A Prayer Worth Praying

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[0:00] If you will, to Colossians, Colossians chapter one, we're going to be focused on verses 9 through 14.! This is a tremendous prayer that we see recorded in Scripture that Paul has written.

Have you ever come across Scriptures at times when you're reading through the Bible that just grab your attention? They just kind of stand off the page to you and for some reason just kind of captivate you.
Maybe it's a moment in time, maybe a place you are in your life. Maybe it's something you've been praying and seeking for direction or guidance.
And there's a Scripture that God uses just to speak to you through that passage. Well, for some time I've been really interested in the prayers of Scripture and especially in the New Testament.
And not to discount the prayers of Jesus or John, but Paul, the prayers of Paul really get my attention. And Paul has a tremendous pastoral heart that we see throughout his letters.
[1:21] And often we see Scriptures that he has written where he is praying not for himself as much as for those that are in the churches where he has started.

And he has moved on to plant another church somewhere. But he continues to pray for the spiritual growth of those that he's left behind. But he's left in the hands of someone else to pastor.
However, in this passage in Colossians, the believers here are someone Paul has actually never even met. He did not start the church here in Colossae.
He has actually only heard about the believers here. He's heard of their faith in the Lord. He's heard of their love for Christ and for one another.
And he's only heard of their hope in Christ. But he still has that pastoral hunger and heart for them and their continued spiritual growth and walking with the Lord.
[2:23] And so he records this letter to them. And he records this prayer that he says he continues to pray without ending. He has not stopped praying for them.

If you ever wonder how to pray for your loved ones, you ever wonder how to pray for a spouse or a child, a grandchild, or maybe even yourself, sometimes you don't even know how to pray for yourself in your spiritual journey and your walk with the Lord.
And you wonder, I don't even know how to pray other than God be with me, God help me. So many times our prayer lives are, God do this for me, or God help me with this, or God do that.
But this is an amazing passage here where we look right into the heart of Paul and that pastoral heart of his where he gives us a glimpse there to show us how we can pray for ourselves, maybe a spouse, maybe a child or a grandchild or other loved ones in our lives.
So let's look together at the scriptures here at Colossians chapter 1 verses 9 through 14. 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 and 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.
[4:31] 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.

You know, as I said, have you ever wondered just how to pray for a loved one? Pray for a child. Pray for a grandchild.
Or pray for your church family. Pray for your pastors. This is a tremendous passage of scripture here, a prayer of Paul of where to begin and to where to incorporate or adopt this prayer into your own prayer life to pray for your loved ones.

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So let's begin to dissect this a little bit. One of the weaknesses of being an associate pastor and only getting to pinch hit occasionally is I don't have enough time to really dive into this and dissect it to the full extent.
I need multiple weeks to really deal with this. So we're going to only be able to hit some of the highlights of this, but I'm going to do my best. And I would encourage you to go home and read this and study this and really learn more than what we'll be able to do today.
[5:51] Because again, this is an amazing passage and it will take your prayer life to a new level when you're praying for others. But let's look again at verse 9. That you would be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

If that's all you prayed for your loved ones, that is powerful. That is powerful. Do you just sit there and soak that in for a moment?
Pray. Maybe you add the name of who you're praying for right now. Your spouse, your children, your grandchildren. I wish you'd pray it for me.
That Jeff would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. This isn't just a head knowledge.
It's not about reading the Bible and just accumulating facts. It's not about being able to just quote scripture and knowing all the ins and outs of when a letter was written or when it was dated and the history behind the letter.
[7:02] It's not about all of that. The word filled means to be completely controlled by something. To be saturated. Paul wants them to be so full of the knowledge of God's will that it shapes how they think.

He wants them to be so saturated with understanding of God's will that it changes the way they speak and how they live.
Too many Christians today settle for knowing about God and not knowing God.
We know facts about God, but we don't know God. Do you realize when you sit down, and I might get to preaching here in a second, but Brian's got me trapped in here where he's got me caged in, so I may not get to walk as much as I like.
When you sit down with the word of God, you're not just reading it to gain factual information. Do you realize you're sitting down with God? You're sitting down, spending time, fellowshipping with God to know him, to fellowship with him, interacting with him, allowing him to speak to you, not just gaining factual information and knowledge, but we are to sit down with him and let the word saturate us, let it fill us, let it impact us, and that just doesn't happen by us reading it quickly.
[8:49] It's great to have a reading plan, but don't just have a reading plan so that you can read it quickly and check it off and move on about your day.

