

"Paul's Prayer for the Saints at Colossae"

Part 1

Colossians 1:9-14

Introduction: The one thing that every believer can use improvement on is their prayer life. There is most likely not one believer here tonight who would honestly say that they are satisfied with their prayer life. Many believers treat their prayer life like a vending machine. They do not pray much until trouble comes and then they go to the "vending machine" and drop in their prayer coin and expect to see results right away. Others treat prayer like a lifeboat on a cruise ship. When you get on a cruise ship, they walk you through a safety drill and tell you all about the lifeboats and how they work. Most pay very little attention. They go about the cruise not really thinking about the lifeboats but knowing they are there brings some comfort but they are viewed as something that is only needed in an emergency. That is the very way prayer is viewed by many believers. It is nice to know we can pray but many only see it as something that is used in an emergency.

Notice the words of Abraham Lincoln:

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power. ... But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. ("A National Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer." Proclamation March 30, 1863)"

Why should we pray?

1. It is commanded in the Bible.
2. It glorifies God.
3. It certainly changes the things which we pray about.
4. Prayer seems to have an effect on our health.

This 4th point may surprise you but let me show you a portion of a study conducted at Penn State.

- *"National Institutes of Health found individuals who prayed daily were shown to be 40 percent less likely to have high blood pressure than those without a regular prayer practice."*

- "Research at Dartmouth Medical School found that patients with strong religious beliefs who underwent elective heart surgery were three times more likely to recover than those who were less religious."
- "A 2011 study of inner-city youth with asthma by researchers at the University of Cincinnati indicates that those who practiced prayer and meditation experienced fewer and less severe symptoms than those who had not."
- "A recent survey reported in the Journal of Gerontology of 4,000 senior citizens in Durham, NC, found that people who prayed or meditated coped better with illness and lived longer than those who did not."

Proverbs 3 seems to support this study.

Proverbs 3:5-8

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

⁶ *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

⁷ *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

⁸ **It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.**

What is prayer? It is certainly talking to God. It is not me trying to get God to accept my will, but it is me aligning my will with God's will. It is me going to God concerning something I cannot change and asking Him to do what He knows is best in the situation to bring glory to Himself. It is me leaning and depending upon God for the circumstance I am praying about.

Who can pray? Everyone can pray but only believers can reach the throne of God with their prayers. The Bible teaches us that the prayers of unbelievers are not heard.

John 9:31

³¹ *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.*

1 John 5:14-16

¹⁴ *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

¹⁵ *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

¹⁶ If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

This now brings us to Paul's prayer for the believers at Colossae. Let us look at what Paul prayed for.

"Praying for Fellow Believers"

Notice Colossians 1:9

I want to begin by pointing your attention to the opening words of this verse. The words "for this cause" tells us why Paul is going to offer this prayer. The question is, "What was the cause Paul was speaking of?" It was what we looked at in the previous verses. The cause was that they were doing great and they were growing and producing fruit.

Application:

When we think of praying for people, we think of praying for those who are sick, or those who have lost their job, or have marital problems, or something along that line. These are prayer requests that need to be carried to the throne of grace. We need also to pray for those who are doing well and especially those who are growing in their faith and producing fruit. Why? When a person is in a time of growth, they are certainly a target for the enemy. Is this not why the enemy planted heresy in the church?

Matthew 13:24-32

²⁴ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

²⁵ But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

²⁶ But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

²⁷ So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

²⁸ He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

²⁹ But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

³⁰ *Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

³¹ *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:*

³² *Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

Both of these parables speak of demonic influence when there is growth.

Notice Colossians 1:9 again.

1. That they would know the will of God.

As we read this verse, we see that Paul prayed that they would know the will of God. Many believers struggle to know the will of God for their lives. The majority of people believe that the will of God is circumstantial, but that is not the way to determine the will of God because circumstances can be deceiving, and subconsciously we can manipulate circumstances to please the flesh. There is a word here in verse 9 and in verse 10 that helps us to understand how to know the will of God.

Notice Colossians 1:9-10

The word is "knowledge." Knowledge is the key to knowing the will of God for your life. Some people would rather make decisions based upon feeling rather than knowledge. They would tell you, "Just do what your heart tells you." The problem with that is found in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 17:9

⁹ *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

We are not to seek to find the will of God based upon feelings. If we are going to know the will of God it will take a knowledge of the Word of God. Notice what the prophet Hosea said.

Hosea 4:6

⁶ **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:** *because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

Application:

A lack of knowledge concerning the principles of God's Word will leave you walking in the dark. If you neglect the Word of God then do not expect to know the will of God. A knowledge of the Word of God is directly connected with the knowing the will of God.

Let me show you a question that Jesus asked the religious leaders about 7 times.

Mark 12:10

¹⁰ And have ye not read this scripture;

Back to Paul's request, he prayed that the believers would know the will of God.

Notice Colossians 1:10

2. He prayed that they would walk worthy of God.

When Paul speaks of our walk, he is talking about how a believer lives and conducts their lives. Here in this verse, just like the previous verse, the walk is connected with knowledge. This is why we study the Bible the way that we do here at CBC. We study it in an expository manner because that is the best way to learn and gather knowledge. I am always cautious about Bible study groups that get together and study a book that an individual has written. I personally believe that if people are not careful in those studies, they can get led down the wrong path. But if we study the Word of God in an expository manner, we are less likely to get on the wrong path. When we study the Bible, we grow in knowledge and our walk is shaped by what we learn. The walk of the believer was particularly important to Paul.'

Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Application:

What does it mean to walk worthy of God?

Notice Colossians 1:10 again.

To walk worthy is to walk in a way that pleases the Lord. It is living as Jesus lived.

John 8:28-29

²⁸ Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

²⁹ And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; **for I do always those things that please him.**

Then we read the Words of Matthew 17.

Matthew 17:5

⁵ While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, **in whom I am well pleased:** hear ye him.

It is important as we live on this earth that we ask ourselves if what I am going to do or is what I am doing going to please God. This is a great filter to run our lives through.

Conclusion:

Notice Colossians 1:10 again.

I am going to stop with this thought and I want to pull some things together here. When we spend time in the Word of God, we can then know the will of God which will then change our walk with God so that it will be well pleasing to Him. This then leads to a fruitful life. This is what Paul prays for these believers, that they would be fruitful in every good work.

Some people may claim that it is very difficult to walk in a way that is pleasing to God today because of what we are surrounded with. But the Bible teaches us that in the darkest surroundings we can walk with God.

Genesis 5:21-22

²¹ And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:

²² And **Enoch walked with God** after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

Genesis 6:9

⁹ These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, **and Noah walked with God.**