

A Pleasing Life

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Colossians 1, and we'll be reading verses 3-14. All over the world, this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace and all its truth.

You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

[1:49] For he has rescued us from the kingdom of the Lord.

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kingdom of the kingdom his milk, and then Joanne snapped, yelling at one and then the other, and
then the third for laughing.

And Jacob glared. Then he started to talk. What's wrong with you? Is your life so bad? You say you're sorry, but you never change. I don't know what the point is.

Well, what do they need? If you were a counselor, what could you say to them? Well, don't they need a deep work of God in their hearts? No superficial remedy will do. They need a deep work of God in their hearts. Don't they need to be filled with the knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding? They need to know what God wants for them, but not just at a superficial intellectual level. They need to be able to grasp it and understand it and feel motivated by it at a deep heart level. And we saw what that was last time. In Paul's prayer, he says, I haven't stopped praying for you and asking that God would fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. We saw last time what that is. It's knowledge for obedience. It's knowledge for obedience. It's spirit given. It's centered on Jesus Christ. It's understanding. It's a spiritually given understanding of how the gospel relates. It bears upon, weighs upon, implies in my life, in my circumstances, in my troubles. It's an extremely practical prayer request.

[4:34] Well, we saw what it was last time, and tonight we want to see why it's so important, and secondly, what it ends up looking like in your life. So why is it so important? And then how does it work itself out? What does it end up looking like in my life? So first, why is it so important? Why is Paul saying, I haven't stopped praying for you in this? Why do we need to cry out for God to fill us

with knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to fill the people around us with this knowledge? Well, to put it plainly, we need this work of God in us because we aren't any different than Jacob and Joanne. We're blind to how the gospel relates to our lives in so many areas, in so many parts. So the gospel is either too much a past thing, or it's too much of a future thing, but we're blind to its nowness, to how Jesus is presently my Savior, how he relates to my life, my circumstances, my dinner, my children, my husband, my anger problem. You see, Paul's prayer is not just another prayer that we can add to our repertoire. It's not just one more thing that we can say in a prayer meeting to sound like we know what we're talking about. It's our desperate need.

It's my desperate need. It's your desperate need because we haven't arrived. We haven't arrived. We want to live a life that pleases Jesus, but we fail so often, and that's why Paul and Paul's prayer is so important. Look at what he says in verse 10, and we pray this, and he gives the reason why. We pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way. Now, what's the implication of that verse? What is the assumption? What is lying behind Paul's prayer request or prayer there? Well, look at it again. We pray this so that you'll live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way. Isn't the clear assumption that if God doesn't fill us with this knowledge of his will, that we will not please him. We will not live worthy of him. So pleasing Christ, that's behind this prayer, and this is Paul's passion. And so he says, I keep praying. I don't stop praying for you because he wanted to see Christ honored in their lives.

And we too would want to say, we want to see Christ honored in our lives. We want to live a life worthy of him. Jesus is worth it. He is worth it. And so we pray. Now, you see, only if you care about Jesus' glory, will you pray this prayer. I don't need to be, and this is what I mean, I don't need to be filled with the knowledge of God's will if I am most interested in pleasing myself.

I don't need to figure out what pleases me. I have a pretty good grasp on what I would like to see happen, what pleases me. I don't need God's help for that. I don't need to know God's will if I'm most interested in my honor. I'll seek that on my own very well. So go back to Jacob and Joanne in your minds. Now, isn't there a lot of them still fighting for their own glory, for their own honor, for their own kingdoms? They're thinking about what they want, not what God wants. They're looking at each other. They're looking at their children from their perspective. They're not looking at them from Jesus' perspective, what Jesus might be wanting to do in their lives, what God's purpose is for them.

[8:44] They're only thinking about what they want. So Jacob knows what he wants to see. He wants to see a wife that isn't angry with his children. He knows that. He knows what he wants to see. And so he doesn't pray. He just talks. And Joanne isn't thinking about pleasing Jesus. She just knows that her world is not the way that she wants it to be. And so she gets angry. So when we're consumed with ourselves, we don't have any interest in praying, Lord, teach me what you want. Lord, help me to understand your will.

We don't need to seek God. And the result is clear. We don't live lives that are worthy of the Lord. We don't live lives that are pleasing to the Lord, pleasing him in every way. So test your heart. Test your heart. Test your heart. Do you pray? People who are only interested in themselves don't need to pray very much.

Are you still living for the things that you really don't need to pray for? For self, for comfort, for your honor? And what's the fruit of your life? What's the fruit of that life?