Read through the scriptures slowly. Set aside time that you can slowly move through the scriptures and let that speak to you.
Hebrews says the word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword. Allow the word of God to come alive in you.
Allow it to saturate your inner being and speak to you. Don't just read it and say, okay, it's checked off and move about your day.
Let it saturate you and change the way you think. Change the way you speak. Change the way you live.
[9:50] And you know what? Spiritual wisdom isn't going to be something that just falls in your lap. Spiritual wisdom isn't going to be something that just pops in your head one day. You know, obviously it begins with the Holy Spirit opening our eyes and the Holy Spirit giving us that spiritual wisdom.

But you know what? It really begins with us wanting spiritual wisdom. It begins by you wanting that. Do you want spiritual wisdom?
If you do, then that means we set aside time to spend with God and we seek God. The scriptures tell us continuously, seek wisdom.
Pursue it like a man would seek treasure. I'll never forget my New Testament professor in seminary. He asked us, do you hunger for God the way a hungry man hungers for food?
Let me challenge you. Go three days without eating food at all and tell me how hungry you are for food.

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[11:05] And then ask yourself, are you that hungry for God? Are we that hungry for God today in our lives?

If we are, we're going to set time aside to seek God, to pursue God, to spend time in His Word and to slowly process it and let it saturate us and impact the way we think, the way we speak, the way we live.
It's going to impact our relationships that we spend and it's going to change the way we live. It's going to change our priorities in life. And having this type of knowledge and understanding leads to a worthy walk with the Lord.
He then transitions into chapter, or verse 10, but I want to go back and read verse 9 to show you how He transitions into verse 10.
Look with me, if you will, verse 9 and 10. So, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Now, catch this in starting with verse 10.
[12:18] So, as to, so when you have that type of spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him.

When it says, so as to walk in a manner worthy, pleasing to Him, it's talking about the way you live. When you have that type of knowledge and spiritual wisdom and understanding, then you will live in such a way that will bring, bring honor and glory to the Lord.
It will be a life that reflects the character of God within you. You can't sit down and spend time with God in His Word and let the Word of God saturate your being without it changing who you are and molding and shaping you in more and more like the life of Jesus Christ.
And it means our conduct, our priorities, our thinking, everything is changed. Romans 12, 1 and 2 says, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship.
Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. You know, when we're seeking the Lord, when we're pursuing God, when we're in the Word of God, we won't be conformed to this world but we will be transformed by the renewing of our mind through the Word of God.
[14:00] And it'll change our choices, it'll change our priorities, it'll change our relationships, it'll change us. We will be set apart and different from the world and when you live your life in the world, people will be able to look at you and see a difference.

Some people are going to think you're weird and crazy, that's okay because they're going to know that you're weird and crazy and different and you're changed because of Jesus Christ.
And Paul gives us a couple examples here that reflect a Christian life that is being lived in a worthy manner that pleases the Lord. He says, bearing fruit in every good work.
You know, fruit is a common metaphor for the visible results of an inward spiritual life. You know, the imagery here is obviously an agricultural metaphor.
When a plant is healthy and well nourished, it's obviously going to produce fruit. Likewise, you know, a believer who is rooted in Christ and filled with the Spirit will naturally produce good works that reflects the character of Christ within our lives.
[15:20] You know, Jesus stated in John 15, 5, I am the vine and you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.

If we are spending time with God, if we are remaining in him, allowing his word to remain in us, we will bear fruit.
This isn't just the fruit of the Spirit because the fruit of the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit of the Spirit within us, but then our lives will produce fruit for the kingdom of God.
There's many different ways that scriptures define fruit and that's one of those things we don't have time to talk about today, but it says in every good work we will produce fruit in every good work.
This phrase means fruitfulness should not be limited just to one area of our life, not just here at church and then we go out and live a different way, completely different, but it touches every part of our lives, whether you're at work, whether you're at school, whether you're in your recreational time or your community, wherever, whatever you're doing, that you will produce fruit for the kingdom of God in every component and every aspect of your life.
[16:44] You can't compartmentalize your life and only have certain aspects of it that are being lived out for the Lord and then you live a different way in a different time.

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Every component of your life will produce fruit for the kingdom of God in all that you do. And then verse 11, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.
You know, this is one of the most practical parts of the prayer here because most of us, really every one of us, all believers, we're going to face seasons of hardship, we're going to face seasons of discouragement and fatigue, loneliness, temptation, seasons of busyness when we're running on empty and we feel like giving up and quitting.
We just don't know if we can keep going. And Paul doesn't pray for the believers at Colossae that they would have all those difficulties removed.
What does he pray for? He prays for them to have endurance to continue. He also prays for them to have patience.
[18:08] Now, patience here, we often think of patience as putting up with other people. That may or may not be what he means here. Patience probably is more like patience to wait upon God to unfold His plan and His will and accomplish what He's doing in your life.

