**A Glorious, Dangerous Prayer**

**If you have a bible, turn to *Colossians – chapter 1…***

We thought this passage might be a good one for New Year’s Day. Here’s a Prayer you can pray for the new year – for yourself, and your church…

Here’s what the apostle Paul wrote to believers in Jesus in a city call Colosae, 2,000 years ago

Follow along as I read, **beginning in** **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, [10] 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. [11] May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. [13] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

**PRAY**

If I offered you a prayer you could pray that you knew would be answered - would you have interest?

Not some superstition… not some bottle you rub and a genie pops out…

But a prayer that had proven results: you pray this prayer and God answers….

Any interest in that? Such prayers do exist!

The apostle John writes: *…if we ask anything according to God’s will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us… we have the requests that we have asked of him*. (1 John 5)

Catch that? Pray according to God’s will and He hears you – and will answer!

**So, how can you know that you’re *praying according to his will*?**

**Here’s one way:** when God gives you the prayer!

That’s what we have before you: a prayer from God, for praying back to God!

*It’s a glorious prayer. But it’s a dangerous prayer.*

It’s dangerous for people like me, who grow complacent in their spiritual life…

It’s dangerous for people like me, who get comfortable with the spiritual status quo

It’s a dangerous, *glorious* prayer in full accord with God’s will for you and me!

So let’s see three parts to it. Three key elements: *the request, the reason, and the results*

Three R’s – just because it worked out that way. *First*…

1. **the request**

So far in this letter, the apostle Paul has followed a standard letter format –

But now he informs these believers in Jesus how he’s been praying for them.

**Verse 9**: *And so, from the day we heard…* (since he and Timothy heard about their faith in Jesus)

*… 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,*

Did you see request?

The request is they would be **filled** with the **knowledge of God’s will.**

***So what is* this knowledge of God’s will?**

We usually take “*knowing God’s will*” as some direction we want…

Whom should I marry, what should my major be…

Where should I live, what house to buy, what car to buy, what career to pursue

All those things matter…. Some of them matter a lot.

**But what the apostle is praying for matters even more!**

He’s praying for **the knowledge of God’s *moral* will** – how to live… His ethical will - consisting of *spiritual wisdom and understanding*

Or: *wisdom and understanding that the Holy Spirit brings*…

That’s what’s in view: knowing God’s moral will, His ethical will, consisting of wisdom from the Holy Spirit.

**But that should raise a question for us…**

Hasn’t the Holy Spirit *already* revealed God’s moral will in his Word?

The Colossians didn’t have a complete New Testament, but they would have had access to our Old Testament… with same essential moral instruction.

**Why pray for them to know God’s will if they already have God’s word?**

And why should we pray this request ourselves?

It seems the Colossians were **confused about God’s will, because they were confused about Jesus.**

Which is an interesting connection: get confused about Jesus, and we get confused about a lot of things!

They were buying into some false teaching that diminished Jesus’ supremacy and sufficiency…

They were losing sight of how Jesus is over all – and that He is all we need!

So a repeated idea in this letter is “**fullness**”: *the* ***fullness*** *we have in Christ.*

And Paul here prays, *I want you to be* ***filled*** *with the knowledge of his will*!

So there’s a connection between the false teaching and this request to know God’s will…

**Now, you’re not facing false teaching like they were… you have excellent teaching**

But don’t you get **confused** **about** **God’s will** – **under the supremacy of Jesus**? I do!

As theologian Bilbo Baggins put it, in *The Lord of the Rings*:

“It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door… You step onto the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to.”

Bilbo is right… you step out of your door, and you don’t know what the day will bring!

Step out your door, and life will confront you with all kinds of situations as you live under the supremacy of Jesus!

Some situations are flip and point in God’s word: “Should I steal? No. Should I commit adultery? No.”

But, Bilbo is onto something: life is not always so straightforward!

**Just think about areas the apostle will address in this letter…**

In this letter, he talks about **relationships…**

how we are to bear with one another. And if we have a complaint, to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us…

That’s not always so straightforward, is it?

Not straightforward for me when I’m having to do the bearing with or the forgiving!

