

Prayer For The Saints

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[0:00] Well, would you please take your Bibles and open them up this morning again to the book of Colossians. Our passage this morning is chapter 1 verses 9 through 14.

If you don't have a Bible, that's okay. We provide them in the seat backs in front of you, but I would encourage you as always, please have a Bible open as we walk through this passage together. We're picking up in verse 9, and we left off last week with Paul telling the Colossian church how he prays for them, how he thanks God for them, and how he thanks God for the work of his grace at work in them.

He had heard about this from his friend Epaphras, who came to Paul while he was there in Rome and updated him on the church at Colossae. And so we pick up here halfway through Paul's train of thought in verse 9 this morning, and again, we'll read through verse 14.

And when you found that in your Bible, let's stand in honor of the reading of the Word of God this morning. Colossians 1 verses 9 through 14. Paul says, Let's pray once more.

Father, we ask once more, God, would you speak powerfully through the preaching of your Word. Let it fall on fertile soil this morning. And draw our hearts' attention to Christ.

[2:08] Would you give us wisdom and knowledge and insight, God, empowered by your Spirit, so that we might walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

You may be seated. How can I pray for you? As a pastor, that's a question that I find myself asking fairly often.

And oftentimes, the response that I will get to that question tends to be focused on circumstances of life. So maybe someone is dealing with a sickness. Maybe someone that they love is struggling in some way.

Maybe they're having some sort of difficulty at work or at home. It's about their life circumstances. And of course, I love to offer up prayers like that to the Lord. And the Lord loves to hear prayers like that and loves to answer prayers like that.

But it's a little bit surprising sometimes when we open up passages like this. And we see that the way the Apostle Paul tends to pray is very different from the way that you and I tend to pray.

[3:17] And it's not that needs like that don't matter. Of course they do. But to the Apostle Paul, it seems like they don't matter most. Paul's prayers for the saints here in Colossae and other places in Scripture are shaped by their greatest and most urgent need.

Namely, that they would know the breathtaking power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And then that they would go living in the power of the new life that Christ has purchased for them in the gospel. You remember how last week we started our series through the book of Colossians. And we saw that these believers in Colossae are wrestling against a dangerous and a false teaching there in Colossae.

This teaching told them that they did not have enough. The gospel is a great start. And Jesus is a great place to begin. But what you really need is more of our man-made rules and man-made regulations.

You need more of our secret, special knowledge. You need more of what we have to offer you. And then, maybe then, you will be spiritually full. Maybe then you will have the knowledge that you need of how to live a life that's honoring to God.

[4:30] But you remember from last week, Paul, right off the bat, told them, No, no, no, no, no. The gospel of Jesus Christ is enough. Jesus and his finished work on the cross is enough.

You don't need to add to it all of these man-made rules and regulations. This morning, as we look to our passage, what we see is that because the gospel is enough, we can pray specifically and boldly to the Lord on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Christ that they would realize for themselves all

the glorious power of God for them in the gospel.

So let's take a look at this gospel-shaped prayer this morning for the saints. And we're going to see it in three parts. This will be our outline this morning. If you're taking notes, I'll try to make it easy for you to follow along.

We'll see three parts this morning. First, the prayer. Second, the purpose. And third, the power. And as we do, I just want you to notice here, just briefly, I want to make this comment.

There is no copyright on this prayer. And it would be my desire for us as a church that we would lift this prayer straight off the page and pray this daily, if not weekly, for one another and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

[5:57] So let's see what Paul's praying here. First, we see the prayer. The prayer. And we see this in verse 9. Look there with me. He says, And so from the day we heard, meaning the day that we heard about you, the day that we heard about your faith in Christ from the Paphras, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with knowledge.

Now, Paul is here for just a moment. And remember, again, what's going on in Colossae. Because if you were a member of the church at Colossae and you heard those key words, right?

Filled. Knowledge. You would have some alarms lining up. Lighting up. Your ears would perk up at hearing this. Because Paul is hijacking the language that the false teachers are using.

These are their lines. This is the exact same angle that the false teachers are taking. Remember, they're promising. They're coming to the church at Colossae saying, If you really want to reach spiritual fullness, you need some of our special knowledge.

