

## “A Prayer for Christians”

May 7, 2017

Colossians 1:9-14

### I. Introduction

Newly formed Christian churches in Turkey were being attacked by people who claimed to have *special knowledge* which was merely a politically correct term for false teachings. In their so-called wisdom or Gnosticism, they denied that Jesus was the only way for salvation—they taught that such a teaching must be rejected as the height of intolerance and bigotry. In the guise of love for all people, they wanted to make Christianity part of a more all-encompassing religion—a world religion, if you please—that included mysticism, legalism, the Eastern religions, and man-made philosophies. They said things like “*my god is a god of love and he or she wouldn’t ...*” but the problem was and still is today, their god, their pc god, and the God of the Bible are not the same.

A relatively new convert by the name of Epaphras who was a citizen of Colossae and who had started a church in his hometown needed help in combating these false teachers. Knowing that Paul was in chains in Rome and not going anywhere soon, Epaphras traveled over 1000 miles to get help from Paul. So that his instructions could be received and understood by everyone, Paul wrote the *Letter to the Colossians*.

Paul knew of the importance of the prayers of others in his ministry—in [2 Corinthians 1:11](#) he wrote, “*You help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*” In [Ephesians 6:18](#) we read, “*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*” Prayer is important, so before he launched into a rebuttal to the false teachings being taught in Colossae, Paul first shared his prayers for the Christians there. In today’s Scripture we find Paul’s prayer for the Colossians; as in most prayers, here we find both a request and praise.

## II. Paul's Prayer for the Colossians

### A. First, The request

**1. That they be filled with knowledge of God's Word.** The words “for this reason” refer to the favorable report Paul had received from Epaphras. So from the moment he heard the report, Paul had been praying for the Colossians. Paul's request was that they be filled with knowledge OF God's Word. The knowledge Paul wanted the Colossians to have was a deep and thorough knowledge of God. The knowledge of doctrinal absolutes-nonnegotiables—is basic to a Christian's life. Godly living is directly linked in Scripture to knowledge of doctrinal truth.

Proverbs 19:2 says, “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge.” Turn to Ephesians 4:11-14.

Growing in the knowledge of the Son of God was important and remains important today.

The reports from Epaphras convinced Paul that these believers truly knew Christ and were born again. But there was so much more to learn from God and about God; in [Philippians 3:12](#) Paul wrote, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” Contrary to the false teachings, Paul was saying, “*You do not need a new spiritual experience; you only need to grow in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ.*”

Paul's prayer, his request, was that their knowledge of God's will would increase. God's will is not a secret; the Bible is filled with directions and instructions. For example, [2 Peter 3:9](#) says that “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” [Ephesians 5:17-18](#) says, “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#) says, “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” We could go on but time flies.

Knowledge about God and His will does not have any saving function—we are saved through faith. Knowledge is a means by which one grows in faith, which in turn leads to a life pleasing to God.

Paul said that knowledge of God’s Word will lead to “**all spiritual wisdom and understanding.**” He wanted them to have “**all wisdom**”—not that they would know everything, but that they would have all the wisdom necessary for making right decisions, godly decisions, and living to please God.

**2. The Results** Paul then listed the results of being filled with spiritual knowledge beginning with ...

**a. A worthy life** Paul wrote “**that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing to Him in every way.**” With the teachings of the Holy Spirit, along with the wisdom about God’s will, come understanding of how to apply the godly principles to daily life—i.e. “**how to live a life worthy of the Lord.**”—a worthy, godly life. In **1 Thessalonians 2:12** Paul wrote, “**Live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.**” In our own strength, we would fail to walk as God desires. But God hasn’t left us on our own, in **Galatians 2:20** Paul testified that “**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**” We can walk a worthy life only in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

**b. A fruitful life** A 2<sup>nd</sup> result of growing in knowledge is a fruitful life. Fruit is a by-product of living a righteous life. It is the mark of every redeemed person, in **John 15:8** Jesus said, “**This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**”

The Bible defines fruit in a variety of ways. In **1 Corinthians 16:15** converts are referred to as fruit. **Hebrews 13:15** defines praise as fruit. **Galatians 5:22-23** lists the fruit of the Spirit. Just as a healthy fruit tree bears much fruit, a spiritually healthy Christian will bear much spiritual fruit.

