

Intro

What does a pastor desire? The apostle John put it this way in 3 John verse four:

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Spiritual children, not physical offspring. His greatest joy was God's flock walking in truth. Living in patterns of obedience. If I'm biblical, this is what I should desire. I desire that your lives and families and marriages flourish because the gospel is operative in your home.

What do I desire of my physical offspring? Walking in the truth. Colossians 1:9-14 spells out what walking in the truth looks like.

How should we pray for each other? Colossians 1:9-14 gives us some great material.

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Body

Passage Focus

What a pastor ought to pray for his people. What we ought to pray for each other.

Point 1: Pastors desire skillful use of the truth (1:9)

Explanation

Previously Paul expressed how he had been praying for the Colossians after hearing of their conversion and fruit. Now he shares what he was praying.

that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, – 1:9

Filled = extent. Not lacking. Not partial. Complete knowledge. The Christian faith is holistic. Paul wants these believers to have the full range of knowledge necessary to live a healthy Christian life. Not 25%. 100%.

Knowledge of his will = content. To be aware of everything that God has revealed. Every truth found in the Bible. Will speaks to God's moral instruction. His commands and how he desires that we live. Knowledge is specified with the terms "*spiritual wisdom and understanding.*"

All spiritual wisdom = comprehensive, not just some. Again, a full and complete faith rather than a partial one. Spiritual wisdom = wisdom that springs from the Holy Spirit. Wisdom = skillful **use** of what's understood.

Spiritual understanding = **comprehension** of spiritual truth. Knowing what the truth is saying and grasping its content.

So Paul desires a knowledge that is complete, comprehended, and used well.

Application

There's a progression in our level of knowledge:

- 1) What's being said?
- Having the data and noting what's being said.
- 2) What does it mean?
- Comprehending the data we have.
- 3) What does it mean for living?
- After gathering the data and understanding what God is saying, we need to be able to use God's truth in real life.

Sometimes we're ignorant of God's truth. We don't know it's out there.

Sometimes we don't understand God's truth. We don't know what it means.

Sometimes we don't know how to use God's truth. We don't know what to do with it.

We need to move from ignorance to practice. The goal of learning God's Word is always practice. We don't have Bible studies just to know. We have Bible studies to shape to our lives.

Illustration

Wisdom is using the truth well. In some situations we find ourselves thinking, how do I obey God in this situation? For example, how do I evangelize someone, say a friend, adult child grandchild, whom I've already shared the gospel with long ago and many times? We start by gathering relevant biblical principles (taking aspects of God's will and putting them together):

- 1) "*do not throw your pearls before pigs*" (Matt 7:6) = don't force the gospel upon people who won't hear it
- 2) Live with good works that commend faith in Jesus (Matt 5:16)
- 3) Speak graciously (Col 4:6)
- 4) Pray for the Spirit to shine light in their hearts (2 Cor 4:3-6)
- 5) Pray for opportunity (Col 4:3-4)
- 6) Be ready for questions (1 Pet 3:15)
- 7) Gently correct false ideas (2 Tim 2:24-26)
- 8) Each person should be answered differently (Col 4:6) = no canned routine

Wisdom says I don't have to force it down their throat every time I see them. Wisdom says treat them respectfully. Be a faithful friend, parent, or grandparent. Wisdom says be patient. Wisdom says pray for gospel receptivity and opportunity. Wisdom say look for opportunity. Wisdom says be ready for the questions that come up.

This isn't intended to be comprehensive. Just an example of how to use various principles in daily life.

Point 2: Pastors desire holistic lives that please God (1:10-11)

Explanation

By holistic I mean complete, well-rounded. Gospel integrated into every aspect of life. Lives pleasing in all respects. Lives that give heed to all of Jesus' commandments, not just some.

so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, – 1:10

What's the goal of biblical knowledge? Lives that please God. Walk speaks of our manner of life. Our normal patterns. *Worthy of the Lord* = in a way that pleases God. In a way that reflects his character. In a way that reflects devotion to him. In a way that reflects trust and confidence in him. In a way that conforms to God's will.

Fully pleasing speaks to pleasing God "in every way" (NIV) or "in all respects" (NASB). A life that is consistently in accord with God's Word. A full and complete faith rather than a partial one.

bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. – 1:10

"in every good work" = holistic faith. In Colossians: living in community with other believers in the local church, marriage, parenting, workplace, with outsiders/evangelism. God intends for his truth to govern every aspect of our lives! In my study the words **filled, all, fully, every** stand out. God wants a complete faith.

Illustration

Good father but a lazy worker (or student). Kind to others but doesn't tell the truth. Works hard but neglects spiritual disciplines. Great evangelist but a lousy husband. You get the point. A life fully shaped by Scripture, not partially shaped by Scripture.

Living pleasing is intimately connected to our knowledge. We learn to live. Learning is for living pleasing to God. Living faithfully requires knowledge of God.

So many spiritual gems in this prayer. The word "*increasing*" also stands out. Increasing in terms of knowledge of God. Knowing more and more about God means knowing more and more about his character. More and more about how God intends life to be lived. Knowledge is the foundation. Going from 10% to 25% to 50% to 75% and so on.

"Increasing" means there was a lot the Colossians didn't know yet. Are there things you don't know yet? Are you facing challenges where you lack wisdom? If so, your knowledge needs to increase.

"Increasing" means God understands our lack. He knows we're learners. He knows we're ignorant. He's patient as we grow spiritually. Growth in wisdom and understanding and good works is a process that occurs over time.

Our lives are supposed to function like the gospel! Bearing fruit and increasing (1:6).

Application

It's possible to live pleasing to God! Our conduct can bring God pleasure. Is it possible to conduct ourselves perfectly at all times in every situation? No. Sin remains inside us. Is it possible to please God? Absolutely.