If you want to be spiritually filled, well, you need our man-made regulations. Paul knows exactly what he's doing here. And this is a strategic use of these key words here.

[7:19] And he says, Yes, I agree. Fullness matters. Knowledge matters. Knowledge matters. But the Christian's path to fullness is not through human regulation.

But rather, it is through divine revelation. Say that again. The Christian's path to fullness and knowledge is not through human regulation and man-made rules, but rather through divine revelation.

It is not through secret, special knowledge of the few and the elite. It is through personal, intimate knowledge of God as he has revealed himself in the gospel.

This is why Paul prays that you may be filled with knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. When this knowledge of the will of God is not the prized possession of a few elite Christians.

Rather, every single Christian can be filled with the knowledge of the will of God. Do you believe this? Every single Christian, meaning every single man and every single woman, every single boy, every single girl, who has heard the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and by his grace has understood the grace of God in truth, they can be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

[8:51] Do you realize, Christian, it is entirely possible for you to genuinely be filled with knowledge of his will? Why? Well, because he has given us his book, his word, his revealed will, and he has given every Christian his spirit to empower the reading and the studying and the preaching of the word of God so that we might understand the revealed will of God.

We have his word and we have his spirit, and Paul says, well, that's enough for you. Now, this is one of the major issues in the Protestant Reformation. If you've ever studied this era of church history in the 16th century, for centuries the medieval church restricted access to the average believer.

And they told them that only the priesthood, only the papacy, only the bishops, only the pope could rightly interpret the will of God.

And so in order for the average Christian in the pews to understand what God's will is, well, they have to go through the professional clergy. They get their directions from the top. They get their directions from them.

Entire worship services like this were held entirely in Latin, which, oh, by the way, nobody spoke or understood except for the clergy. They just had to go in faith that these elite special people with this elite special knowledge, that they were giving them the truth.

[10:17] But of course, we know the story. The reformers made the dangerous decision to actually take up and read the word of God for themselves. And then they made the dangerous decision to go and translate the word of God into the language of the common people and to write and publish

commentaries on the word of God that could be read and understood by average Joe in the pew. And guess what happened? The reformation took place and caught like wildfire. You didn't have to be a spiritual elite to grow in the knowledge and the will of God. You simply had to have the spirit of God and the word of God. So Paul, understanding this, prays for these believers that they would be filled with all knowledge of his will. They don't need the secret knowledge of these false teachers. They simply need the word of God and the spirit of God, which, by the way, they already have because the gospel has come to them. But then we should ask, well, what does that knowledge actually look like in practice? This is going to be our second point this morning. We should ask why? To what end does Paul pray these things?

[11:33] And we'll spend the bulk of our time here in this second point. Second, we see the purpose of Paul's prayer. Why does Paul pray that they would be filled with knowledge?

To what end? And what does he hope that this knowledge will produce in them? He tells us in verse 10, Don't you want to do that, church?

This is such a vital truth. I need to stop here and make this point. Do you understand that true knowledge of God, it accords with a godly life?

True knowledge of God will be lived out in your life Monday through Saturday. True understanding of who God is, it must necessarily result in a life lived for God's glory.

There is absolutely no place for a classroom only, intellectual only, academic only, so-called knowledge of God that has no impact whatsoever on a Christian's daily life.

[12:55] If you can study about God in a book and then shut the book and go out the door and live in blatant, unrepentant sin, you should know that is not biblical Christianity. And you may have knowledge about God, but you may not know God.

You can come to church, and you can sit through the sermon, and you can sing the songs, and then go home. And if there's no actual difference in your life compared to your non-believing neighbors, again, you may be doing religion, but you may not actually be walking with the Lord. The great theologian Herman Bivink, he says it like this. He says, Scripture knows nothing of a knowledge that is merely academic. To know God is to love Him, to fear Him, and to trust Him. And to be filled with the knowledge of His will means that our entire existence is captured by His truth. Friend, is this true of you? Here Paul says, to be filled with the knowledge of God and all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

That sort of fullness will show itself up in your life. Be filled, again, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. And so my question becomes then, well, what in the world does that look like?

