



Message **Transcript**

Praying for Maturity

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Thank you so much for choosing to worship with us today. And as we continue our worship, let's prepare our hearts to hear the living and active word of our Lord Jesus Christ. Will you pray with me, please? Lord Jesus, we thank you that we are able to gather, and that when we gather and your word is proclaimed Lord, that you speak. And so our prayer this morning is speak Lord for your servants are ready to hear.

Because Lord, we believe that whether this is our first time ever in a church service or first time we've ever heard preaching or Lord whether we've heard it over and over our entire life, that every time that the word is accurately proclaimed, you speak directly to us. Lord, let us hear what you have to say. Lord, we desire to own who we are in you and our identity. We desire to put in practice the very things you show us Lord, so that you can get more glory out of our lives. And now for all of God's people who are ready to hear God speak directly to you, to hear who He says you are, to believe it and put it into practice agree with me by very loudly saying the word, amen. Amen.

Hey, 30 years ago this fall, my parents dropped me off at college, and that's painful to say. And when they did, I remember right where we were when it all finalized and took place. I played football, and so our coaching staff had met with all the parents of freshmen and told them what they could expect and all these different things, and then they gave time for the parents to go out, say goodbye to their kids before they drove away.

And I remember standing there, my dad was there, my mom, my two sisters and my little brother, and my dad started to get choked up. And then my sister's shoulders started shaking and my mom had tears in her eyes and everybody's ready to hug this goodbye. And I remember saying like, "Why y'all crying? I going to see next week." Because they had season tickets and I'm like, "It's just a week away." And I was used to being on my own and enjoying the independence but what I didn't realize then that I realized now is they were getting in a car and going back home and our family had changed.

And while they had been wanting me to grow up and send me off, there was part of the send off that was painful to see as I was maturing. I was reminded of this yesterday, my nephew, my oldest nephew, my sister's firstborn child went off to school, and so I was on a text thread yesterday with grandparents and aunts and uncles and everybody feeding into this thing, talking about what it was like and it was different for me. Because I remember when Mitch was born, holding him shortly after, minutes after he was born. And for years we prayed for him and they prayed for him and they parented him. And at the place where it was bittersweet and I saw it from a different perspective.

Because was thinking yesterday, my sister cried when I left, I know she was born yesterday. But it's what we had been wanting to see in him and it was exciting to watch him mature and grow. And when you bring a baby home from the hospital, that's what you want to see. You want to see them develop into all that they're supposed to be.

The same is true in the Christian life. There's nothing like new birth, to see somebody a born again by the spirit of God, to see somebody repent of their sins and trust Jesus, there's nothing like knowing, wow that person's a believer. But it's just as important as they come to Christ, that we watch them grow in Christ and become all that God wants them to be. And that they are maturing in Christ and that they know Christ and that are living for Christ.

The question becomes, how is it someone can become that and how is it we can help facilitate that? And today that's what we're going to take a look at in God's word. If you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up to Colossians 1. We're going to be in verses nine through 14. And as we look at these verses today, what you're going to see unpacked in these verses is what does maturity look like and how can we as believers pray for the maturity in other people?

Because we've already taken a look at prayer here a couple weeks ago, how prayer changes everything, and God's given us a responsibility in the lives of other believers that when we pray for other people the things that God wants us to pray, that we can see maturity in the lives of other people. And so that's what we're going to take a look at today. So let's look at these verses and then let's unpack them together.

Paul says, "For this reason also since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord to please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing

in the knowledge of God. Strengthened with all power according to His glorious might for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously giving thanks to the father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints. For He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved son in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins."

And as Paul is writing to this church that he's never been to before, where he's aware of their faith in Christ and the love they have for the saints, he is writing and he's praying for them to grow and mature into everything that God would want them to be. And here's what he says. "For this reason also." And you might say, well, for what reason? Go back to verse four. The reason that since we heard of your faith in Christ and love what you have for all the saints.

We talked about this last week in detail, that salvation comes when you place your faith alone in Christ alone. There are no other gods. There's the Lord Jesus Christ and that's it. He is the way, the truth and the life, and that when you place your faith and trust in Jesus, something else takes place. That because he comes to and dwell you and live in you, you will have a love for all of the Christians like you never had before. You'll love the body of Christ.

And since Paul heard of their faith in Christ and the love that they have for all the saints, he's been praying for them, but here's what he says. "For this reason also since the day that we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be." Now notice this, Paul's not stopping praying. To not cease means to not stop. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5, "Pray without ceasing." It doesn't mean he doesn't eat. It

doesn't mean he doesn't get dressed. Doesn't mean he doesn't shower. It means this. No matter what the circumstances are, I'll never stop praying these things for you. No matter what happens and what it looks like, no matter what circumstances come your way, I will always continue to pray.

Now, why is that important? Because as a Christian, when you begin to pray for other people, the devil will tell you to stop praying for them. They've gone too far now. You've been praying for them to walk with Jesus and they're still doing drugs. You've been praying to walk with Jesus and their marriage is still a mess. You've been praying for them to walk with Jesus and their finances are still all messed up. Just stop praying. Here's what Paul says, "I will never stop praying for you to become all that God wants you to be." As long as I have breath in my lungs and as long as you're still alive, I will continually pray for you."

That's an important principle for us as Christians. Because if we're going to talk about praying for maturity in the lives of other people, it means we can't give up on this thing. This is not a one and done microwave prayer, Lord help them mature. Amen. If they do, they do. If they don't, they don't. I already prayed that. This is a consistent prayerful, I'm going after God. I'm praying for him to intercede. And isn't it interesting in our Bible that says, Jesus today, what's He doing now? What's Jesus doing now? He's on the throne and he lives to make intercession for us. He's praying for us.

