

THE SPECIFICS AND OBJECTIVES OF PRAYER

“⁹ For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; ¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:9-13).

PRAYER is the necessary discipline for discernment.

“For this cause;” Christians everywhere, everyday are confronted and bombarded with questions of life and practice that require careful consideration. Most of the time there is not opportunity to make careful consideration before a decision is made. Believers in a local church must learn to pray for one another regarding the decisions we will make each day. Paul prayed for the believers at Colosse regularly. Paul prayed for TWO SPECIFICS:

1. He prayed for their discernment of God’s will (v 9-10)
2. He prayed for God’s enabling power that they might perform God’s will (v 11)

This regular prayer was prompted by the good report detailed in verses 4-8. There is a natural incentive to pray for the faithful based upon understanding that God will bless the efforts of faithful people in ministry.

The Specifics of Prayer

The word “desire” in Colossians 1:9 is from the Greek word *aiteo* (ahee-teh'-o). In this context, it is a specific word for prayer which signifies to ASK for something to be GIVEN, not done. In this context it refers to the ILLUMINATION of the truth of God’s Word. God’s will is revealed in His Word. We cannot know God’s truth until we are COMMITTED TO A COURSE OF ACTION WHICH INVOLVES US IN THAT TRUTH.

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself” (John 7:17).

Paul prays that these believers at Colosse might have KNOWLEDGE. This is from the Greek word *epignosis* (ep-ig'-no-sis) and refers to perfect knowledge. This is a knowledge that fully grasps and penetrates into a subject.

This knowledge Paul refers to is directly opposed to the *knowledge* worship of Gnosticism. The knowledge Paul refers is solely derived from the illumination of God’s inspired Scriptures through study and pastoral instruction. The knowledge of the corrupting influence of early Gnosticism was salvation. Salvation came to the initiate as he progressed through *Twelve Dominions of Light* (knowledge). A person achieved salvation once he ascended to the twelfth level of this knowledge. These twelve levels of knowledge are listed in the book **Gnosis On The Silk Road** by Hans-Joachim Klimkeit as translated from ancient Manichaean Gnostic texts (from a Parthian original); a **Sermon on the Nous of Light**. These twelve levels of knowledge help us understand what Paul was dealing with and why these early Christians needed spiritual discernment regarding the integration of these concepts into Christianity. They are:

1. Father of Light – dominion
2. The Mother of Life – wisdom
3. The First Man (Ohrmizd) – “victory,” salvation
4. The five sons of the First Man – contentment, joy
5. The Friend of Light – zeal
6. The Great Builder – truth
7. The Living Spirit – faith
8. The Third Messenger – patience
9. The Column of Glory – righteousness
10. Jesus the Splendor – kindness
11. The Maiden of Light – harmony, mildness
12. Vahman, the Great Nous – Light

These twelve progressions toward “complete” knowledge (see Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:10) are what New Age people call Self-actualization. Once a person achieves this final state of *knowledge*, he actually becomes part of the *Great Nous* (Light). It is easy to see how easily this could be integrated into Christianity. It is also easy to see how many Christians, saved out of the pagan religions, could easily be led astray into this integrationism (syncretism). In this heresy, salvation became a quest for *knowledge* (Light).

In ancient Babylonian, the religion of Gnosticism was manifested in the Towers (Ziggurats) of Babylon. These kinds of towers (ziggurats) are found all over the world in many pagan cultures. The consisted of towers (pyramids or mounds) made up of stones, bricks or earth amassed in various numbers of levels. The various levels were accessed by steps or ramps. The highest level (the summit) was where the idol was erected and where sacrifices were offered. Only certain individuals were allowed on the summit level (usually High Priest and Royal Rulers; the children of the god).

In Babylonian Gnosticism, the Towers represented the journey to enlightenment. The various levels represented the intermediaries of a pantheon of gods. The supreme god of the pantheon was Allah (the Moon god, represented by the Crescent, who was married to the Sun-goddess and the stars were their offspring). Therefore, Allah is not the Arabic name for the God of the Bible.

