

Colossians 1:9-14

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 October 2018

Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0 : 00] Well, good morning everyone, and great to see you. If you've got a Bible, then please turn back to those verses that Violet read for us in Colossians chapter 1. It says 1 to 8, actually we're going to be 9 to 14 this morning, that's where we're going to be.

Hopefully as you came in you received a little bookmark, which is going to act as a sermon outline this morning, and also give us something really practical that we're going to do with this passage at the end of our time together.

So grab your Bibles, grab the bookmark, and let's pray together. Colossians chapter 1, 9 to 14. Heavenly Father, we ask that you would help us now as we turn to your precious word, to know the leading of your Holy Spirit as he helps us to see something more of the greatness of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, would you instill in us that utter conviction that there is simply none like him. And so we pray in his powerful name. Amen.

I don't know if you're a fan of The Apprentice. How many fans of The Apprentice? A few of us? Yeah? Yeah. So one of Alex and I's favourite programmes to watch on television.

[1 : 17] We love it so much that we actually watch it, and then we watch the... We watch the You're Fired programme afterwards, and I even caught Alex the other night watching the outtakes on his subtitles.

So we are big fans of The Apprentice. So much so that this is the 14th series, and I think we've watched maybe about half of them. So I think we can count ourselves as pretty strong fans.

As usual, this is the 14th series of the programme, and as usual there are some pretty confident, I think it's fair to say, characters who are on the show. And we were watching it the other night, and one of the people that caught my attention on it was this chap whose name is Coyote.

Which is a great name, isn't it? Coyote. So after the programme finished, I went onto The Apprentice website, which is on the BBC, and I looked at his short biography on the BBC website.

So this is what he says about himself, and why he thinks he's going to win. And as I read it to you, I want to ask you, whose glory is he on The Apprentice for?

[2 : 19] You ready for this quote? It's pretty special. And I know it's TV, okay, but still, you've come out with this. Look at this. I'm not here to dazzle-dazzle and hit you with the buzzwords, like, I'm so motivated and I'm so passionate.

Anyone can say those things. But I'm not anyone. I'm Coyote Damali. If you're not your own biggest fan, then who do you expect to be it for you? I thought that would have got at least a kind of laugh or something like that.

I don't know. It's a funny thing to say about yourself. It's so strange, isn't it? And yet here it is in our world, a mindset. Now, here's the question I want to ask you this morning.

Whoever you are here today, whatever's going on in your life, think about your life. Think about the things that you do. Whose glory are you in it for?

Whose glory are you in it for? Whose smile do you crave? Whose opinion do you rate?
Whose applause do you seek? Whose pleasure do you live for?

[3 : 24] So I think that's the question we're going to be confronted with this morning as we look at Paul's prayer. As we get back into this little letter that Paul wrote to this church in Colossae, what we're going to see is Paul prayed that these Christians would be marked by a radically different mindset.

And the headline of Paul's prayer, the thing that he wants more than anything else for them, you'll see it at verse 10, that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way.

That's what he wants for these Christians. That you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way. That's his heart for this church. He prays that their lives would be underpinned by an all-out commitment, not to live for themselves, but to please their Master and King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That they would have a desire stemming from a transformed heart, stemming from a deep love for him, that means in the everyday things of their lives, they're going to live for the glory and the praise, not of themselves, but for Jesus Christ.

That's what he's praying. That's what he wants for this church. And so as we eavesdrop in on this prayer today, it's going to challenge us to ask ourselves if this is our mindset as we live our lives in this world.

[4 : 40] And it's going to equip us as to how we can live a life for God's glory and also how we can best pray for each other that we would be marked by a life that is praiseworthy of Jesus Christ.

And I really hope it encourages us as well to love the Lord Jesus more and like we said last week, if you can remember last week, to grasp that we have a big Jesus who is worthy of all praise.

So when it comes to prayer, verse 9, Paul wants them to know, remember writing to these Christians that he's probably, most likely never met, he wants them to know that he's praying for them.

And do you see it in the text? Not just occasionally, not just when they happen to pop into his head when he's out at the shops, he's praying for them continually from house arrest in Rome.