So to have the heart of God means we're going to pray for maturity in the lives of other saints. And notice what he says. He's not set up to cease to pray for them and to

ask. Those are two different words, both meaning prayer. Prayer is the general word for prayer. Ask supplication to ask specific requests for, that they may be what? That they may be filled with the knowledge of His will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding. That means this. We're going to talk about four ways that we can pray for maturity in the lives of believers. And I'm just going to encourage you to write these things down because if you can get these things written down and you can begin to engage in this, it will be a blessing to your life.

And the first is this, pray for believers to be controlled by God's desires and direction. Pray for other believers, pray for the saints in Christ to be controlled by God's desires and His direction for what he would want in their life. Now, this word controlled, it's going to sound prickly to you. I know it does. I don't want to be controlled by anybody. I don't want to be controlled by anything. Don't pray that I be controlled.

But if you look at this word, ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will. That word, filled play role, is the same word you have in Ephesians 5:18. I pray that you would no longer be drunk on wine, which leads to dissipation, but you would be filled with the spirit, means this. It means that you'd be controlled by the spirit. To be controlled by means that you're empowered by someone other than yourself.

As we've talked on this pulpit before, if you ever seen someone under the influence, they might have behaviors or attitudes that are different than who they are. Perhaps they act in a way that makes you exceptionally sad. Or perhaps they act in a way that makes you exceptionally disappointed. And perhaps they act in a way that

makes you exceptionally angry. Or perhaps they act in a way that makes you laugh because of what they're behaving like. And here's what you would say. It's not them who's doing it. It's the substance that's controlling them.

In the same way, Paul is praying for them to be controlled by what? The spirit. Now we see these words, knowledge, wisdom and understanding. What's he pray first? For the knowledge of His will. Well, we got to know what God's will is. What's God's will? God's will is that you would know the Lord Jesus Christ and serve Him only. And God's will is as a result of that, that you would follow Him in all of his ways. That's God's will for every single believer's life.

And what's he praying for? He's praying for the knowledge of this will. Now knowledge here, this word being used is far more than just academic understanding. This word is coming out of personal engagement with Him that gives you the knowledge for what it is. And you might ask, "Well, where am I going to get this knowledge? How am I going to know what God wants for me? How am I going to know how to relate to Him?" I'm so glad that you ask. It's this book right here.

We've said this from this pulpit many times, this book is made up of 66 books, from Genesis through Revelation. This book is inherent, which means it has no errors in it. It's true. It's authoritative. What this book says is always right even when you don't feel like it's right. What this book says is true even when you don't understand that it's true. This book will always trump what you say, think or feel. And here's what the Bible says, "The grass withers and the flowers fade but the word of our Lord stands

forever." Not one jot of this book will ever change.

That heavens and earth may pass away, but Jesus said, "My word will never pass away." That's why we preach the word. So if you want to know what God wants, you have to know what His word says and you have to believe what it says. There's a knowledge component to what we get. Then he says this, "The knowledge of His will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding." This is insight. Wisdom is to taking that knowledge and practically applying it in your life. That's what wisdom is. I know what He wants and now I'm going to do something with it. Understanding comes third once you have a knowledge of what God wants and you've put it into practice over a period of time and then you're like, "Oh, that's how marriage works. I see it differently now than I did 20 years ago."

Just because you have knowledge doesn't mean you know how to put it into practice. And it's having knowledge, putting it into practice and gaining understanding over time, and that's what Paul's praying for these Christians. He's praying for them to know who God is and what His direction and His discernment is for their life. It's like this. When we're young in our faith, we don't like being controlled. No, don't don't do that.

It reminds me when my son was four. When we would go on trips when my son was four, we bought him a special backpack. This backpack that he used to call a pack pack. It was a monkey. And you put the backpack on, it was like any other backpack, except for this monkey had about an eight-foot tail, which had a handle on it and functioned as a leash. And we loved that backpack more than he did. Because

what it allowed us to do while he thought it was a cool backpack, it allowed us to keep a distance of eight feet around everywhere he went, because we were concerned when he was four, he may go somewhere he didn't need to go and would never see him again, which on most days was a concern of ours. So we would have that.

But the purpose of having the backpack on him was not permanent. The idea wasn't, man, when he's 16, we're going to have to buy a bigger one of these. This is going to be ... It wasn't that idea. The idea was that while he's young and he's learning his boundaries, that he would be controlled by someone that cares for him in such a way that he would want to listen more as he matured. In the same way, that's what it means to be controlled by the spirit. God wants you to be close to him because if you truly understand that God's word always brings out God's best and you really want to be around God, the reason the Holy Spirit, when you're young and your faith, is convicting you of things that you don't want to be convicted about, is because he's trying to draw you to Himself.

And if you get to a place, once you've been living this way, where you're like, "Man, God's way is the best." Then He knows, no matter where you go, you're going to seek Him. What's Paul's prayer for the Colossian church? My prayer for them is that they would have the knowledge of His will, that they would know that God's will is best and that they would be willing to apply that with great wisdom and put it into practice. And that over time they would have incredible understanding about my ways being better than their ways. It's like anything in life. Just because you take a driver's head course in the classroom does not make you a good driver.

Amen.

You ever driven on I-25 around here? Just because you get an A in the classroom doesn't mean you know how to drive. Just because you think you're an expert on sports and go to a game doesn't mean that you could actually be on the field doing it. Just because you have not of what to do doesn't mean that you would have the wisdom to skillfully apply it. See, but once you have knowledge and then you have the wisdom to skillfully apply it, then you're going to have understanding on some things that maybe nobody else has.

That's why I love talking to people who've been married for a long period of time, who have been honoring Jesus in their marriage, because they may understand what oneness is, they may understand what it means for a man to lead his wife. They may understand what it means for a woman to submit to her husband. They may have been trying to apply it for 30, 40 or 50 years. But when they've been at it for a while and you ask them questions, they have understanding about that in a way that newlyweds have no clue. Amen.