Paul made it pretty clear that living according to the flesh, living for me, living for my honor, my glory, for living like in my strength, the fruit is pretty nasty.

[10:22] Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, envy.

Well, is that the fruit in your life? If it is, the answer is not, I need to cut off that fruit and put on new fruit. I need to start acting better.

No, there needs to be a deeper change. Bad fruit is an indication of a bad tree. And so that tree needs to be made right. The answer is not simply to cut off fruit and staple on new fruit.

The answer is you must stop living according to the flesh. There needs to be a different heart at the bottom. Stop living to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Now, you know what the flesh wants. It's what you used to live for. So if you're a Christian, you know what the flesh wants because this is what consumed your whole life before you were a Christian.

[11:22] You wanted to be exalted. You wanted to be strong. You wanted to be self-reliant. You didn't want to be needy. You wanted to look good. You wanted glory. You wanted comfort. You didn't want to die.

You didn't want to serve other people. You didn't want to lay down your life for anyone. Now, as long as you're living for those sorts of things, for your comfort, for your fame, etc., you're blind to the will of God.

You're blind to the gospel. But when you're living under the powerful influence of the Spirit, so when the Spirit is filling you with the knowledge of God's will, the fruit that comes from that life is not nasty at all.

It's something very different, very wonderful, very refreshing, and it's worthy of the Lord. It pleases Him. You remember what that fruit is. But the fruit of the Spirit is love and joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The fruit that comes from being filled with the knowledge of God's will is beautiful. It's different. It's refreshing. It's encouraging.

[12:34] It's helpful. It diffuses situations like Jacob and Joanne were in. So, do you see why this prayer is necessary?

Why it's so important? Why it's so important for us to want this, to want to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. We can't, we won't live holy lives unless God teaches us in our inmost places.

Unless God gets down to the places where our desires and our loves, where those live, and we need to be taught at that level. So, when we know God's will, when we begin to live, then we're going to begin living Christ-honoring lives that please Him in every way.

He died. He died for us so that we could live for God. And not just in one part of your life, but in every part, pleasing Him in every way.

The Christian life is an all-embracing life. And you know that. But don't we, and I include myself here, don't we need to be looking for more and more areas where I can please the Lord, where this part of my life needs to be brought so that it honors Him and doesn't bring shame to Him anymore.

[13:54] It's an all-inclusive, all-embracing life. So it's not just one part of your life, but in every way and every day. Now, Paul draws this out more.

He draws out what this life looks like. What does it look like when we are filled with God, with the knowledge of God, when we are living to please Him, when we are living worthy of Him? He gets down to brass tacks.

He gets down to four things that this life is going to look like. What does it look like pleasing Jesus? And this is our second point. What does this life look like?

Or another way to ask it, what does being filled with the knowledge of God lead to? How does it work itself out into the nooks and the crannies of our lives?

Well, you see four things in verses 10 through 12. Four things in verses 10 through 12. First, a Christ-honoring life is a fruitful life. It's a fruitful life.

[14:57] He says, bearing fruit in every good work. So it's not just not sinning. Let me repeat that. A life pleasing to God is not just a life of not sinning.

A holy life isn't just the absence of sin. It's the presence of fruit, of good works. Now, maybe you get focused on one side or the other, but we have to balance those.

We need to bring both of them in, not sinning as part of a holy life and good works, good fruit, is part of a holy life. So remember Ephesians chapter 2, for we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works.

The whole purpose of our new creation is to do good works, not merely not to sin, not merely not to bear bad fruit, but to bear good fruit. So what kind of things is he talking about?

Well, all sorts of things. Let's get practical, though. What kind of things is he thinking about? Turn over to 1 Timothy chapter 5. 1 Timothy chapter 5. It's a few pages over.

[16:07] And here in this passage, he's talking about widows and who should be put on the list to be cared for by the church, who the church should care for. And in 1 Timothy 5, and we're going to look at verses 9 and 10, he paints a picture of feminine virtue.

What does a godly woman look like? And there are lessons here, I think, for both men and women. I mean, obviously it's talking mostly about women, but I think there are lessons here for men and women.

Look at verse 9. So what does it mean to be a virtuous woman? Verse 9. No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over 60 has been faithful to her husband.

That's a good work. Faithful to your husband. So ladies and gentlemen, what kind of good works pleases Jesus, is worthy of him, doesn't shame him, but honors him, marital faithfulness.

Being a one woman man, being a one man woman. So in this world of divorce, and rampant sexual immorality, in this world of where people are married, but they're effectively living a divorced life, where they're living for each other, marital faithfulness, is a good work that speaks well of Jesus Christ.

