

Paul's Prayers – No. 1 – Colossians 1: v. 9-14

<sup>9</sup> 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; <sup>10</sup> that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*,

being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup> strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

<sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

## Introduction

We continue our studies on the subject of prayer. We have learnt from the disciples' prayer that we must have a personal relationship with God if we are to enjoy the privilege of intercession. We also learnt that we need to recognize who God is and praise and thank him for his qualities before we actually start requesting our own personal needs.

We learnt last week the value of corporate prayer and the need for all Church prayer to be not just a one off thing but a continuing requirement for all Churches who want to be effective in the battle for lost souls. We learnt that true Revival is possible but we must pray for it in order for it to happen.

We now come to learn some lessons from Paul's Prayers in the New Testament.

We will start by looking at his prayer in Colossians Chapter 1 and verses 9-14.

Firstly it may be helpful to have a little background into this Church at Colossae and to know of Paul's connection with them.

Colossae was situated about 130 kilometers from Ephesus. It was a meeting point between east and west and was an important trade route that people passed through.

There was a large Jewish Colony in the town which was influenced by new ideas and doctrines and philosophies from the east.

Paul didn't start the Church in Colossae. The Church was started as a result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. During Paul's ministry in Ephesus two people became Christians. These were Epaphras and Philemon. (Philemon v.19)

These two lay people started the Church in Colossae. The Church was predominantly Gentile and was going

through a crisis at the time of Paul's letter to them. They were being infiltrated by false teaching at the time. Although Paul was in prison at the time he wrote this letter, he did witness to a fellow prisoner who became a Christian. It happened to be Philemon's old servant, who had stolen from Philemon and then run away. Paul also had a visit from Epaphras who informed him of the problems and probably took the letter back to the Church.

It is in this letter that we read one of his prayers and learn from it how to shape our prayers as we intercede for others.

Before we come to the content of Paul's prayer in Col. 1: v. 9-14. We need to notice two important things.

- Paul prays for Christians who he has never met personally. Paul heard about the Church in Colossae and the problems that the Christians were having but he had only met Philemon and Epaphras. He didn't know all the other people. It is essential that we pray for people who we know. However sometimes it is good to pray for others who we have never met. In my Church in England we used to have a Pastor's prayer time each week, like last week. I would always introduce somebody who needed prayer. Sometimes we never knew these people personally.

Every two weeks I send an e-mail prayer request to 100 people in the U.K.

They pray for Wendy and myself and for some of you. You will probably never meet them, but they are praying for some of you, be encouraged.

Also be encouraged to pray for people who you don't know.

- Paul prayed unceasingly for the Church at Colossae.

What Paul is saying here is that he continues to pray for this Church in his regular prayer times. Paul was a Jew and I expect that he had developed a habit of praying three times a day. Therefore every time he went to prayer he prayed for this Church. What an example for us.

I have a prayer partner who lives in Northern Ireland. She is over 80 years old. She has been praying for Me, Wendy and our children for over 25 years. Her husband has died recently and she doesn't always enjoy good health. However she wrote to me recently and provided some medicine I need each day for my stomach. She also said that she is going to re-start a prayer meeting for Japan. With her husband they ran a prayer meeting for Japan every month for over 30 years.

What an example to us to maintain our focus with people and situations in the place of prayer, even if we have never met them.

Let us now look at the content of Paul's prayer and see what we can learn and apply to our prayer life.

Q. What is it that Paul constantly prays for the Church in Colossae?

In v. 9 it clearly tells us the answer.

Paul prays that the believers may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

In order to understand what Paul is praying for here we need to understand the context of the letter that Paul is writing.

Paul is writing a letter to Christians who are born again, but they are being influenced by false teachers who tell them that if they will accept their teaching then they will have the "Full knowledge about God".

These false teachers were "Gnostics". They believed that they held a secret knowledge of God. Paul was saying to the Church at Colossae that you don't need to have a new spiritual experience, you only need to GROW in the experience that you already have.

When a person is born again into God's family, by faith in Jesus Christ, He is born with all he or she needs for growth and maturity. This is the theme of the letter. You can find it in chapter 2: v. 10. "You are complete in Him"

No other experience is needed, only the "New Birth".