And this is what Paul's praying for them. He's praying maturity for them. He say, "I'm praying that grow in the understanding of God's desires for you and His direction for your life, that you'd have all sorts of spiritual insight and that you'd listen to Him and you'd trust Him." Let me give you some ways that you can do. I'll give you three. If you want to grow in this, this is what you want to be. This is what you want to be praying for others. The first is this, that you would fear the Lord. That you would fear the Lord.

If you go back to the Book of Proverbs, he uses the words oftentimes, knowledge and wisdom interchangeably. But Proverbs 1:7 says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. Well, how about Proverbs 10:9, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the holy one is understanding." What's he talking about, the fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord. It means this, that you would fear of the Lord. That you would recognize that He's all sovereign, that He's all good, that He's King of kings, that he's Lord of lords, that there is no other. To fear the Lord.

There's nothing wrong with having a healthy fear of God. It means that you hold Him in reverence and awe. That He's way bigger than you. And however big your view of God is, He's bigger than that. I promise you, we're limited by our small view of what we think God is. And I've said before, often times when I'm driving in from Castle Rock to the church and am looking west at the mountain, I think for a moment, if the father had a body, which he doesn't, the father, spirit. This is just me thinking, and he had a body and he opened up His eye, it would go over the entire front range. His eyelashes would just go [inaudible 00:15:22].

And that's not even as big as God is. He's way bigger than that. But my point is our view of God is not big enough. And so when we get cavalier about God, the reason that we get cavalier about God is because we don't realize how vast and awesome and big and mighty our God is. So fear the Lord. Recognize, you're going to give an answer to that being. That's who we're answering to.

Second is this, obey the Lord. Obey the Lord. Several places we could go. I think about Romans 12:2 this week when I was studying, where it says this. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you'll be able to prove what the will of God is, which is good and acceptable and perfect. It means this. When God begins to show you in His word ways he wants you to live, it's not for dialogue, it's not for debate, it's not for more prayer on. It just means when you know this is what it is, do it. Put it into practice. This is what God showed me. It's clear in His word. I'm going to do this. This is uncomfortable.

And as you fear the Lord and you obey the Lord, you will do this third one. You will experience the Lord. Because when we're talking about fearing the Lord and obeying the Lord, we're not talking about a distant God. Oftentimes when I grew up in church, my view of God is this. God's way out there, we're way down here. If we pray, He'll hear it way out there and then hopefully He'll do something way down here. That's not the God of the Bible.

The Bible tells me that God is everywhere. Jesus Christ is alive. He's present. He's here. He's among us through His spirit. He's as alive as He's ever been. And when we fear Him and when we obey Him, we get to experience Him in a way that we never thought possible. Once you get a taste of that, and taste and see that the Lord is good, you can't go back to religious happenings just for the sake of religious happenings. Because you want to experience the person in work of Jesus.

And every time you fear Him and you obey Him, you get to experience Him in

your heart saying, that's it. You did it. Look at how you're growing. That's awesome. Thanks for letting me come out of your life and do that. And the reality is, as I've already said, God's word is true. Everything about God's word is true. When you hear somebody preach something, if it doesn't align with God's word, no matter how wonderful or personable that person is, they're wrong. They're wonderfully wrong too.

The word of God is true, but I want to tell you something about God. The more you fear Him and the more you obey Him, the more you walk in His ways, the more you can experience Him subjectively. The more you can hear His voice, that you know aligns with His word. Psalms 25:14 says this, "The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him and He will make known to them His covenant." Do you know the more you walk in obedience of the Lord, the more you fear the Lord, the more God gives you revelation about who He is and about His word and how to walk with Him. And the more you taste, that the more you want it and the more you fear Him and the more you want to obey Him. That's what continues to go on.

So what's Paul praying for? Paul's praying for them to be controlled by the spirit of God in such a way that they would have the knowledge of His will, that they would have all spiritual them and applying it, they'd have great understanding of who God is and they would always walk in His ways. That's what he's praying. Now you think about that. How long would it take you to pray that for somebody? How long? I don't know the answer.

Used to be like for me, "Hey Jeff, pray that I would know God's will in my life."
"Okay Bill. Dear Jesus, I pray that bill would know your will. Amen." But when you start

praying this way, I'm praying over every area in your life. Lord, that he would have knowledge of what it means to be a husband, that he would have knowledge of what it means to be a dad, that you'd give him insights and practical ways that he could grow in his understanding of how to do that.

And Lord that he would steward all his resources the way that you would desire him to do. And that Lord, his job would be a real reflection of you. And Lord, even in those things he's uncertain about, Lord that you bring certainty to those things and he grow in such understanding that he'd be so compelled to tell people, this is the ways of the Lord and this is how you walk in the ... You could continue to pray that for one person for days, weeks, months and even years.

Because the reality of maturity is this, when does someone mature? Let me ask you this, when are you done maturing? Never. You never graduate from the school of discipleship. There's no place that you plateau. It's always grow. So who is it that's a believer that you cannot pray for? Who's a believer? They're so great in their faith. I don't need to pray for them anymore. No, everybody needs to grow. I just encourage you this week. Just think about ways that you can begin to pray for others and being controlled by God's desires and direction.

Because here's what happens. If God has a hold of someone, he's going to take him in the way they need to go, that's a beautiful thing. See, when people get scared of allowing people to be led by the Lord, what do they do? They form all sorts of legalism. Because now I got to tell you what to do. I got to keep controlling you. I got

to keep you in tight because what if you do something wrong? No, I just want you to be controlled by the spirit of God and you go anywhere He wants you to go and you honor Him anywhere He takes you.

That's how we pray. We pray for believers to be controlled by God's desires and His direction. Secondly, we pray this way. What's the purpose for all that? Why would we want them to go God's way? For this reason, verse 10, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord to please Him in all respects. So secondly, we want to pray for believers to be honoring to the Lord in all areas of life. We want to pray for believers to be honoring to the Lord in all areas of their life.

