

Pray for Spiritual Growth

Colossians 1:9-12

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Paul begins his prayer for the Colossians with thanksgiving for God's work in their lives. He gives thanks for God's spiritual gifts of faith, love, and hope in the lives of the Colossians. The second part of Paul's prayer, verses 9-12, is for their spiritual growth. Paul prays that the saints will be grounded and built up. These verses emphasize that it is important to pray for spiritual growth in the lives of fellow believers.

Colossians 1:1-12

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel 6 which has come to you, just as in all the world and 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; 7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, 8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard about it, 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, 10 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; *11* strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously *12* giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

Spiritual Growth

★ *9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard about it, 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*

We covered “*have not ceased to pray for you*” with the phrase, “*praying always for you,*” in verse 3. Paul constantly takes his requests for the Colossian believers to his Father in Heaven. Our conversation with God can take place continually throughout the day regardless of what we are doing. An important part of prayer is being aware that God is always with us.

Isaiah 41:10 Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

- *and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will (1:9)*

The cycle of spiritual growth can be seen in verses 9 and 10. Paul does not “*cease to pray*” for the Colossian believers which allows him to witness their growth. First Paul prays that they “*be filled with the knowledge of his will*”. We need to know God’s will to understand what God’s desire is for us, to know what God wants us to do in every situation, to be aware of how to serve Him.

- *How do we know God's will?*

Knowing and understanding God's Word will guide us to knowledge of His will for our lives.

Ephesians 5:15-17 15 So then, be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

Psalm 25:4-5 Make me know Your ways, LORD; Teach me Your paths. 5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day.

- *in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*
 - *Wisdom and understanding* - True wisdom and understanding find their source in God and are revealed by the Holy Spirit. They do not grow from human reasoning, but from "the fear of the Lord" (Proverbs 9:10). (*Life Change Series, Colossians and Philemon*)
 - **Fear of the Lord** - Having a deep reverence, awe, and respect for God's authority (lifehopeandtruth.com)

We gain wisdom by knowing God's will "*in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*". God's Word communicates His desires for us, but it is not just a list of what to do or what not to do. Scripture gives us a growing appreciation of the things God values; through understanding Scripture we can put away our foolish ways and adopt wisdom for that which is longer lasting, eternal, and will make a long term difference in our lives and the

lives of others. God's priority for us is to be "*filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*".

Ephesians 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Proverbs 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

James 1:5 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.

- How can we gain spiritual wisdom and understanding?
- *so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects (1:10)*

A godly walk or "*walking in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects*" results from gaining "*spiritual wisdom and understanding*".

Appreciating God's desires and what He values gives us the wisdom to make godly choices. Understanding God's will for our lives should lead us to live life like Jesus did. This is a byproduct of the Spirit's work inside us. It is the insight that the Spirit of God gives us that enables us to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God.

Ephesians 4:1-3 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Philippians 1:27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

- *bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*
(1:10)

“Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects” results in “bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”. A godly walk will produce good works. We will bear fruit that accompanies our faith in Christ as our relationship with the Lord grows. Scripture uses the term “fruit” both for actions and attitudes, and a disciple of Jesus should be bearing both. Our actions should represent that we are following the Lord. Fruitful actions include our service to others. These should be coming from attitudes that represent the Holy Spirit of God at work in our lives (Galatians 5:22-24).

Galatians 5:22-24 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

John 15:1-2 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Our “*every good work*” leads to “*increasing in the knowledge of God*”. Every part of spiritual growth works together. Knowing God’s will for our lives guides us to living a Godly life which results in the fruits of good work such as displaying holy attitudes, leading others to Christ, serving others, praising God, and sharing what we have. All of this allows us to know the Lord better and have a deeper love for His Word which expands our faith, increases our obedience, and encourages us to live our lives like Jesus Christ did.

1 Peter 2:2 and like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

2 Peter 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Psalms 119:97 How I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day.

1 John 2:3-6 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever follows His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says that he remains in Him ought, himself also, walk just as He walked.

Paul diligently prays for spiritual growth of the Colossian believers which reminds us that we should pray for spiritual growth of others, especially those we mentor.

How?

★ *strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. (1:11-12)*

Strengthened ... power ... might - The repetition of the synonyms shows how difficult it is to express the fullness of God's power in words. The expressions Paul uses here are common in early Christian doxologies (literally, "words of praise") that praise God for His glory and power. The word for "power," *kratos*, in the New Testament is used only for God. His power becomes our strength. *(Life Change Series, Colossians and Philemon)*

- *strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might,*

The process of spiritual growth does not happen because of us or what we do, it takes place because we are "*strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might*". We can be strengthened towards growth through God's power, not by our ability or the strength that resides in us, but with the strength of His might. God gives us the ability to succeed in the cycle of spiritual growth when we ask Him. We need to pray for Him to strengthen us and fellow believers as well.

Ephesians 3:14-20 For this reason I bend my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner self, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and

depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God. 20 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,

- *for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience (1:11)*

God not only empowers us and strengthens us to grow spiritually, he will give us the “*steadfastness and patience*” to succeed through this process of sanctification (*spiritual growth*). Steadfastness and patience refer to the attitude one has when going through trials. “*Patience*” looks more at enduring difficult circumstances while “*steadfastness*” refers to suffering through difficult people. Sanctification is not going to happen without God’s gifts of “*steadfastness and patience*”. There will be trials throughout the process, but God’s ability stretches through the difficult times when we need to continue persevering and pressing onward in the faith.

James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres (remains steadfast) under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firm (steadfast), immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Ephesians 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

- *joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. (1:12)*

Acknowledging God's grace in our sanctification and in our eternal destiny will move us toward "*joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light*". The joyful thanksgiving that occurs happens because of our confidence that God will guide us to sanctification and that He has qualified us to have a portion of His eternal inheritance, along with all the other saints of the Lord.

Acts 20:32 And now I entrust 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 26:18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

Conclusion

The prayer of Paul is an important model to follow. He points out the things we should give priority to. What is most important in life rests in what our Lord is doing in the lives of His believers (other believers and ourselves). He is changing us from being unholy to holy, he is sanctifying us. Responding to God and walking in a way that is pleasing to Him should be our greatest priority and hopefully our prayers will reflect that. Having our prayers reflect that will lead us to a life that reflects His priorities and we will be well on our way in the cycle of spiritual growth. Remember that, "What you are praying for is what you are living for." (Gerry Anderson)

- *How can we learn to pray the way Paul does?*