

Last week we introduced you to this letter to the Colossians. Paul had to address some of the false teaching that was threatening to undermine the pure teaching of the Gospel and the grace we find in Jesus. But first, he praised them for the powerful impact of their testimony. (Colossians 1:3-4) He reminded them that they had put their faith in the grace of God that resulted in their love for all the saints. Their faith was evidenced by their love, just as Jesus had predicted. (John 13:35) That is how the world knows if we are really Jesus' disciples. The Colossians were true disciples. The other evidence of their faith was that they were growing spiritually and bearing fruit. I assume that Paul meant all the fruits of the Spirit that he described in his letter to the Galatians. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Next, he wrote out a prayer that he prayed regularly for them. This is one of a number of prayers we find in the epistles of Paul. Each one is rich with insights that we should adopt as our own. (Ephesians 1:16-19; 3:14-19) As we go through the prayer today, remember that in the background is the threat of false teaching, of depending on works, and on needing something in addition to the grace we receive from Jesus.

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, From the day Paul heard from Epaphras about the church in Colossae, he and Timothy began to pray for them and continued to pray for them. That should be our habit whenever we hear of a new believer or new church established. The enemy doesn't attack his own. He goes after those who have switched sides hoping to discourage them or distort their understanding enough to make them ineffective. (Genesis 4:7) This church was bearing fruit and growing. That is where the enemy attacks. We counter attack, not by attacking individuals, but with truth and prayer. (Ephesians 6:17-18) Paul's prayer will show us the things we need to ask in prayer. The battle is won on our knees.

First, we need to be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. (Philippians 1:9) What is God's will in general? It is the Word of God. (Psalm 1:1-2) But just the words on the page are not enough. We need spiritual wisdom and understanding to apply them. We can memorize a passage, and we should, but without the spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding, we can apply the words in an unspiritual way. Just because a passage says to love one another, does not mean that you let sin slide or soft peddle serious issues. Love must be applied with spiritual wisdom and understanding or you simply enable others to continue to sin. (John 16:8-11) You've probably seen the Word used without spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Commented [Paul1]: Colossians 1:3-4 (ESV)

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,
⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,

Commented [Paul2]: John 13:34-35 (ESV)

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.
³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Commented [Paul3]: Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Commented [Paul4]: Ephesians 1:16-19 (ESV)

¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,
¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,
¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,
¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

Commented [Paul5]: Ephesians 3:14-19 (ESV)

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,
¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Commented [Paul6]: Genesis 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Commented [Paul7]: Ephesians 6:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,
¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Commented [Paul8]: Philippians 1:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

Commented [Paul9]: Psalm 1:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Commented [Paul10]: John 16:7-11 (ESV)

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.
⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:
⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;
¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;

... [1]

The Word of God must be applied with wisdom and understanding for it to be in the will of God. (Proverbs 26:4-5)

This is often one of the ways churches are sidetracked today as they were when the letter was written. Apparently someone was taking portions of Old Testament Law and saying the Colossians had to keep those laws to reach through heavenly realms to please God. You can support almost any idea with Scripture and you don't necessarily need to take it out of its immediate context. But the crux of the matter is whether or not it is applied with spiritual wisdom and understanding. (Ephesians 1:17) And so Paul and Timothy regularly prayed that the Colossians won't be duped by the misuse of Scripture but would be filled with the knowledge of God's will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

The world has its own knowledge that is equally seductive. (1Timothy 6:20) We need to filter what we hear through God's full knowledge so that we know what to reject and what has any value. In addition to your own time in God's word, listen carefully when God's word is faithfully preached. The Word equips us with the full knowledge we need.

We are going to be praying that prayer a lot this year. I know some are averse to any routines, but notice here that Paul writes that they don't stop praying this. Since the day they heard about the church, they continued to pray the same thing because that is what is needed. It isn't a ritual; it's a spiritual need. We need to be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Why?

¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Jesus is the worthy One. (Revelation 5:12) He deserves us to let Him have His way in us. He deserves us to live daily in a way that fully pleases Him. That should be the passion of everyone that is redeemed. After all He has done for us, we should desire to please Jesus in everything we do. This is why we need to know His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then we know how to please Him. We often do what we think is right from our perspective and yet displease the Lord because we lack the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and understanding. (Proverbs 14:12)

When we have that insight and do live in a way that pleases God, then we bear fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God. Wow! I want that testimony. Don't you want to bear fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God? Then you need to know God's will – in all spiritual wisdom and understanding – so that you can live a life that is worthy of Jesus! I hope this is giving you a desire to cry out to God this same prayer, not only for yourself but for the whole congregation. You have to get into the Word, and not just the letter of the Scriptures, but to let the Spirit of God

Commented [Paul11]: Proverbs 26:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.

⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Commented [Paul12]: Ephesians 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,

Commented [Paul13]: 1 Timothy 6:20 (ESV)

²⁰ O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge,"

Commented [Paul14]: Revelation 5:12 (ESV)

¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

Commented [Paul15]: Proverbs 14:12 (ESV)

¹² There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

give you the wisdom and understanding to see the application to your life and the situations you face. (John 14:26) You have to be willing to let the Word have the final say, not your preferences. This is how we grow in the knowledge of God.

Now we come to the part of the prayer that I'm using for a benediction. ¹¹ *May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy*, The first request is to know God's will to live in a way that pleases God and bears fruit. Next is to continually be growing stronger, but not just with the natural strength. Paul isn't praying they all be Samson. He is praying for increasing spiritual strength in the face of these tempting doctrines that were seducing the church. He prays they would be **strengthened with ALL the power of God's glory!** (a more literal translation) That is an audacious prayer.

The world is constantly coming against us. Our flesh would readily rise up and take back over our life. The enemy of our soul is a powerful supernatural being that is waiting to devour us. (1Peter 5:8) Our pride is ready to rise up and cause factions. (2Corinthians 12:20) No wonder we need to be strengthened with the power of God's glory! Have we been praying this way? If the Colossians needed this, we certainly do as well! (Matthew 26:41) We need people in the prayer room on Sunday. We are going to have another 24 hour prayer day in the end of February. We want to have the church open again during the week for people to pray. We need to be strengthened! But here is what we need to be strengthened for...

for all endurance and patience... These two words in their original Greek say so much more than our English translation. Endurance is the Greek word *hupomone*. It means to work through to the end any situation we face. It is to bear with a situation turning it into glory. It is being eventually triumphant in the circumstances we face. (James 5:7-11) In other words, it is knowing that in the power of God's glory you can see the circumstance through to a victorious end. It isn't just getting through something by gritting your teeth and hanging on until you have your way. (Romans 8:37)

The verse ends with these virtues expressed *with joy*. It is knowing that in the end you will be victorious no matter how long it takes because you have the power of God's glory! I like that word! It isn't a fun word, but it is a reassuring word to those who want to live in a way that is pleasing to Jesus.

Patience is the word *makrothumia*. It is to not allow people drive you to bitterness or despair or even irritation. **Never letting people alter your love.** Love conquers all. (1Corinthians 13:8) It doesn't lose hope that the person might eventually come to their senses. (2Peter 3:9) Our fortitude and patience will be indestructible if it is according to the power of God's glory. Remember that glory is expressed in a consuming fire that

Commented [Paul16]: John 14:26 (ESV)

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Commented [Paul17]: 1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)

⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Commented [Paul18]: 2 Corinthians 12:20 (NIV)

²⁰ For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.

Commented [Paul19]: Matthew 26:41 (ESV)

⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Commented [Paul20]: James 5:7-11 (ESV)

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Commented [Paul21]: Romans 8:37 (ESV)

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Commented [Paul22]: 1 Corinthians 13:8 (NIV)

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

Commented [Paul23]: 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

devours selfishness and pride. (Deuteronomy 4:24) **It is only when our endurance and patience is empowered with the very power of God's glory that we can joyfully bring glory to God in the painful circumstances and relationships of life.** Here's how we might express it today: *"Make me, O Lord, victorious over every circumstance; make me patient with every person; and withal give me the joy which no circumstance and no man will ever take from me."* Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT). How's that for a prayer!

Commented [Paul24]: Deuteronomy 4:24 (ESV)
²⁴ For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

I need to apply this verse on a daily basis. You probably do too. I know how to hang on by my fingernails and grit my teeth and bear it, but I need to experience being filled with power of God's glory to see trials joyfully through to a victorious end. Would you please pray this prayer for me, and for the whole congregation? I will pray it for you.