**c. A growing spiritual life** A 3<sup>rd</sup> result of growing in knowledge is a growing spiritual life. Knowledge and obeying God’s will leads to more knowledge and more spiritual growth. Knowledge should result in more than just knowing good from evil but in doing good. It will lead to a transformed relationship with God and others. **Micah 6:8** gives the blueprint for such a spiritual life, “**He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**”

**d. Spiritual strength** A 4<sup>th</sup> result of knowledge is spiritual strength—“being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might.” The strength and power to do God’s will can come only from God. In **Romans 15:13** we read, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Spiritual strength is available to the believer who is filled with the knowledge of God’s Word; **Philippians 4:13** says, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

**e. Endurance and Patience** The last result of true spiritual knowledge that Paul listed was “great endurance and patience.” Endurance refers to hanging on during tough times due to circumstances. Patience refers to patience with people. Both refer to the patient enduring of trials. Knowledge of God’s promises and purposes found in the Scriptures gives the strength and hope to endure any trial or suffering regardless of the source. Turn to **Romans 5:3-5**.

**B. Thanksgiving** Paul’s prayer is a model for all believers to follow. Prayers should include thanksgiving as well as requests. In **Philippians 4:6** he said, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” A Christian who is filled with the Spirit and filled with the Word of God will prove it by his attitude of appreciation and thanksgiving to God. Paul then listed 3 things for which Christians can be thankful.

**1. God qualified us.** Paul wrote to give “thanks” to God the Father since “God qualified us.” There is nothing in any person that qualifies him or her for eternal life-- **Isaiah 64:6** says, “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” Or as **Romans 3:20** says, “No-one will be declared righteous in his sight, i.e. God’s sight, by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” But **Romans 5:6** says, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” God qualified us; **1 Timothy 1:15** says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” As **Romans 3:23** says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” God qualified us.

**2. God rescued us.** A 2<sup>nd</sup> reason for thanksgiving is that God “rescued us, i.e. believers, from the dominion of darkness.” God draws believers out of Satan’s kingdom to Himself. Notice that Christians aren’t gradually delivered from Satan’s power, but the instant faith is put in Jesus Christ, he or she is delivered. **2 Corinthians 5:17** says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

**3. Finally, God brought us into the kingdom of the Son.** This kingdom is more than the future millennial kingdom. The kingdom of the Son is right now—**Romans 14:17** says, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

The only way that one can be brought into the kingdom of the Son is through “redemption.” By His death and resurrection, Jesus met the holy demands of God’s Law. The ransom was paid on Calvary, and through faith in Jesus Christ, we have been set free—we have been redeemed. We are co-heirs with the Son of God; **Romans 8:17** says, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

### **III. Conclusion**

Paul’s prayer isn’t just for the Colossians, it should be the goal for all Christians. How about you, are you growing in wisdom—knowledge—of God and His will? There’s an easy test which is found in today’s Scripture. Are you walking in a life-style that’s pleasing to God? One test of true Christian faith is whether it makes any difference in the way a person lives and treats others. Is your Christian life a fruitful life? Are the fruit of the Spirit seen in you? Are you still growing in knowledge or have you stagnated? Are you even trying? When things get tough, is your spiritual strength obvious? If you find yourself coming up short, there is a remedy--**James 1:5** says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” This doesn’t mean you just sit back and wait for something to happen, you have to do your part, too—as Paul wrote to Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:15** (NAS), “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who

does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.” If you want to get better in your use of technology, if you want to learn a new craft, if you want to lose weight, you have to put some effort in to be successful. The same is true of growing in your Christian walk; you need to exert some effort. As Paul said, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved” (2 Tim. 2:15). Are you?