



Our Prayers, God's Priorities

Colossians 1:9-14

Introduction

Last week we saw Paul begins his letter to Colossian church telling them how he's been praying for them.

- Last week we saw how and for what Paul gives thanks for the Colossian church.
- This week will look at vs. 9-14 which show us what he prays, what he asks God for in this church.

Remember, Paul prays similarly in *Eph 1, Phil 1, 1 Thes 1, 2 Thes 1*.

Such prayers are models for us – how we should pray, what we should pray for.

- Paul's prayers reflect God's priorities.
- They not only tell us what Paul wants, but, if they truly are biblical models of prayer, they tell us also what God wants.
- They don't represent the sum total of praying. It's not like if Paul doesn't pray it in one of his prayers; we should never say it in any of ours.
- But, on the other hand, we probably have something out of whack if Paul's prayers don't resemble many of our own; if his general aims and priorities are never ours.

^{ESV} **Colossians 1:9** And so, ^afrom the day we heard, ^bwe have not ceased to pray for you, asking that ^cyou may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all ^dspiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as ^ato walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, ^bfully pleasing to him, ^cbearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ ^aMay you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for ^ball endurance and patience ^cwith joy, ¹² ^agiving thanks¹ to the Father, who has qualified you² to share in ^bthe inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He ^ahas delivered us from ^bthe domain of darkness and transferred us to ^cthe kingdom of ^dhis beloved Son, ¹⁴ ^ain whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

1. Pray frequently (9a)

- Unceasing prayer? (consistency, regularly, routinely)
- We need to pray for others, for these things, *regularly* – *because they need them regularly*
- Sometimes we think that the goal is simply more prayer.

Matt 6:7-8 when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

“Long prayers are good when they're biblically informed prayer...when they tap into God's purposes.”

- Paul prays some specific things pertaining their Christian growth in vs 9-14.
 - Thankfulness and beyond.
 - Paul’s thankfulness (3-8) is a springboard into lofty requests that God do more and more for them and in them (9-14).

2. *Pray for understanding (9b)*

- “filled with the knowledge of his will” -- God’s will (again) is not some personal blueprint to be “figured out” but that which is revealed in Scripture.
- “spiritual wisdom and understanding” -- how to apply the revealed will; how to live it out.
- Image of a strainer-- What gets caught in the strainer of our attention – what do we latch on to – what passes through? (*truth or cause for thankfulness*)

We need both kinds of strainers.

- Paul is encouraging one kind of strainer in his earlier verses on thankfulness. But he’s encouraging another kind of strainer when he prays in v 9 for them to know God’s will and have spiritual wisdom and understanding.
- Remember the main reason he’s writing to the Col’s – warning them of the errors of this false teaching that was circling about their city.

“It is not an either/or. Truth, discernment, and knowledge are not enemies of love, prayer or communion with God.”

3. *Pray for fruit (10)*

- All true Christians will bear fruit (4th soil – Matt. 13)
- Phil 2:12-13 tells us that this is mysteriously both a work of God and work of our own

^{ESV} **Philippians 2:12** Therefore, my beloved, ^aas you have always ^bobeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for ^ait is God who works in you, both to will and to work for ^bhis good pleasure.

- We need to be in prayer more for others’ growth
- Paul not only prays for fruit, but he prays for ridiculous fruit! Paul is not hesitant to pray prayers that will only truly and completely be answered in heaven.
- We should pray such unblushingly bold prayers.

4. *Pray for strength (11)*

- praying for power

Phil 3:10 – *“that I may know him and the power of his resurrection*

“The power that raised Jesus from the dead—is the power that is at work in us to make us holy, to make us a fit place for Jesus to dwell, to enable us to grasp the limitless dimensions of God’s love for us (Eph 3:14-19), to strengthen us so that we have great endurance and faith and lives constantly characterized by thanksgiving (Col. 1:11-12). It takes extraordinary power to change us to become like that. In fact, it takes nothing less than the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead. What the apostle wants, then, is not power so that he might be thought powerful, but power so that he might be conformed to the will of God. Only the power that brought Jesus back from death will do.” [D.A. Carson, Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians, Pg. 87]

- praying for endurance (*sometimes sounds too ordinary--it's not*)
- praying for patience (*yes James 1:5 says trials produce patience... but we should still pray for patience--literally translated "long-suffering"*)
- praying for joy (“patience with joy”)

5. *Keep circling back to redemption (12-14)*

- Paul began this prayer with thanks to God for the Colossians’ *faith, hope, and grace*...and he ends on it.

Summary:

- Keep thanking God for his gift of grace and growth
- Keep praying for more of his work, more of his fruit...even though he’s promised to do it
- Pray bold prayers which ask God for way more of his grace and growth
- Emphasize the eternal and the spiritual with whatever other kind of request we make (in suffering, ask for it to cease...and be praying for God to use it to sanctify while it remains)
- Pray such prayers with thoughtful, rich language

Baptism

Today we’re praying the things of Col 1 for all of us, but in particular for these being baptized.