[14:16] What does that look like? Paul gives us four clear marks of a God-fearing life here in this passage. Four clear marks of a God-fearing life.

You can use this sort of as a self-assessment tool as you look at your own life. The first mark he says, he says, the God-pleasing life bears fruit.

The God-pleasing life bears fruit. He says, bearing fruit and increasing in every good work. This is what the gospel does in the life of a believer. Isn't he, this is what he said earlier in the chapter. As he said, the word of the gospel in all the world is bearing fruit and increasing as it also does among you. And that fruit of the gospel, it doesn't just look like a polished exterior that just keeps all the rules and looks good on the outside.

He says, no, no, no, no, no. That fruit looks like faith in Christ. It looks like love for all the saints. He tells us in Galatians, that fruit looks like love and joy and peace, patience and kindness and goodness and gentleness and faithfulness and self-control.

[15:31] This is the fruit that the Spirit brings about in the lives of those who have trusted in the good news of Christ. The path to bearing fruit is not rigid, ritualistic, legalistic, man-made rule-keeping traditions.

It's found in driving your roots deeper and deeper into Christ. What does he tell us? Abide in me and you will what? You will bear much fruit.

That's Mark number one. Mark number two, Paul says, the God-pleasing life increases in knowledge. The God-pleasing life increases in knowledge, bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Key word here, increasing. Increasing. In other words, church, the God-pleasing life is not stagnant. The God-pleasing life is a constant pursuit.

The God-pleasing life is not content with where you are in your knowledge of God. The God-pleasing life is eager to grow and eager to learn not just knowledge about God, but again, knowledge of God.

[16 : 46] Let me ask you, church, how are you increasing in your knowledge of God? What are you learning about him that's not just going into your brain, but seeking down into your heart so that you love him more?

What are you marveling at about who God is and what he's done? Theology is not just for the nerds.

Okay? Theology is not just for the spiritual elite. Theology is the study of God. And guess what? We're going to be doing theology for the rest of eternity, if you're in Christ.

For all of the rest of eternity, we're going to be studying and diving deeper and increasing in our knowledge of who God is and marveling at his attributes, that he's good and that he's holy, that he's infinite, that he's eternal, that he's gracious, that he's wise, that he's just, that he's kind.

We will spend the rest of eternity growing in the knowledge of God. Paul says, if you're in Christ, guess what? You can start right now. Where do we start?

[17 : 57] Again, we have his own special revelation right here. We have his own revealed will, his own special self-revelation of who he is in his word.

But why do we study the word of God? Why do I, week after week, just open this book up and try and communicate what it says? It's because this is where God makes himself known.

The word of God empowered by the spirit of God for the growth and the good of the people of God. That's the recipe. You can start in prayer and communicating with him and speaking back to him and talking with him and praying his words back to him.

You can read a thousand good books. We can benefit, church, from the centuries of wise believers that have gone before us. It's almost embarrassing how much knowledge and wisdom we can gain from others.

This is what the Christian life is. It's a communal pursuit of the knowledge of God. It's a body growing up and walking together in his will.

[19 : 06] But of course, the truth is that this type of lifelong pursuit requires strength, doesn't it? It requires strength.

It requires strength, not our strength, but rather his strength. This is the third mark that Paul gives us. The God-pleasing life, verse 11, requires his strength.

He prays that they would be filled for a life pleasing to him, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.

You know, the thing about legalism, this rigid law-keeping, right? Think about it like this. Legalistic, ritualistic, religious law-keeping does not require the power of God.

This is why we're drawn to it, to be honest. Legalism does not need God's help. It does not need God's strength.

[20 : 18] What does it demand? It demands your strength. It gives you a list of do's and don'ts, and it says if you just muscle up, if you just grit your teeth, you can get it done if you try hard enough.

If you're serious enough about God, you can check off this list and you will make it. You can do it if you're really serious about the Lord. That's what legalism tells you. But true Christianity, you know what it says?

You can't do this. Here's the motivational talk you didn't know you needed this morning, right? The gospel of Jesus Christ, it says you cannot live a life worthy of the Lord in your own strength.

You can't do it. You can't begin to discern His own will by your own knowledge. It's spiritually discerned. You can't begin to live a life that's pleasing to Him in the slightest bit by your own merit.