In fact, he's not stopped praying for them. Do you see it there? Remember, they're always on his mind, they're always in his heart, they're always in his prayers. You see, there's an incredible persistence and a relentlessness to Paul in his prayer life.

[5 : 47] Think about it, how encouraging do you find it when you hear somebody tell you that they are praying for you? I find that one of the most encouraging things in my life. How encouraging must this have been for these Colossian Christians to read?

Paul, Paul, he's praying for us all the time. And he's praying that our lives would please the Lord. And how are they going to do that, verse 9?

By being filled. Do you see? Verse 9, Paul prays that God would fill them. Popular, isn't it, in our society today to hear people talk about how emptying your mind is the key to spiritual progress in life?

I read a quote by Bruce Lee recently, who writes in his book, *Wisdom for Daily Living*, giving advice on how an individual can grow. He says this, Empty your mind, Be formless, Be shapeless, Like water.

Be water, my friends. Be water. Now I've read that about a hundred times since I read it on Tuesday, and I still cannot understand what he's saying. Be water, my friends. Be water. What? But he's a pretty decent martial arts, from what I gather, so I'll probably keep up to myself.

[7 : 02] But do you see how Paul is saying the exact opposite of what Bruce Lee is saying? The key to these Christians growing and developing and maturing is not by the emptying of their minds, but rather, on the contrary, it's by the filling of their minds.

That's how they're going to grow. That's what Paul prays. More particularly, that God would fill their minds, you see in the text, with the knowledge of his will. That the Spirit, as he lives in them, as God's chosen and holy people, set apart for him, as they encounter God and his word, as they get a deeper grasp of the Lord Jesus, that they would know something of the sheer enormity of what God has done for them, and what he calls them to live like is his people.

That's what he prays. And in so doing, that they would come to understand what a life that is pleasing to him looks like. It was Charles Spurgeon who famously said, we hope to understand the truth better, but mark this, we shall never discover better truth.

So let me ask you this morning, are you growing in your knowledge of the Lord? Are you getting to know him better as he has revealed himself in his word?

And is that knowledge, is it leading to the transformation of your mind? That's why I love to sing the chorus that we sometimes sing before we come to God's word.

[8 : 33] We sing, Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds. Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us. truths unchanged since the dawn of time that will echo down through eternity.

That's what Paul is praying for, that they would be transformed by the renewing of their minds, that they would be filled, that God would fill them. And I think he tells them that for their encouragement, yes, but also he wants them to give them a template as to how they can pray for themselves, but also how they can pray for one another.

The brothers and sisters, that they too would live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way. Do you begin to see how this is so relevant for us today as a church family?

And what Paul does next is he doesn't leave them to guess what a life-pleasing to the Lord looks like. He shows them and he tells them specifically what he's praying for. And you'll notice in the text from halfway through verse 10, there's four verbs, four doing words.

And so all I want to do in the time that we have left this morning is I want to look at these four doing words together. That's how I remember what a verb is. I don't know about you, right? I'm looking at it. I'm a teacher here. That's how I remember.

[9 : 47] It's a doing word. It's an active word. He uses four verbs. But we're going to look at these together and then I've got something really practical for us to do this week as we seek to put this into practice in our lives. You ready for the first verb?

The first doing word? Here's the first doing word. First, verse 10, he prays that they would be bearing. He's praying that in their lives they would be producing fruit.

They would be bearing fruit. Because that is how the watching world is going to know that Jesus has truly taken hold of their lives and that they live in him and he lives in them and they know it because they can see the fruit of a transformed life.

Because beforehand, their lives, they were just like our friend and the apprentice. They lived for their own glory. But God has transformed their lives by his grace and now that they live for his glory.

Because that's what God has done, isn't it? In the lives of every believer. Given us new hearts. That's what we read in Jeremiah earlier. He's given us new hearts. We can know him. And the Holy Spirit as he lives inside of us, he makes us hungry for good works that are going to put the glory of our Father on full display to the watching world.

