

The Book of Colossians

Lesson 2: Prayer for Spiritual Growth -- Colossians 1:9–14

Have you ever listened in on someone praying for you? Not a quick blessing over a meal, but a long, thoughtful prayer that names you and lays your whole life before God. It does something to the heart to hear it. You realize someone has been carrying you in places you never saw, asking God for things you did not even know you needed. That is exactly what the Colossians get to overhear in these verses. Paul says that from the day he heard about them, he has not stopped praying for them. And now he tells them what he has been asking.

Notice what Paul does not pray for. He does not ask that their problems would vanish, that the false teachers would leave town, or that their lives would suddenly grow comfortable. He aims much higher than that. He prays that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God. He prays not that their circumstances would shrink but that their souls would grow.

And then his prayer swells into something almost too large to take in. He asks that they would be strengthened with all power, according to God's glorious might, for endurance and patience with joy. Strengthened for what? Not for conquering, not for ease, but for the long, patient endurance of faithful people who keep walking when the road is hard, and who do it with joy. Behind all of it stands a reason to give thanks: the Father has qualified them to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Then comes one of the most stunning sentences in the whole letter. The Father, Paul says, has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Stop and feel the size of that. We were not coaxed across a line; we were rescued out of one kingdom and carried into another. We live, right now, under the reign of the Son. Read these six verses as a window into how a faithful man prays, and let his prayer become the prayer you pray for yourself and for the people you love.

Group Discussion: Paul prays not that the Colossians' hardships would disappear but that they would grow, be strengthened, and endure with joy (vv. 9–11). How does this compare with the way most of us pray for ourselves and for the people we love, and what might change if Paul's priorities became ours?

Personal Reflection: Paul longs for these believers to be filled with the knowledge of God's will so that their whole walk would please Him. In what area of your life right now do you most need to know God's will, not merely as information but as something that reshapes how you actually live?

Study Questions

1. Paul prays that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (v. 9). What kind of knowing is this? How is the knowledge of God's will that Paul has in mind different from simply collecting religious information?
2. Paul ties knowing God's will directly to how we live: knowledge that leads to a walk worthy of the Lord (vv. 9–10). Where in your life have you known God's will clearly and yet not been living it out? What would it cost you to close that gap this week?
3. Paul prays that they would walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (v. 10). Notice the loop: we grow in knowledge in order to obey, and obeying leads to still more knowledge of God. How have you seen that pattern at work, where obedience deepens our knowledge of God rather than the other way around?
4. Paul prays for a walk that is fully pleasing to the Lord. Be specific: in what relationship or responsibility this week is the Lord asking you to live in a way that pleases Him rather than the people around you, or rather than yourself?
5. Paul prays that they would be strengthened with all power, according to God's glorious might, for endurance and patience with joy (v. 11). It is striking that he asks for great power, not so they can escape hardship, but so they can endure it with joy. What does this teach us about how God's power usually shows up in a Christian's life?
6. Think of a trial you are carrying right now. Honestly, are you asking God mostly to remove it, or also to strengthen you to endure it well? What would endurance with patience and even joy look like in that specific situation?
7. Paul says the Father has qualified the saints to share in the inheritance (v. 12), and he frames the whole thing in thanksgiving. What does it mean that God Himself has qualified us, and why is gratitude the fitting response rather than pride in our own progress?
8. Paul's prayer overflows with thanksgiving even while these believers are under pressure. What would it look like for you to build deliberate, specific thanksgiving into your week, especially in a season that does not naturally feel thankful?
9. Paul says the Father has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (vv. 13–14). What does this teach about the kingdom of God: when it began, who reigns in it, and where we stand in relation to it right now? And what does it mean that our redemption is defined as the forgiveness of sins?
10. Look back across Paul's prayer. He asks for knowledge that changes how we walk, strength to endure with joy, and a heart full of thanks for our rescue into the kingdom of the Son. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth from Colossians 1:9–14 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Ephesians 1:15–23, another of Paul’s prayers for spiritual strength and knowledge; Philippians 1:9–11, love abounding in knowledge and discernment; Daniel 2:44, the kingdom God would set up that will never be destroyed; Acts 26:18, turning people from the power of Satan to God; Ephesians 5:8–11, walking as children of light.