[17:46] Look at what Jesus can do for a marriage, for a couple. They aren't living for each other. They're not just coexisting. They love each other. They're serving each other. They're faithful to each other.

Well, he goes on. This woman, she's well known for her good deeds. Now, so we're getting into the specifics here. The good deeds, such as bringing up children.

So marital faithfulness, and I'd say this domestic faithfulness. Faithfulness to the place where God has called you to be. Faithful to raising children.

And so that's encouraging. Ladies, bringing up your children at whatever stage you're at, bringing them up, being a mom, caring for them, loving for them, loving them, being compassionate, showing them wisdom and teaching them and instructing them.

Fathers, raising your children in the instruction of the Lord. That pleases Jesus. He takes an active interest in that. He takes an active interest in that.

[18:50] He takes an active delight in seeing you do that. It honors him. Pleases him. So don't give up. Well, what else?

What other kind of deeds we're to be producing in our lives? It says bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints.

Those are both services to the church. Hospitality in the New Testament. It's not about the hostess. It's about the guest.

It isn't parading about how clean and how orderly and how beautiful you can present your house.

There's nothing wrong with any of that. But it wasn't about that.

It isn't necessarily about eating a nice dinner and laughing with your best friends. It was service. It was service. service. It was using your home, using your family to encourage, to build up, to provide for those who were in need of every kind.

[19:55] So it was an act of service. It was often inconvenient. It was often difficult. Ladies, I know what it's like to have someone suddenly sprung on you and there they are and they need served.

They want into your house. They need to be in your house. That's hard. Jesus notices. Washing the feet of the saints. That's the menial work.

That's the hidden work of the church that no one sees, no one thinks very highly of. That was a good deed. Paul said, that's part of what it means to be a godly woman.

You're bearing this fruit. And he says, helping those in trouble. Helping those in trouble. Not running from the troubled. Not running from the needy.

Not insulating ourselves so we never see them, never experience them. Not reaching, but instead reaching out and helping them. After all, isn't that what Jesus did for us?

[20:59] He didn't cocoon himself in a lovely cocoon of domestic tranquility where it was all beautiful and good and there was no trouble.

He went into the wilderness to find his lost sheep. So, brothers and sisters, what does it look like to live a pleasing life?

A life worthy of the Lord? Well, don't measure your maturity by what you know in your head. measure your understanding of God by your good deeds.

Because those who are growing in their knowledge of God's will are bearing more and more fruit. We can't escape James' words.

So, show me your faith without deeds. That isn't an alternative. That's more of a taunt. There's no such thing as faith without deeds. You can't show me faith without deeds.

[21:57] And he says, you show me your faith without deeds and I'll show you my faith by what I do. Can't escape those words. But Paul goes on. It's a fruitful life but it's also a spiritual life.

It's a spiritual life. So, turn back to Colossians chapter 1. Back in Colossians. So, in verse 10 he's bearing fruit in every good work.

And then the next phrase. Growing in the knowledge of God. Growing in the knowledge of God. What's worthy of Christ?

What pleases Jesus? What honors Jesus? Well, it's an ever closing gap between you and God. an ever closing gap between you and God.

And so you were born far away and Jesus came and he brought you near. You once hated him. You were suspicious of him. You were unconcerned about him.

[23:03] And then Jesus came and he brought you near. He opened the way to God. He died to reconcile you to God so that you could be friends with God.

So that you can know God. So that you and God could live together. So Paul says growing in your understanding. Growing in your understanding of God's will will look like growing in your knowledge of God.

You'll live more and more face to face with God. So think of a married couple. As they live together. As they live together.

They sleep next to each other. They get up and they eat breakfast together. They go through life together. They see each other more and more. And they begin to know each other better. Don't they? That's what we're talking about here.

So there's going to be less suspicion and more trust. Because you know him. You can depend upon him. You're not just talking about things that you've heard about.

[24:08] You're talking about things that you've experienced with him. So when trials come we won't automatically say what is God doing? How could God do this to me? We won't automatically say God doesn't care.

No, that's suspicion. That's our old life. That's before we really knew who God was. But now we're understanding him more and more and he's a God that we can trust. He's a God that loves us and cares for us and his wisdom is beyond ours and his wisdom is at work in our lives.

And I know I can trust him and I know that what's coming in my life is because of him. This isn't out of his control. This isn't for my bad. It's for my good. So you're growing in this.

So Jesus didn't live and die and rise again so that we would be always backing away from God. He didn't do that so that we would just live on the outskirts.

Doesn't Christ's death and now Christ's ongoing life tell us that God loves us, that he is concerned about us, that he really won't abandon us, that he really does care for us.

