

### 3. One of the most wonderful prayers

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Some people I know have been coming to me to ask me to pray for them with some sort of indication that I have a special connection with God since I am a pastor.

Don't get me wrong, I don't mind praying for others at all. As a matter of fact, I'd love to pray for our church family and it is my honor and privilege to pray for you all. But I don't want people to think that I have an extra pull from God. We all have the same opportunity in Christ. Because of His atoning sacrifice, all the born-again Christians can pray from the equal level at the feet of Jesus.

Since I don't know what the people exactly need from the Lord, I pray to the Lord that He would grant them His will in their lives. I cannot go wrong with that request. Of course, if I know what they need, I would pray for that, too.

In my opinion, the portion of this morning is one of the most wonderful prayers in the entire Scripture. It is a prayer that I think touches all the bases, and it will be very helpful for us to notice what the apostle Paul is praying for.

*Colossians 1:9-14 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; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

Let's take a closer look at this portion together.

#### A. BEING FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL

*Colossians 1:9 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;*

Remember, I told you guys that the apostle Paul had not seen the believers of Colosse in person, yet he treated them like his own congregation. This shows that Paul had the heart of a faithful and caring pastor.

To begin with, he prays for others and not for himself. The requests in his prayers center on spiritual blessings, not on material or physical matters. Of course, there is nothing wrong to pray for physical or material needs. But spiritual needs are vastly more important.

Every believer needs to have "the knowledge of God's will." No Christian would ever dare to say that he had "arrived" to the pinnacle of spiritual maturity and doesn't need to learn anything more. If anyone does that, that Christian would only declare his arrogance in ignorance.

The will of God must be the most important part of a successful Christian life. Paul wants us to know His will and understand it. As we study God's Word and pray, we discover new and exciting truths about God's will for us.

In the language of the New Testament, “to be filled” means to be “controlled by.” If we are filled with anger, we are controlled by anger. To be “filled with the Spirit” as mentioned in Ephesians 5:18 means to be “controlled by the Spirit.” Paul’s prayer, then, is that these believers might be controlled by the full knowledge of God’s will.

Many people want to know the will of God in their lives. That is very good. Unfortunately, some want to know it so that they can be selective – “if I like it, I will take it. But if I don’t, no thanks.” Uh, no! As born-again Christians, we should know that our God’s will is ALWAYS GOOD.

The will of God is an important part of a successful Christian life. God wants us to know His will and understand it. God is not a distant dictator who issues orders and never explains. Because we are His friends, we can know what He is doing and why He is doing it. Grant that, there are some of His will and actions are way above our paygrade.

We can divide God’s will for us into two sections:

The general will of God for all His believers is given clearly in the Bible. The specific will of God for any given situation must always agree with what He has already revealed in His Word. The better we know God’s general will, the easier it will be to determine His specific guidance in daily life. Paul did not encourage the Colossians to seek visions or wait for voices. He prayed that they might get deeper into God’s Word and have greater wisdom and insight concerning His will.

Great theologians, like Charles Spurgeon, G. Campbell Morgan, and H.A. Ironside never had the privilege of formal Bible training. But they were devoted students of the Word, learning its deeper truths through hours of study, meditation, and prayer. The first step toward the fullness of life is spiritual wisdom – growing in the will of God by knowing the Word of God. We all should strive to achieve it.

## **B. WALKING WORTHY OF THE LORD**

*Colossians 1:10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

To walk worthy of the Lord, it requires 2 things from us: the knowledge of God’s Word and the obedience to the Word. In the Christian life, knowledge and obedience go together. There is no separation between learning and living. The wisdom that Paul mentioned here was not simply a head knowledge of deep spiritual truths. True spiritual wisdom must affect our daily lives.

It is not we who work for God. It is God who works in us and through us to produce the fruit of His grace. Christian service is the result of born-again believer’s devotion. The work that we do is the outflow of the life that we live. It is by abiding in Christ that we can produce fruit.

*John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

God must prepare the worker before the man can do the work. God spent 13 years preparing Joseph for his ministry in Egypt before he became the prime minister. It took 40 years preparing Moses to lead Israel. Jesus spent 3 years teaching His disciples how to bear fruit. Even the highly educated Apostle Paul needed a “postgraduate course” in an Arabian desert for 3 years before he could serve God with effectiveness.

A newborn babe can cry and make its presence known, but he cannot work. A new Christian can witness for Christ and even win others, but he must be taught to walk and learn God's wisdom before he is placed in an office of the responsible ministry.

