

Message #4

Colossians 1:9-14

When many people look for a church, they look for the wrong thing and they ask the wrong questions. Do you have a band? Do you have a youth program? Do you have a children's program? Do you have food and snacks and coffee? Do you have contemporary music? Do you have a Christmas Eve service or a Good Friday service or an Easter sunrise service? I have heard those kinds of questions asked in many different contexts. I talked with a man in Florida who said he likes a church that is "laid back." It was a "laid back atmosphere."

I have never had someone ask me this question: **Is this a church that can take me deep in my knowledge of the word of God? Is this a church that week in and week out will feed me meat from God's word at every service? Is this a church that can feed me to the point that I am not shallow or simple in my spiritual understanding?**

That is the kind of church Paul wanted the Colossian church to be. Paul had never been there, but he had heard good things about the church. This was a church that had a grasp of the fact that only faith in Jesus Christ can save. This was a church that embraced other believers who were traveling, who also had that same kind of faith.

Paul wanted this church to become a powerful church so what he and his team did was pray for it to become that. What he prayed for is not numbers; it is knowledge.

HEARING A GOOD REPORT ABOUT HOW THESE BELIEVERS RESPONDED TO GOD'S GRACE AND GOD'S TRUTH, HE CONTINUALLY PRAYED FOR THE ULTIMATE DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE FOR THESE BELIEVERS AT THIS CHURCH.

The believers in Colossae were sensitive to the Holy Spirit (v. 8) so Paul continually prayed for them. In fact, Paul uses a present tense middle voice verb to say, "we have not ceased." What that means is Paul and those with him continually prayed in and of themselves for the Colossians and for their development. They were thrilled to learn of a church that was actually dedicated to a deep understanding and application of God's word.

Now there are three different words that are used in the context of this prayer:

- 1) There is the word "pray" (proseucomai) - word that emphasizes moving toward God in reverent sacred prayer (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 191). **1:9**
- 2) There is the word "ask" (aitew) - word that emphasizes specific requests or petitions (*Ibid.*, p. 14). **1:9**
- 3) There is the word "thanks" (eucaristia) - word that expresses great gratitude and thanks to God (*Ibid.*, p. 190-191). **1:12**

So what Paul is saying is that they continually went to God in serious and sacred prayer and they petitioned God for the deep spiritual growth and development of this church and thanked God for the privilege of sharing in this prayer.

Just think of having an Apostle continually praying for this on your behalf. He is praying for the ultimate development in spiritual knowledge.

PRAYER FACT #1 – Paul continually prayed for the Colossians. **1:9**

The fact that the Colossians were going someplace in their relationship with God prompted Paul and those with him to pray for them. Now Paul prayed for every church and for people in the church. But the prayer he makes for this church is very unique. This is no lightweight mere mention of them as an afterthought in his prayer.

He prayed very specific things for them that he did not pray for every church. He prayed for an amazing development that he did not pray concerning many other places.

He did not pray this kind of prayer for the Romans or the Corinthians. He sure didn't pray this kind of prayer for the Galatians or the Ephesians or the Philippians or the Thessalonians. This is quite a prayer and it is one of a kind and it is for the Colossians.

There are four prayer requests Paul makes:

Prayer Request #1 - Paul prayed that these believers would be filled with deep knowledge.
1:9a

The word for knowledge means that Paul wanted these believers to have deep knowledge that was far above and beyond a shallow surface level of knowledge.

What this tells us is there are different levels of knowledge that God grants to people and to reach a deep level of that knowledge does require prayer.

Prayer Request #2 - Paul prayed that these believers would be filled with deep knowledge of God's will. **1:9b**

Every once in a while you will bump into someone who almost flippantly talks about God's will in their lives. It was God's will to do this or say this or get involved in this or that. Just because someone says it, doesn't mean that is reality in the sight of God.

What is clear about this request of Paul is he believed that coming to a deep knowledge level in grasping the will of God was something that needed prayer. For one to truly grasp the deep will of God for life will require prayer.

Prayer Request #3 - Paul prayed that these believers would be filled with deep knowledge in all spiritual wisdom. **1:9c**

Having deep knowledge and grasping the will of God not only requires prayer, but also “wisdom” (sofia). The particular emphasis of this word is to have a very skilled level of intelligence and learning of the things of God (*Ibid.*, p. 413).

Paul prayed that they would be filled with deep knowledge in all spiritual wisdom. He wanted these believers very skilled and intelligent when it came to spiritual things in all facets of life.

Prayer Request #4 - Paul prayed that these believers would be filled with deep knowledge in all spiritual understanding. **1:9d**

The word “understanding” (sunesei) is most interesting. It is a word that means to have an understanding of something that flows together with something (*Ibid*, p. 428).

In the context this would mean to have an understanding of spiritual things that flows together in harmony with a deep wisdom and deep knowledge and deep understanding of God’s word and will. What Paul is praying about here for these believers is for a deep grasp of God’s word and will. He wants the believers in this church solid as rocks in their understanding of God’s word.

PRAYER FACT #2 – Paul continually prayed this for the Colossians for specific reasons.
1:10-11

Keep the context of this in full focus. Paul is praying for this incredible level of development in spirituality and mind for at least eight specific reasons.

