



## **Colossians 1:9–12**

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, 10 so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glo-

rious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, 12 and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

## **Reflection**

When we read Paul's letters each has its dominant theme. In Romans, its justification by faith. In Ephesians, is it the mystery of Christ and his church. In Philippians, it is the joy which Christ brings. In Colossians, it is the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the head of all creation and of the church. No book in the New Testament, not even John's gospel, takes us higher. No book is equal to Colossians in its presentation of such a

comprehensive picture of the fullness of Jesus. This means that there is no writing better equipped to draw us upward and to raise our vision of Jesus than the book of Colossians.<sup>1</sup> Colossians 3:1,

3 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Paul wrote to the young church in Colosse to expand their vision of Christ and permanently impress upon their hearts the desire to seek those things which are above, as opposed to being overly influenced by the prevailing religious and secular culture that surrounded them. But before addressing some of these pastoral matters

<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ* (Preaching the Word; Westchester, Ill: Crossway Books, 1989), 13.

that were co-mingling with their faith, as is Paul's custom, he begins by celebrating the amazing work that God has already performed amongst the Colossians.

And very intimately, this celebration has come in the form of Paul sharing with the Colossian church his daily prayer life concerning them. We're halfway through his prayer and already we've been charmed by just how much Paul loves them – even though he's never met them – and just how thankful to God Paul is for the miracle that has taken place in their midst. By the grace of God a poor, pagan people without God and without hope in the world have found Christ and are now characterized by faith, and hope, and a love that is overflowing for all God's people. For this Paul thanks God daily and rejoices. And in today's pas-

sage we go on to hear the second half of Paul's prayers for them; his daily requests on their behalf. Reading from today's passage, Colossians 1:9–12,

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, 10 so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, 12 and giving joyful thanks to

the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

Kent Hughes tells the story of a young missionary named Raymond Edman who served as a missionary to the Quichua people in Ecuador from 1923 to 1928. One evening he staggered in from the Ecuadorian jungle, desperately ill. 'He'll be dead in the morning,' the doctor predicted. Edman's wife dyed her wedding dress black, so it would be ready for the funeral. (In the tropics funerals must be held immediately.) However, thousands of miles away in Boston, Edman's friend, Dr Joseph Evans, interrupted a prayer meeting, saying, 'I feel we must pray for Ray Edman in Ecuador.' The group prayed earnestly, until finally Evans called out, 'Praise the Lord!

The victory is won!’ The end of the story is well-known: Raymond Edman recovered, his wife’s dress did not; and Dr. Edman went on to become president of Wheaton College, one of America’s most influential Bible colleges, where he served for the next 25 years.<sup>2</sup>

Prayer is powerful and effective. It is also an integral part of being a Christian. And so, motivated by stories like these and Jesus’ constant example of prayer it is very natural to ask, how are we to pray for the church and for individual members of Christ’s body? The classic answer is to turn to the Scriptures, to the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6 or to a passage like today’s one in which the apostle Paul shares with us how he prays for the Colossian church.

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<sup>2</sup> Hughes, Colossians and Philemon, 21.

Paul started with thanksgiving. Today he prays for the knowledge and then for the conduct of the church. Paul has thanked God for graciously making himself known to the Colossians and for the work that the Holy Spirit has already performed in their community and in the hearts and lives of every believer. Today Paul prays that this knowledge of God might only continue to grow and overflow more and more in their conduct. So firstly, knowledge and then secondly, conduct.

Firstly, Paul prays for the Colossians' knowledge of God. Verse 9,

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the



knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,

Nothing can be more important for the Colossian church's wellbeing or ours than a growing knowledge of God's will for our lives. And Paul's prayer here certainly isn't unique. Listen to him in Philippians,

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight (1:9)

or in Philemon,

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every

good thing we share for the sake of Christ. (6)

or in Ephesians,

17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. (1:17)

For Paul, a deep and growing knowledge of God and his will for our lives is of the greatest importance. When we become Christians Jesus Christ gives us special saving knowledge of him through the Holy Spirit; but the Holy Spirit does not work alone. To grow as a Christian, to grow in our knowledge of God and to be increasingly transformed into his likeness, God

has given us the Scriptures to study and understand through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And not only is this pursuit of the knowledge of God in his word the pathway to joy and fulfilment in life, it also overflows in a really positive way into our conduct in God's world. We see this as Paul's prayer moves from knowledge to conduct.

Secondly, Paul prays for their conduct. He prays that they might grow in their knowledge of God ...

10 so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious

might so that you may have great endurance and patience, 12 and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

## **Think**

A growing knowledge of God results in a life worthy and pleasing to our Lord – in other words, the very best of life possible here on earth. What does a life like this look like? It is a life that bears fruit: souls won for the kingdom of God and good deeds that bring blessing to our world. It is a life characterised by increasing knowledge of God, a rich blessing in and of itself. It is the life of a person whose character is continually being strengthened to exhibit great

endurance and patience in the faith. And it is a life that overflows in joyful thanks to our heavenly Father, who by his gracious provision has qualified us to share in an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade.

## **Pray**

Thanksgiving. Knowledge. Conduct. Resulting in a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing to him in every way; the best life possible here on earth. Instead of physical health, well-being, relationships and whatever else pops into our minds how about we model our prayers today on Paul's prayer to the Colossians?