

## **Colossians: My Prayer for You**

**Colossians 1:9-14**

By [Sean Morris](#)

*September 10, 2014*

Well good evening. Good to be with you all here once again tonight. If you have your Bibles handy, turn with me to Colossians chapter 1; Colossians chapter 1. It's also printed there for you on the back of your prayer bulletin. We'll be looking at verses 9 through 14 tonight. So let's read this section of God's Word and before we do so let's pray together and ask that He would bless our time of study. Let's pray.

*O Lord, we come tonight confessing and acknowledging and thanking You that this is Your Word. And so we pray that You would captivate us, Lord, by the word of Your servant, the apostle Paul, and cause us to understand it. And then, God, by Your Spirit, to apply it to our own hearts because we know that this word is meant for our profit in instruction, in training, in correction, for being built up in righteousness. So do that great work in us tonight by Your Spirit, through Your Word, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Colossians chapter 1. We're going to be studying verses 9 through 14 but just to help set some of the context I'm going to begin reading at verse 1. So Colossians 1 beginning in verse 1. This is the Word of God:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother. To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

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 in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing - 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.

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. 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.

Amen, thus far God's holy and inerrant and inspired Word to us tonight.

### **A Prayer for New Christians**

If you could wish anything for a brand new Christian believer, what would it be? If you knew a new Christian believer, a recent convert, a young believer in Christ, what would you want for them, or hope for them, or pray for them? Perhaps that they would find a good Gospel-preaching church; that's always a good thing to pray for. Perhaps that they might have a strong season of personal devotion and prayer and study the Scriptures. Perhaps that they might have good growth in holiness as they set out on the Christian life. Perhaps that the Lord would one day provide for them a good and godly spouse to encourage them and sharpen them and live the Christian life together with them. All of these are wonderful and good things.

Well tonight, we have the apostle Paul coming at that question from a particular angle here in Colossians 1 verses 9 through 14. This is exactly what we find. We find Paul's prayer for a brand new church and a brand new group of disciples that have just come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Times are exciting, energy is up, enthusiasm is fresh, but suddenly it seems that before the new members have barely even been received and the welcome luncheon committee has even finished washing their dishes here at this new church with these new group of disciples, Satan is already out and about plaguing these new believers with insidious lies and false teaching. So Paul's prayer for us is actually quite instruction for what we might pray for new believers, for conversions, especially right now during this season of heightened evangelism and a thinking through evangelism in our congregation. But frankly this prayer is not exclusively a prayer that we might pray for new converts or new disciples. This is a prayer that you and I can pray for any Christian and every Christian, whether they're nine years old or ninety-nine years old. Paul's prayer is striking when you consider it in light of everything that he's just been saying to them in the first eight verses which we studied more so with Billy last week if you were here.

## The Context of Colossians

Just to help set the context, you may remember that the church in Colossae was one of the New Testament congregations not started by the apostle Paul. He actually tells us that Epaphras had come to the Colossians with the word of truth. Now very likely, Epaphras had been in Ephesus, some hundred miles or so to the west, and there it was that he had heard Paul's preaching and there and then he took back the Gospel to the Colossians and then they came to Christ and then a church was formed in that city. So now in this letter, Paul is responding both to some of the information that's been passed on to him by Epaphras as well as some concerns because apparently there are these false teachers in the congregation that are confusing these new converts, these young converts. These teachers want to introduce these Christians to a deeper knowledge of God, a deeper experience, a higher life, teaching that they ought to be keeping certain rituals, believing certain mystical things.