With this background in mind we now come to better understand what Paul is praying here. Paul wants the believers to be filled with the knowledge of God's will.

The Greek word translated "knowledge" carries the meaning of "full knowledge"

In other words there is always more that we can learn about God and His will for our lives. God wants us to "know" His will and understand it. (Eph 5:17, Acts 22:14)

As we study God's word and pray, we discover new and exciting things about God and His will for our lives.

Paul prayed that the believers would be "filled" with the knowledge of God's will.

In the language of the New Testament, to be filled, means to be controlled by.

Paul doesn't just pray that the believers will be filled with the knowledge of God's will, he wanted that knowledge to be in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

So what is Paul praying here?

Firstly the general will of God for all His children is clearly found in the Bible. As we continue to read the Bible, we discover God's will for our lives.

The specific will of God for any situation in our life must always agree with what God has already

revealed in the Bible.

The better we know God's will in general, the easier it will be to know and understand God's specific will for our lives.

Let me give you an example.

A young woman came to me for help. I had never met her before. She was having problems in her relationship with her boyfriend and she needed advice. She professed to be a Christian.

The first question I asked her was "Is your boyfriend a Christian?"

She replied "No". I said "I know exactly what God's will is for you concerning your problem" She was surprised. I pointed her to 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 14 where it says "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers..."

When I suggested that it was God's will to terminate the relationship, she said, it's not that easy, we are living together. Had that lady been reading her Bible and being willing to obey God's word, she would never have dated the man in the first place.

Now she was going to find it much more difficult to break away in the situation.

It is ALWAYS wrong to date a person who is not a Christian. God's word says so.

If you disobey that, you will always get problems.

So we see now what Paul was praying for the believers in Colossae.

He was praying that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's word.

When you are filled with the knowledge of God's word, you are more likely to make right decisions concerning your life and Christian practice.

This is why the Pastor's challenge is to read the whole Bible in 1 year. Hopefully you will want to not just read the Bible but obey it too.

If you do this your spiritual life will be enriched.

When I went to Bible College 30 years ago, they had one very strict rule. You had to read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation each year. The course was two years. You had to read it once in the King James Version and then you could choose another version for the second year.

You could get 100% in all your exams on doctrine and other subjects but if you failed to read the Bible each year, you failed the course and would not get your Diploma.

I am grateful to God that He sent me to a Bible College that was focused on the Bible and Prayer.

v. 10 " that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him....."

Q. What does it mean to “walk worthy of the Lord?”

The answer is in the text. It means a life that is pleasing to the Lord Jesus in every way.

What Paul is praying for the believers in Colossae is that they would live a life worthy of their calling. That is a very good thing to pray for one another.

Paul goes on to tell us in v. 10-14 what a life looks like that is pleasing to Jesus.

Paul gives us 4 characteristics of what a life is like that is pleasing to Jesus.

1. Christians should bear fruit in every good work. Yes we are saved by “Grace” through Jesus Christ, but we are saved to serve Jesus.

Ephesians 2:10 New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>10</sup>For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

If we are not serving Jesus in some way then we are not living a life that pleases God.

As we will discover later when we return to John’s Gospel, that fruit bearing depends upon being willing to let Jesus prune our lives and remove those things that stop spiritual fruit bearing.

Serving Jesus is not what WE DO, it is what we allow JESUS to do through US.

I don’t want to get too deeply into this subject because we will deal with it later in John’s Gospel, however I do want us to pray for fruit bearing in our lives. That is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, His fruit and not ours, He flows through us as we yield to Him. He gets the Glory for everything that happens in our lives.

We are just a channel for His blessing to flow through.

2) The second characteristic of what a life pleasing to Jesus looks like is someone who is increasing or growing in the knowledge of God. ( v.10)

It might surprise you to know that Pastors are still growing. I have been studying the Bible for 30 years, but I am still growing in my knowledge and understanding of God. If I am NOT GROWING in my understanding of God, then I am not living a life that pleases Jesus.

I may have studied the Bible hard for many years, I may have had lots of experience in Christian ministry, but I am still growing in my knowledge and understanding of God. Let us pray for one another that we will not stop growing in our knowledge and understanding of God.