The sooner we grasp this truth, the better off we'll be. Christian books have no place in the self-help section. The bad news is we can't do it.

[21 : 26] But the good news is, Paul tells us, God Himself supplies the strength that we need. God Himself supplies the strength.

He gives us everything that we need to live a life that's pleasing to Him. It is His provision that makes the God-pleasing life possible. It is His power that makes the God-pleasing life possible. It's His strength that makes the God-pleasing life possible. And apart from His strength, you can't do it. If it were, based on our own strength, to hold on to Him or to climb a ladder up to reach Him, guess what, church?

We would lose our grip on Him every single time. This is why Paul prays the way that he does. May you be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that we may endure and have patience and joy.

This is God's work. And when you realize, church, that the entire Christian life is empowered by His strength, and then and only then will we understand the fourth mark here of a God-fearing life.

[22:44] Fourth. Fourth and finally. Verse 12. He says, the God-pleasing life is filled with gratitude. He says, giving thanks to God the Father.

Giving thanks to God the Father. The fact is, you will not give thanks to God if you believe that it all depends on you.

You will not give thanks to God if you believe that it's all dependent on your strength.

When you go to a hotel and you don't walk up to the hotel door and open it yourself and lug your own bags inside and then turn and thank the doorman. Gratitude is the overflow of a recognition of need.

Gratitude is the overflow of a recognition that you have been served. You have been helped. You have been unable to do something and someone has taken it upon themselves to do it for you.

[23:52] Someone else has served you in a way that you could not serve yourself. But the man or the woman that's relying on their own strength, the man or the woman that's depending on human effort to keep man-made rules, they don't overflow with thanks.

You know what they overflow with? Pride. It's either pride when you do it well or it's despair when you don't. It's not God, thank you for what you've done.

It's not God, thank you for saving me. It's not God, I was unable and I was lost and I was dead in sin and you made me alive in Christ. You did what I couldn't do.

You kept the law perfectly when I failed. You abolished death. You resurrected Christ from the grave. I couldn't do any of that on my own. No, legalism says, well look what I can do.

I can keep my rules and I can puff myself up. I can pad my own stats and get my own recognition for my own pride. Paul looks down this road of legalism and he sees the end of it because Paul has lived this himself.

[25:04] He sees the end of what comes from these legalistic rules and regulations and at the end of that road is not glory to God. It is glory to self.

And so he says, you know what? A life that is pleasing to God, it looks like humble gratitude. Overflowing. The thanksgiving.

Because at the end of the day, the God-pleasing life understands that God's pleasure in you is not based on your performance for Him. Can I say that again?

Church, do you understand? Christian, do you understand? God's pleasure in you is not based on your performance for Him. Be free of depending on your own strength.

faith. Be free of religious legalism that demands more and more and more and more and more in order to earn God's favor. Be free of these lies of the enemy.

[26:07] God's favor, His pleasure in you is not dependent on your performance for Him. It is based on the finished work of Christ that is given to you. Not by your rule keeping but simply by faith.

This is the power of God that will guard us from the temptation to perform our way into God's grace and it's this power of God that will enable us to live a life worthy of the Lord.

It's the power of God and the gospel of Christ. The finished work of Jesus Christ is enough. This is where Paul points us in our third and final point this morning.

Third, we see the power for a God-pleasing life. What is it? The power is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's not these man-made rules.

It is the gospel. And don't you love how Paul's prayer is just so rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ? He reminds these saints, these brothers and sisters in Christ all the way off at Colossae not what they have to do next but what God has already done for them in Christ.

[27:25] The gospel by definition is a miracle of God's grace. Don't you realize grace can't be earned? Then it's not grace.

If you earn grace it's not grace anymore. It's a paycheck. God says the gospel is a message of God's unmerited grace. no man can add anything to it on their best day.

No Christian can rob from it on their worst day. It is grace upon grace upon grace towards sinners like us in Christ. It's a finished work. Paul shows us what God has done for us in three absolutely

breathhtaking actions here.

And we'll walk through it and then we'll close. What has God done for you? Christian Paul tells us one he has qualified you to share in the inheritance of saints and light.