And you see, the insidious thing about this was that this false teaching was actually quite a hodgepodge. They did not deny the Lord Jesus Christ out rightly; no, no, no. They just said you needed more - you needed Christ plus these extra things. You just needed Christ plus these extra techniques; Christ plus something else. An ancient heresy - there's nothing new under the sun, is there? Well here comes pastor Paul. Even in the opening verses of this epistle, Paul, you'll notice begins to undercut this false teaching. He expresses the fact there is some of those early verses that these Christians have received the fullness of Christ and the gifts of God in the Spirit, that they are equipped by God. Did you catch some of that language there that he was using in some of those opening verses? He's reinforcing to them even in his greeting that none of the gifts that belong to Biblical Christianity, none of the gifts and graces that belong to Christians, to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, none of those gifts had been denied them. They had received it all; they had received Christ Himself, he says there in verse 4. And so Paul, actually, as he's writing this letter, is bolstering their confidence even as he praises Epaphras and he commends them because part of what these false teachers were doing was saying, "Oh no, no, no Colossians. You can't trust this Epaphras guy. He gave you half the story but we've got the rest of it that you really need for the living of this spiritual life." So Paul boosts their confidence and commends Epaphras to them and essentially he's saying, "Look Colossian believers, God is abundantly at work in you. In fact, when Epaphras came to visit me in prison he told me about your growing faith. These things don't come naturally, Colossians, unless the Holy Spirit is at work among you. So there is evidence. I'm hearing about it. The news that Epaphras is passing on to me; there's evidence that God is at work among you."

So understanding the situation that these new believers are in and understanding the conflict that's going on, I think, sets up this marvelous passage that we have before us tonight. So here in verses 9 through 14 Paul gives us his prayer in

response to that report that he's just heard from Epaphras. This is pastor Paul's prayer request for these young Christians, these new Christians. Paul is both concerned for them and yet thrilled for them and their new-found faith. So that's what this is. This is Paul's prayer for them as they set forth as brand new believers. This passage is a real Biblical feast but I'd like for us to focus on three things here in particular. In verses 9 and 10 we see Paul's prayer that they would be filled with true knowledge. In verse 11 we see Paul's prayer that they would be filled with real power. And then in verses 12, 13, and 14, we see Paul's prayer that they would be rooted in their great salvation. True knowledge, real power, and great salvation.

### **I. A Prayer to be Filled with True Knowledge**

So first let's start in that first point - Paul's prayer that they would be filled with true knowledge. Look again with me at verse 9. "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." And isn't Paul being clever, even right there. Don't you love how he takes that little buzz word that these false teachers are batting around and he's now using it and employing it against them? Even in his prayer for the Colossians he's giving a rejoinder to these false teachers' deceit and shutting down the pompous teachings and the pompous boastings that they're saying because these folks, like many of the early church heretics and the early church false teachers, something to do with Gnosticism, they're promising knowledge. They're saying, "You can attain this deeper spiritual knowledge that only we can provide. You can't get it from Epaphras. You can't get it from the writings of the apostles, but we can give it to you, Colossians." And so what does Paul say here? "Well let me tell you something, Colossians. You already have access to the fullness of truth and the grace of God in the Lord Jesus and so this is my prayer for you, that you would continue to be filled with the truthfulness, the fullness which comes from Christ, a knowledge, if you will, that is in accordance with the Word of God, a practical knowledge that impacts your daily living, Colossians. That's the kind of knowledge that I want you to grow in. None of this mystical techniques and unbiblical rituals that they're peddling upon you. You don't need that, Colossians. My prayer is deeper, true knowledge in the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians, you can slam the door shut in the face of these false teachers. Don't be fooled," Paul is telling them, "by these false teachers and their philosophies or their peculiar, spiritual, mystical techniques because all the spiritual fullness of God has been given to you," he says. "It's been given to you in Christ; it's been given to you as you've come to Biblical, Gospel faith in the Lord Jesus. All the fullness you need, dear saints, and all that God supplies is to be found in Jesus Christ." That is part of Paul's prayer for them.