Are you needing to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will – in spiritual wisdom and understanding - for your relationships right now?

In this letter, he talks about **our ministry** **to each other**

… the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, *teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom*…

Doing that takes spiritual wisdom – does it not?

We can use His word like a sledgehammer – no problem. We don’t need a lot of help for that…

But to use His word like arthroscopic surgery – making the smallest incision, to bring great healing…

That takes *wisdom and understanding* from the Spirit!

As you minster to each other in your small groups, you’ll need this request!

Paul talks about **marriage** – wives honoring a husband’s loving and kind leadership, AND husbands loving their wives and not being harsh.

Anyone need *wisdom from the Spirit* for that?

My wife and I do… if you’ve got those things perfectly nailed down, come pray for us afterward.

You’re going to need to know God’s will - as you live out your marriage - under the supremacy and sufficiency of King Jesus!

Paul talks about **parenting** in this letter. I love parenting…

I love parenting, and it’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done! Not because of my kids, but because of me!

When my kids were younger, I had a pretty formulaic view of parenting: *Do this – just like this – and you always get this…*

I’m older and hopefully wiser, and my kids are older – I regularly need wisdom from the Spirit for God’s good will in this area of my life!

Parents, do you want to *be filled with the knowledge of his will?*

**We could go on…**

There are countless ways we need to be *filled with the knowledge of his will - to live out lives under the supremacy of our King!*

**My point is we need this request!**

**Where is that for you right now?**

Where do you feel confused about how the supremacy of Jesus connects with how you should live out God’s will?

**Where is that for you right now? Got in mind…**

**Right there, for that area, bring this request to bear!**

**And do so regularly.**

Notice, the apostle says he has *not* *ceased* praying for the Colossians like this.

He makes this request *continually* for them! It’s near the top of his regular prayer priorities!

**But why?**  For what purpose should we pray to *know God’s will* like this?

1. **the reason**

**Verse 10 tells us:** *so as (here’s purpose / reason)*

*So as… to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him*

That is a **profound reason** to pray this prayer!!

To walk or live in a way that is “*worthy”* of the Lord, *fully pleasing* to Him!

This can be confusing for us, as people who are saved by free grace.

It can be confusing because we know we are declared righteous before God by grace alone, through faith alone.

For the believer in Jesus, the verdict of the last day, brought into the present, as the Father declares you: *“righteous, with the righteousness of my Son!”*

And now, you always relate to God – and God always relates to you – on one basis: the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ!

But that verdict does not mean we’re always *walking worthy* of the Lord, *fully pleasing* to him…

Scholar D.A. Carson points out that if we lived in a **shame-based culture** we would understand **verse 10** a lot better.

Our culture says, “Do whatever you want, as long as you’re not hurting anyone...”

**But in an honor or shame-based culture**, you represent other people – you represent your family in particular...

And the worst thing you can do is fail to bring honor to those you represent…

My wife Sung was born in Korea, came to the states when she was 10, so grew up in a very culturally Korean home.

Like many Asian cultures, it is more of an honor and shame-based culture.

I was introduced to that reality the night before our wedding.

Sung’s uncle from Korea flew in for our wedding. He is the patriarch of that side of the family….

Had the wedding rehearsal, drove over to the rehearsal dinner – I pull up at the restaurant and find my lovely fiancée outside - in tears, sobbing.

Between sobs, she tells me that as they were leaving the rehearsal her uncle from Korea said to her, “*You have dishonored our family*”.

It’s a good thing I wasn’t there when he said this! *“You have dishonored our family*”.

We’re still not sure why he said that...

Sung thinks maybe it’s because she wasn’t dressed up enough in his eyes, or because she wasn’t wearing her hair up...

Apparently women in Korea would have been made-up and had their hair up.

For her uncle, Sung brought shame to the entire family – all the way to Korea!

As he went through the receiving line the next day, I shook his hand - looked him in the eyes, and said “Sung represents your family very well.”

I think he got the message!

**But here’s the thing… her uncle would get verse 10!**

**Verse 10 would make total sense to her uncle:**

Because he knows what it means to live “worthy” of someone else!