[10 : 57] I don't know if you watched the BBC documentary this week. I realize I've quoted the BBC twice here. There are other channels available, but BBC. And they highlighted the work of Christians against poverty.

Did anyone see that documentary? No? So it's on iPlayer. It's a wonderful watch. And they just went around with a camera crew and they followed the work of Christians against poverty up and down the UK.

Fascinating documentary into the work. Did you know that according to a study that was done at the London School of Economics, Christians Against Poverty, their work, it contributes 31.5 million pounds to our economy each year.

They have 6,000 Christian volunteers, people who bought into the vision and are motivated to share the love and the message of Jesus Christ with people in word and in deed.

6,000 volunteers they've got. And it's estimated that CAP helped 10 people out of debt every day. On their website, Sharon, Sharon, one of their clients, says this, CAP has given me back my husband, my family, my life, and my faith, which my debt had taken hostage.

[12 : 08] This is Christians Against Poverty that we saw this week in the news. What a wonderful example of what it means to bear fruit for the glory of the Lord Jesus. And I was with some students from Heriot-Watsey on Thursday night and we were looking at that passage in 1 Peter 2 that though the world accuses you of doing wrong, they will see your good deeds and they will glorify God on the day he visits us.

That's what their prayer as a CU was for them. And it's my prayer for us as a church that we would be marked by good works. That's what he's praying for this Colossian community, that they would be on the front foot when it comes to good works that bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ in the eyes of the watching world.

And it's not an encouraging thought today, friends, that God is pleased with good works that his people do for his glory as they live for an audience of one.

Isn't it not a tremendously wonderful thought that I can please the Lord Jesus in my everyday, mundane, nothing spectacular, going through the mill, everything ordinary life?

I can bring him glory through that. Isn't it? And when you begin to see life like that, as Paul prays here, do you see how our whole lives become worship to him?

[13 : 24] Paul prays that these Colossians would be bearing in their lives. Here's the second verb, the second thing that he prays for, verse 10, they're growing. Paul prays that they would grow, that they would mature, that they would develop, that they would increase in what?

The knowledge of God. Not, not the right of the super spiritual as the false teachers behind this letter are probably teaching, but the privilege of every single Christian that we can grow in our knowledge of our Father.

He prays and asks that God, asks God that these believers would come to know him better. Who he is, what he's like, what he's done, what he's doing. Isn't that a wonderful thought? That God has made himself knowable?

The God who created all things has made himself knowable. He's done so most fully in the person of his son Jesus Christ who we'll see next week is the image of the invisible God and he's done so through his words.

That's how we can know God. Let me ask you, what role does God's word play in your daily life? Have you got a hunger to know him? A hunger for his words?

[14 : 40] J.I. Parker, theologian, says this, if I were the devil, which always gets your attention in a quote, doesn't it? If I were the devil, one of my first aims would be to stop Christians from reading the Bible.

Evangelist Vance Herver, a Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't. Paul prays that these Christians would be growing, but not simply just in facts about God.

He prays that they would grow in a personal and intimate knowledge of their father. You know, the late Anglican minister and lecturer, John Stott, he was once asked what his biggest fear for his students was.

So the students that would come to study under him. And he always said that his biggest fear was that many of his students would leave with a doctorate in Jesus Christ, but they wouldn't leave as disciples of Jesus Christ.

In other words, they would go from talking about God in the second person to the third person. Paul is praying here that these Christians would grow in their knowledge, intimate, relational knowledge of God.

[15 : 46] Let me ask you, just growing, does it describe your Christian walk today? Or would you pick a word more like static or comfortable or lukewarm?

It would be a wonderful thing to pray this morning, wouldn't it, that today we would be marked by this growing. Grab someone today and pray with them that that would be true for you. Ask them to pray for you this week. Here's the third verb, the third thing that Paul prays for, verse 11, that they would be being, being strengthened.

Do you see? That they would know the power of God in their lives, the same power that we were just singing about that raised Jesus from the grave would be at work in their lives, giving them strength.

And what is that power going to enable them to do? Well, somewhat surprisingly, Paul tells them that the power of God at work in their lives won't manifest itself in spectacular signs, which I'm sure some in the background of this letter are saying.