[25:17] And so there's going to be less selfishness. There's going to be less self-concern. There's going to be more service. There's going to be less self-centered living and there's going to be more worship.

As he fills up my life, we'll think of ourselves less and we'll think more of him. So instead of me filling my horizon, where all my thoughts, there's no room for God, there's just, it's all about me.

Instead of me filling the horizon of my life, he'll fill the horizon of my life. He'll fill my vision. Because I'll be stepping closer and closer to him.

I'll be growing in my knowledge. I'll be getting closer and closer to him. And so he'll be getting bigger and bigger and bigger. So you know what it's like. You see a tree and it's so far and it looks pretty small from far away.

And there's a lot more that you can see. The tree is only a little bit and all that you can see. But as you get closer and you get closer to the tree, what happens? The tree gets bigger and bigger and if you get close enough, all you see is the tree.

[26:30] That's what Paul says. That's what happens when you're filled with the knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. That's what pleases Christ. That's what's worthy of him. Getting closer and closer to God until he fills your life.

So understanding the Spirit's wisdom will take me closer to God because he is the Spirit of adoption after all, isn't he? He's the Spirit and if we're learning from him, then we'll be walking more and more with our Father.

We'll be sharing more of our life with him and the Spirit of fear will flee before the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of sonship. And that pleases Jesus.

That honors him. That's a fulfillment of his work. But we haven't arrived and we need to go further.

And Jesus didn't die and live again so that we could stand on the outskirts. He died to give us a confident entrance into the most holy place to get us right in.

[27:43] So second, our third, verse 11, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you might, so that you may have great endurance and patience.

So what does a Christ-honoring life look like? Well, it's a persevering life. It's a persevering life. It looks like suffering patiently as we rely on God's strength. That's what it looks like. It's suffering patiently while we rely on God's strength.

It's sticking with it as we depend on his mighty power. So persecution comes and we persevere. And so sickness comes and we persevere.

So trials and loneliness come. Things that make us feel weak. Things that make us feel hopelessly out of our depth. Things that expose us. Things that expose our places of weakness.

[28:41] Things that make us feel like we're drowning. And by faith we take God's power. We live on it and we press on. We don't give way to despair. We don't give up.

We take his power by faith and we press on. So let's go back to Joanne at the dinner table. Her boys are difficult.

Her patience is rubbed raw. So all of her natural patience is now gone. She doesn't have what it takes. And she is ready to explode.

What does she need to know? What does she need to remember? That it's not just her and her power.

She hasn't run out of resources to be patient. Because she has all of God's glorious might. All of his divine might. All the power of God is now available for Joanne.

[29:42] So does she need to explode? Does she need to yell? No. She has God's power. It's there for her. She needs to remember it.

She needs to believe on it. She needs to count on it. And in his power she can persevere. She can. And what about Jacob? Does he need patience?

Does he need power? Yes. He lives with a sinner. We all live with sinners. Because the best of us are still unfinished.

Unfinished. Unsanctified to some point. So Jacob needs patience to endure his wife's anger, his wife's troubles, and her unfinished sanctification.

She's not what she's going to be. She's not what she's going to be. She's short of that now and so he needs to be patient. But his explosion, his berating her, his comments, that's not faith.

[30:44] That's not trusting in God's power. That's him trying to manipulate the situation. That's him relying on his own power. He's not taking God's power because taking God's power would look like waiting and thinking about what you want to say.

And look at that person through Jesus' eyes. What is Jesus trying to do in this situation? And then saying the right thing at the right time. persevering with the sinner that we live with.

So Jacob needs to remember, God hasn't left him alone with an angry wife. God's power, God's help is available right now for him.

So Christ's pleasing life is persevering. It's persevering. Now fourth and finally, what does a life pleasing and honoring to Christ look like? How does this being filled with the knowledge of God's will, how does that work itself out?

What does it end up looking like? It looks like joyful thanksgiving. Joyful thanksgiving. What about your life? How much of it is filled with joyful thanksgiving?

[31:51] Could you say, I'm a very joyful, thankful person? And probably all of us could say, yeah, I fall far short. That's why we need to pray.

That's why we need to ask God to teach us in the inmost places. Because this is what happens when you're filled with the knowledge of God's will. It produces a life worthy of Jesus Christ.

That's what he says in verse 12. Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

So giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you. Now, these four things, they're not four separate things. thankfulness. We can't do one without the other.

We can't bear fruit without thankfulness. We can't be thankful without being patient. We can't know God without having endurance. These things are not four separate things.