It's not enough just to be controlled and know, hey, this is where God's leading me. But if He's leading you that way, why? So that God will get honor from your life in every single thing that you do. Notice what he says, "Walk in a manner wordy of the Lord." You'll see that word in the new Testament and a lot of different places. Another place you see it is in the book of Ephesians 4:1. Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling which you have been called. What does it mean to walk, walk, walk? What's his walk. How's your walk brother? How's your walk sister?

It means this. How are you living with Jesus? If Christ is in you living His life through you, how's that relationship walking out? Is Jesus able to walk out His life through your life in such a way where people know that you're a follower of Him? Like how's your walk? Is Jesus able to do in and through you, everything He's ever wanted to do in and through you? How's your walk. Here's why you want to know God's will in

His direction to be controlled by His spirit so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Jesus. Meaning that you would honor Him in every single area of your life. Now, why is that important?

Because for many of us as Christians, we think about church as the place that we want to honor God. So Sunday mornings, we got to dress different, we got to talk different. Don't say that in church, don't act that way in church, don't run in church, don't do this in church. Now, outside church, do whatever the heck you want because it don't matter. But in church, we got all these rules. Here's what he's saying, and I want you to walk in a manner that no matter where you are and no matter who you're with, that 100% of the time, you're living for Jesus.

Now, why is that important? I want to tell you about a creature in our culture. It's called a chameleon. You're familiar with these guys? This creature has the ability to change colors on demand for different situations that it's in. Some of them specifically change color to protect themselves and to hide themselves so they cannot be seen by those who would be hostile to them. If I was a chameleon, I could turn silver right now and hide behind or you wouldn't see me. I'd blend in with the background because I don't want you to see me be hostile to me.

We have a lot of chameleon Christians. We have a lot of Christians that on Sunday morning, they come praise the Lord, raise their hand, clap, give their offering, read their Bibles, "Praise God, Pr. Jeff. That's awesome." But Monday through Saturday, they're chameleons. Because pending on who they're with, they're going to

change their color to be not seen. They know that if they're with their family acting this way, there's hostility so they're changing their color. They know that if they're in the workplace and they act like this, they're going to change their color. So they change who they are based on where they're at so they're not honoring to the Lord in all areas of their life.

Here's the thing. Jesus Christ wants to put you on display and be put on display in every relationship, every situation, every entity that you have. It means when you're praying for believers, you're praying that they would honor God with their money, relationships, marriage, parenting, family, vacations. Wherever they go, in whatever they're doing, they'd be honoring to the Lord in all areas, so that anytime Jesus Christ can pour His glory and his grace through them, and they can say, "Man, that person's living for Jesus." That's what we want to pray.

And I would say this, just I don't have statistics on this. I don't see everybody. I would say if we took a poll of Christians and say, how many really try their best to live it out in all areas of their life? It would be a comparatively small percentage. But the reality is God wants us to be put on display all the time. Think about it like this. It used to be when you took photos, you had to go to a place and have them developed. And then once you had them developed, then many people would put together what they called a photo album.

What they would do is they would take their photos from what they wanted, they would choose the best of those photos and they would put them in the album, and then they would set the album out. Perhaps at your house you have a photo album set out.

Maybe it's of your wedding or maybe it's of a vacation or maybe it's one of your children were born. You have a photo album. And they're pictures that are so good. You not only want to keep them to yourself. You want everybody else to see. But you're very selective about what you put in there.

There may be pictures that got taken of you that you didn't want taken of you that get put in the back file or got ripped up and thrown away. Now we don't have photo albums as much as we have social media. So we take pictures of everything then we post it on social media. And so people get a picture, we don't post everything on social media, but we post what we want people to see about us on social media thing and say, that's who they are. But we never post everything.

We don't have everybody follow us around 100% of the time posting every single thing that happens. Because there's probably areas in our life and I don't want that posted. I wouldn't want them to see what I'm like there in private. I wouldn't want them to see that. That's uncomfortable. And every now and again on social media, something gets taken and gets posted to Instagram that somebody didn't want to get posted to Instagram.

And then it's a big bru-haha, because somebody's I didn't want, I didn't know how to. Here's what you need to know. Everything you do, everywhere you go, God has an Instagram account with you. He sees it all. So the point is no matter where you do, no matter where you go, Paul's praying that you would never have to hide any of your pictures. Because God wants you to be living out in such a way that anybody can see

what you do and in areas that you're falling short, what people would see is I'm repenting of this because that isn't what I was supposed to do and that hurts my heart. I shouldn't have lived like that. That's what it looks like.

And so, when we're praying for other believers, we begin to pray for ourselves. And notice what he says. And we'd please him in all respects, bearing good fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Now last week we talked about bearing fruit, that you can bear fruit. All Christians to some extent bear fruit, but then you can bear more fruit or you can bear much fruit. And Paul's talking about this increasing in the knowledge of God, for every single good work.

Now can I just talk about good works for a second? I believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with your works. I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ says there's no one good, no, not one. I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ says, it's not like try to be a good person and then God will come through and fill in the rest. I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ says you're dead in your transgressions and sins. There's nothing you can do to get to God. The only way that you can ever be saved is that God came to you. Has nothing to do with you, it has everything to do with what Jesus did, by dying for you, being risen, making Himself available, revealing Himself by faith in you choosing Him. That's it.

But just because that's true, for by grace, we have been saved through faith, it's not your own doing, it's a gift of God so no one should boast, works still count. Because Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good work works, which God prepared beforehand so that you would walk in

them." So you weren't saved by your good works but you were saved for good works. You were saved so that God could put you on display to allow His son to live through you in such a way that the world would know that Jesus Christ is still alive. Works count. Works matter.

I'm afraid in the evangelical church in America so often we talk about grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, that when it comes to doing good works, he's like, "Grace. I'm forgiven anyway. I'm going to heaven. What difference does it make?" Here's the difference it makes. That we miss opportunities for God to work in our life to the full extent and measure that He wants. What we miss out is a growing relationship with Jesus Christ that stirs our heart and gives us confidence to continue in you to walk it out. What we miss is the world seeing a true picture of what Jesus looks like with joyous saints that are walking His way.

