



Colossians 1:9-12

Prayer for Spiritual Growth

The apostle Paul begins his letter to the Colossians with a great prayer of thanksgiving and fervent petitions for the believers in Colossae to grow spiritually. As he ends this thanksgiving to God he speaks of the churches' "love in the Spirit."

Love is consistently spoken of as the fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He bears the fruit of love wherever He dwells (Gal. 5:22). It reminds us of the apostle Paul's doxology in Ephesians 3:16-17, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love" (NASB95).

The Holy Spirit implants and nurtures this love in the Christian. It is the one word that characterizes the believer in Christ.

Although this is the only reference in Colossians to the Holy Spirit, it is noteworthy because this letter of Paul goes on to stress the preeminence of Jesus Christ. Twice he will focus our attention on the deity and sovereignty of Christ. The Trinity or Triune God is stressed in this letter even though the word "Trinity" does not appear. No where does the Bible speak of three gods, however it does speak of the three persons of the Godhead. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Deity is an attribute of all three persons.

Paul has eloquently given thanksgiving to God. "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." (Colossians 1:3-8).

Paul's answer to the shallow "knowledge" of the Gnostics who claimed that the Christian had to have additional knowledge was the rich, full, true knowledge (*epignosis*) of the will of God. He was serious when he prayed that Christians would "know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). The perfection of knowledge is to know God in Jesus Christ.

The answer to modern day Gnosticism and the secret cults and mystery religions of our day is the full knowledge of God's revealed will in Christ. There is a lot of windy speculation for a deeper knowledge of God, but all

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There is a lot of windy speculation for a deeper knowledge of God, but all these speculations are empty because they do not point to Jesus Christ. They can't deliver.

When Paul got word about the faith of the Christians at Colossae he didn't stop praying. Paul prays that believers will be filled with a full, deeper, clearer, accurate knowledge of God's will that will enable them to live a life that is pleasing to God in everything, full of fruitful works, growing in knowledge of God, patience, longsuffering, and thanksgiving to God for their salvation. The blessings already received ignited his prayers.

PAUL'S PETITION FOR THE BELIEVERS (v. 9)

Paul prayed, "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" (Colossians 1:9, NASB95).

Paul was in the habit of praying for the churches every day. He wrote to the Ephesian church, "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." (Ephesians 1:15-17). His prayers for the Colossian church were no exception. It was his passion to see God at work in their lives.

We see it also in his letter to the Philippian church. "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

Two things stand out in Paul's prayer for these believers. He wants them to have a full knowledge of God's will, and that this will lead to lives that please God and are worthy of the name Christian.

Paul prayed that God would fill them with the knowledge of His will

The full knowledge of God's will rests on an intimate personal knowledge of God. It is not a theoretical knowledge; it is not book knowledge. It is a personal experience with the living God. Paul said on occasion, "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12). Jesus Christ was his most valued person. Christ was the passion of his life.

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This kind of knowledge of God's will comes through the insight that the Holy Spirit gives the believer as He applies the living Word of God.

"Filled with the knowledge of His will" has the idea of being completely filled. The Christian is to be continually growing in His knowledge of God. Now matter how much we have learned, we need to learn more.

This full knowledge of Jesus Christ is the solution to the fanciful schemes of Gnosticism. The false teachers had made a superior knowledge their goal, but it led to conceit, ecstatic visions, rules and regulations, and the worship of angels.

God has revealed His will in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is true that a special knowledge is the basis of the Christian life, but its fruit is a "life worthy of the Lord." God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ is open to everyone; it is not limited to a special select group of initiated elite individuals.

The word Paul uses for "knowledge" (*epignosis*) is a compound word, that focus the knowledge on an object. It is a full, accurate, thorough, comprehensive focused knowledge that takes hold of and penetrates into an object. The apostle Paul prays that these believers will be filled with a thorough, perfect knowledge of God and Christ.

The "will of God" here is the whole counsel of God as we know in Jesus Christ. The result of such knowledge will change our daily lives. Knowledge of God's will beckons us to live accordingly. It touches every area of our being. It captures our thoughts, affections, motives, and volitions. This letter deals with the will of God for Christians. We are wise to focus our attention on the vital teaching in the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit employs our human faculties which he has endowed us with and expects us to use them. He is not going to drill a whole in our head and fill it with His Word. He expects us to read, study and memorize the Bible. When we do He will use that knowledge to change us from the inside out.