Because sometimes we have to wait for God to answer prayers. We have to wait for God to accomplish what He's doing through us. We have to be patient and trust that God's will is best.
But have endurance to run the race and finish the race. Now, I know this next one is speaking to me. Maybe you too, amen?
with what? It sounds like a joyful group here today. With joy.
With joy. You know, all of us, every one of us can grit our teeth and bear it. I'm waiting for Jesus to come back and I'm gonna like it. But He's saying do it with joy.
[19:19] The kind of joy that Paul and Silas had when they were whipped and beaten and thrown in jail and they sang praises to God, thank you that we were worthy. Thank you that we were worthy to suffer.

Now, is that natural? That isn't about circumstances. Our lives are not gonna always be hunky-dory, good and wonderful. We're gonna go through hard times.
We're gonna go through suffering. We're gonna go through difficulties. You know why? Sometimes God puts us through those things. Sometimes God puts us through them to get rid of sin in our life. Sometimes He's building character. Sometimes He's preparing us for future work. But He's saying do it with joy.
That joy can only come through the power of the Holy Spirit living within us. What's one of the fruits of the Spirit? Love, peace, joy. as we walk with the Lord, as we spend time in the Word, as we get our eyes off this world and keep our eyes on the Lord.
[20:29] Every time I go through periods in my life when I'm discouraged, I'm depressed, or I'm struggling, I notice that I've neglected my time with the Lord.

Every time. Without exception. But when we're getting up or staying up late, whenever your time is to spend time with the Lord, turn the TV off.
Quit watching Clemson trying to lose football games and South Carolina giving up massive leads of football games. Quit watching that kind of stuff.
And spend time with the Lord. Spend time with God. Saturate your mind. Saturate your heart. Saturate your life with Jesus Christ and stay focused on Him and His will for your lives.
What God wants to do with you. What is it that God wants to do in you? What is God's plan for your life? If you're still sitting here today breathing, God's got a plan for you.
[21:39] God's got a will for your life and we can do it with joy because Jesus said I've come to give you life and to give you life more abundantly.

He doesn't want us to grit our teeth and just bear it. He wants us to get through this life with joy and peace. You may go through hard times.
You may go through some suffering and not every moment is going to be filled with happiness but when the Holy Spirit lives within us we can have joy and I'm going to show you why that's true.
Let's look at verse 12 to 14. 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 sin.
[22:44] Amen? Amen? Paul ends with thanksgiving not because it was easy not because life was easy but because salvation is certain.

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Folks we've won. we've won. Our destination is certain. We know where we're going to spend eternity if you've given your heart and life to Jesus Christ.
So no matter what you endure no matter what you go through in this life no matter what suffering and hardship and endurance we face we know that we will spend eternity with Jesus Christ and that should fill our hearts with joy and peace and happiness endurance and stamina to get through whatever we're going to get through every day.
He says here God has qualified us he's delivered us he's transferred us he's redeemed us and he's forgiven us through Jesus God didn't just improve our lives he adopted us into his family is that not good news God transferred us from being an enemy of God living in darkness destined for hell nothing we could do about it we couldn't earn it we couldn't buy it we couldn't deserve it we could do nothing about it but Christ qualified us and the father adopted us through Jesus Christ into his family if you've ever felt unworthy if you've ever felt unwanted if you've ever felt like you don't belong then remember it is
God who chose you it's God who qualified you you didn't earn salvation you received it and gratitude becomes the natural response of a redeemed heart so what do we learn from this sermon here in Colossians what do we learn that we can apply in our own prayer lives we learn that we can pray for spiritual wisdom of complete knowledge and understanding of God's will we can pray that for ourselves we can pray it for our loved ones and others we can pray for God to give us complete wisdom and understanding we can pray that God enables us to live a life that's pleasing to him that we would bear fruit in every good work we can pray for strength to endure with joy and then we can pray with thanksgiving for salvation can you see how that would change you begin praying that over your loved ones you begin praying that over your own life how that can have a radical impact upon your spiritual life you know
[26:18] I know that it's a reminder to me to use this praying over my family I have some family members that I'm not certain are saved I have others that are not living the way I'd like for them to live and then others that I just pray that for that they would continue to grow and mature and develop because none of us are where we need to be and we will never get there until Christ calls us home even Paul said that he still was growing he still was developing and he would never get to the level that God wanted him to be as long as we contend with this flesh and blood so we can continue to pray for that for all of us that we continue to grow in him I'm going to ask

Brian to come lead us in a closing invitation and you respond today how the Lord is leading you do

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