A highly complex and secretive set of religious rites evolved in the Babylonian cultus. Disciples advanced by going through a succession of secret initiations into higher and higher levels of knowledge (*gnosis*) of the mysteries of the cosmos, until they obtained god-like powers. These various levels are to represent the various phases of the moon (eight phases; New Moon, Waxing Crescent, First Quarter, Waxing Gibbous, Full Moon, Waning Gibbous, Last Quarter, and Waning Crescent). The Moon completes these eight phases every 29 days, 12 hours and 44+minutes. The Jews add a month (Adar II) every nineteen years to compensate to correspond with the solar calendar.

The practices of Gnosticism and Moon worship can be traced back to ancient Nimrod.

“⁸ And Cush {son of Noah’s son Ham} begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.¹⁰ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar” (Genesis 10:8-10).

Knowledge of God’s Word must never stop with merely an intellectual awareness. The truth of God’s Word must fill our minds and overflow into a lifestyle that corresponds to the moral aspect of God’s will for the conduct of our lives. This perfect knowledge is divided into two categories both coming by illumination.

The cultural pressure on believers to become syncretistic (to accept varying beliefs contrary to the truth of God’s Word) was enormous (as it is today). The “wisdom” and “spiritual understanding” that Paul prays they have or receive is the only means through which they will be able to maintain the distinctive BIBLE BASED beliefs that they presently held. Without “wisdom” and “spiritual understanding” they would quickly be absorbed into the syncretistic society.

1. WISDOM, this is a general overall knowledge of God's Word.
2. SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING, this is a specific ability given to the believer to grasp the Spirit of God's insight. (This insight discerns between the false and the true.)

FIRST OBJECTIVE OF PRAYER - v 10

Perfect knowledge of God's will in the areas of wisdom and understanding results in a "walk worthy of the Lord." "Walk" refers to a specific order of behavior. "Worthy" refers to something that carries the same influence as another thing. The objective for believers in having "all wisdom and spiritual understanding" was so that their lives would be conducted in such a way as to carry the same influence upon people as the Lord Jesus had carried.

"Wisdom and understanding" are of little value if they do not result in the same ACTION OR PRACTICE as the Lord. Knowledge meant much more than acquiring a certain level of spiritual understanding. Knowledge was only a reality once the spiritual understanding was translated into living ("walk"). This "walk" is according to knowledge when it is "pleasing to God in every way."

Perfect knowledge of God's will in the areas of "wisdom and understanding" will also be manifested by the believer bearing fruit "in every good work." The KJV translation is somewhat misleading. It should read, "constantly bearing fruit as a result of pleasing God in every good work and increasing by means of the perfect and thorough knowledge of God."

The objective of Paul's prayer was not that these believers increase in knowledge, but that they would be CONSTANTLY BEARING FRUIT AND INCREASING IN NUMBERS as a result of having all "wisdom and spiritual understanding."

SECOND OBJECTIVE OF PRAYER – "Strengthened with all might"

Being "strengthened with all might" is still another objective of having "all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (discernment). The idea is that through this "wisdom and spiritual understanding" they will receive the strengthening ability that would enable them to do that which was right in God's eyes. The implication is that there is INTRINSIC POWER in "wisdom and spiritual understanding."

"Glory" is a reference to the bright light over the mercy seat. It was a physical manifestation of the POWER OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD. When the believer lives his life according to the perfect knowledge of God's Word, that believer will be "glorifying" God; or manifesting the power of the goodness/holiness, righteousness of God to the world. The "Light" that is God is not in the knowledge/truth of God, but in the living/actualization of those truths. The believer that lives those truths does not become God. He merely accurately reveals Who God is by restoring the image of God in his life. This is what it means to bring God glory.

¹³ Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. ¹⁴ Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

Somehow Christianity has come to suffer under the misnomer that the Holy of Holies is a place we visit rather than the place where we live. Every believer is "mercy seated" (propitiated; Rom. 3:25), but it is only the believer with a perfect (living) knowledge of God's Word that is able to manifest the power of God's goodness/holiness/righteousness. God's goodness/holiness/righteousness cannot be understood apart from the revelation of His Word. A source of our highest strength lies in the PRACTICAL TRANSLATION of the goodness/holiness/righteousness of God revealed through His Word in our everyday lives; i.e., to live the goodness/holiness/righteousness of God.