### **The Fullness of Christ**

In many ways, as we continue to study through this epistle this fall, this epistle to

the Colossians which we'll be studying, Lord willing, through December, we'll see that this is essentially the message of Colossians - the incomparability of Christ and the all sufficiency of Christ. That's what he gets into in the next section that we'll take a look at next week - the preeminence of Christ, that Christ is preeminent in all things. And so Paul goes to great length throughout this letter and especially here in this prayer to say to the Colossians and put Christ before them and say, "How full He is of grace, Colossians. Behold Him. Behold your King. Behold your Savior. How full He is of grace and salvation and see how it is that the Christian can drink to satisfaction from the full foundation of riches and blessings that are His in Jesus Christ." And so that's part of what Paul is saying to us - be bold; pray boldly. "I'm praying boldly for you, believers. Drink deeply from Him!" Isn't that what we just sang a moment ago? "O, the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, and free!" That's who Christ is; that's what He is to the believer. And so Paul is saying, "I dare you to plunge the depths of His fullness, Colossians. That's my prayer for you."

One of the reasons this prayer, I think, is so marvelous is because of how different it is from so many of the prayers that we pray. You see, Paul is not indifferent to the practical or tangible needs of these believers but he sees, doesn't he, the practical needs of these fellow believers can only be met out of the riches of their fellowship and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so in this prayer we are humbly reminded that in our prayers, far too often we ask for far too little, and so here in this prayer for these new believers we see that we are and ought to pray boldly and deeply and Biblically because Christian, for the riches that are yours in Christ Jesus to be shed abundantly upon you and to be shed abundantly upon all his people, that's Paul's prayer for these young believers. That's what we can pray for one another tonight, perhaps especially poignant, that is, in our prayer meeting.

### **The Pleasure of God**

But notice what else is involved in Paul's prayer that they would have true knowledge. Look there at verse 10, right after there. That they walk in a manner "worthy of the Lord." Now obviously he does not for one moment mean that they are to walk in a manner so as to become worthy of God extending His grace to them. Now that would be to turn the Gospel on its head, though in fact many people do turn the Gospel on its head at this very point, don't they? As if, "If I walk in a manner worthy of Him then God will extend His grace to me." Paul is not talking of walking in a manner that earns grace, but rather he's saying the worthy walk of the Christian is a life that expresses the grace that we have already received in Jesus Christ and it shows itself in this, that we want to please God. And that is Paul's prayer for these believers. Indeed that would be, verse 10, "fully pleasing to him," he prays.

When our mission team was back in Scotland in July this past summer, one of the things we got to do was spend an evening on the beach of the famous city of

Saint Andrews. And you golf fans and you movie buffs out there will remember that there in Saint Andrews is the world famous golf course that can be found and there on the beach of that golf course was filmed that famous scene from the movie, *Chariots of Fire* - the infamous slow-motion running scene with Eric Liddell that's often mocked with Eric Liddell running along the beach. Well you may remember in that film when he tells his sister, she asks him, "Why do you run? What is it that so drives you to keep up this so persistently?" and he tells his sister that one of the reasons why he runs, "I run because when I run I feel His pleasure." God's pleasure, he says. When he runs to the glory of God he knows the pleasure of God and he says, "Frankly there is no feeling like that in the entire world." And Paul says to the Colossians, "That's how I want you to live, Colossians. I want you to live enraptured by the pleasure of God and captivated by the desire to live a life pleasing to God, sensing His pleasure at every waking moment with every fiber of your being."

### **Walking, Growing, Glorifying, and Knowing**

And then notice in the next clause there, right there in verse 10, Paul says it's this pleasure, this pleasing to God that leads us to bearing fruit in every good work. Now friends, when living the Christian life is a burden that oppresses us and weighs us down, it's never going to be a pleasure to us and we're never going to be or find pleasure in God. But here's the glorious thing about the Gospel that Paul's reminding them here - that Christians, that one of the glorious things that makes the Gospel, is that it makes Christians different from mere do-gooders. They have a pleasure in pleasing God. The whole goal of their lives has become, "I want to please Him and I want to give Him pleasure because this is what I was made for - to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Isn't that the famous Westminster Shorter Catechism question and answer number one? And so Paul is praying that they would experience this, this pleasure.