Works count. What's he praying for? I'm not praying you'd be saved by your good works, but I'm praying so that you would live in abundant good works and increase in this knowledge of God. And what's this knowledge? This knowledge is this personal experience with God where I'm growing in Him and I know him and I'm applying Him. And I understand Him and I have spiritual insight in a way I never used to have. So how can we pray for someone like that? Just the same way Paul did.

Lord, I'm praying for Susie. I pray that she walks in a manner worthy of the gospel of Jesus. I pray that in every way in her life, she glorifies you. Lord, I'm aware

that over here, she's really struggling right now. I'm aware here that she really doesn't feel like she's well, but I'm going to continue to pray for her until I see you get a hold of her life and do something great, because I believe you want do something awesome in her. And we're praying for God's work to be done in other people. And it's hard to pray for other people to increase in the knowledge and grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ when you're not increasing in the knowledge and grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ. How can you pray for somebody else something you're not willing to do?

Lord, let them all mature at BRAVE Church. I don't have any desire to as their pastor, but I hope I pastor a great church where people love Jesus a lot. It's incongruent. It doesn't even make sense. Now, we're praying in such a way that we want to see realizing other people what we want to see realize in ourself. That's why when it comes to discipleship, even the Apostle Paul at the end of Philippians 4:9 he says, "These things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things and the God peace will be with you." Practice what things, Paul? What you have seen, what you have learned, what you have heard, what you've watched me do.

In other words, Paul wasn't like this, like some of us are. Do as I say, not as I do. Just do as I say, not as I do. Paul was like, do as I do. Be imitators of me as I am in Christ. Do what you see me doing. If you do what you see me doing, the God of peace will be with you. Here's why, because I'm walking in the things of God. And where I'm off, I'm repenting. So walk in the way that you see me. Now for most Christians, we would say, "No, I'm going to pray that prayer. I don't want to tell my

friends in my small group, 'Hey, just walk like you see me walk.'" That's what God would want all of us as believers to be able to say.

And in areas that we can't say it, we will be saying, "God, let your Holy Spirit change me in that area so I can tell people, follow me in this way." Men, we should be able to say, you want to be a good husband? Just do what I do. You want to be a good dad? Just do what I do. Women, if you want to be a good wife, do what I do. You want to be a good mom? Do what I do. Hey, you want to be a good single? Do what I do. You want to be a good student? Do what I do. Because I'm a Christian and this is what I'm responsible to Jesus, for being a reflection of what he wants me to be.

And we get uncomfortable with that. God doesn't want us to be uncomfortable with that. God doesn't say, be perfect as I am perfect. Only Jesus could say that. Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. None of us can say. I'm not perfect, you're not perfect, we're never going to be perfect. But we want to walk in a way that pleases the Lord in all areas of our life so that people are following us to the extent that we're following the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen?

We want to be controlled by Him. We want to honor Him in all areas of our life increasing. And then notice this in verse 11, I love this. Pray this for others, that they would be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might. Amen. Now this is fun now, right? Now we're getting to the good part. Just out of curiosity, answer with me aloud, how much power does God have?

All power.

All power. He is all powerful. He doesn't need to go resource out His power. He doesn't need to go to a power mill. He doesn't need to go get any. He's got it all. And He wants to dispense power according to, not out of, but according to what? He wants to be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might. Now, if God gave out of something, it means that He's going to lose some of it. You see in Philippians 4:19, that God would supply all of your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ.

It means He doesn't give out of His glory riches. Because if He gave out of His glory riches, it means God only has so much riches, and then He gives out of that, so He has less now that He gave you some. If God gave out of His power, it means He gave you some, He has less than He did before. No, God gives according to His power, which means when God gives according to His power or God gives according to His wealth, when He gives out, He hasn't lost anything. He still has it all.

He's giving according to what He already has. He's giving innumerable measure. So how much power does He want to give out? All of His power. And I hear that. I don't know about you. I hear mine. I want it. I want, give me more, give me more power. Strengthen me in your spiritual might. But this is where you have to understand the purpose of it. Notice what he says. He says why? For attaining of all steadfastness and patience. Say what? See, here's how you want to pray for the saints. You want to pray for all believers to be strengthened with God's power to endure and suffer.

You want to pray for people to be strengthened with God's power for the purpose of enduring and suffering. You say, why is that a big deal? Here's why it's a

big deal. Because when you trusted Jesus Christ, here's the promise that comes with you. This is not your home, heaven is. This world is sinful. There will never be a time in this world where everything works perfect. It'll never, ever happen. There will always be things out of place. There will always be trials, there'll always be these things.

If somebody told you, give your life to Jesus and your life will be perfect, they're liars. They're just liars. It's not going to happen. Give your life to Jesus, promise you, persecution will come, trial will come, difficulties will come, challenges will come the same way, and even more than they come to other people. So what do we need power for? To be able to endure those powers with great long suffering. That's what maturity looks like.

Jeff, give me an example. What are you talking about? I'm talking about the dad that's been praying for a different job for quite some time, and God's like, "No, this is the job I have for you." "But God, I hate what I'm getting paid and I hate working with this group of people and I don't like going in and I get persecuted for being a Christian." And God's like, "And that's the job I have for you, so go in and do that, and bear under the load of it and suffer under it for a little while."

Or it's the mom, and all her friends, she's married, she's been waiting to have a child. All her friends are getting pregnant. Matter of fact, all of her friends are getting pregnant for the last 10 years, she's never been able to get pregnant. And she's pleading out to the Lord, she's saying, "Lord, well, how long is this going to take? I've done everything right and I've done it your way. How come I don't have a kid?" And God's saying, "No, you need my strength and my power to remain under this and to

suffer under this with great patience and to not get out from under it."

