

Contributing to Our Core Strength Emphasis

Building Core Strength

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I want to begin this morning by introducing myself. Many of you know me, but I know there is a number of you who don't. My name is Dustin Folden and I have the privilege of serving on the pastoral team here in the area of community ministry. Basically I facilitate the ministries out of the community center and make sure that is all run properly. I am also involved in the Encouragers ABF that meets at 11:00 o'clock after this service upstairs. And then I am also the service pastor for this service. My wife Trish and I have been married for a little over six years and the Lord has blessed us with two children, McKenna, a very precocious two year old who likes to play with Legos and likes to tell you how you should play with Legos as well. And then there is also Sawyer our youngest. He is seven months old and he will smile at pretty much anyone with a face. He is just happy go lucky and he will eat anything you put in front of him whether it is edible or not. So a lot of fun those two. Both of them have learned they have a will and that they have a toolbox of things to accomplish that will. So my wife has her hands full take care and ministering to them each day.

So today the four service pastors—Mark at eight o'clock, myself at is time slot and then Brent at 10:15 and Rob at 11—have the privilege of preaching to you this morning. This service pastor idea started earlier this year with a simple purpose. We have four services online now and a service starting a year from now at Faith West and we wanted to make sure that each service had a pastoral presence and every service would be there to help shepherd a particular group of people, primarily through prayer and announcements during the service, but also available before and after for additional needs and then prayer and contact throughout the week. So if you have questions about ministry or you want to get more connected, at least you can put a face with a name and then some of you can seek out and get connected that way. And then on occasions like today I get to preach in our respective services. So it is a joy to serve in those capacities.

So let's just transition into something we have all kind of been aware of. Over the last few weeks I think many of us have watched the Olympics. I have talked about it a little bit. Many of us have seen a portion of the games, some of us more than others. I know some of you have been glued to your TV late in the night to see the results. And we saw some incredible efforts by both individuals and also by whole teams. And I would like to contrast what happened with two particular events.

Event number one was the women's four by 100 relay. This event has Alison Felix, who is a great Olympic athlete to take note of, in part because her daddy teaches out at Masters Seminary in California and because she has a strong testimony for Christ. But this event requires four runners to each run 100 meters. And in addition to just running fast, you also have to run around the track with his little thing called the baton and you have to pass it in this small little window and if you pass it outside, before that window, you are disqualified. This year it came down to Jamaica versus the United States. And not only did the U S win, but they actually set a world record and each lady contributed to the team, the whole effort and the result was an amazing world record and a gold medal.

Now event number two was men's gymnastics. The men's team was essentially assured a medal. They were a contender for gold and they were assured of something. During the preliminary round they were the best. They had the highest score and hopes were high. Guys were full of excitement, maybe even a touch of over confidence, except on the day of the finals. Pretty much everything went wrong. Man after man faltered and the team earned nothing. When it counted, each member of the team did not deliver, even though they had the ability to win. Winning is not what actually occurred.

The main thing I want us to take away from these examples is that everyone on the team needs to contribute to the team for it to finish strong. Everyone not only needs to know what they are supposed to do, but they actually have to go and execute it in real time. And sports often provides object lessons that are particularly helpful when studying the Bible.

You know, our annual theme this year is developing core strength and similar to these sporting events we, as a church, we as a service, we each individually need to contribute to developing core strength so that we can finish the race that God has set for us.

So with those two teams in mind, please turn in your Bibles to Colossians 1:9-14. That is on page 156 in the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you.

So this morning we are going to be considering three ways that we can contribute to our core strength emphasis from Colossians one with the result, just like the women's four by 100 that amazing things will happen. So let's read the text and I am going to start and pick it up in verse three to grab the context. So starting in verse three in Colossians chapter one. Paul says:

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a

faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

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 in 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 in Light. 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.¹

Now the first and most obvious point about this text is that it is a prayer. This is Paul's prayer. Paul has actually not ever met the Colossians. So he hasn't met them. He wasn't actually the one who individually won these believers to Christ. Instead, that was the work of others and Paul is writing to them and he explains that he is praying for a spiritual harvest in their life. So the first way that we can be a contributor to core strength is we can be praying for a spiritual harvest.

Now we are going to unpack some of the details in a few minutes about the content of the prayer, but it is very clear that Paul's focus lies in the spiritual realm. He is interested in that the believers would grow in their understanding of the Lord's will and he is praying that their actions will result in living in such a way that God is pleased.

