

## **“Walking Worthy of the Lord”**

### **Colossians 1:9-11**

Sunday, February 19th, 2023

Automaker Henry Ford asked electrical genius Charlie Steinmetz to repair a massive generator for his (Ford's) factory in Dearborn, Michigan. One day the generator ground to a halt, and the repairmen onsite couldn't find the problem. So Ford called on Steinmetz.

Upon arriving, Steinmetz rejected all assistance and asked only for a notebook, a pencil and a cot. He listened to the generator and scribbled computations on the notepad for two straight days and nights. On the second night, Steinmetz asked for a ladder, climbed up the generator and made a chalk mark on its side. Then he told Ford's skeptical engineers to remove a plate at the mark and replace 16 windings from the field coil. They did, and the generator whirled to life.

Ford was thrilled; until he got an invoice from Steinmetz in the amount of \$10,000. Ford acknowledged Steinmetz's success, but he balked at the charge. He asked for an itemized bill. Steinmetz responded to Ford's request with the following: "Making chalk mark on generator \$1." "Knowing where to make mark - \$9,999." Ford paid the bill...

We're in the 3rd Sunday of our present sermon series, "The Preeminent Christ: A Collision with Colossians." Before we launched this current series, we were working our way through the Old Testament book of Isaiah, having studied the first 35 chapters of that book. We'll return to Isaiah after we conclude our study of Colossians sometime this summer.

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter from prison to a small congregation in Colosse, a small town in the southern part of modern day Turkey, somewhere around the year 60 AD. You'll recall from last Sunday's message that Paul's purpose in writing this letter was to help the church in Colosse resist an errant doctrine working its way through churches called "gnosticism." "Gnosticism" was a school of thought (a movement) that advocated people could be redeemed from matter rather than redeemed from sin. Their basic doctrine advanced that matter (anything physical or created) was evil and that only the spirit was good.

You can see the problem of holding such a position - Jesus' parentage was a human mother and a divine Father. They both were necessary for the Savior of God's chosen ones to accomplish His saving work!

#### **Colossians 1:9-11:**

**“9** For this reason **we** also, since the day **we** heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; **10** that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; **11** strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;”

The pronoun “we” used twice here in verse 9 refers to Paul and Timothy both of whom were mentioned in verse 1. This could have included others with Paul and Timothy, but we don’t know who they may have been, if indeed there were others present other than Paul and Timothy at the writing of this letter.

**MP1 - Notice Paul’s and Timothy’s praying for the church in Colosse** (v. 9) - “For this reason **we** also, since the day **we** heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;”

Back in verse 3, Paul stressed that when he and Timothy prayed for the Colossian Christians, they always did so with *thanksgiving* for them. Now, 6 verses later in verse 9, we read that Paul and those with him **did not cease** to pray for the church in Colosse. That’s precisely the thought Paul used in addressing his first letter to the Thessalonian church, chapter 5, verse 17, to “pray without ceasing.”

It’s interesting to see another term Paul uses in verse 9 for praying - “asking,” as in asking God that the Colossians may be filled with the knowledge of His will. When you consider to whom it is that we pray (Almighty God), prayer is our asking of Him for the various things we lack. The *First Catechism* recognizes this when in Question #109 it asks, “*What is prayer?*” The answer - “Prayer is praising God, giving thanks for all his blessings, and *asking Him for the things* he has promised in the Bible.”

James Montgomery was a Scottish-born author and hymn writer. He described prayer as “the Christian’s vital breath, the Christian’s native air.”

Look at **what** Paul and Timothy pray for the church in Colosse - that the Christians there “may be filled with the **knowledge** of (God’s) will in all **spiritual wisdom** and **understanding**.” “This is “more than simply an insight into how God wants His people to behave; it is an understanding of God’s whole saving purpose in Christ, and (therefore) a knowledge of God Himself.” (Wright, 57) Commentator David Garland notes, “For Paul, understanding God’s will involves recognition how Christ is the fulfillment of God’s redemptive purposes, how God’s salvation is open to all people, and how God intends for Christians to live in whatever situation they find themselves.” (Garland, 65)

How very different from what many of our prayers address - passing a test, travel mercies, easing a headache, or getting a raise at work. Hear me now - those things are *good* things to pray for; we should pray for such things as necessary. My point is that this is **all the further** most people go with their praying! Our spiritual needs are very great and much longer lasting than our temporal needs.

