

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE SAINTS AT COLOSSE

TEXT: COLOSSIANS 1:9-12

INTRODUCTION:

1. There are many differences between Baptists and Roman Catholics. One of the differences is we do not pray *to* the saints; we pray *for* the saints (1:3).
2. Last week I mentioned the emphasis on prayer in Paul's epistles (cf. 1:3, 9; 4:2, 3, 12). Paul was "praying always" for them (1:3). First Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing."
3. Leonard Ravenhill said, "The self-sufficient do not pray, the self-satisfied will not pray, the self-righteous cannot pray. No man is greater than his prayer life."
4. H.A. Ironside said, "We need to pray as much as we need to breathe. Our souls will languish without it, and our testimony will be utterly fruitless if we neglect it."
5. Sometimes Paul prayed for physical healing. In II Corinthians 12:8, Paul says he prayed three times that "a thorn in the flesh" might depart from him.
6. But when we study the prayers of the apostle Paul we see that his emphasis was in the spiritual realm, not the physical (Col. 1:9-12).

I. PAUL PRAYED THAT THEY WOULD BE FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL (1:9).

1. God wants us to know His will. When the apostle Paul was converted, the Lord sent Ananias to talk to him, and Ananias said to Paul, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will" (Acts 22:14).
2. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:17, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."
3. Romans 12:2 says we can "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
4. But what Paul wrote in Colossians 1:9 is better than just praying that they would know God's will. Paul prayed that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."
5. Once again we are reminded that Paul wrote this epistle to correct the error of Gnosticism (from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning "knowledge"), a false mysticism.

6. The knowledge that Paul speaks of is imparted by the Holy Spirit -- "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."
7. The Holy Spirit is called "the spirit of wisdom and understanding" in Isaiah 11:2.
8. Epaphras was probably the man who had founded the church at Colossae, and may have been the pastor when Paul wrote the epistle (Col. 1:7). In Colossians 4:12, Epaphras prayed specifically that the Christians in the Colossian church would "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."
9. Are you standing perfect and complete in all the will of God?
10. According to the Word of God we can stand in the perfect and complete will of God. Paul and Epaphras prayed for it and we should too!

II. PAUL PRAYED FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH (1:10).

1. There are three key phrases in verse 10:
 - walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing
 - being fruitful in every good work
 - increasing in the knowledge of God
2. "Walk" refers to the Christian's conduct; how he conducts his life (cf. 2:6; 4:5). D.L. Moody said, "Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather."
3. Romans 6:4 says we "should walk in newness of life."
4. Romans 8:1, 4 says we "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
5. Galatians 5:16 says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." These Scriptures contrast walking in the Spirit, and walking in the flesh.
6. Romans 13:13 says, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." Here we see a vivid contrast between the walk of godly Christians and the walk of wicked sinners.
7. Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "We walk by faith, not by sight."
8. Ephesians 4:1 says, "I...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."
9. Ephesians 4:17-32 tells us that walking refers to more than just our actions. It includes our thinking (cf. Eph. 4:17-19).
10. Ephesians 5:2 says to "walk in love," and Ephesians 5:8 says, "walk as children of light."
11. Ephesians 5:15, 16 says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

12. First Thessalonians 2:12 says, "That ye would walk worthy of God" (cf. Col. 1:10).
13. First Thessalonians 4:12 says, "Walk honestly toward them that are without."
14. Second Thessalonians 3:11 says, "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies."
15. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing..." So as to please him in all things. Hebrews 11:5 says Enoch "had this testimony, that he pleased God."
16. Genesis 5:24 says, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Genesis 6:9 says, "Noah walked with God."
17. In Colossians 1:10, Paul goes on to say, "being fruitful in every good work." Every Christian should be fruitful. Where there is no fruit, there is no life.
18. Jude 12 describes the ungodly as "without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."
19. Obviously some Christians will be more fruitful than others, but every Christian should be "fruitful in every good work."
20. Our Lord said in Matthew 13:23, "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."
21. Our Lord said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing...Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:5, 8).
22. The Holy Spirit produces fruit in the believer's life (Gal. 5:22-26).
23. I mentioned three key phrases in verse 10. The other phrase is "increasing in the knowledge of God," and this refers to constant growth through Bible reading and church attendance.
24. Second Peter 3:18 says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

III. PAUL PRAYED FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH (1:11)

1. Albert Barnes said, Paul "desired that they might be strengthened for the performance of duty; to meet temptations; and to bear up under the various trials of life."

2. Ephesians 3:16 says, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."
3. "Strengthened with might by his Spirit" (Eph. 3:16). "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power" (Col. 1:11), i.e., the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
4. These Scriptures refer to the power which God gives Christians, whether it be for soulwinning or for endurance through difficult trials and troubles.
5. Colossians 1:11 says this power is "glorious." It is the power of the great and glorious God, and therefore it promotes His glory and shows forth His praise.
6. "Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (1:11) means God's power is available for us when we go through trials.
7. Patience has to do primarily with circumstances, while longsuffering has to do with people (Col. 1:11).
8. David wrote Psalm 59 when King Saul and his soldiers were chasing after him and trying to kill him.
9. "Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me" (Ps. 59:1-3).
10. Then David says in verse 16, "But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble."
11. David sang while being pursued by his enemies, and so Paul says in Colossians 1:11 and 12, "unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" and, "Giving thanks..."
12. Prayer is primarily asking, but it also includes thanksgiving. Prayer is primarily asking. Our Lord said in Luke 11:9, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."
13. Prayer is primarily asking, and that is what we see in the prayers of the apostle Paul (cf. Col. 1:9-11).

14. But proper prayer also includes giving thanks (Col. 1:12, cf. 1:3; 2:7; 3:15-17; 4:2, 3).

15. In many ways, Thanksgiving Day is our most important and Biblical holiday -- giving thanks to God!

CONCLUSION:

1. We will conclude our study with a few words about our inheritance (Colossians 1:12; cf. I Peter 1:3, 4).
2. We did earn this inheritance, and we cannot lose this inheritance.
3. Furthermore, we do not have to wait till we get to heaven to enjoy our inheritance. We can enjoy this inheritance right here and now.
4. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "In ordinary usage an heir is one who has not yet entered upon his inheritance, one to whom his possessions are still future; but the Bible idea of 'heir' and 'inheritance' is very much more than this, for it implies actual possession in part here and now with the promise of complete possession and enjoyment in the future...It starts with Sonship; it proceeds to Discipleship; it calls for Stewardship; it is expressed in Worship; it rejoices in Fellowship; and it culminates in Heirship" (*Romans*).