The application to our lives is quite clear. In the next seven days we have a number of ministries starting. FCI is starting, Wednesday night Kids of Faith, a new ABF series, our fall kickoff Sunday and all these activities are just around the corner like Purdue Bible Fellowship. All the college students are coming back in droves. This is all in addition to normal stuff, the normal things that occur. The challenge for each one of us is going to be whether we are going to be praying for a spiritual harvest or if other interests are going to occupy our thoughts and our time.

It is interesting that the first words in verse nine are: For this reason. Paul's prayer is based on the work that God has already done. In other words, Paul has heard about the good things the Lord has already done namely your faith in Christ. He hears about the Colossian's faith. He hears about the love for which they have for the saints, the love for which they have for one another. And ultimately the reality of the gospel has been bearing fruit and increasing. This motivates Paul to pray for the church.

I don't think it is too difficult to find some of these same elements present in our own lives and ministry. Earlier this month 11 people were baptized and many more gave their testimony of they came to know Christ. Two weeks ago there were at least three people

¹ Colossians 1:3-14.

who professed Christ in our ministries, two in the counseling ministry and one in another ministry. Praise the Lord.

And, you know, despite the time that it took, there is dirt moving in Northwest Avenue, 1920 Northwest Avenue. Stuff is starting to move in that area. People are serving as teachers in SCI, in children's ministries, Wednesday Night Kids of Faith. People are using their gifts and abilities to proclaim God's Word. And, you know, the last few weeks have been higher attendance this year than last. In other words, it is not too difficult to look around our campus, look around our ministry and see that the Lord has done some wonderful things. And that should motivate us to continue to ask the Lord for a spiritual harvest. In other words, the work that the has done should lead us to prayer that he would continue his mighty work.

Also by focusing on prayer we do a very important thing. We avoid pride. We avoid pride, because this is the Lord's work and prayer reminds us of our constant dependence upon him.

The text also adds that the praying that Paul is doing is without ceasing.

Have you ever noticed how it is easy to pray for something like for two or three days? If I really want something, it is kind of easy to keep it in my mindset for a couple of days, maybe even a week or if it is really important, I will keep it on my mind for a month, maybe two. It is really hard to pray for things like this over the long haul. Yet that is the example we are receiving from Paul. He prays for a spiritual harvest of this church and he does so regularly. You know, without ceasing doesn't mean every second of every day. That is not what it means, but praying regularly, consistently each day for what is important, because it is a priority that deserves that kind of commitment. One of the requests or one of the lessons that Paul is teaching is that some requests need to be made over and over again and again. Get this, even when things are going well. I should motivate us to pray more.

As parents, many of us pray for unity in our home among us as parents, among our children and between parents and children. You know, if that is happening, it is not like we can just stop, because we understand the delicate balance of unity. It can be set off kilter by something as small as an ill spoken word or a hurtful comment. What God is telling us is that we need to pray for each other that we might have a spiritual harvest because it is possible and, in fact, likely that many of us will struggle.

Just a few simple examples to illustrate that importance. You know, some families have left churches because a child care worker maybe encouraged them to take a class on parenting. They got offended by that, someone trying to help them. Or maybe people tend to get disgruntled and bitter over one single event that seems to color and surround everything else that happens to them, one event. I know I am capable of letting one thing just totally control my thinking about everything else that goes on and I am sure many of you would join me in that admission.

We need to pray for each other regularly that the spiritual harvest would continue in our lives. You know, may the Lord help us pray with that kind of attitude, with that kind of approach to our prayers so that core strength emphasis can increase this fall. Or, to put in the language of the four by 100, that we would finish the lap around the track without disqualification.

You see, we believe that core strength this fall will involve all of us praying without ceasing, remembering the wonderful works of the Lord that he has done and asking the Lord for a continual spiritual harvest. You know, with the commitment to pray without ceasing and with the motivation to pray that is based on the work of Jesus in our midst, let's turn our attention to the actual content of the prayer. What is Paul actually praying for? What is this spiritual harvest that Paul is referring to?

Well, it is going to start by learning the Word of God. It may not be obvious how this point comes up from the verbiage in the text, but it actually falls quite directly. In verse nine it says:

“...to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will.”²

Let's work through the passage and then return to the main idea of core strength, learning the Word of God.

So this whole idea of filled with the knowledge of his will, the prayer... {?} it seems kind of obvious, but the prayer is addressed to God asking that we would be filled with the knowledge of his will.