Or the single that's here that says, "I've kept myself pure. I've been waiting for my spouse for a long time and it seems like all my friends who weren't living pure have met their spouse and it's going well for them. And where's my spouse because out of seven billion people in the world, if half of them are not my gender, you would think there would be at least one person out there for me and I can't find it?" Because you're remaining under.

See, here's how we need to pray for the saints. We need to pray for the saints sometimes to remain under because so often, we want to change other people's circumstances. Somebody comes to us and says, "Man, I'm not doing well financially." And what do we want to do? Just give them money. My marriage is broken. What do we tell them? I wouldn't want to be married to them either. I'd get rid of it. Hey my kid's wayward. Well, that's because you probably did something wrong when you raised them.

We want to remove people's circumstances. We want to alleviate people's pain. How many of you know God doesn't always want to remove your pain? How many of you know sometimes God wants you to remain under it? And how are you going to remain under that? Because our natural tendency when things go wrong is to get out of the circumstance as fast as we can, and Paul's saying, "I'm praying for you, that you would be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might for attaining of all steadfastness and patience. All endurance and suffering, that you would remain under

it for a long time."

Which means this, spiritual maturity often happens in a way where nobody else knows what you're enduring under and nobody else knows how you're suffering except the Lord and you're doing it His way. That's spiritual maturity. Here's why it's important. Here's why this is important. Because in the church so often, we think spiritual power is only and all about spiritual gifts. If you get more of God's power, you're a better preacher or you can speak in tongues, or you can heal people or you can cast out demons or you can raise them from the dead. And if you have more spiritual power, you'd be able to do all that stuff. And the reason that you have problems in your life is you don't have enough of God's spiritual power. That is false.

Now listen, I have room in all my theology to believe that all the spiritual gifts are for today, all of them. I have ruined my theology to believe that God wants to do supernatural things through people, but I don't believe it's necessarily a sign of maturity. Maturity is remaining under and enduring and suffering and doing it long and still trusting Jesus when things aren't going your way. Case in point.

I'm speaking on this because several people in our church have asked and I've had people outside the church that have texted me. I was at Red Rocks on Monday night for this worship on the rocks deal. They had different speakers, different bands, okay. One guy got up to speak, gave a 10-minute message. It started like this. Just hear me. Said, "This is my hand. Look at this hand. This hand has raised 38 people from the dead." That's how it started. I'm like, "Okay." So I'm listening.

He goes on to tell this 10-minute story about being a missionary in Mexico. And in one of his stories that he told was about a boy who had been dead for six hours, laying flat and how he went in to pray over this boy. And how he'd read in the Bible, all these things that happened miraculously. So he starts to pray over the boy. He said, "I prayed in Spanish and nothing happened." He said, "I prayed in English, nothing happened." He said, "I prayed in tongues and nothing happened." He said, "I prayed in Aztec, nothing happened.

But then I called on the name of Jesus," and he said, "this boy started to move, and his cold body began to get warm. And sure enough, this boy woke up and he looked at me. This white man standing over him, normally he'd be intimidated, and this little boy looked up and hugged me. And his dad who was there said, 'Your God must be powerful.'"

Now I'm watching all this go on. And here's what's going on in my heart. So what? Who cares? That was the climax of the story. I'm waiting for the story to climax like, so did you lead him to Christ? Did you lead his dad to Christ? Are they out sharing the gospel about our God that not only raises the dead, but redeems people for all eternity? There was no mention of the gospel. The story ended by having 8,000 people at Red Rocks look at their hand and pray to their hand to raise the dead.

I was texting my brother while I was watching all this going on, who happened to be there. And I told him, "Bro, if I've been dead for six hours and with Jesus, and somehow chooses to use you to bring me back to earth, and I wake up and I see your

red head sitting over me, I will punch you in the face." The goal of my faith is not to come back. I've been called to His eternal glory in Christ?

God doesn't just raise people from the dead so he can put men on display or women on display to say, look at how powerful I am. Do I believe that that man may have been raised from the dead? Yeah. And I don't care, if he doesn't know Jesus, he's going to die and spend eternity in hell. Who's sharing that with him? Here's my point. My point is this, sometimes in church, we think that spiritual power is for presence and position, when spiritual power is really to help you remain under and endure tough times that nobody else sees, and to suffer long because Jesus is saying, "I see you son and I see you daughter, and I see what you're doing, you're mature."

That's it?

That's maturity. I guess my question for us is, how many could use a little more of God's spiritual power and authority in their life to get through some trials they're currently going through? That's what I need. That's what you need. And I share that with you because I don't want you to be afraid or intimidated by people that may seem to have other spiritual gifts that you haven't had or have experiences that you haven't seen. That's always going to be the case.

You want people to say what I was waiting for, that man to say, is I led that person to ... Jesus led him do Himself. And I was able to share the gospel with him and his dad and their whole family got saved, and now they're out in their village sharing the gospel with people. I've heard too many mission stories where somebody

gets healed like that and then they bring the whole, and then somebody else dies and they can't heal them and everybody else leaves. "Well, God can't heal me, I'm out." Jesus didn't come to earth to raise the dead. Jesus came to earth to take dead people eternally and make them eternally alive. Amen?

Amen.

And God wants us to pray for that kind of spiritual power. And you know what it's like. It doesn't matter what season of life you're in. Whether you're a college student and you're going through it and it's like, how am I ever going to get through this? It doesn't matter if you're a young mom or dad, it doesn't matter if you're a single, it doesn't matter if you're married. There are always things in your life where God is taking you through circumstances that you wouldn't have chosen. And how about this circumstance, the ones you don't get to pick? You've done it all God's way and tragedy strikes your family in a way where the enemy whispers in your ear saying, if God really loved you, that would've never happened to you. What about that circumstance?

I need all of God's spiritual power in that moment to endure this and believe that He's still God and He's still on His throne and He still loves me and He's still doing good. So what's Paul praying for them. This is a mighty prayer. This prayer, he's praying for them to have all their strength and to be strengthened so they can endure with great patience. It means they're going to suffer long. Which leads us to the final one, how do we do it? How do we do this? Here's what he says.