THIRD OBJECTIVE OF PRAYER – “Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness”

The living of God’s goodness/holiness/righteousness in our lives will result in PATIENCE AND LONGSUFFERING. In the Gnostic mindset, this could not be achieved until the eighth level of knowledge and after years and years of pursuit. Paul says it is immediately available to the believer willing to yield his will to God’s will.

“Patience” is the long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action. “Patience” here is the forbearing in respect of people. The person who has to deal with a person who is antagonistic toward him or God’s Word can be said to have “patience” if he does not allow that individual to provoke him or cause him to blaze up in anger.

“Longsuffering” is forbearing in respect of things. The person who is “longsuffering” is the individual who, under trials or difficulties of life, is not discouraged by them.

Neither of these is a mere endurance or a toleration of something for a period of time. It is a courageous, daily contending with the hindrances, persecutions, and temptations that confront the believer between that which he believes inwardly and that which attacks and confronts those beliefs outwardly. “Patience” and “longsuffering” does not allow the many times we fail to defeat us, but continuing on even after we have been knocked down many times.

THE VALUE OF THE GOODNESS/HOLINESS/RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD LIVED

“Patience and longsuffering,” when seen only as a need to endure a wrong or injustice, will result in a sour and bitter disposition. When we understand God’s purposes behind “patience and longsuffering” and the potential blessings of God in our lives, they will be accompanied by “joyfulness.”

THE FOURTH OBJECTIVE OF PRAYER - v.12; “Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us fit”

Constant thanksgiving should be given to the Father because of the standing the believer has “in Christ.” To be “made meet” (or made fit) means to make sufficient/ready/prepared. Through the finished work of Christ, the individual who puts faith in Christ is “rendered fit,” or made qualified, by the work of Christ on his behalf to be “participants with Him” in his inheritance presently in the realm of His light. He does not need to wait until he has achieved the final twelfth stage of *enlightenment*. The Christian’s life begins with the believer living in the realm of God’s “light.” We build from that beginning. Peter says this in detail in his answer to Gnosticism’s heresies.

“¹ Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, ³ According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: ⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ⁵ And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; ⁶ And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷ And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. ⁸ For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Peter 1:1-8).

The list of spiritual qualities in II Peter 1:5-8, that the believer is admonished to add to this beginning, is for the purpose of validating the reality of that beginning. The truth of God’s Word is a kingdom on itself. Validating that we live in that realm of “light” is done by living the “light” and by our becoming “light.” We have been made qualified to function and live in the KINGDOM of TRUTH (v 13) the moment we trusted in the finished work of Christ. We have been delivered out from the tyranny of disorder, and the confusion of this world of Satan, and translated, or transferred, to a well ordered sovereignty in the truth of God’s Word.

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians
Chapter Three
THE SPECIFICS AND OBJECTIVES OF PRAYER

1. Read Colossians 1:9-11. What two specifics did Paul pray for regarding the believers at Colosse?
A. _____
B. _____

2. According to verses 4-8, what was Paul's natural incentive to pray for this local church? _____
How do you view your investment of time in prayer? _____

3. "Desire" (v 9) is a specific word for prayer that signifies to _____ for something to be _____, not done."

4. According to John 7:17, what is the requirement before God will reveal His will through His Word to an individual? _____

5. The Greek word translated "knowledge" in verse 9 is EPIGNOSIS. Does this refer to merely an intellectual knowledge of something or someone? _____
If not, explain what this means? _____

6. What would happen to these believers and this local church without "wisdom" and "spiritual understanding"? _____
A. Define "wisdom"? _____
B. Define "spiritual understanding"? _____

7. Verse 10 relates to Paul's objective in praying for these believers. What two results will the perfect knowledge of God's will in the areas of wisdom and understanding bring about?
A. _____
B. _____

8. What is Paul's second objective of prayer in verse 11? _____

9. The word "glory" is a reference to the bright light over the mercy seat. What was it a physical manifestation of? _____

10. What was Paul's third objective of prayer from verse 11? _____

11. What was Paul's fourth objective of prayer from verse 12? _____

12. By the finished work of Jesus Christ, where has the believer been made qualified to function and live? _____