So, in other words, God is the one who is actually doing the filling. And the knowledge that is sought, the knowledge that was requested in prayer is his will. Now that immediately raises the question. What is this knowledge? What is Paul talking about? What is the knowledge that he is asking for?

Now there is a temptation. The temptation is to wrap this around an issue like where should I work or should I look for a new position? Should we remove? Should we have another child? And, you know, certainly the Lord does direct us in our path of life. But that does not appear to be Paul's primary point. His focus is to direct us to the will of the Lord that is already revealed, that God has already shown. And notice one other thing, that the request is to be filled.

I have an illustration. I have an illustration for you. I have two bottles. One has power aid in it. The other has water. Now if I took the lids off of these and shook them as far as I could—now I am not going to do that. I almost took the lids off, but I figured that I would just get too excited and I might actually do it. But if I shook them, it would be pretty obvious what would come out, right? Are you ready for a very deep and insightful point? If I shook the power aid bottle, power aid would come out of the bottle. You got that? Are you with me? Are we tracking? Ok. And if I shook the bottle of water, water

² Colossians 1:9.

would come out, right? Fairly obvious. The reason is because power aid is in the bottle and water is in this bottle. No matter how hard I shake the power aid bottle, water is not going to come out of it and vice versa.

I think that is one of the reasons why Paul wants to pray that the church would understand the Lord's will. We are shaken. We are shaken in life on a regular basis. Your boss may communicate to you in a way that is contrary to Colossians 4:6 which says:

“Let your speech always be with grace.”³

Your boss speaks and it may come out like barbs and hurtful. You just got shook. Your spouse maybe is irritated at you for who knows what. You have no idea what, but you can tell there is irritation. You just got shook.

One of your kids. Focus on your kids for a second. One of your kids acts like you owe them something and they seem to have no appreciation for the fact that someone washed their clothes, somebody cooked dinner, somebody went shopping and carted them around to activity to activity for the past 17 years. Now you just got shook.

Or let's jump to the other side of the spectrum. What happens when something you are involved in goes perfectly or goes well. Maybe you just a promotion. Maybe a project at work just... it came off and your boss commended you or you just won a gold medal.

Last year we did a counseling conference in Minnesota and in over 20 years of the ongoing training by a number of gifted and skilled people, this last year was the single greatest opportunity we ever had. We just got shook. We need the knowledge of his will—get this—to handle the blessings in a way that results in the Lord getting glory and we need the knowledge of his will to handle the challenges also so that God gets the glory. We need both. It is like Solomon said in Proverb 19:2.

“... it is not good for a person to be without knowledge.”⁴

When we get shook by the realities of life, what is God's will? What is God's desire for the response of his people who are representing him?

The text goes on and says:

“...in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”⁵

Now there is two possible ways to understand this phrase. I could understand the knowledge of God's will and spiritual wisdom as two separate things and that one leads to the other. In other words, having spiritual wisdom is how I am filled with God's will. But another, a more likely understanding is that spiritual wisdom and understanding is

³ Colossians 4:6.

⁴ Proverbs 19:2.

⁵ Colossians 1:9.

essentially the same thing as the knowledge of his will. They are the same thing. It is God's will that consists of all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that when I understand God's will I actually have spiritual wisdom and understanding.

That brings us back to the main heading of this point, learning the Word of God. That is the revealed of God, what God wants, what God has clearly articulated in his Word. Paul's prayer centers on the people in the Church learning the Word of God so that when they are shaken, when life happens, whether a good shake or a bad one, it is the will of God that comes out.

As you think about core strength {?} number one—we have been talking about this a lot—but as you think about shoring up foundational areas in our walk with Christ and our church ministries that comprise the basis of godliness in effective community service, ask yourself a question as we transition into some practical ways this service can be doing that. How are we going to greet visitors in is service? As the pastor of this service, I want to bring that up before us so that we can be praying and thinking about that. How are we going to greet visitors? I don't think I have ever heard someone say, "I hate this church. I hate it. I would never return because there was too many people who were nice to me. I am never coming back. They are just too nice over there, too welcoming. They talk to me too much." I have just never heard that. Maybe somebody doesn't say that, but I have never heard that.