God has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints and light. You know the lies of legalism they give you this list of do's and don'ts in order to be qualified.

[28 : 36] If you just check this box then you will make it. And just so we're clear that's not just a problem back then in Colossae. This is a right now problem isn't it? It's a right here problem isn't it?

Our hearts are so wired to return to this legalistic performance based religion where we think we gotta do something to measure up and earn God's favor. The lie that we can believe is that we must do certain things in order to be qualified.

What does Paul say? God has qualified you in Christ. God has qualified you in Christ to inherit this glorious inheritance of the saints in light.

Not only this verse 13 tells us he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and again do you notice this is past tense? This is past this is something God's already done.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and I know what you're thinking man it looks plenty dark around here doesn't it? In this country where we live this area of the world where we live there is plenty of darkness all around us isn't there?

[29 : 54] The same was true in Colossae they wrestled with all the same powers of darkness that we wrestle with here. How in the world can Paul say he's delivered you from the domain of darkness? We're still in it. Paul is saying something has happened so that you even though you still live all around it it's all around you something has happened so that you can say I no longer belong to this darkness all around me.

What's happened? Christ has triumphed over the powers of sin and darkness at the cross. Christ has shattered all the power all the authority of the enemy at the cross in the empty tomb.

Christ has disarmed the rulers and the authorities he has conquered the dark domain at the cross of Christ. So now even though we live in a fallen world those who belong to Christ can say with confidence I don't belong to this domain of darkness anymore the gospel has set me free.

He has qualified us he has delivered us and look at the rest of the verse says he has transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins.

here's some good news for you church if you are in Christ simply by faith in him you are already right now in this present moment you are a citizen of the kingdom of God he has already transferred you into his kingdom you belong to his kingdom John Calvin says it like this he says this is a word transferred this is a word used of empires when a king takes an entire population and relocates them into a new glorious territory we are not merely improved prisoners in the old kingdom we are fully naturalized citizens in the new kingdom of his beloved son our legal standing is completely new and our old master has no right to demand taxes or obedience from us ever again by his finished work

[32 : 22] Christ Jesus has purchased everything we need for our redemption Christ Jesus by his blood has purchased the forgiveness of all of our sins Charles Spurgeon commenting on this passage he says it is a done thing we are not arriving at his kingdom we are already there we are wrestling to get out of the dungeon of darkness the doors have been smashed and we've been brought out into the glorious light of the sun church this perfect finished work of Christ this is the power that we need to live a life pleasing to God nothing else this is the power that we need to resist all the many lies from the enemy that tell us to do more be more achieve more in order to be spiritually full

Paul says if you are in Christ you have everything you need in him the power for a God pleasing life is yours right now in Christ friend if you are not a believer in Christ my prayer for you this morning is that you would be free from the lies of performance from the lies that would tell you that you must do more achieve more be more in order to be pleasing to God but rather that God by the power of his spirit through the proclamation of his word would open the eyes of your heart so you might trust fully in the finished work of Jesus Christ it's enough and church my prayer for you is that you too would look to the finished work of Christ and that you would leave here walking in a manner worthy of the

Lord resting in the power of God at work in you who believe because of what he's done I would ask one thing of you as we close by way of application church would you pray this prayer for me this week I told you there's no copyright on this prayer I want you some of you have committed to pray

for me and I appreciate that so much if you're looking or wondering what to pray for your pastor please take this prayer and would you pray that for me and then would you look at your your fellow brother and sister in Christ and would you pray this for one another this week would you pray for one another that they would be filled with all spiritual wisdom and understanding and the knowledge of his will so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord not to earn his favor but because they have been given his favor already in the finished work of Christ to pray that we would walk in a manner worthy of the

Lord because he has qualified us delivered us transferred us redeemed us forgiven us all at the cross of Christ let's pray father we praise you God for the finished work of the gospel we praise you God for the finished work of Christ we praise you that his work is enough father that he alone is what qualifies sinners like us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light we pray that we would not fall victim to the many lies of the enemy that would lead us away from fully trusting in the finished work of Jesus in the gospel we pray God that we would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to you bearing fruit in every good work we praise in Jesus name amen may may may