A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight. – Proverbs 11:1

Some cautions. On one hand, we may be so blind to our sin and think we're in better shape than we are. We think we're pleasing when we're not. On the other hand, we may be so fixated on our remaining sinfulness that we think we can't live pleasing to God. We think pleasing God isn't possible when it is possible.

Pleasing God is possible because of empowering grace! The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring fruit and increase in our lives. God delights in fruit he works in us!

Point 3: Pastors desire joyful clinging to the truth (1:11)

Explanation

being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,
– 1:11

Here we see how it's possible to bear "*fruit in every good work*" and increase "*in the knowledge of God.*" Divine strengthening accompanies fruit and knowledge. Without divine strengthening, there would be no fruit, no knowledge.

"being strengthened" = by God.

"with all power" = God's power isn't lacking. It's complete. Sufficient strengthening to produce pleasing lives.

"his glorious might" = God's might is glorious = there's a shining beauty to God's power and authority. God uses his might to remove harmful patterns and replace them with flourishing patterns. This is gospel hope. A life reformed by God's power. **Beautiful power.**

To fruit and knowledge Paul adds "*all endurance and patience with joy.*" We also need divine strengthening to endure the challenges we face well.

"endurance" speaks to the capacity to continue and not quit in the face of difficult circumstances or testing.

"patience" speaks to emotional calmness or tranquility during unfavorable circumstances.

Paul believes this is possible!

Application

What did the Colossians need to endure? False teaching. What would this look like? Continuing in the gospel.

False teaching may come through internet clips, TV preachers, or your children and grandchildren. Don't give up the truth. Cling to God's Word and ignore the culture's lies. Even when it makes relationships uncomfortable. Cling with calmness. Increase in the truth. Draw near to God and experience the empowering grace God provides. God's glorious might (beautiful power) is with you!

Paul believes endurance and patience and joy is possible. Do you? Do you believe God will strengthen you as you endure the effects of old age? Do you believe that you can continue with calmness? With joy? Paul says you should.

Joy during difficulty isn't natural. Peace during difficulty isn't natural. Continuing, peace, and joy is gospel fruit. God does the impossible in us because of his glorious might!

How should I pray for you? How should we pray for each other? That we continue through difficulty with calm. With joy.

Point 4: Pastors desire thankfulness for redemption (1:12-14)

Explanation

What else does God work in his people?

giving thanks to the Father, – 1:12

As we go about increasing in wisdom and knowledge and good works and continuing with calm and joy, we give thanks to the Father. Paul provides three reasons for thanks.

1) *who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. – 1:12*

That's future hope. An inheritance is something that awaits you. This inheritance belongs to the saints. All who trust in Jesus. We have been qualified by another (God) to be worthy of this inheritance. We weren't qualified, but we are now.

Of ourselves, we're sinners, rebels, separated from God. Unqualified for inheritance. How can we be qualified? Through faith in Jesus and repentance towards God. Paul calls it justification. Being declared righteous and not guilty. On account of the merits of Jesus' death, through faith, we can be declared right with God and worthy of this inheritance.

What's the inheritance? "*the hope laid up for you in heaven*" of 1:5. A world without death, sin, and suffering. A world where we see God face to face.

2) *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, – 1:13*

This is the Father's doing. We've been taken from one realm and transferred to another realm. Paul is sharing what happens to us at conversion. When we're born again. We leave one state of being and enter into a new state of being. You were this (past reality). You are this (present reality).

"*domain of darkness*" = under slavery to the world, the flesh, and the devil. The opposite of the flourishing life we see in Paul's prayer. Ignorance. False beliefs. Destructive conduct. No divine strengthening. No inheritance. Slavery to sin. Total darkness. Elsewhere Paul expressed it like this:

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. – Ephesians 2:1-3

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. – Ephesians 4:17-19

▪ Ignorance. Darkened understanding. Hard-hearted. Destructive desires. Impure living.

“kingdom of his beloved Son” = the saving reign of Christ and all that entails. A new heart. Divine strengthening. An eternal inheritance. Forgiveness of sins. Peace with God. Justification (declared righteous and not guilty). **A realm where we experience life under divine blessing and God’s glorious might!**

3) *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* – 1:14

Paul defines redemption as the forgiveness of sins. We’re all born captives or slaves to sin. Under sin’s control and under sin’s punishment. We need God’s glorious might inside of us to create new desires. And we need release from the punishment our sin deserves. Redemption is **the act of release** from captivity to sin. Like when a slave is released from their servitude. In order for release to occur, a ransom needs to be paid. The ransom paid for our forgiveness was Jesus’ death on the cross. A substitute (Jesus) took the punishment we deserve to secure our release.

“in whom” = redemption is only found in Jesus. Forgiveness of our sins is only found in Jesus.

Application

Why wouldn’t we be a joyful people? We not only have these three reasons. We also have God working joy in us.

Non-Christian

You need to be rescued from darkness.

You need your sins forgiven.

In Jesus, and only in Jesus, there’s a new heart to overcome sinful patterns. In Jesus, and only in Jesus, there’s peace with God. No more striving to measure up through our own efforts. Living from redemption. Not living for redemption.

Conclusion

Are we praying these things for each other? Get a copy of the deacons’ list. Pray systematically through the list. I go through it once a month. You might say, I don’t know this person that well. That’s okay. Pray Colossians 1:9-14 for them!

Pastors desire skillful use of the truth.

Pastors desire holistic lives pleasing to God.

Pastors desire joyful clinging to the truth.

Pastors desire thankfulness for redemption.

I desire that you pray Colossians 1:9-14 for one another.