But this will require that we come to church not simply expecting to receive something, but to give something. Think about the body imagery in the Bible, how the body works together to support itself and to give and to serve one another. It means that we are going to be looking for visitors in this service. It means we are going to be inviting people to come visit our adult Bible fellowships so that we can get to know them better and learn the Word together. It might mean sending a card of encouragement, maybe a letter or inviting someone into your home.

When we are filled with the knowledge of God's will, then these are the things that will flow out of us. And the end result is that core strength continues to develop. We become stronger as a church family, able to handle the shaking of life.

Think about core strength number two and number three which state planning and praying for the construction of Faith West and the successful launch of a cluster of new ministries in West Lafayette. And also preparing for the next round of ministry dreaming as we embark on a new strategic planning process in 2013.

You know, there is ministry planning going on right now in regards to Faith West. It is happening right now. College ministry, international ministry, counseling ministry, the fitness center outreach possibilities, the day care, the housing, all the way to be a blessing to our community. All these plans are being made right now and some of your friends are intimately involved in the details. There is also a lot of {?} dreams. There is a lot of dreaming going on of when it comes to ministry and what might be pleasing to the Lord

in the days ahead. You know, it is going to take great wisdom and spiritual understanding to create a strategy that brings the Lord glory and honor.

So here are a few suggestions to this idea of contributing to core strength through learning the Word. Now you have heard about this. There are several SCI classes that specifically deal with learning your Bible better, knowing the Word better, knowing God's will better. There are also a number of outstanding resources in the ministry resource center. Here is a couple of them. *The God Who is There* by D. A. Carson. This is a wonderful book that goes through the Bible and talks about a different section of God being ... what God is doing, a wonderful book. Another great book is called *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*. You know, a monthly task of just getting to know the whole Bible a little bit better and how do I start to learn and dig into it better. And there is a wonderful devotion book called *For the Love of God*, also by D. A. Carson, a great way to just have a devotion of God's love to kind of start your day. So those are three resources to help you learn more about God's Word, God's will.

You know, you might also benefit this fall from just picking a book of the Bible and just saying, "You know what? I want to learn more about this book of the Bible and what God has to say about it." And maybe you buy a 10 dollar MacArthur study Bible or a study book with that book of the Bible to help you understand it. But just focusing on one book of the Bible and really wanting to understand what God's will is better. Or maybe you want to just read back through the book of Luke. You want to just start back over in Luke one and just keep reading and ask the question: You know, what has Jesus done? Soak up the reality of the cross and the empty tomb and ask the question: Why did Luke give us all these details and how can I bring that into my life?

In other words, not only this fall should you be praying regularly that a spiritual harvest should occur, but that specifically you, me and all of us would grow in the knowledge of God's will as revealed in his Word. Then if you are praying that, take a step yourself to accomplish that, to grow in that area. Use the opportunities available to you to grow.

I think it is also worth noting that wisdom, wisdom throughout the Bible is closely connected to skilful living, living in God's world wisely. That is wisdom. You see it is not just knowledge for knowledge's sake.

The Bible is not interested in you just knowing more facts about the Bible. Paul didn't write to the Colossians and send them a five page multiple choice quiz on how much they knew about the Bible. He didn't do that. The way he found out how they were doing spiritually was he heard of their testimony coming across the countryside of their love for the saints, their hope they have in Jesus and the way that they were living even though it might be difficult for Jesus. That is how Paul found out about their testimony of living in light of the gospel.

You know, God's will is not that you know as much about the Bible as a Pharisee. That is not God's will, but that you would know God's Word and then live out God's Word.

Not surprising, this is the next place that Paul takes us in the place, the third way that each of us can contribute to the overall core strength is to live pleasing to Jesus.

You know, I think many of us want to please, to some extent or another, those whom we work for. Wouldn't we prefer if our boss were happy with our performance? To some degree, right? Or maybe our parents or possibly even our family name, we want to represent them well. You know, we applaud soldiers that get captured and because they want to honor their country the refuse to give up intelligence even though it might be harmful to them. You know, we see athletes cry on the podium as the national anthem is played and they talk about winning the medal for their country.

Paul ratchets this up a notch, brings it a whole new level. He prays that God's people would live in such a way that Jesus would be pleased. And this is the focus of our prayer as well.