"When you're interceding for others," he goes, "pray for believers to be joyful,

thankful and mindful of the gospel." Pray for believers to be joyful, thankful and mindful of the gospel. Notice what he says, "Giving thanks to the father." But what does he say before that? Last word of verse 11, joyously, joyously, joyously. Let me tell you something about joy versus happiness.

Happiness is a feeling. Joy is a spiritual quality. If you lost a loved one and I came up to you and said, "Hey, be happy." You'd be upset with me. You're going through some trials in your life I said, hey, just be happy. Don't worry. Be happy. And I played the Bobby McFerrin song. It doesn't connect. But I can tell you no matter what your circumstances are, you can have great joy in your life.

Now, where did Paul get the authority to talk about this? He's making up, he's trying to get on the positive mental attitude speaking circuit? No, he's writing this letter from prison in Rome where he's about ready to get beheaded. When he wrote Philippians where he didn't know whether he was going to live or die, he's like, "Well, what should I choose? For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. What do I choose? I don't know. I'd rather be with Christ by far. But it's probably good for you that I remain in the body, convinced of this, I'll come help you guys out. But it doesn't make it do difference to me."

And what did he do? He did everything with great joy. Because what do we have a tendency to do in our flesh? When trials hit, when tribulation hits, when tragedy hits, when circumstances are down, when circumstances are bad, even when we're doing it God's way, we have a tendency to be like this, "Woa is me. Hey CB, have you ever read the Book of Job? That's nothing compared to what I've been going through lately.

I am so spiritual. It's been so hard. You know what I'm talking about?"

We lament and we mourn. Our attitude should be of great joy. What's our great joy? Our joy should not be, man, this is a great circumstance. Our joy should be that I'm partnered in the gospel and I'm thanking God that he has qualified me to sharing the inheritance of the saints. Do you see what a big deal that verse is? It means you who are a sin, God who has redeemed you by the blood of Jesus has positioned you and made you right, so you can enter the eternal banquet with Jesus Christ forever and ever, and when you walk in, nobody's going to look at you like, "Dude, what are you doing here dressed like that?"

You are qualified to share in the inheritance with all the saints. Which means this. No matter what your life brings, and I don't know what it's going to bring. I don't know what my life's going to bring. I can't choose all those things. But no matter what comes, here's what you can be certain of. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, your future is secure. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, as hard as it gets down here, it's temporary.

If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, what is coming it is so glorious. You would trade anything in your life now for what you're about ready to receive. That's what he's talking about. So he's praying for them as they're going through life, that they would be joyful, that they would be thankful giving thanks to the father who's qualified them to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now, where we can become mindful of the gospel, these two verses in 13 and

14 packed together may be one of the best short statements of what the gospel is in the New Testament. It tells us what God has done. It says, "For He rescued 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." Now, what did he do? First of all, you got to get this, he rescued us.

Think of rescue stories for a second. Think of like Rescue 911. I saw one recently of a football coach who had been rescued. He had been hurt in a car accident laying on the side of the road, completely unconscious. And they brought all these people in that night that were part of the 911 team, who he wouldn't have known because he was unconscious at the time.

And he was telling his story and he's like, "Yeah." He didn't know these were the people. He's like, "One night I was on this road and this happened and this happened." And each person goes down the road and say, "Hey coach, I was the one that was first on the scene and I got you out of the car. Hey coach, I was the one that laid you on the bed. Hey coach, I was the one that got your heart back started. Hey coach, I was the one that fed you oxygen the whole way to hospital." I was bawling watching this.

Because here's what I knew, that coach did nothing to rescue himself. It wasn't like they showed up and said, "Okay, go to work, get me out. Help me out. He needed to be rescued." Here's the gospel, you didn't do anything to come to Jesus. Jesus did all the rescue work. He came to you. He died on the cross for you. He was buried in the grave for you. He took the father's wrath for you. He got up and He's as alive as

ever and He's the way, the truth and the life. He did it all. All the rescue work was done by Him.

The Bible says there's no one good and no not one. There's no one that goes looking for God. Nobody came out of the womb saying, "Wow, I know that Jesus died for me and I want to serve him." Nobody comes out that way. We all come out thinking me, I take care of me. How come it's not good enough for me? What do I get out of this life? It has to be God who does the rescue work. If you're saved, God was the one who moved on in your heart and did the work.

And what did he rescue us from? Notice what he says, from the domain of darkness. All of us are born in darkness. The Bible says we were spiritually blind. Picture when the lights go out in your house or picture being on a [inaudible 00:47:40], where you can barely see your hand in front of your face. That's how dark this world is. The more you walk in the light, the more you'll see how dark the world is. And we're all born in the blindness, and so we don't realize that we're blind. That's just what we know.

So everything we see physically with our eyes, we think that's normal, until God works on our heart and realizes that we are in this dominion of darkness and we're doomed in our sin, and we're trapped in it and there is no way out. And the only hope for us is facing an eternal help separated from God. That's the domain that we're all born in. But notice what He did. I love this. He transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved son. He transferred us.

You're not going this way anymore. You're going my way now. We were in the darkness, now we're in the light. We were enemies and now we're friends. We were dead and now we're alive. That's all his work, in whom we have what? Two great things, the redemption and the forgiveness of sins. Believer, in case you're wondering, what's God ever done for me lately? Redemption means this. He purchased you. He bought you. When Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished." It means He took the final payment of all the wrath of His father. It's paid in full. You've been bought with a price. What God put is the down payment on the cross He is going to fulfill in taking you home. You are His, you belong to Him in every single way.

In whom you have redemption, because you've been bought, and what? The forgiveness of sin. Now, when you hear the forgiveness of sin, if you don't and say praise God, then you don't understand the gospel. Because what keeps you out of heaven and what keeps you from a relationship with God and what keeps you from experiencing the fullness of who God is is your sin. And your sin is what kills you. The reason you're going to die is because you have sin in your life that you inherited from your parents. And you're not perfect.