Do not overlook this. **In order for this to happen, there needs to be a deep knowledge of the word of God. No one can fulfill this unless they are after deep, accurate knowledge of God’s word.**

Reason #1 - They would walk worthy of the Lord. **1:10a**

To literally have a life that walks in a way that God deems as worthy, one must have a deep understanding of God’s word and a depth level of wisdom and understanding. Without it, one does not walk in a way that is worthy of the Lord.

Reason #2 - They would please the Lord in every way. **1:10b**

To please God, one must have a deep level of knowledge of God’s word. There must be a deep development in God’s word. Pleasing the Lord is contingent upon accurate knowledge of God’s word.

Reason #3 - They would bear fruit in every good way. **1:10c**

Bearing fruit for God is not something any human can do without God's Spirit. In other words, one cannot just come up with a plan to bear fruit. God's Spirit must authorize it. God's Spirit will only authorize one to bear fruit that is after the deep things of God.

One who is on that path of gaining the wisdom and knowledge of God will discover that God will use them to bear fruit.

Reason #4 - They would increase in the deep knowledge of God. **1:10d**

This is again something Paul mentions. He wants these believers developing in deep knowledge of God and His word.

The participle "increasing" is present passive, meaning Paul wanted these believers to continually grow deep in knowledge and the action of doing that was something God had to give to the believer. The passive participle indicates that Paul prayed that they would be the recipients of the increase.

Just because someone goes to church does not automatically mean they will grow in this way. God has to grant this level of growth. Proverbs says in order to have the wisdom of God, one must take in the instruction and cry out for wisdom and knowledge and search for it as one would give intense effort to finding treasure (Prov. 2:1-5).

Reason #5 - They would be strengthened with the glorious power of God. **1:11a**

God has the prerogative of unleashing His glorious power in the life of an individual and in the life of the church.

Paul is praying that they would be so strong that the glorious power of God would be seen in these people in this church.

Reason #6 - They would attain a steadfastness. **1:11b**

Becoming steadfast is something we "attain." It does not happen overnight. But Paul prayed that the believers would be so well grounded and developed that they would reach a steadfast level.

Becoming strong and steadfast in faith is a grant from God and Paul prayed for that in this church. It requires people who are serious about God and His word.

Reason #7 - They would attain a patience. **1:11c**

Being patient in a way that honors God stems from a deep grasp of God's word.

Reason #8 - They would attain a joy. **1:11d**

Any believer who wants a happy, joyful life must be serious about God and His word because that is where joy will be found.

PRAYER FACT #3 – Paul gives thanks to God for what He has done for him and the Colossians. **1:12-14**

Now Paul was praying this amazing prayer for these Colossians and then he includes himself with the Colossians in giving thanks to God the Father.

Thanksgiving Reason #1 - Paul thanks God because God the Father qualifies us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. **1:12**

Paul was thanking God for the fact that God permitted him to be qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints. That word “qualify” means that God had deemed that Paul was sufficient or competent to share with the people of God as an inheritance.

Paul was amazed that God had used him to share in the lives of His people and “saints in the light.”

Mr. Bill Brew used to say, “Paul never got over the fact that God saved him.”

Thanksgiving Reason #2 - Paul thanks God because God the Father has rescued us from the domain of darkness. **1:13a**

The aorist tense of the verb means that Paul is thanking God for the one moment in time when he was delivered from the domain of Satan to the family of God.

The preposition “from” (ek) means that the moment they had believed in Jesus Christ they had been completely removed out of the power of Satan and his forces.

Thanksgiving Reason #3 - Paul thanks God because God the Father has transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son. **1:13b**

The verb “transferred” means to remove something and take them to another place or change location (*Ibid.*, p. 282).

At the moment one believes in Jesus Christ, one is instantly moved from the realm of Satan into the relationship with Jesus Christ the Son of God.

This immediately gives one the potential for growth.

Thanksgiving Reason #4 - Paul thanks God because in the transference to the Son we have redemption. **1:14a**

There are three words in the N.T. translated “redemption”:

- 1) agorazo - purchase something by paying the price for it in the market place.
- 2) exagorazo - purchase something by paying the price and taking it out of the market place and take it home for yourself.
- 3) apolutroo - purchase something by paying the price and taking it out of the market place and set it free.

Paul uses the third word here. What he means is that Jesus Christ paid the price for a sinner and when one believes on Jesus Christ, he is set free from all sin and he is set free from the O.T. law and he is set free from all condemnation.

Paul could thank God that Jesus Christ paid the price to set him free and us free so that we have everlasting life.

Thanksgiving Reason #5 - Paul thanks God because in the transference to the Son we have forgiveness of sins. **1:14b**

There is an article “the” before the plural noun “sins.” What that means is all of the specific sins one has committed are completely forgiven in Jesus Christ.

I don’t know what all your sins are that you have committed and frankly, I don’t want to know. But here is what all need to know—Jesus Christ is the answer to forgiveness of all of them.

He paid the price to set you free from all your sin, all your guilt and all your condemnation.

Invite Him to save you from your sins and your sin case will be closed; and for that Paul thanked God.