[32:49] They're braids. They're a braid with four strands. And they're weaving in and out of each other. And weaving in and out of all of them, the whole thing is thankfulness. Thankfulness that despite my sin, God has qualified me.

Despite the many, many ways that I have disqualified myself, God the Father has qualified me for a future inheritance with the saints.

God has qualified me. God took action on my behalf. He took action for me. God did something to qualify me. It's not left up to me.

It's not depending on me. My hope is based on something much stronger, more powerful, more sure than that. It's based on something that God did.

He qualified me. And so, yes, I'm to bear fruit and good works. Yes, I'm to patiently endure. Yes, I'm to grow in my knowledge of God. But those things aren't the qualification for me going to heaven.

[33:58] I am called to do all of those things. But that isn't my hope. My hope is what something that God did. My hope rests on that. The Father qualified me. He gave me what I needed.

And He did it in Jesus Christ. He did it in Jesus Christ. So are you qualified for heaven? If you were to die tonight, would God say, yes, come on in.

You're qualified. You have what it takes. And what is it that it takes to get to heaven? It takes Jesus. He's the ticket. He's the ticket.

He's the life. So how can a sinner be ready, prepared, and qualified to live eternally with God? It's because of what Jesus Christ has done.

So Jesus died for sins. For sins, and Jesus rose again for our justification, so justice has been satisfied. God is not asking for anything else.

[35:03] He's done it. And so all he asks is repent and believe. So repent. Turn from your evil thoughts, your wicked thoughts of God, your small thoughts of God.

Let the wicked man forsake his thoughts. So forsake your evil, suspicious thoughts about God.

Repent and believe. Believe the promise that God has done everything that needs to be done.

And so all you need to do now is throw yourself, throw yourself on his mercy and live. And dear Christian, he's qualified us.

So no matter, and I say this carefully, and I hope you understand what I mean, but no matter my sin, no matter my struggle, no matter what a slow learner I am, no matter how hard things are now, I have hope.

hope. I have hope. I have an inheritance that is coming to me. My best things are ahead. And so in every situation, I can say thank you.

[36:05] In every situation, I can say thank you. No matter how bad it gets, no matter how bad it gets, I can say thank you. I can thank God when I'm in pain because I won't always be in pain because he qualified me.

And I can thank God when I'm struggling in confusion and uncertainty, even after I've sinned, because God has not treated me as my sins deserved. He's qualified me for heaven.

And in heaven, I won't sin anymore. Praise the Lord. It will be over. Milton Vincent said this, and it's so true. The Christian is suspended.

He's hung between blessings received and blessings hoped for, so he should always give thanks.

So blessings received, blessings hoped for, and there we are in the middle of it all.

And so no matter the situation that we find ourselves, we can say thank you. In a thankful life, it pleases Jesus. It's worthy of him. You know, a Christian that's not thankful, a Christian that is forever doubting and unhopeful and unexpected, that isn't worthy of a Lord who died and lived and says, I'm coming again.

[37:25] But a thankful life is. So as we end, let's go back to Jacob and Joanne. They need to be filled with God's, the knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And then they'll remember how much they have to be thankful for. They'll remember how much God has done for them in Jesus Christ. You see, it's hard to be angry.

It's hard to be angry at people when you're thanking God that he's qualified you for heaven. And it's hard to be angry with people when you're thanking God that he poured out his anger on his son instead of you.

And it's hard to face off with your wife, stand against her and accuse her and be so upset and angry with her without any compassion when you're remembering that Jesus didn't face off against you.

He stood beside you. He took your place. He saw you in your sin and he didn't say, why don't you ever change? He came and he did something.

[38:28] He came in mercy. He came to your relief. He suffered hell so that you could be qualified to go to heaven. And so Grace Fellowship Church, earnestly seek to be filled with the knowledge of

God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding because this is the way that we can live a life that pleases Christ, that glorifies him and honors him.

And he's worth it. He's worth it because of what he's done for us. Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for the clarity of your word.

Thank you that it meets us where we are at. It meets us in the lives that we live. It meets us in our difficulties. It speaks to us not as perfect people, but as very imperfect and needy people.

Thank you that you know our frame. You know where we are at. And you speak to us. Holy Spirit, come and take that word and now press it in upon our hearts and renew our spirits.

Change us. Sanctify us. Help us to be a people that live before you and live for you.

[39:54] Help us to be a people that live to please Jesus. To be putting off our desire for fame. Our desire to be honored. Our desire to be rewarded.

But to embrace Jesus Christ and his reward and his glory and his honor and his pleasure. Pray that you would help us to be Christ-centered people so that we would live a holy life worthy of the Lord who did so much for us.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.