So even if you live perfect from this moment on, you're still not perfect, you're imperfect. And your imperfection will keep you from admittance into the kingdom. But through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, He's bought you with a price and He's forgiven how many of your sins, all of them. Past, present, future, they're washed away. So that when you qualify and you enter heaven, God doesn't come up with a big screen and say, "Look at your sin. I can't believe you call yourself a Christian and

you're coming." It's gone.

Enrobed in the righteousness of Christ, because of the blood of Jesus, praise God. And no matter what's going on in your life, be mindful of the fact, be thankful for the fact that you belong to Jesus Christ and live in great joy no matter what your circumstances are, because your future is so secure. I'm not just talking about future like, "Hey, in five years it's going to get really good. And then you'll have like five good years." I'm talking about future. I'm talking about your eternity. I'm talking about every single moment for eternity is good. It's great. And it's yours and you didn't do anything to deserve it. Jesus Christ did it all for you.

So what's he praying? He's praying for believers never to lose sight of the cross of Jesus Christ in any way. Do you know how easy that is to do? We live in a culture that doesn't think about Jesus at all. Just last Sunday, I went to The Broncos game with a friend of mine, and while I was there, I'm watching it, and this was the first time in a period of years I didn't know somebody on the field. We have a friend of our family that played is for the Chicago Bears, but he didn't travel with the team, so I don't know anybody. So I'm like, I'm not invested. I'm not praying for people in the stands. I'm not rooting for anybody in particular.

I want the Broncos to win because I live in Denver and I don't like Chicago fans. So I'm rooting that way. But normally I'm looking around and I get these things that will go off in my heart, as everybody's cheering or doing something, I think about, "God, what's it going to be like when you come back?" It's not going to be a stadium of

75,000. It's going to be people from every tribe, tongue and nation. It's going to be the greatest, most glorious event, and everybody's going to be looking heavenward saying, "This is awesome." But looking around me, it's going to be so overwhelming. I get goosebumps thinking that way.

But for whatever reason, this last weekend as I'm watching the game and I'm watching it and I enjoy going because I played and so I enjoy watching plays and how things develop and what defense are playing, and what they're calling. But I couldn't help but just listen to people talk, and I'm watching the guy next to me just get incredibly drunk and screaming. Who thought he was an expert on everything and quite frankly wasn't. And people yelling at coaches, and there was just all this intensity and energy going downward this way so much so. And at one point I started praying. I was like, "God, this has got to be hard for you."

Here there are 75,000 people in my city, and all the attention is on that, which counts for absolutely nothing in eternity, and is so comparatively insignificant. Does that not break your heart? And I started thinking, if the rapture would've occurred during the Broncos game, they men needed an extra TV time out to clean up a few jerseys and to let some people move forward in their seats, but the game would've gone on. It would've gone on.

Don't believe for a second, well everybody in Denver is saved. They're not and they don't care. It broke my of heart so bad that with five minutes to go, I left the game. I can't watch any more of this. If you saw the game, there were only five minutes that were actually good, the were five minutes I wasn't there. And I didn't care.

I was going home. I don't care anymore. Why? Because God wants us to be so centered on Him.

And when you think about our city for a minute, think out how many people truly know who Jesus is. Think about how many of those people are really walking with the Lord and the fullness. Think about how many people are walking in the fullness that really care about the gospel. Think about how it breaks God's heart. And so, here's what Paul's praying.

Paul's praying, "Man, I pray that because you're a believer now, that you would honor Him in every area of your life. That you'd be filled with His spirit and be controlled. That you'd be able to endure any trial that comes your way. That you would honor Him in all things and you'd live joyously and thankfully. And you'd live mindfully of the gospel of Christ because it's yours. And that you'd allow Jesus to pour His life through you every single place you go, and you'd be a difference maker for Him." Amen. That's what he's praying.

I would encourage you, I challenged you last week, hey, start reading the book of Colossians. I hope some of you did this week. I hope you read chapters or verses or even the whole book a couple times. I'm encouraging you to just pray for the saints. Pray for the people you know. Even if you just pick two people this week, you said these are two saints that God's put on mind, and pray these four things over them continually, and don't stop praying for them. And continue to believe that God can move in their life that way.

That's why God gave us His word, so we would know how to apply it and we would know how to put it into practice. And as you do that, the joy of the Lord will grow in your heart. Amen. I get excited about the gospel. I know many of you do too.

The reason that I want to close this way today is I want to give you an opportunity if you've never trusted Jesus Christ, to trust Him as your Lord and savior. If you have, we have a baptism testimony today. Somebody's going to share how Jesus Christ has changed their life. We're going to celebrate baptism after this as well, so I'm going to have you remain seated. But if you will, would you just close your eyes and bow your head with me as we pray.

Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we just pray that in this moment, Lord, as you're moving on people's hearts, that you would speak directly to us. And if you're here today and you're like, "I know that there's no way that if I met Jesus today, I would be saved." Here's how you can pray.

Dear Jesus, I admit to you the fact that I'm a sinner, and that that sin separates me from you and will keep me out of heaven. But I believe you came on a rescue mission from me, that you died on the cross, that you took the father's wrath, that you were buried in a grave and that you rose from the dead. And right now I just confess to you that you're my personal Lord and savior. I want to turn from my sin and I want to receive your righteousness.

For those who are here who have confessed Jesus as their personal Lord and savior, here's what I would pray. Lord Jesus mature us. Lord, let us be controlled by

your spirit. Let us honor you in all areas of our life. Lord, some of us here need strength to endure the trial that we're going through. And Lord, some of us just need to be reminded of the joy that we have coming to us.

And Lord, help us to be a praying church that prays for the lives of those who know you, as well as for those who need to. And Lord, just do a work in our church through the prayers of your people. We give you all the praise, in Jesus name. Amen and amen.