- We’re **thanking** God for his grace in saving their souls and ...
- We’re **asking** God for much more!
- We’re committing to partner with and pray for these who are publically identifying Christ and the Church.

Baptism is a picture of what Paul describes in vs. 12-14

- An identification with Jesus’ death and res as our only hope – as the object of our faith

Rom 6:3 *Do you not know that all who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*

- A picture of washing, cleansing
 - A picture of our own spiritual death and resurrection
- Romans 6:4** *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*
- A public testimony to the world of identifying with Christ and his Church

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Discussion 1: Thankfulness

– *Brief review of last week's text/message*

1. The Need for Thankful Prayer (3)
2. Thankful for Faith (4)
3. Thankful for Love (4)
4. Thankful for Hope (5)
5. Thankful for the Gospel (5)
6. Thankful for Gospel Growth (6)
7. Thankful for Gospel Messengers (7-8)

[Last week we saw how and for what Paul gives thanks for the Colossian church. This week we'll look at vs. 9-14 which show us what he prays and what he asks God for in this Church.]

– *Are you growing in your thankfulness?*

[If you, like the rest of us, struggle with this it is a good time to apply this week's message to last week's exposed sin and weakness. Let us pray boldly for thankful hearts!]

– *What is the relationship between thankfulness and petition?*

[Paul models both here and elsewhere (*Eph 1, Phil 1, 1 Thes 1, 2 Thes 1*). For Paul it is a springboard into bold petition... What does humble gratitude reveal about the believer's relationship with God? ...]

Discussion 2: Praying for one another. Remind yourselves why each of these is so important/needed, bring up specific needs in these areas for those in your group, and then pray in each of these areas.

[If the rest of the meeting is spent here--excellent! *In each of these areas, circle back to redemption--make each area of prayer all about the gospel!* Our goal here is to practice these consistently. Do not hesitate to focus on specific needs of your members (e.g. ones enduring great suffering...) for a season.]

➤ **Consistency (frequency)**

[We can't model "consistency" in a single meeting, but we can pray for God to change our hearts to make this a priority in personal worship and in community.]

➤ ***For Understanding***

– ***God's Will***

[Keep in mind the distinctions between God's revealed will and wisdom (and their roles in Christian living/ decision making)... pray for both]

– ***Truth & Reasons for Thanksgiving***

[Recall the "strainer" image. As you listen and observe the world around you and your brothers and sisters, ***are you using both "strainers" in a healthy way?*** (See sermon notes for review of strainer types). ***Which are you more prone to use consistently?*** In what ways can you offer one another help with exhortation or correction?]

➤ ***For Fruit***

[Think broadly in terms of fruit and think big... pray for ridiculous fruit. Here are two areas:]

– ***Fruits of the Spirit (more, more, more!)***

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:22** 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.

^{ESV} **2 Peter 1:5** For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,¹ and virtue with knowledge,⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.⁸ ***For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

– ***Harvest of Souls (more, more, more!)***

^{ESV} **Luke 10:2** ^aAnd he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.
^bTherefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

[Do you have a gospel "hit list" yet? How do you know whom to pray for? Think of that person you think God could/would never save. Humbly pray for that person's salvation (and forgiveness for your own lack of faith).]

➤ *For Strength*

[A lot of crossover here with fruit--but here we focus on the source of the power to change. We are often exhorted, even commanded to do that for which we lack the power... What's up with that!? -- It drives us to the source.]

^{ESV} **Acts 1:8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...

- endurance [for those suffering, for all walking by faith]
- patience (with joy!) [fruits of the Spirit...]
- personal transformation [growth in holiness... fruit of the Spirit]
- community transformation [growth in esteeming others ... one another-ing of the gospel]

Discussion 3: Baptism

– *Discuss the importance of Baptism*

[Does not save, but marks those who are saved... an act of obedience...]

– *Review the symbolism of Baptism*

[see the sermon notes... Romans 6:3-4]

– *Are there any in your group who profess faith in Christ who have not been baptized?*

[This is not a time to gang up on new believers who have not been baptized, but it is a time to make clear the importance of pursuing it at the next possible opportunity. If you have people who have professed Christ for a long time and have been putting off baptism, they are due for a loving yet firm rebuke. All who have not been baptized need to contact the church office and get signed up for the next baptism class and service.]



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- **Consistency (frequency)**

- **For Understanding**
 - *God's Will*

 - *Truth & Reasons for Thanksgiving*

➤ *For Fruit*

– *Fruits of the Spirit (more, more, more!) (Gal 5:22-23; 2 Pet 1:5-8)*

– *Harvest of Souls (more, more, more!) (Luke 10:2)*

➤ *For Strength (Acts 1:8)*

– endurance

– patience (with joy!)

– personal transformation

– community transformation

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