine our lives, to examine our hearts, and to ask ourselves, is my life showing that love of Christ?

Am I living in a manner worthy of the Lord fully? He says here, fully pleasing him. And as soon as we ask that question, immediately, I'm sure your response is no, because that's an automatic reaction.

When we think of a life worthy of the manner of the Lord, or fully pleasing him, we often know, I cannot. I cannot achieve that.

[8 : 01] And never am I living in that way. But he's not asking that question to make the people feel guilty. He's asking them that question to put a desire in their heart, to be a people who seek in all their strength, and in all God's strength, to live this kind of life.

There are so many people in this world who would say, they're living good lives. And the danger with asking that question, with the wrong focus, when the focus is on self, is that we begin to say, judge ourselves by our own standards.

There are things that we say we do, or there are things that we say that we don't do, and that that is what means that we are living a life pleasing to God. The things we do might be to say, I go to church.

I pray. I give generously to the church. I help people. I help in the work on the cause of Christ.

The things that we don't do, we could say, well, you know, I don't swear. I don't steal. I don't slander people.

[9 : 21] There are standards that we look at and we think, well, if we don't do this, or if we do do that, then I must be living a life pleasing to God. But the good as these things are, they are not in and of themselves what it is to live a life pleasing to God, because there is a danger in them.

And the danger is spelled out for us in scripture, where it becomes, or it actually can become a bit self-righteous. And we become like the Pharisee in Luke's gospel in chapter 18.

The Pharisee who was praying, and you will know about that time when the Pharisee stood up to pray. And he said this, he said, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

As he looked beside him, he said, I fast twice a week. And I give a 10th of all that I get. And they are all commendable things.

But what was the outcome of that time when the tax collector and the Pharisee both prayed? The tax collector prayed just a short prayer.

[10 : 39] Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. And who went away right from God? I mean, people would look at the tax collector and say, he's not worthy.

He's a wicked man. He steals. He does all of these things. This Pharisee is such a good man. He's done all of these good things, but God sees the heart. And who went away right with God?

It was the tax collector. Because he asked mercy of God. He was looking away from himself to God, instead of looking within himself and saying, I have done this, but I haven't done that.

And so we have to ask ourselves, as we're living a life pleasing, or seeking to live a life pleasing to God, are we depending on ourselves, or are we depending on God?

And so Paul outlines for us here, in order to live and walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, he gives us an insight as to what it looks like.

[11 : 46] And there are four things, briefly, we just want to look at here, that he says in these verses, that show what a life pleasing to God is like. And that's what we see, as we go on through verse 10, down to verse 12.

So as you look at verse 10, he says, to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, the first thing he comes to there is, bearing fruit in every good work.

Bearing fruit in every good work. The chapter begins by outlining how Paul is seeing the people full in what they have already become.

How they've become faithful in the Lord Jesus Christ. They know the grace and peace that comes from God.

And now he's asking that they continue to be filled in this way, in order that they will live lives transformed, transformed by this grace, an ongoing transformation taking place, that they will please God.

[12 : 58] And in highlighting these positives here, it's a reminder of how we often think of these things in a negative way, ourselves as well.

You just think of the words that Paul uses here, when he says about walking in a manner worthy and fully pleasing him, he is saying, you can please God.

We can often get bogged down in all that we do wrong. In every way, we fail God and have a sense of guilt about this.

And there are certain times where that is right, where that is good for us. We know we sin and fall short of the glory of God. But God never wants us to remain in that way, where our sins just weigh us down.

God sent his son into this world that our sins might be forgiven, that we might be restored, that we might walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing him.

[14 : 11] He's saying, when you come into this relationship, you can go on in this strength, not weighed down, but rejoicing in the forgiveness of your sins.

Paul, he does it in such a positive way, in a pastoral way. He brings his people, God's people on. He shows them their sin, but he doesn't leave them there.

He lifts them up to show them what they have in Christ and what the works of Christ has prepared in advance for them to do. And so he shows them that you can rejoice in God and seek to live a life pleasing to him.

And another thing is, we can often have a problem with the idea of pleasing God by bearing fruit, that it's more of the little that we've achieved for God.

And again, you ask yourself the question, how has my life borne fruit? Maybe you say to us, I've not brought anyone to the Lord.