In all spiritual wisdom

True fullness of knowledge of God comes in Christ. "All spiritual wisdom and understanding" is probably a fuller understanding of the knowledge of God's will.

The Holy Spirit gives discernment and insight. The one thing we need in our generation is practical wisdom, clear discernment of right and wrong, truth from error. *Sophia* or "wisdom" takes in all of our mental facilities.

The Holy Spirit applies the Word of God to our daily lives if we allow Him. This penetrating knowledge consists of "all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

The apostle James wrote, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously

and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind" (James 1:5-6). The only reason we don't have it is because we don't ask for it. God is always ready to give it in abundance.

Understanding

The knowledge Paul prays for is not the Gnostic philosophy taught the initiates in their mystery, secret society meetings. It is a penetrating insight into the redemptive revelation in Jesus Christ. It is no secret, but something fully revealed and ready to be proclaimed from the house tops.

The right knowledge always leads to a changed life. "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2). Such knowledge of God's will is the basis of all Christian life.

This fellowship with God leads to a deeper fellowship with Him. It is a life transforming knowledge. It is a growing knowledge.

Do you want a rich, deep experiential knowledge of God's will? Come to Christ and learn from Him. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

Christian behavior is always founded on right thinking. Good solid Biblical theology or doctrine leads to right behavior. Such knowledge always brings glory to God because it is spiritual and practical. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart. The more we know him, the more we will love Him and the more we love Him the more we will obey Him. Jesus told His disciples: "If you love Me, you will obey Me."

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE (v. 10)

The purpose of wisdom and knowledge of the will of God is "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" (Colossians 1:10). A little later Paul will write in 2:6, "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6). How did you receive Christ? It was by grace through faith.

Our knowledge of God's will is not an end in itself. Our goal and ambition in the Christian life is to be pleasing to our Lord (2 Cor. 5:6-9; Eph. 5:10).

Live worthy of the Lord and please Him

The word "walk" suggests the idea of living or conducting one's life. Live your life this way. Live in a manner worthy of the Lord and to please Him.

Not only does Paul stress the importance of a changed life in his Colossian letter, but also when he wrote to the Ephesian church. "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).

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A life worthy of the Lord is one that is conformed to God's will. You want to make Jesus look good in everything you do. You want to please Him in every way. You want to live in such a way as to bring joy to God's heart.

The word "pleasing" in this passage suggest the idea of mind and heart in which we anticipate God's every wish so that we may please him.

Bearing fruit in every good work

What kind of fruit should we be bearing as Christians? What kind of life is pleasing to the Lord?

Paul gives us four in verses 10-14. They are revealed in four ongoing action words or participles. The believer is to "bear fruit (v. 10), "increase in the knowledge of God's will" (v. 10), "being strengthened" (v. 11), and in "giving thanks" (v. 12).

"Bearing fruit" is the Christian's continual exhibition of fruitfulness. Fruit bearing is in the present tense suggesting perennially bearing fruit. The fruit consists of every good work. It is also the fruit of the Spirit as Jesus Christ is allowed to live His live out in and through us.

This fruit bearing is the result of a living faith in Christ. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). This fruit does not come automatically; we have to make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit and obey Him. Because we have been saved by grace we will produce good works.

Growing in knowledge of God

Growing in the knowledge of the will of God results in a "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" (Colossians 1:10). The knowledge of God is the sphere or realm in which spiritual growth takes place. It never takes place in a vacuum. Knowledge of God for the believer is like rain and sunshine to plants; we continually grow and mature in our spiritual life as we grow in knowledge of Him.

STRENGTHENED WITH ALL POWER ACCORDING TO HIS GLORIOUS MIGHT (v. 11)

Paul prays that they be "strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously" (Colossians 1:11). That is the resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead. This is the power God places at our disposal.

Perhaps you are asking, well how in the world do you live such a life? Listen to another prayer of Paul. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:14-21). God does not want His children to pray asking for too little.

Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly, above, beyond all things, superabundantly, and over and above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.

Don't tell Christ that you cannot live the Christian life. He makes Himself available to you to live in and through you as you make yourself available to Him. It is not you; it is Christ who lives His life in and through you to do all that He wants to do.