Which is exactly how the Christian life is to be lived… walking worthy, fully pleasing to HIM!

Do you see why this prayer is so dangerous?

It doesn’t just reorient our prayer life **– it reorients all of life!!**

**It** makes *walking worthy - and fully pleasing -* our Polaris to navigate by...

Polaris is that bright star in the northern sky.

If you’re on a ship 100 years ago… no GPS - you look up and it guides you… you navigate by that bright star.

**Verse 10 becomes our star – our reference point - to navigate by!** Secure in his grace, we live for HIS honor and glory!

**Secure in his grace… ask yourself: To what degree is *Walking Worthy of Jesus* directing what I do?**

**Last week, I was sinfully angry with one of my sons.**

I can’t remember the details – but he didn’t respond well to me…

He was angry with me. And my brilliant response to help him with his anger was to be angry right back!

I asked his forgiveness, and he forgave me…

My actions in that moment, were not *worthy* of the Lord… they were not honoring HIM, though I stand perfectly righteous before him.

In that moment, I needed this prayer to reorient me… to give me a different way to navigate that moment.

**This prayer… it can have a transforming effect on our lives!**

It makes *Walking Worthy* of Jesus our goal in the workplace, or on the campus

It makes being fully pleasing to him – not ourselves – as you relate to member of the opposite sex – or in what you look at online

*And if you’re married…*This prayer could transform a marriage…

So often in marriage, the goal of my heart is how to *please myself*…

But if a husband and wife starting praying this request for this reason, their marriage would not be the same!

This can be a very powerful prayer God uses in our lives…

But if you’re feeling weighed down by this call to walk worthy of your Savior…

If you’re aware of how you’re falling short of doing so… a couple things:

*Remember, the Christian life is lived repenting and believing good news…*

You get to rely on the obedience of Another every day!

Every day, you have good news – Jesus has lived, died and risen for you – to take away your sins and bring you to God by his grace!

Remember that…And realize that in giving us this prayer, **God wants to meet us** – **and help us**!

It’s like the prayer of the church father Augustine – who said: “Lord, command what you will and grant what you command!”

“Lord, command what you will – to be pleasing to you these ways…

“And, by the way, I need help! Help!! So grant to me – do in me - what you command!”

Give me the ability to do what you command - to navigate by that star more and more!

**The request is: knowing God’s will**

**The reason is: walking worthy of Jesus**

But what does it look like as God answers this prayer? *Third…*

1. **the results / the effects**

The English Standard Version (ESV) doesn’t capture the effects quite as well as the New International Version (NIV). Here’s the NIV:

Notice the four verbs ending in “*ing*”:

*(VERSE 10) …so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way:* ***bearing******fruit*** *in every good work,* ***growing******in the knowledge of God****,* [*11*](http://biblehub.com/colossians/1-11.htm)***being******strengthened*** *with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,* [*12*](http://biblehub.com/colossians/1-12.htm) *and* ***giving joyful thanks*** *to the Father…*

Think of those four phrases as **four results** of this prayer.

**First, bearing fruit in every good work (verse 10)**

A tree that is alive, bears fruit…

It has sap flowing in it, which makes branches put out leaves and bear fruit.

The grace of God is like that sap in our lives… God’s grace makes you fruitful.

Verse 10 is saying: this prayer results in more fruitfulness in those works!

More fruit in our relationships, more fruit in service, more fruit in countless ways… sign me up for that!

That’s what happens as we pray to know His will and live for his glory.

**Second result, growing in the knowledge of God (verse 10 again)**

It’s a wonderful feedback loop!

We pray to know God’s will…

And in knowing God’s will, we grow in knowledge of God himself

As we grow in the knowledge of God, we will know more of his will…

It just keeps going – this glorious feedback loop of grace!

**Third result, being strengthened with God’s power**

**Verse 11: …***being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might…*

This is a remarkable…. This verse is describing a constant supply of the greatest power imaginable…

*being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might…*

Next, you’d expect some reference to miracles being performed.

Power to heal. Maybe power to raise the dead!