[15 : 19] My witness has been poor. I have failed in so many ways. I've done nothing. But again, that's not what Paul is getting at here when he says, bearing fruit in every good work.

Paul is here speaking about a transformation that comes in the heart of the believer. As we go on in the strength of God, and we see this in verse six before we came to this section, he says that the gospel is bearing fruit and growing.

And it's doing this in the whole world. It is bearing fruit and growing. Now, it's not to say that God is using people to convert others all the time.

What he's saying in bearing fruit is that people are growing in their knowledge of God. People are going on in the strength of God. And since the day that the gospel came to Colossae, its ongoing work is transforming people.

It is bearing fruit. The Christians are not staying still. What they understood when they were first believed, they're not still at that same point.

[16 : 35] It's just like when you're going through school. You don't stay in primary one forever. You learn the basics and you're building on it. You go through to secondary, you go to college or university.

It's an ongoing learning experience. You leave university, you go into work, you're still learning. And that's the Christian life. We never stood still.

The work of transformation, the work of God's grace in our hearts is always ongoing. We should see a transformation.

We should be bearing fruit in this way. We should change and continue to change over time and mature as Christian brothers and sisters in Christ.

So are we bearing fruit? Is that our longing to bear fruit, to go on learning with a hunger and a thirst for the things of God?

[17 : 40] Paul later on in another chapter in Galatians, he speaks of the works of the flesh and how they are evident. He speaks about sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, all of these things.

If you remain in all of these things, you're not living a life pleasing to God. You're not bearing fruit. But he says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

is to long for these things in our lives, to bear fruit in that way of the love, joy, peace, patience, so on.

So we want to bear fruit, not in the sense of all the works that we have done or seek to do or to help save other people. That's not what he's talking about.

But every one of us can bear fruit in this hunger and thirst for righteousness and seeking to bear fruit as we grow and learn and develop together and mature as Christians, never reaching that point where we know it all, but always seeking day by day to go on with him.

[19 : 06] So there's bearing fruit, then he goes on to say increasing in the knowledge of God. And you see that they're very closely linked. But knowledge is often a key teaching in Paul's letters.

In Romans 1, he speaks about the rejection of knowledge as the root of evil. In Romans chapter 1, verse 28, he says, furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done.

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness. rejection of knowledge is not a life pleasing to God. And so a life pleasing to God is to grow in the knowledge of God, increasing in the knowledge of God.

And again, you see how it's just closely linked to bearing fruit. The two go hand in hand. The more we know of God, the more we will bear fruit.

If you're into gardening, if you like growing fruits of different kinds, you know, in order to bear fruit, you have to tend and water the plant.

[20 : 23] You can't just leave it to develop itself without tending to it. And the same is true for the Christian. In order to grow, in order to bear fruit, we have to increase in our knowledge of God.

We have to feed our souls. We have to water our hearts. We need the fruit of the Lord in our hearts too. In a similar way in Philippines, Paul writes very pastorally towards them as well, and he says, it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, the glory and praise of God.

Do you crave this knowledge? Is that what you hunger for day after day, to realize this knowledge and truly be filled to satisfaction with it?

A lovely story told of a little girl in Wales during the 18th century. It was a time of great revival in the valleys in Wales. This little girl called Mary Jones.

She came to faith at the age of eight. She lived with her family on a farm out in the valleys and in order to get near to anybody else, she had to walk very often a great distance.

[21 : 55] She loved to hear the word of God, but she didn't have a Bible and they didn't have a Bible in their own home. The nearest one was two miles away at another farmhouse and they would often as a family be found going there just to hear the word of God.

But even as an eight-year-old, she decided to start saving to buy her own Bible. And she started just collecting the little money that she could day after day, week after week, year after year.

She was 15 before she could finally afford to buy a Bible. and in order to get the Bible, she had to walk barefoot over the hills 25 miles to go and buy this Bible.

But her longing, her desire, was to have her own copy of the word of God and so she bought it. Now today, you can download an app on your phone for free.

In literally seconds, you can have a Bible on your phone, you can have all kinds of Bible study tools on your phone, your computer or whatever. We have a plethora of books we can choose from to feed our souls and to grow in knowledge.