Last Sunday, we merely noted in passing the man mentioned in **verse 7 of Colossians chapter 1** - Epaphras. He was a remarkable man, and we’ll discuss him further when we get to chapter 4. For now, consider how Paul describes Epaphras in **Colossians 4:12** - “Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

Let's apply this teaching. *Do you pray regularly?* Paul and Timothy prayed for the Colossians without ceasing. *Do you pray at all?*

Reformer Martin Luther once wrote, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing."

Bishop JC Ryle has written, "To be prayerless is to be without God, without Christ, without grace, without hope, without heaven."

*Do you pray for brothers and sisters in Christ, as Paul and Timothy do in this passage?* We don't stop praying for others simply because they've received salvation and become believers in Christ.!

*Do you pray for others' spiritual needs?* We must pray for others to grow in grace, to overcome their strongholds of sin, to resist temptation to sin, to joyfully and thankfully embrace the privileges of being God's redeemed ones in Christ Jesus.

To pray for others is to love them. And we can always give more prayer for, and more love to, others whom Jesus also died for.

**MP2 - Having noticed Paul and Timothy's praying for the Colossian Church, we next see the purpose of their praying.** Verse 10 - "that (they) may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

"Walk" is figurative for "live" (as in "live" a life worthy of the Lord). We should wish our lives would be pleasing to the Lord. *Now, what does pleasing God entail?*

It entails living according to the precepts He lays down in Scripture. To obey His Word is to please God. There are three occasions in the New Testament when God speaks audibly from heaven - Jesus' baptism, His transfiguration, and His address after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. On the first two occasions, God declares that He is pleased with His Son, Jesus:

- **Matthew 3:17** - "...a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
- **Matthew 17:5** - "While he (Peter) was still speaking (to Jesus), behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased..."

The late Dr. RC Sproul wrote of pleasing God, "What higher approval could a man (or woman) enjoy than to know that what he/she has done is pleasing to God? Every Christian should have a passion to please God. We are to delight in honoring Him. It is our own greatest pleasure to please our Redeemer." (Sproul, 9)

"To walk worthily of Christ is to walk in harmony with other Christians; disunity in the churches is unworthy of Him." (Lucas, 38)

Paul lays out the purpose for his praying by four participles in verses 10 & 11:

- **Bearing fruit in every good work**; such fruit as we find in **Galatians 5:22-23** - "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."
- **Growing in the knowledge of God**; I've a sobering illustration to share on this point.

The prince of Grenada, an heir to the Spanish crown, was sentenced to life in solitary confinement in Madrid's ancient prison. Everyone knew that once you were in, you'd never come out alive.

The prince was given one book to read the entire time: the Bible. With only one book to read, he read it hundreds and hundreds of times. The book became his constant companion.

After 33 years of imprisonment, the prince died. When they came to clean out his cell, they found some notes he had written using nails to mark the soft stone of the prison walls.

The notations were of this sort: **Psalms 118:8** is the middle verse of the Bible; **Ezra 7:21** contains all the letters of the alphabet except the letter J; the **ninth verse of the eighth chapter of Esther** is the longest verse in the Bible; no word or name more than six syllables can be found in the Bible.

This man spent 33 years of his life studying the greatest book of all time. He probably memorized chapter upon chapter and could quote large chunks by memory. Yet he could only glean trivia from it. From all we know, he never made any religious or spiritual commitment to Christ. He simply became an expert at Bible trivia.

- **A third participle Paul gives in verse 11, Being strengthened with all power according to God's glorious power**; "Genuine saints should be motivated to carry out God's precepts because they understand that God has provided the power for them to do so." (Beale, 61)
- **Being patient and joyful**. He reiterates two primary characteristics of the life that pleases God in bearing fruit in every good work.

"Living a life worthy of the Lord is a high and difficult calling." (Moo, 97)

Cal Ripken Jr. is the Iron Man of baseball. On September 6, 1995, he broke the record held by Lou Gehrig of 2,130 consecutive games played. Of course, there were days when that consecutive streak was in danger. In a June 1993 game Ripken was involved in a bench-clearing brawl. Ripken twisted his knee, and when he woke up the next morning, he couldn't put weight on it. He told his wife, Kelly, he might not be able to play that night. Just before he left for the ball park, Kelly said, 'Maybe you could just play one inning and then come out.' He snapped, 'No! Either I play the whole game or I don't play at all.'

Ripken did play the full nine innings that night. In fact, he played in 99.2 percent of every Orioles game since the streak began.

In any high pursuit, we face the temptation to lower our standards, to do just enough to get by. Cal Ripken Jr. had committed himself to walk worthy of the title Iron Man.

*Are you committed to continue walking worthy of the Lord, or will you do so for the first time if you haven't been walking with Jesus? It is there for the asking.*