The question you might ask is “How do I grow?”

The answer is very simple. We have already learnt it from John 7:17.

If we obey God,s word then we will grow. It is that simple. Obedient Christians “GROW” in grace and in the knowledge of God.

When we obey God,s word in a particular area, God then will trust us to reveal more of His will in our lives.

Let me give you a little example from “Giving of Tithes and Offerings”

The Bible is very clear in Malachi and other parts of the Old and New Testaments that God requires us to give Him 10% of our income. In the Old Testament that was given into the Temple to provide for the Priests and the running of the Temple.

In the New Testament the money was to be given to the local Church for use in the ministry of the Church. Jesus even commended tithing in Matthew 23:v.23.

In fact Malachi charged the Israelites of robbing God by not tithing.

(Mal. 3:8)

You would be very upset if the pastor announced at the offering, who is stealing from God this week? If Malachi was here today he would not have a problem about saying this.

What I am saying is that when we start obeying God in the area of our tithing, then we will start growing in the knowledge of God.

The reason we will grow is that we will be encouraged that we can manage our money on what we have left after our tithe. If we ever have a need God will supply that need and our faith will increase.

All of a sudden we have grown in our understanding of how God can provide for us and what a blessing it is to give to God’s work here at OIC.

This is only one area of growth. There are 100’s more areas in our Christian life where we can grow in the knowledge of God.

Paul was praying for the Christians in Colossae to “GROW” in the knowledge of God. It always costs to grow in the knowledge of God and the cost is always obedience to God’s word.

You show me a Christian that is “GROWING” and I will show you a Christian that is obeying God’s word.

The third characteristics of someone who is living a life that is pleasing to God is contained in v.11. This is someone who is strengthened by God in their suffering and who exercises patience also. This is done with JOY in their heart.

Paul knew very well that suffering was part of the Christian life.

He had suffered much and God's Holy Spirit had strengthened him in his various trials.

Philippians 1:27-29 New Living Translation (NLT)

27 Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. 28 Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. 29 For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.

Paul also warned Timothy a young pastor, that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution..."

James tells us in his book, chapter 1:v. 2-4 that suffering produces patience and that God is working His purposes out in our suffering.

Therefore Paul prays for the Colossians that when they suffer and submit to God's purpose through the suffering, they will not only be joyful but their lives will be pleasing to Jesus.

It is not easy in Japanese culture to understand that suffering can be a good thing and that God can accomplish something good in the lives of suffering believers. I don't know a Christian that has been mightily used of God that has not suffered in some way.

When we hold on to God through our suffering, we are living a life that is pleasing to Jesus.

The fourth characteristic of a life that is pleasing to Jesus is when we joyfully give thanks to the Father in all things.

Paul was praying for the Christians at Colossae that they would be "THANKFUL" Christians. ( 1:v.12)

Paul even tells them what they should be thankful about in v. 12-14.

<sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

<sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

If we really, really, really understand what Jesus has done for us on the cross, how He rescued us from the hands of the devil, and forgiven our many sins, because Jesus took the punishment for them, then we will be delighted to give thanks to God each day.

We will be "THANKFUL" Christians if we understand our Salvation with ALL of our heart.

So what have we learnt today that will help us to pray better for the Church at OIC and that includes all of us.

1. We need to pray on a regular basis, maybe the Jewish custom of praying 3 times a day is a good one. Certainly in the morning and before we go to bed, and at lunch time if we can get out of our work situation for a few moments.
2. We need to pray for each other that we will ALL grow in the knowledge of God, by being obedient to God's word as we read it.

The cost of "GROWTH" is always obedience.

3. We need to pray that we will be strengthened by God as we go through different periods of suffering in our lives. Suffering comes in all shapes and sizes. It can be physical, emotional, and even spiritual attacks from the devil.
4. We need to pray for each other that we will be "THANKFUL" Christians. This means that we will fully understand with all of our hearts what Jesus has done for us on the cross. How He has rescued us from the hands of the devil and His darkness and brought us into His kingdom and His light and love.

In a moment as a whole Church congregation it would be good if we could pray like Paul did for the Church at Colossae. The items for prayer will be on the screen later.