### **C. PATIENCE AND LONGSUFFERING WITH JOY**

*Colossians 1:11-12 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all (1) patience and (2) longsuffering with (3) joy; 12 (4) giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

Too many Christians have a tendency to quit when circumstances become difficult. These verses show us that we need 4 things to be strengthened:

#### **1) Patience**

We must never think that patience is complacency. Patience is endurance in action. It is not the Christian sitting in a rocking chair, waiting for God to do something. It is the soldier on the battlefield, keeping on fighting when the situation gets worse by the minute.

#### **2) Longsuffering**

Along with patience, we need 'long-suffering'. This word means "self-restraint" and is the opposite of revenge. Patience has to do primarily with circumstances, while long-suffering has to do with people. Our God is long-suffering toward people because of His love and grace. Long-suffering is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit.

*Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

*2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

It is amazing how people can patiently endure trying circumstances, only to lose their tempers with a friend or loved one. Moses had long-suffering during the contest with Pharaoh in Egypt. But he lost his temper with his own people and, as a result, forfeited his right to enter the Promised Land.

#### **3) Joyfulness**

God's power is evidenced in our lives not only in our patience and long-suffering, but also in our joyfulness. When circumstances are difficult, we should exhibit joyful patience. When people are hard to live with, we should reveal joyful long-suffering.

Is it easy to do it? Are you kidding me? Absolutely not! But as we grow older in the Lord and learn to trust Him in everything, we get to have the joy that cannot be robbed or taken away by anyone in the world, including the devil.

We often use the words 'joy' and 'happiness' interchangeably, but a distinction should be made. Happiness often depends on happenings. If circumstances and people do everything the way we want, we are happy. But joy is independent of both circumstances and people. The most joyful epistle Paul wrote was Philippians, and he wrote it from jail as he faced the possibility of being martyred for his faith in any day.

Only God's Spirit working within us can give us joy in the midst of troubling circumstances and problem people. Joy is not something that we, ourselves, "work up". It is something the Spirit Himself "works in" to our lives.

#### 4) Thankfulness

Another evidence of God's power in our lives is thankfulness. Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit will be joyful and thankful to the Lord.

*Ephesians 5:18-20 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

When we lose our joy, we start complaining and becoming critical and make those who are around us hard to live with us. We get to lose our focus on Jesus and we become cynical and bitter toward God.

The Colossian epistle is filled with thanksgiving. Paul gave thanks for the church in Colosse, and he prayed that they might grow in their own thanksgiving to God. The Christian life should abound with thanksgiving. One of the evidences of spiritual growth in our study of the Word of God is thanksgiving in spite of all of the problems in our lives.

#### D. REDEMPTION THROUGH THE BLOOD OF JESUS

*Colossians 1:13-14 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

Our society doesn't really have answers for all the problems we are facing in our country today. Ironically, our society seems to do everything it can to undermine the only One who can help us, and that is Jesus Christ.

There are people caught in our legal system as repeat offenders. There are judges who make the wrong decisions intentionally. There is the breakdown of the family. And all of these elements combined produce a society that can do very little to change a person's heart if anything at all. Rehabilitation efforts largely fail because they don't deal with the root problems. In fact, the only real programs that seem to produce lasting change are faith-based, and more specifically, are being operated by Christians who are calling people to faith in Jesus Christ. Society doesn't have the answers.

Jesus met two men whose lives had been controlled and ruined by Satan. Society didn't have the answers. Enter the Savior, Jesus. What did He do? He sought them out in their graveyard and offered them hope. In fact, Luke's account of the story tells us what happened to one of the men who was delivered:

*Luke 8:35 Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.*

Why were people afraid? They didn't know what to make of it. He was so transformed that it frightened the people. They couldn't even imagine a guy like him could be changed in such a dramatic way.

It is such a glorious thing when Christ so transforms someone that you can't even imagine that person being what he or she used to be. You realize that it is the power of a changed life. And that is what God can do.

Redemption has the idea of release by a legal ransom. The price for our release was paid by the blood of Jesus.

This is one reason why “pleading the blood of Jesus” – the right sense, not in a “magical” sense – has such great significance in spiritual warfare. It shows the “receipt” of our lawful purchase as redeemed people from our former slave owner satan.

### **E. CHALLENGE**

I usually finish each study with applications. But this morning I have a challenge for all of us including myself.

As we review this marvelous prayer, we need spiritual wisdom if we are going to live to please God. We also need practical obedience in our walk and work. But the result of all of this must be spiritual power in the inner man and woman, the power that leads to joyful patience and long-suffering, with thanksgiving.

Have we been praying this way lately? If not, we can start it this way from today.