The word for "power" denotes to be strengthened, to make strong. The believer is constantly strengthened by God's enabling power. We have the inherent power to live the Christian life because Christ lives in us.

This strength comes from "His glorious might." God is at work in us. This "glory" (*doxa*) reminds us of the bright light over the mercy-seat in the wilderness Tabernacle in Israel. The *Shekinah* glory of God was the manifest symbol of His presence with His people. God is with His people all the time.

How many Christians go through life cheating themselves out of the most wonderful life far beyond anything we could ever imagine or ask for?

We need the constant strengthening with all power because we are engaged in a spiritual warfare. We cannot possibly win the battle with sin, Satan and the forces against the Christian life without God's indwelling presence through the Holy Spirit. This continuous empowerment is essential. The apostle Paul declared with conviction from personal experience: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

We cannot live the Christian life in our own strength. No one can live the Christian life but Christ. The wonderful truth of the Scriptures is that Christ comes and lives His life in and through us to His glory.

The power is "according to the might of His glory." It is in proportion to God's abundant supply. It is according to His measure, not ours. We are empowered by "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might" (Ephesians 1:19).

Do you long to see God at work in your life? The power of God is a prominent theme in this letter of Paul (1:29; 2:12; cf. Eph. 1:19; 3:7, 16, 20; 6:10).

Attaining steadfastness patience with joy

Are there times when you want to throw in the towel and call it quits? Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:13-14). "Patience" is the opposite of being a coward; it is a steadfast endurance, fortitude to follow through. Patient endurance is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Joy is the pervading element of patience and steadfastness. The Christian keeps on keeping on with steadfast endurance. He endures patiently without grumbling and complaining with joy. This is an outlook toward life that maintains a wholesome attitude toward life. We can live above the chances, changes and circumstance in life.

Paul is not one to lie down and let his enemies run over him. He had an overcoming patience. Second Corinthians 11:22-28 gives along list of extreme pressures that came his way one after another in which he turned the events into that which would give glory to God.

POSSESSION OF GREAT SALVATION (vv. 12-14)

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Paul continues "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" (Colossians 1:12-14).

We are the people of His choice. Our inheritance is not a process, but an instantaneous act of God. Paul is absolutely sure of the salvation of believers that he sees it as an already completed transaction. It is not something await us in the future. We have eternal life now.

Qualified by the Father to share in the saint's inheritance (v. 12)

The believer in Jesus Christ has a shared allotment in God's inheritance. This is true even now. Christians live in the presence of the Lord all the time. Jesus expressed this inheritance as "I in you," and "you in Me." It is an intimate, personal living relationship with Him. We do not have to wait until we get to heaven to enjoy our inheritance. God is our inheritance and we are His.

We have a great inheritance. Paul gives "thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light" (Colossians 1:12).

The word "qualified" in this verse has the idea of making sufficient or competent and therefore qualified. It can denote empowering or authorizing.

What is infinitely clear in the Bible is that no one is fit for sharing in the inheritance of God's people because of our depravity. We are guilty sinners. However, what we cannot do God does on our behalf. This is the believer's standing before God. We are "in Christ" and that is the qualifying factor. It is not our character or virtue or good works, but Christ's virtue that qualifies us for the inheritance.

The apostle Peter stressed: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Remember how God provided an earthly inheritance for the Jewish people? The apostle Paul tells us we have an even better inheritance. "Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12-13).

God in His sovereign grace chose to include us in this great inheritance. It has nothing to do with human merit or character. It is an "inheritance" meaning it is a gift one receives by the good grace of another. You do not earn an inheritance. It is a gift from a gracious heart.

It is God who makes worthy those who are not worthy. He enables the unworthy sinner to receive His inheritance. The "inheritance of the saints" is the inheritance of redeemed believers in Christ Jesus.

The inheritance of the saints speaks of the now and the yet to be. Our inheritance has not yet been manifested in its infinite wealth, but the divine act by which believers have been rendered meet for it has already taken place. The kingdom of God has already broken into this world in the redeeming work of Christ; it will break in one day in the plenitude of glory which only the Second Coming of Christ will reveal. There is a future

in one day in the plenitude of glory which only the Second Coming of Christ will reveal. There is a future consummation of which this present life is only a foretaste. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

We have been delivered from the power of spiritual darkness (v. 13)

It is almost like a doxology and Paul continues saying, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Colossians 1:13).