Think about Job. Think about the example of Job. I love Job 1:4-5. The Bible tells us that Job had seven sons and three daughters. And let me just read a portion of the text to you here. In verse four it says:

And his sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And it came about, when the days of feasting had completed their cycle, that Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.⁶

Don't you love that? Job sacrificed for the Lord just in case one of his sons or daughters may have sinned. Job wanted to see his children love the Lord so much that some of the sacrifices he offered he offered merely on the basis of their youthfulness, not on firm knowledge. Oh, that we would pray for that. Oh, that we would have that kind of burdens for our prayers for those who are around us.

Look at the people sitting on the same row as you. Just glance down and make a funny face and just look at each other. Smile. Nod. Wave.

Let me ask you a question. Is one of your heart's desire that each of those people would live to please the Lord? Is that your prayer that the people around you would live to please the Lord? And then are you seeking to do the same in your life? This has a tremendous impact how we pray and impact how we serve, how we use our time, our resources, whether our communication is seasoned with grace or that the sarcasm and hurtful words we use actually push people away from us.

It has implications how we come to church. Paul's prayer is that they would be filled with the knowledge that results in pleasing Christ.

⁶ Job 1:4-5.

When you are shaken and filled with the knowledge of his will, then Jesus pleasing results happen.

The Lord graciously explained this. What does that look like? And the Lord highlights some of that. It includes bearing fruit. So living to please Jesus includes bearing fruit. And this is not very surprising. You know, think about Ephesians 2:10. It states:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”⁷

Not in order to earn his favor, but as we are newly created in Christ, God has laid out good works for us to bear fruit in. The Bible consistently explains that believers living to please Christ, they bear fruit. The biblical writers simply can't imagine a person pleasing to Christ without fruitfulness.

Now note. That does not mean that everyone produces the same amount of fruit or the same kind of fruit. Do you get that? The Scripture thinks of fruit in a lot of different ways. Sometimes fruit is seeing someone won to Christ, actually seeing that happen. Sometimes it refers to generous and sacrificial giving of your time, of our resources. Sometimes it refers to the sacrifice of praise, whether you are willing to not be seen to serve the Lord or whether you just want to use your gifts and abilities to praise the Lord and direct attention to him.

Sometimes it refers to the work of the Holy Spirit producing in us things like self control, things like joy and things like peace. Sometimes that is the fruit the Bible is talking about.

Once again, fruit is incredibly important to us this fall. You know, just think about an FCI class. Just think about a class that takes place. We would not think that because 10 people sign up to be in a class that fruit would automatically be born from just signing up and being in that class, right? That makes sense. Fruit would be people living out the will of God in their life with respect to the topic that that class is covering.

You know, a class on marriage or parenting is not solely for information. It is designed for radical change. They are designed to help us live out the will of God and that we need God's grace to do it, because as we start to try to live to please God we realize how weak and frail we are and how much we need a Savior and how much we need to be constantly relying on God's grace to be pleasing to him to produce fruit.

You know, a class on counseling is not just for people who are involved in being counselors, but for everyone who is going to minister to someone one on one. You know ABFs are starting a series on the fruit of the Spirit and, you know, truly just starting a new series is not our goal, just having a new ABF series is not the goal. The goal is that people's lives would be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.

⁷ Ephesians 2:10.

Faith West, great example. You know, we want to build a building that is nice. We want construction to go well. We want everything to be on schedule, but we didn't invest 10 million dollars in a church family simply to put up a cool building. We invested in the spiritual benefits to the lives that will be touched by those ministries. We want to see fruit. We want to see God working and that is our prayer.

Even in the 9:30 service, you know, there are going to be new people here in the next month. One question that we all have to ask ourselves individually and as a group: Are we going to be ready to welcome them? Are we going to be engaging new people and getting to know them? Are we going to be bearing fruit in that way? And it is a really easy way, just looking around and knowing the people around you. Sometimes all it takes for someone to feel welcome is to know that someone has reached out to them and laid the foundation for a friendship that they might want to come back and invest and get to know that friendship.

What about in your home? Is there fruit being born in your home? Is your spouse moving closer to Jesus? How about your children? Is your involvement with them such that spiritual fruit is born?

Let me encourage you and lovingly ask you to evaluate your life. It may be part of the challenge is that you have not been focusing in your own life on the Lord. And you might need to do that in order to produce fruit. Jesus said in John 15 that:

“...apart from Me you can do nothing.”⁸

Unless you focus on Christ, you can do nothing. Forget about fruit. But on the other hand, those who abide in Christ bear fruit, much fruit and more fruit. Bearing fruit is part of what it means to please the Lord. Another description of pleasing the Lord is increasing in the knowledge of God. What is so powerful at this point is that the more you understand and obey his will the better you understand God himself. The more you see his love and grace poured out on your life, the more you think about that, the more you appreciate his commands, his wisdoms, his instructions about how you should live so that serving Christ, serving the Lord is not drudgery. You are not working under a cruel task master. It is a joy and a privilege because you get to know God better.