How is it going to happen? Well look back once again to verse 9. The importance connection that he gives there between the way we live and the way we find pleasure in pleasing God. What's the key? What's the key to Christian pleasure for us? It's that we are increasing in the knowledge of God. There's that word again. Paul's using the false teachers' own vocabulary right against them. They are increasing in the knowledge of God. And we have a sense, that's Paul's prayer, that we have a sense that whatever our circumstances may be that we're coming to know Him better and that we may understand His will better and therefore be able to live for His pleasure and for His glory better, abounding more and more he prays. He's saying, "The great burden of my heart as I pray for you, Colossians, is that you would come to know the Lord and to find that your deepest pleasure is in fellowship with the Lord and knowing that He is yours and living with Him and for His glory, growing in knowledge of Him."

### **Methods of Growth and the Means of Grace**

He says this because it flies directly in the face of what these false teachers are trying to peddle to these young disciples. They wanted to offer the Colossians “deeper knowledge,” and “deeper fullness.” And though two thousand years have passed, the world still seeks to muddle Christian growth in much the same way, doesn’t it? “Try this method! Make use of this technique!” We hear it all the time. “Click here! Go here! Purchase this! Unlock the secrets to real spiritual health and wellness that others have not yet discovered but I have and so I pass it on to you for the mere price of \$19.95 a month!” This is merely an early church version of that exact same heresy and it’s nonsense.

And so here in Paul’s prayer, what a thing it is that he reminds us we have, what a beautiful thing it is that he reminds us we have to know that the method for such deepening, the deepening that Paul has in mind here to grow in the knowledge of God and that the means to grow in that knowledge is sitting right there in front of you, it’s right there on your knees and it surrounds you here in this very room. Because brothers and sisters, you and I have the very words of God, the fully revealed will that Paul’s alluding to here - the knowledge of God, the wisdom of the ages, the full counsel of the Almighty. In sixty-six books, nine hundred some odd pages that sits there on your desk and you carry it in your pocket - dive in and plumb the depths of that knowledge, Paul prays for them. Here’s the will of God for you; here’s the knowledge of God - bask in it; take full advantage of it.

Not only that, you have access to the throne of the King of the ages in prayer, any day at any moment, a privilege that has been won for you by the death and the resurrection and the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have fellow believers to grow with, to lean on, to encourage, to serve and to sharpen as iron sharpens iron. And Paul’s saying, “Seek after and enjoy and cherish and take advantage of those means towards Christian fullness. You don’t need these spiritual, mystical techniques. They’re utter nonsense. You have them, Christian. They’ve been given to you in full. All the means you need for all the fullness that God makes available to you.” And so Paul prays, “Come, be filled, and plunge deep into His fullness. Listen to His voice as He speaks to you through His Word. Come and sit with your fellow believers under His Word, His revealed will.” First Presbyterian Church, this is Paul’s prayer for us as it was for those Colossians, so shall we not be filled in true knowledge in this way. So a prayer to be filled with true knowledge.

## **II. A Prayer to be Filled with Real Power**

But then secondly, Paul prays that they would be filled with real power, that they would be filled with real power as we come to verse 11. It’s almost as if he was saying that, “This is what I’m praying for you, dear friends, but in addition to that, if God would give me just one wish here’s what it would be.” And look at verse 11 with me - “May you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious

might for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father.” Now isn’t that fascinating? Paul’s aspiration for them is that they should experience the mighty power of God in Christ so that they might have endurance and patience. Now some of you may already know this, but that word in “endurance” in the old King James Version would have been translated “longsuffering” - taking a long time to grow angry or to grow frustrated with a person or a situation. And Paul says, “It takes the power of Christ to make me think and be like that.” And then he says, “Not only endurance or long suffering but you need the strength of Jesus Christ for patience, for patience in enduring.” One commentator says this. “This is the living of the Christian life with endurance and patience, as if it were running a marathon underneath a weight and yet at the same time trying not to run ahead of yourself or God but to be able to take the strains and the stresses of living the Christian life.” Paul says, “I pray that you would be able to live the Christian life like that, with endurance, not necessarily to be easy, not necessarily to be delivered from those obstacles, but to run with endurance.”