¹² *giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.* So as we go through these circumstances and relationships in the power of God's glory, with joy, we are to do so with thanksgiving. **Our attitude is a byproduct of our level of trust in God.** If I believe in the power of God's glory, to consume my selfishness and empower me to patiently endure to a glorious end, then I can be thankful. (Ephesians 5:20) **The reason Paul gives for the basis of our thanks is that God has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Jesus' sacrifice for our sin debt qualifies us to share in all the promises of God to His children, now.**

Commented [Paul25]: Ephesians 5:20 (ESV)
²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Chrysostom explained it this way. It was as if someone gave someone the position of king, and yet, because he was not qualified to hold the title, he makes a fool of himself. Jesus not only gives us a title but also makes us fit to bear the title. He equips us to shine in this life. (1Peter 2:9) **If God doesn't qualify us, we'd be miserable being among the saints for eternity.**

Commented [Paul26]: 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)
⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

We have a share, or portion, with the saints. The language looks back to the families of each tribe getting a portion of land, but applies it spiritually. (Joshua 14:2-3) **We each have our portion in heaven but also our portion of ministry presently. How is God calling you to help. Pray about that. Look at the things you enjoy doing. See what needs touch your heart. Next week we'll be giving you an opportunity to sign up to meet some of those needs if you are not doing so already.**

Commented [Paul27]: Joshua 14:2-3 (ESV)
² Their inheritance was by lot, just as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses for the nine and one-half tribes.
³ For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan, but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them.

The next verse elaborates on qualifying us, the reason for our thanksgiving. ¹³ *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,* ¹⁴ *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* The best manuscripts do not have "through his blood" (KJV) added to the end, though that is certainly a reality. We were a part of Satan's domain. Our understanding was darkened. We lived for self and self alone, finding pleasure in destruction and reveling in dragging others along with us. That is the domain of darkness. There was absolutely no way we

would have ever broken free from it had God not transferred us to the kingdom of the Son He loves. He reached down into our filthy condition and lifted us out. He took us from darkness to light, slavery to freedom, condemnation to forgiveness, pride to humility, and from sin to holiness.

The Jewish reader would have thought of the deliverance from Egypt as a type of what God did spiritually for us in Jesus. (Exodus 15:13) We were enslaved, hopeless, despairing but God did what we could never do on our own. He brought us out with a great deliverance. Today we sometimes think of slavery to genetics or upbringing. We say we have addictive personalities or are predisposed to certain weaknesses or had a dysfunctional family. It may be true, but Jesus is our Deliverer from all things that would keep us from living in the will of God.

The grace of God shined through the darkness and enabled our hearts to see the truth, and then empowered us. But that was not enough. Our debt had to be paid. God is never unjust. A judge that would simply forgive some heinous crime is not good or gracious; he's evil. The penalty for sin had to be paid for God to remain righteous and good and for us to value His goodness. So God stepped down into time and space and took the penalty for us, redeeming us from the slavery we were under, forgiving us of our sins. He then empowered us to live a new life. (Galatians 2:20)

The power of His glory is ours for the asking, so that we can joyfully endure the circumstances of life to the glory of God. We can refuse to give up on a difficult relationship and see God glorified in the end. We can discern His will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding. These are the victories waiting to be given to those who draw near to God through Jesus. (Hebrews 7:25)

Even when given God's glorious grace we must be willing to apply it. I hear people say they just can't forgive. Sorry, that's not Scriptural and therefore untrue. (Matthew 6:14) You can't, but God can enable you to forgive and endure patiently. I just had someone tell me it wouldn't do any good to obey a Scripture. That is a lack of faith in God's word!

Will you take up this prayer with me for this year and put it by your bed or on your mirror and pray it from your heart? Please pray it for this congregation. Pray it for those who have wounded you. Pray it for the church of the Verde Valley. Let's close today by praying it.

Lord Jesus, we come to you knowing we are in need of your divine power. Help us to not stop praying that we may be filled with the knowledge of Your will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that we can live in a way that is worthy of You and

Commented [Paul28]: Exodus 15:13 (ESV)

¹³“You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

Commented [Paul29]: Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Commented [Paul30]: Hebrews 7:25 (ESV)

²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Commented [Paul31]: Matthew 6:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

pleasing to You, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of You. May we be strengthened with all power according to Your glorious might, with all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to You for qualifying us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Amen!

I have a copy of this prayer for everyone as you leave today. Meditate on it. Pray it often. Watch God answer! Praise God!

Questions

- 1 What did Paul and Timothy do when they heard of the church of Colossae? Why?
- 2 Why do we need to pray this prayer?
- 3 How do we know the will of God?
- 4 Why do we want to know the will of God?
- 5 How do we bear fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God?
- 6 What was the source of their strength?
- 7 What are we strengthened for?
- 8 How does our trust in God affect our attitude?
- 9 How were we qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light?
- 10 What must we do with the power we receive?
- 11 Will you pray this prayer throughout this year?

John 16:7-11 (ESV)

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;

¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;

¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.