

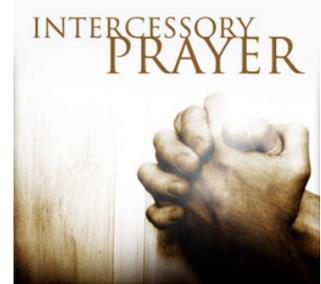
A STUDY OF COLOSSIANS

Part Three

Introduction

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:9-14).

1. In the previous lesson, we saw how Paul and Timothy continued in prayers for the Colossians when they heard of their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints. This was a cause of thanksgiving to God. His mind then turns to the power of the gospel and the fruit it was bearing, not only in Colosse, but in the entire world.
2. The content of their prayer for the Colossians is revealed in this section, which is for their spiritual growth and steadfastness. Paul then speaks of the deity of Christ and His preeminence in all things, which we suspect is countering those among them who brought in destructive false doctrines concerning Christ.



Paul's Prayer For The Colossians – 1:9-14

V. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE COLOSSIANS' SPIRITUAL GROWTH

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:9-14).

1. Since the day Paul and Timothy had heard of their faith and love, they had offered thanks for these brethren, but it also prompted them to offer continual intercession on their behalf. Such sincere prayers reveal a genuine love for these brethren; even though they had not personally met them.
2. The content of their prayers:
 - a. We pray that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will.
 - 1) The word “filled” introduces the subject of maturity; for one cannot be *filled* with the knowledge of His will overnight; it takes time. His desire, then, speaks of a goal: to be filled with the knowledge of His will. The knowledge he desires is the knowledge of “His will”. The Colossians already had basic knowledge (1:6), but he desires they go beyond this knowledge to come to a clear and thorough knowledge of God’s will.
 - 2) The knowledge in which they are to grow or be filled more accurately defined. It is not a knowledge that is speculative or intellectual. It is likely that the knowledge of which he speaks is to be contrasted with the “knowledge” of the false teachers. The knowledge he desires for his brethren is that which is in connection with “all wisdom” and “spiritual understanding”. The idea is that we learn to apply the knowledge of God’s will to all of life’s situations.

b. We pray that you may walk worthy of the Lord. The speculative doctrines of the false teachers may challenge the intellect, but were of no practical benefit to Christians. All that such teaching will do is make prey of him and make him “captive through philosophy and empty deception” (2:8). In other words, such speculative teaching does not provide any guidance for practical Christian living. By contrast, being filled with the knowledge of God’s will results in a walk or manner of life worthy of the Lord or to live in a manner that is becoming of Him.

- 1) Walking worthily of the Lord will result in a manner of life that is pleasing to the Lord, which continues to be the aim of every Christian (2 Corinthians 5:9; 2 Timothy 2:4). Perhaps the contrast here is between pleasing the Lord and pleasing ourselves (see Romans 8:8; 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:32).
- 2) Walking worthily of the Lord will be attended by good works (Romans 13:3; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 2:10; 5:10; 2 Timothy 2:21; Titus 1:16; 3:14). In fact, Paul says that we have been “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10a). It is important to note that the “good works” in view are those “which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10b). It is not we ourselves that determine what a good work is, it is God. This means we must study to find out what qualifies as a good work.
- 3) Walking worthily of the Lord includes growing spiritually. The present tense of the verb “increasing” emphasizes the *habitual action*. The knowledge in view is the same as in verse 9, i.e., a knowledge of God’s will that is advanced, precise and full. Here, Paul may have in mind an increase in the knowledge of His will that we may understand what are good works. Such an increase requires diligent study, which is a stumbling block for many, because many are unwilling to learn how to study or invest the time and effort to do so. One cannot study without making notes, which is the proof that we are studying.

c. We pray that you may be strengthened with all might.

- 1) The purpose of such strengthening is that one might be able to “stand against the wiles of the devil” in one’s conflict with “the spiritual hosts of wickedness” (Ephesians 6:11-12). In Ephesians, one obtains this strength when he puts on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-11). Here in Colossians, one obtains strength by growing in the knowledge of God.
- 2) It by this strength that one is able to exercise endurance and longsuffering with a joyful spirit (cp. Matthew 5:11-12; Acts 5:41; 16:24-25; James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:13).