### **Grace-Fueled Endurance and Patience for the Christian Life**

This isn’t stoicism, as David alluded to on Sunday morning in his sermon there on Philippians. This isn’t a sort of stiff upper lip, pull yourself together, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, pull yourself together, man. This isn’t that kind of thinking. Rather, Paul is flying in the face of the stoicism that these Colossians would have been bombarded with and he says, “In all circumstances dear friends, fellow Christians, by the grace of Jesus Christ the Christian learns to endure with patience and with joy and thanksgiving,” he says there in verse 11. Now therein lies the difference of what Paul is getting at. A non-Christian man or woman may endure great things, may endure hard things with stoicism by simply pulling themselves together and grunting and gritting their teeth and bearing through it. But to be able to endure with joy and thanksgiving, Paul says, is a mark of the wonder of God’s grace and a mark of the wonder of God at work in them and in their soul.

And how different that is from the culture in which we live. You know some of you may hate me for this because it’s just begun Fall and I’m about to mention Thanksgiving and Christmas but bear with me. I realize that Pumpkin Spice Lattes have just begun and football season has just kicked off, but you think about Thanksgiving and you think about Christmas and what was it intended for? Well it’s a time to gather together with family, with friends, to share and delight in God’s bounty, to give God thanks for a harvest time, to give Him thanks for provision, to give Him praise and thanks for His goodness in our lives. There’s its intention. And yet we come together and what does it become? Well family gets together and tensions arise and the turkey is burned and the flights are delayed and the luggage is lost and the kids are screaming and the dog’s passed out under the table and everything is falling apart and utter chaos has broken out before four o’clock in the afternoon and the turkey’s not even done yet. And so that exact thing that was intended to bring us joy and celebration and family



togetherness and a sense of camaraderie has become an avenue towards bitterness and cynicism and we become bitter and cynical right along with it. A time that was supposed to be joyful and thankful has become joyless and thankless. And then we turn around and bemoan that our culture has become joyless and thankless and yet then in the process we become joyless and thankless ourselves right along with it.

### **Grace-Fueled Power for the Christian Life**

Paul says, "I know that this is what life is like. I know how Satan is out and about prowling to disturb you and to distress you and to plague you and so I'm praying for you, Christians. I'm praying for you that God would fill you with His power and the strength of Jesus Christ that would fill you in such a way that you may be able to persevere and endure and your life may be characterized by a spirit of joy and thankfulness in Jesus because it ain't easy and the Holy Spirit needs to be at work if that's going to happen for you."

And so First Presbyterian Church, shall we not make that a prayer of our own, for one another, for our covenant children, that they would come to faith in Christ and be filled with this kind of power to mature in their faith? For this kind of power that Paul speaks of to attend the preaching of the Word each and every Lord's Day and each and every Bible study and each and every prayer meeting? For this kind of power and strength to come not only now during this season of evangelism that many might be converted but that this kind of strength and power and endurance would attend God's people through His Word and by His Spirit all the days of our lives. There's a prayer for us. May it be so.

### **III. A Prayer to be Rooted in their Great Salvation**

So a prayer to be filled with true knowledge, a prayer to be filled with real power, and then thirdly and finally we see Paul's prayer that they would be rooted in their great salvation. Look again with me at verse 12, there at the end of verse 12. "The Father, 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." There again in verse 12, there's Paul bolstering their confidence and bolstering their hope yet again. "These false teachers are telling you that you need to do X, Y, and Z, that you need to do these techniques, that you need to do these rituals in order to qualify for the inheritance of God. Nonsense. God Himself has qualified you for that inheritance. It is Him, it is Himself, it is His Son. You share in the inheritance of the saints in light and He did it all, not you, believers." What confidence he gives!