The power of God at work in their lives is going to manifest itself in those wonderful two words, endurance and patience. Endurance and patience.

[16 : 58] That God would give them the power in the Christian life to just keep on going, keep on enduring, keep on persevering, keep on running the Christian race. That he would give them the power to stay the course, to go the distance and have their eyes fixed on everything that Jesus has accomplished for them and have their eyes and their hearts fixed on the glory that is ahead of them because of Jesus Christ.

No matter how hard life gets in the presence, that's what he's praying for. Endurance patience and patience. I was reading this week about one of America's greatest ever hymn writers whose name was Annie J. Flint.

I don't know if you've ever heard of Annie J. Flint. Her life story was one of great suffering. She was orphaned and adopted at a very young age. She suffered from rheumatoid arthritis which plagued her most of her life.

She had cancer that was eating inside of her, eating away and as she grew older, blindness was beginning to set in and she spent the last few years of her life in bed covered in sores.

But she was a woman of deep faith and a saint whose life was marked by great endurance. And one of the most beautiful hymns she ever wrote went like this.

[18 : 19] When we have exhausted our store of endurance, when our strength has failed and the day is half done, when we reach the end of our hoarded resources, our Father's full giving has only begun.

Fear not that your needs will exceed his provision. Our God ever yearns his resources to share, so lean hard on his arm everlasting availing.

The Father, both you and your load will up bear. It's not a wonderful hymn considering the woman who penned it and who loved it and who lived it and who believed it, that God's provision will never, we will never out, our needs will never exceed his provision.

That's what she's saying in our life. And on Thursday we celebrated the life of our dear sister Elma at our funeral. At the beginning of the day I went to Derek's house and with the rest of the family together we read Psalm 46.

That our God is a refuge and a strength and he's an ever-present help in times of trouble. And we spent the day celebrating that Elma knew the truth of that psalm and that despite her suffering, her faith was resolute and she was a saint who was marked by, and this came across so clearly, by great endurance and great patience.

[19 : 50] And for her it's now far better. You see, that's what he's praying that Christians would be marked by. Endurance and patience. That God wouldn't take them around hard times, but rather they would know their father more as he gives them the power and as he takes them through hard times.

See, Paul prays that they would be marked by endurance and a patience, one that puts on display to the world that there's something far bigger that we're living for in life than just material stuff.

Paul prays that they would be being, finally he prays that, verse 12, that they would be giving. He prays that their lives would be marked by thanksgiving, and that their joy would be derived not from the changing up and down circumstances of their lives, but a joy that is steadfast because it's derived from the God that they worship and the God who will never change.

God has qualified them. Do you see that language in the text? He's qualified them. Let me ask you, when was the last time you qualified for something? Think about it in your life, when was the last time you qualified for something?

I had my mom on the phone the other day and she was thrilled that my dad now qualifies for a free bus pass. That's what he qualified for. It's amazing, isn't it, how excited Scots get about free things.

[21 : 14] That was my mom. But God has qualified you, says Paul. It's kind of what the kids talk was about, wasn't it? God's qualified you, not for the final of the egg and spoon race.

He's qualified you for him. For him. The holy and righteous God. Think about that. How can I qualify for him?

The only thing that I've qualified myself for is his wrath, his righteous anger against my sin against him. That's the only thing that I've qualified myself for. Only one person deserved to qualify for him.

And that was Jesus. But Jesus dealt with my sin on the cross. He took the punishment that I deserved upon myself. And I'm accredited with his righteousness.

Righteousness just being his perfect, God- glorifying, obedient life. And when God looks at me now, he sees my life as being hidden in Christ.

[22 : 18] That's just what God has done for us. He's qualified us. Do you see that? They didn't qualify themselves. God has qualified them for a race that they had absolutely no interest in running.

And God has won for them through Christ a prize that they had no interest in getting. And a prize that on their own, they had no chance of winning. He's qualified them for himself.

That's the gift of the gospel, isn't it? Not stuff. It's God. And the hope of being with him in heaven where with the rest of God's ransomed people, we have an inheritance before us that is far greater than we will ever begin to comprehend down here.