But we read: *so that you may have great endurance and patience*

Endurance, perseverance – through trial and difficulty… with patience. According to God, that’s **power**!

When you see a Christian here going through a **financial trial** with patience, and without complaint… that’s power!

When you see someone here enduring a **parenting trial** – while patiently trusting God…

Realize, parenting trials are doubly hard, because your child is sinning against you – and simultaneously breaking your heart…

When someone is enduring a trial - with a child they love – but they are persevering with patience…. that’s power!

Or, when you see a believer enduring a **health trial…**

Recently guy had a stroke in our church..… (with Lindsay) – watching her walk through this in the hospital, concerned – yes. But trusting…

That’s not normal! That’s not natural - that’s power!

I’m all for enjoying the power of the Holy Spirit… let us get all we can.

But include this in your definition of power: *endurance with patience*… perseverance with trust… that’s power biblically defined!

That’s what happens as we know His will and walk worthy of Him.

**Fourth result, giving joyful thanks to the Father**

**Verse 12 -** *and giving joyful thanks to the Father*

*It’s “giving joyful thanks” to the Father* … so appropriate on **Thanksgiving** **weekend…**

Christians have so much reason to give thanks!

And if you’re here, and not a believer in Jesus – thanks for coming!

Let me walk through these and hear this as an invitation from God, that you might have some amazing reasons to give him thanks!

… *who has qualified you**to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.* [*13*](http://biblehub.com/colossians/1-13.htm) *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,* [*14*](http://biblehub.com/colossians/1-14.htm) *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

We often live with what Paul Tripp and Tim Lane call “**a gospel gap” – a gap related to the good news of Jesus, that’s all that means**

That’s the gap between realizing what God has done for us in the **past** – and realizing what God will do for us in the **future**…

But how we *fail* to realize that this same good news makes a difference in the **present** for us too.

The gap is being aware of what grace *covered* *from our* ***past****…*

*And* being aware of what grace *promises* to do for our **future**…

But living unaware of how grace means to affect us right now…

**And this prayer closes that gap!**

It makes us aware of God’s **past** work…

*rescuing from the domain of darkness, bringing them into the saving reign of Jesus, and forgiving their sins.*

And makes us aware of **future** implications – *qualifying us to share in the inheritance of the saints!*

But, God’s work for our past - and our future – transforms our present: **causing us to give God joyful thanks right now**!

**Don’t you need that result?**

Maybe came in today… Thanksgiving weekend – but not very thankful.

The stuff of life is weighing you down…

Maybe you even feel crushed by life this morning – overwhelmed…

Here’s God’s will for you: He wants to fill you with joyful thanks!

If you are a believer in Jesus, your past has been fully dealt with!

You have been **rescued** – plucked out of the pitch-black darkness of our sin … and transferred the glorious kingdom of Jesus!

For you were **redeemed** – purchased out of the slave market – **forgiven** of all your sins…

You stand righteous with the righteousness of Jesus!

Past deal with – and your future is secure: you have been **qualified for a coming, future inheritance**, though you were utterly disqualified!

All, that you may be filled – in the present - with **joyful thanks to Him** right now…

God wants to close that “gap” in our lives, as we pray this prayer!

**If you are not a believer in Jesus**… You might be a guest here today – or you might be growing up in this church.

See what Jesus’ life, death and resurrection have provided for you!

He can qualify you… and rescue you – and deliver you – and forgive you – right now!

Turn to Jesus and believe.

And that produces purpose in your life!

25 years ago, I met a Christian, who asked me what I was living for… and I didn’t have a good answer. But I longed for purpose!

Maybe you feel that way right now…

God can give you the purpose you were made for – living not for yourself, but living for Him…

As he qualifies you – rescues you – and forgives you…

Trust in his life, death and resurrection for you!

**For all of us, I hope you see this dangerous, glorious prayer –**

We pray that we would know God’s will – under the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus..

That we might live worthy of Him - fully pleasing to him…

And so give Him joyful thanks for all he’s done for us in Jesus!

**We want to celebrate what Jesus has done by celebrating the Lord’s Supper or communion…**