That is what Paul's heart is when he said in Philippians 3:10 that he wants to know Christ more. The better you know Jesus, the more pleasing you are to Christ and the more you are prepared to continue to living for him.

The third description in the passage is to be strengthened with his power. You know, you might say, “How in the world am I going to do that? I can't do that. That is just too hard.” And the answer is you are right. The simple answer is that you cannot do this by your own strength. There is a supernatural exercise going on when this happens. God's power is working in you and that is incredibly freeing. It means that this exercise is not dependent upon you pulling yourself up by your bootstraps or just trying harder. It

⁸ John 15:5.

means that the Lord is giving me strength, that even in my weakness the power of God is magnified as I seek to live for him. In my weakness, I am strong, strengthened by his power.

There is one more description in the text, giving thanks for your new condition. This is actually the last description of a God pleasing life and it is actually the longest. And it could be a sermon all in its own. But the primary picture is that a person who pleases the Lord gives thanks. We live in a world where few things are good enough. I don't know about you, but I am a great critic. I think we as a people in our culture are great critics. Tell us to evaluate something and we will be quick to point out all the things that we don't like and not so quick to be thankful for all the thing that is right. Thanks is assumed. Criticism is explained. So a teenager who is not happy with his parents because of x, y or z fails to understand the level of gratitude they should have because of the thousands of things that are right. Or maybe a teacher is critical towards a student, but rarely complimentary or an employee who finds all kinds of faults with their boss, but doesn't appreciate or acknowledge the things that they do right or a boss who treats an employee just as a burden, rather than thanking them for what they bring to the table. And I wonder if that is the way that we often interact in our culture. I wonder do we tend to take that attitude and apply it to the Lord Jesus? Do we apply it to the Lord?

Despite the fact that Jesus pleasing lifestyle means giving thanks to the Father, do we sometimes fail to appreciate all that the Father has done for us? You know, we think about, we talk about, we pray about all the things the Lord has not provided for us and we often times fail to give thanks for everything that he has. Sometimes we might even be angry at God. We might even be angry at God for the job that he has given us, the boss that he has given us, the spouse that the has given us, the children he has given us or even maybe the problems and the circumstances that he has sovereignly allowed to come our way. We respond in anger. You know, the more we dwell on what God has failed to give us, the more we drift away from him. You know, as Paul ponders this thought, he reminds himself of the fact that the once was in the domain of darkness.

You know, this is everyone's starting point, the domain of darkness. And if you have placed your faith and trust in Jesus' work on the cross and your only hope of salvation is Christ's work, you have been transferred from the domain of darkness. You have been transferred from your default state. You once lived under the power of Satan and under a task master who hates you and wants to devour you based on 1 Peter 5:8. And Paul says to the Colossians, "You have been transferred to a very different kingdom. Give thanks, because this is the kingdom where Jesus reigns. This is the kingdom where redemption is available. This is the a kingdom where there is forgiveness."

You know, if you are here today and you would say, "I have never been rescued. I have never been transferred from my default state," it would be impossible to please the Lord unless you are first reconciled to him. And that can only be done by placing our faith and hope in the person and work of the Lord Jesus where there is redemption and forgiveness freely offered and readily available through the person and work of Christ.

If you have been rescued, God makes this simple point. If that is what Jesus has done for you, then it would seem to follow that the response we should have is thankfulness that results in a lifestyle committed to pleasing him.

So in summary we need to pray. This fall we need to pray that the ministries would produce fruit. We need to pray that our friends sitting around us would produce fruit. We need to pray that our church would reap a spiritual harvest. And this fall we need to learn to use the resources around us to learn more about God's revealed will so that when we are shaken at home in our ministries, at our work place, what comes out of us is language, actions, communication that is the will of God. We need to live pleasing to him, because he has transferred us from a dominion where Satan reigns and where succeeded to destroy to a dominion where Jesus reigns. It is a dominion where Jesus is our intercessor, where he sent his spirit in a dominion characterized by redemption and forgiveness.

We have a lot of great work to do this fall, because the greatest work has already been done on our behalf.