The saints have their inheritance in the kingdom of light, not the kingdom of darkness.

The kingdom of darkness is the realm of Satan. It is a powerful picture of the power of sin and Satan and his rule over the unbelievers. Jesus said, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

We are rescued from this realm of spiritual darkness and the power of sin and the hold of Satan were broken when we believed on Christ as our Savior. We are now the citizens of the kingdom of His Son in the realm of light. In the Christian life we are now under new management.

Note especially that God did more than rescue us out of the power of spiritual darkness; He "transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (v. 13).

We have been transferred to the kingdom of God's Son

God the Father declared Jesus to be His unique, one of a kind Son at Jesus' baptism. "Behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'" (Matthew 3:17).

The apostle Paul admonished the Ephesian believers, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

When God "transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" He changed our place of residence. He delivered us over "into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

Paul's readers were very familiar with the word "transferred" because it was used of removing a king, terminating with an employee, remove from one place to another, and executing a prisoner. It describes the removal of whole countries to other locations. Their forefathers had experienced the exile. Conquering governments removed persons from one country to another settling them as colonists and citizens of another country.

Paul stresses the wonderful fact that when we were born again we entered into the kingdom of light. Gnostics claimed special illumination and initiation into special knowledge and religious experiences, but it was a spiritual darkness.

We are dwellers in the light because God is light. In the Bible "light" speaks of purity and perfection. Where we are going there is no night.

We have a new master. Is Jesus Christ the sovereign ruler of your life? Are you walking in the Light?

We have a new master. Is Jesus Christ the sovereign ruler of your life? Are you walking in the Light?

We have been redeemed (v. 14)

The apostle closes his petition "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). Paul uses the word "redemption" meaning a release brought about by the payment of a price. Slaves were set free from bondage and prisoners of war were released upon a payment of ransom.

We have been purchased and set free. We have this present possession. Our freedom that we enjoy in Christ was purchased for us at the price of the death of Christ when He died as our atoning sacrifice for sin. "The wages of sin is death," and Christ paid that debt in full once and for all. Christ came to give His life a blood-ransom for many (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; 1 Tim. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:18-19, etc).

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). At the last supper Jesus told His disciples, "for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

Our redemption has been procured by the death and resurrection of Christ; it now behooves us to trust in that sacrifice.

Again Paul wrote, "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Romans 3:24-25).

"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Come and receive eternal life today by trusting in Jesus.

The redemption in Christ brings forgiveness of all our sins.

We have the forgiveness of sins

"Forgiveness" is a sending away, the removal of our sins from us so they are no longer a hindrance to separate us from God. Prisoners were released from bondage or imprisonment. When God forgives He separates us from our sins as far as the east is from the west. They are infinitely removed from us. Even God can no longer see them because they are all under the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ paid the penalty of human sin in full when He died on the cross, therefore satisfying the just and holy demands of the law of God. Our sins were put away, sent away forever.

There is no greater joy than knowing that all of your sins have been forgiven and you stand right in the eyes of a holy God. There is no need for any one reading this who does not have peace with God and assurance of eternal life. If you have put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ knowing that He died for you on the cross all of your sins are under His atoning blood. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Colossians stresses the preeminence of Jesus Christ. As sovereign Lord He touches every area of our lives.

Because we have put our faith in Jesus Christ we are a rescued people.

We have been delivered from the realm of spiritual darkness into the kingdom of God's Son. We are no longer held in bondage to Satan. Sin can no longer be the master of our lives. Jesus Christ is Lord.

When we love the Lord Jesus Christ we will obey Him.

Is Jesus your most valued person? If He is your most valued person you want Him to be your Lord and Master. He becomes the boss in your life.

Because we have been redeemed and all of our sins have been forgiven we have peace with God and assurance of eternal life.

When we are "strengthened with all power according to His glorious might" we have everything we need to live the Christian life. You do not need any Gnostic secrets and names of pagan gods whispered in your ear.

"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives we are no longer dwellers in darkness, but people of the light.

When we are "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and understanding" it will change our lives for our betterment and for God's glory.

The more we know the will of God the more we want to be like Him. Growing in knowledge of God results in a walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, and to please Him in all respects.

W. T. Sleeper expressed so well this blessing that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Out of my bondage, sorrow and night,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy freedom, gladness and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of my sickness into Thy health,
Out of my want and into thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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