3. Paul has prayed that they might be filled with a knowledge of God’s will, walk worthily of the Lord, and be strengthened with all might. One that is walking worthily of the Lord is continually offering thanks to God, and these verses (1:12-14) name specific blessings as reasons for giving thanks to God. Two things are named as the primary grounds of thanksgiving:

- a. Thanksgiving for our inheritance. Before the Israelites entered Canaan, each family was promised an inheritance in the land (Numbers 26:52-56; 33:54; 34:2, 11). As Christians we, too, look to enter that spiritual land of Canaan (Hebrews 4:8-11) in which we will obtain a better inheritance. Peter says we have been born again “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4).
- b. Thanksgiving for our deliverance and redemption. Here we see salvation described under two different images: deliverance and redemption:
 - 1) Delivered. (i) This deliverance or rescuing, rather than referring to just one act in the past, points back to all that was involved in the past making this deliverance a fact; it includes all that was involved in our conversion and all that was involved in our obedience to the gospel, as well as the provision that was necessary to make our salvation possible through Christ, (ii) The deliverance or rescuing described here is from “the power of darkness”. This darkness is the realm of man’s alienation from God. It is the realm in which Satan rules the hearts and lives of men (Ephesians 2:2; cp. 2 Corinthians 4:4).

- 2) Redemption. We were captives and slaves of sin, but now we have been set free, and just as a redemption or buy-back price had to be paid to set free a slave, so a price has been paid to redeem or buy us back, which price was the blood of Christ (cp. **Romans 3:21-26**; **1 Peter 1:18-19**). It is sin that brings every man into bondage and so forgiveness of sins is essential to free us from that bondage.

Applications

1. Paul and Timothy offered continual prayers on behalf of the Colossians. Such prayers were born out of a sincere desire for their spiritual growth. Do you also offer continual prayers for the spiritual growth of your brethren? If you do, then you do well, but what if it never occurs to you to do so? It may suggest that we have little interest in seeing our brethren grow spiritually, and, further, that perhaps we are not growing spiritually ourselves. No Christian can remain static; we must always be pursuing spiritual growth and seeking the same for our brethren.
2. One of the purposes of teaching is that one may “walk worthy of the Lord”. Teaching ought to increase our knowledge of the scriptures, but it should also provide guidance for practical Christian living. Indeed, it is the duty and charge of all those who teach to offer encouragement, expose evil, prick your conscience, and rebuke sinful behavior. The problem these days is that many people are not really interested in hearing the truth, but in hearing constant reassurances from the pulpit that their cherished opinions are the truth and that God approves of their sinful lifestyle. A good teacher sets forth, not what people *want* to hear, but what they *need* to hear.
3. Walking worthily of the Lord includes growing in the knowledge of God’s will. This requires diligent study, which is a stumbling block for many. There are those that have excuses at hand to try and justify not studying, but the root of the problem is simply a lack of interest; people that are happy to be religious to some extent, but have no desire to grow spiritually. These are the same people that are resentful and critical of those that are pursuing knowledge. If there is any that have no interest in growing spiritually, then you need to ask, “Why?” Identifying a problem is, in many cases, halfway to solving the problem.
4. Paul prayed that his brethren might be “strengthened with all might” that one might be able to “stand against the wiles of the devil” in one’s conflict with “the spiritual hosts of wickedness” This can be accomplished through pursuing knowledge and putting on the whole armor of God. What does it say about one that does not pursue knowledge and who does not even know how to put on the whole armor of God? Such a person is leaving themselves defenseless and easy prey. Someone might say, “Well, I am not pursuing knowledge and I haven’t got a clue how to put on the armor of God, and yet I feel as though everything is okay and that I’m doing fine.” This is exactly the position in which the enemy wants you – it is a feeling of false security. I would say that such a person remains static regarding their spiritual growth, but, in actual fact, their faith is slowly waning. In order to grow, one must take the spiritual warfare seriously and adopt new attitudes.
5. One thing that will motive us unto spiritual growth and a worthy walk is to fully comprehend all that was involved in our deliverance and redemption.