[23 : 18] But what use that if we don't have the desire of Mary Jones, a hunger for the knowledge of God. So may he give us that hunger to increase in the knowledge of God, an appetite and a desire to crave the word of God, just like Mary Jones.

The third thing we see here is that we are being strengthened. May you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might.

God gives us the strength to go on. God gives us the strength to do it. God gives us the strength to do it. We sometimes have to be reminded of it.

We don't go on in our own strength. To live a life pleasing to God is a realization that we are dependent on him. But again, Paul is giving us a reminder here that if God asks us to do something, he will give us the grace to do it.

He will give us the strength to do it. God doesn't say I will leave you weak. I won't give you a hunger. He says if you will come to me, I will give you the strength.

[24 : 41] I will give you the grace. I will give you the power. May you be strengthened, he says, with all power according to his glorious might.

Not ours, but God's. That is the power that is complete. It's all power. And God has this power to give to you.

So that as we seek to bear fruit, as we seek to increase in the knowledge, God can strengthen and does strengthen us in this way with all power.

Again, just to go to another letter of Paul, a pastor letter to the Ephesians. In chapter one, he says in verse 18, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.

God gives power and grace to his people as they have need. So that unlike the Pharisee who prayed in his own strength, who felt he was strong, but was so weak, that's not the strength that he gives, it's the strength that he gave to the tax collector, the sinner, to go away justified and right before God.

[26 : 12] As we come weak before him, he gives us his perfect strength to go on. This is a young church, the church at Colossae, the God's people, young in the faith and facing many trials and temptations, but he is saying, Paul is saying through God, God through Paul saying to them, the Lord will give you strength.

You may know his power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience. he will give as you have need.

And so that is true for ourselves as we go forward to know his glorious strength and the hope that he gives to his people.

Living a life pleasing to God is being in Christ, as Paul wrote at the start of this letter in verse 2, to the saints and faithful brothers, in Christ at Colossae.

That is the kind of people we are to be rooted in Christ, in the vine, as John in his gospel describes, there bearing fruit through him.

[27 : 33] So we are to know and seek the power of his glorious might for all patience and endurance. Finally, and just very briefly here, the fourth thing he says is, with joy and giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

How often are we full of thanks to God? God, how easy it is for us to go and complain about things. It's easy.

It's second nature to us sometimes just to complain and to grumble about things in this life. But if that's all we do, we lose our joy.

We lose our joy and we lose it very quickly. God, how do we do? He's telling us that we're to go on, trusting as we're looking at on Sunday morning, trusting the Lord, delighting in the Lord, and all of these things.

It's a very similar reminder that we are giving thanks to the Father, that everything that we do, everything that we do, we recognize it's from God, and that we remember to come back and give thanks to God.

[28 : 56] It will affect us in how we bear fruit, it'll affect our growth and knowledge, it'll affect our strength in the Lord if we do everything with a grumbling spirit.

But if we seek to do everything, joyfully giving thanks to the Lord, I know so good and refreshing as we hear, praying together and just being reminded of all that we have together.

thanks for. Every blessing that we have from the hand of God who has blessed us so much, and above all, how we are blessed through his beloved Son, who has brought us from darkness into his glorious light.

Again, it just comes back to fixing our eyes on Jesus. making sure that we are doing everything in his will and by his strength.

God is a God who has richly blessed, and so may we joy and delight in him. There was a book I once read on the study of the gospel of Luke, and there was a quote in that book that said this, when we locate our joy in our holy and loving God, our joy can always be out of reach of anything that would seek to harm us.

[30 : 32] Locating our joy in our holy and loving God can take us to be out of reach of anything that would seek to harm us. love us. Now, that's not to say that there's nothing that ever goes wrong in our life, but we know that whatever comes our way, that we have our joy in the Lord who always sustains us.

As Paul said to the Philippians, rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Keep your joy in the Lord.

Let us rejoice together in our loving Saviour and seek to live a life pleasing to him as we endeavour to grow in our knowledge and our understanding of him.

That together we would grow and the more we grow, that we would share with one another and then share with those who have nothing of this knowledge and understanding of him.

The two again go hand in hand, a longing to know God and a longing for others to know God. So may God bless us and help us to that end.

[32 : 00] We're going to do your to to to you