### **Gospel 101**

And then he goes on to root the hope and root the confidence that he's praying for them back in Christianity 101. That's what this is, isn't it, just Gospel Christianity 101? Delivered from the domain or bondage of darkness. One pastor even suggests that the word "addiction" best captures the sense that Paul's trying to get at here. You see, we're all by nature addicts and Paul knows that, and we're all by nature in bondage to self and to pride and to sin. We may not yet have discovered it but the more we learn about ourselves the more we will learn that by nature we are addicts and we need to be delivered. We are by nature in a kingdom of darkness, says Paul, and that's why so many people don't see their true spiritual condition. You know so many people you run into will say, "Well yes, this man or this woman is an addict. He's addicted to some sort of substance or some sort of habit or another, but I'm not!" Except the sobering fact is that we are addicted to living for yourself, to living for myself instead of the glory of God. And you're in prison, says the apostle Paul, and you're under the judgment of God. Yet the glory of the Gospel is this, that he's reminding and rooting them of - that through Jesus Christ, by faith in Him, we can be delivered from the kingdom of darkness where we cannot even see His glory and be brought into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

Redemption. Redeemed. That's banking and accounting language that Paul is using here. Transferred from death to life. Forgiven of your sins. There's the fullness that you need Colossians! None of these paltry mystical substitutes that these false teachers are trying to peddle upon you; you need Christ! He's the preeminent one. He is your all in all. And isn't that a beautiful expression there in verse 13? That's Christianity in a nutshell, isn't it? The Gospel in one short sentence. The kingdom, the rule, the authority, that belonging to God's own beloved Son, the Son that He gave to the cross for us that we might not only be delivered from the kingdom of darkness and into His kingdom of light but that we also might be brought into the blessedness of the family of God. This is the great salvation that Christ has won for them, that the Father had planned for them from eternity past and that the Spirit has gloriously applied to them in giving them new hearts. And so as Paul prays for their growth he wants to remind them of the root of it all so that they might grow up into this marvelous truth and be strengthened against being led astray by any whimsical fads or trends of falseness, that they might not be tossed about by waves and blown about by every wind of false doctrine. In his prayer for them, Paul shows them that everything they need is to be found in Jesus Christ and everything they need is theirs through faith in Jesus Christ. He is the fullness, the fount of every blessing.

### **A Call to Revel, Repent, and Grow**

So friends, as we consider this prayer for others and for our own selves in living the Christian life, Paul invites us to bask and to repent and to grow in our own great salvation. So won't you revel in the glorious Gospel and the great salvation that Almighty God has ordained for you from before the foundation of the world? Will you never cease to be amazed and astounded at the wonder of it all and the

wonder of sovereign grace? That's Paul's prayer for them and for us. And in light of that, perhaps we ought to repent of those things in our lives, those paltry substitutes, those pathetic alternatives that you and I have tried to employ for real spiritual growth. Whatever gimmicks or habits they might be, perhaps we ought to do some real soul searching. What means have I tried to use instead of Christ and His Word to grow to maturity? Have I been swayed by smooth talking peddlers by those folks here in Colossae, seeking out an easy shortcut instead of real Christian depth? There's a call to repent as well as a call to revel, both for the Colossians and for us. But he says, "Christian, take heart, because here we see Christ offering all the fullness of all the riches of Himself to you. Do you see what God says to you in the Gospel? That everything that is mine is for you, for His glory, and for your eternal good. A prayer that they would be filled with true knowledge, a prayer that they would be filled with real power, and a prayer that they would be rooted in their great salvation. Amen. Shall we pray?

*O God, we pray that You would bless Your Word to our understanding and to our hearts. We thank You for these marvelous words of life that we have here in Colossians 1:9-14. And so we pray that You would work in us this knowledge and this power that we would be firmly rooted in the salvation wrought for us in Christ so that we would ever rejoice and give You thanks and live for Your glory. May this prayer be true in the lives of Your people. For we ask it in Jesus' name, amen.*

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