What incredible grace. And later in chapter 2, speaking about the false teachers, Paul will say, do not let them disqualify you for something that God has qualified you for.

Do not let them disqualify you. God's qualified you and he's rescued you from the domain of darkness. That's where they were before.

[23 : 22] Living like everyone else in the world, chasing the same dreams, thinking the same thoughts, captive to their sin, but Jesus broke in. He broke into their lives. He smashed in and he brought them.

Do you see the language? He brought them. Think about it. It's like a firefighter rescuing a child from a burning building and taking them to safety. That's the imagery here. God has brought them out of the darkness and he's placed them with sins forgiven and freedom purchased into the kingdom of light of the son that he loves.

That's what God has done for his people. What an incredible thing that God has done for his people in the gospel. Paul prays that these Christians would be bearing, growing, being, and giving.

These are the things that will please their master Jesus Christ. So let me ask you as we work towards a close this morning, I wonder as you, as you read Paul's prayer here, how it challenges your prayer life.

not just your prayer life, but our prayer life. Because this has greatly challenged me as I studied it this week. As I thought about how often my prayers are simply requests to God for things in my life and things in others' lives to get easier and to get better.

[24 : 51] Now friends, there is nothing wrong with praying those things, and because we love each other, we should be praying those things. But if that's all we're praying, then I think we might be missing it. So here's my challenge as we work, as we come to a close this morning.

Hopefully you got a prayer sheet on your way in as you came in this morning. And you'll see at the bottom of it, if you have it there, it just says, I'm praying for. I'm praying for, it's all it says.

So here's what I want you to do before you go this morning. I want you to write down the names of three people down there that you're going to pray for this week. And I want you to find them this morning. I want you to let them know that you're praying for them, and you're going to commit to praying for them, and you're going to pray, this is how my mind works, okay, you're going to pray the BGs for them.

Yeah? You're going to pray that they would be bearing fruit this week. I'm going to pray that you would be growing in your knowledge of God this week, that he would give you wisdom to know how to act in every single situation.

I'm going to pray that you will be strengthened by God in your life so that when tough times come, and they will come, you will have the endurance and the patience by God's power to keep on going, and I'm going to pray that your life would be marked by thanksgiving, and the Holy Spirit as he works in your life would make what Jesus has done for you a source of constant joy.

[26 : 15] and overall, I'm going to pray for you, that your life this week, you would know and live a life that is fully pleasing to God.

Are you up for that? Yeah? A few of you nodded. Yeah, let's do it this week. How counter-cultural would that be for us? How, do you not think that would change things if we began to pray for each other like that?

That we would be bearing and growing and being and giving as a community together this morning. There's your BG's challenge, okay? Take it up.

We'll all take it up this week. Find three people this morning and say, I'm going to commit to praying for you this week. As we close, here's another quote from The Apprentice that I read this week, and it's just as good.

I have the beauty and the brains. Typically, people only have one, but I was blessed with both in abundance. Friends, Paul is saying to these Christians and Colossians, he's praying that they would be marked by a completely different mindset, and that they would be a people who live not for their own glory, that they would be a people who are marked by a passion and a love to live their lives for the glory of the Savior and King Jesus Christ who has saved them.

[27 : 32] Paul prays that they would be marked by a life that is worthy of the Lord and a life that pleases Him in every way. Valley of Vision, let me close with this prayer from the Valley of Vision.

It's also a song that we sing sometimes here. Help me now to live a life that's dependent on your grace. Keep my heart and guard my soul from the evils that I face.

You are worthy to be praised with my every thought and deed. O great God of highest heaven, glorify your name through me. Let's make that our prayer this week.

Let me pray as we close. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for today. And we ask this week that you would, in our lives, help us to be people that glorify you and who live for your pleasure alone.

That we would be your people who are marked by an overflowing love for you. And Father God, by your spirit and through your son, would you help us to get to know you better?

[28 : 42] Father, thank you for the great love which you have shown us. And so we praise you and we pray to you knowing that you hear us because we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.