



Content of a Godly Prayer

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; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. (Colossians 1:9–11)

It took me a very long time to realize that God doesn't "script" acceptable prayers into a small, tight box. Scripture encourages us to pray to God about every aspect of our life. That point fully established, we learn much about the godly prayer from the prayers we read in Scripture. I love to read Paul's description of his prayers such as the one before us. Let's summarize what Paul prayed for on behalf of the Colossian Church. First notice that the sentence we are examining continues to Verse 17 and the theme continues through Verse 20.

1. **...desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.** Knowledge of God's will grows out of our study of Scripture, not out of mystical experiences or Gnostic teachers.
2. **That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.** We manifest our wise and understanding knowledge of God's will by our respectful and consistent relationships, both with God and with God's people.
3. **...being fruitful in every good work.** We don't pick and choose the good works we perform. We are His servants, not His directors. He tells us what to do. We do not do what we want and then expect Him to bless us regardless of what we choose to do. I fear that too many people in churches have failed, miserably so, to understand the role of a servant. They seem to think God has turned over full governance of their church to them, and they intend to govern it the way they want it governed, not the way God told the church to carry on its business. A church that permits such a despot to rule it is a church on the downhill slide. They have allowed someone whom Scripture commands to serve to become their lord, to compete with the Lord Jesus Christ for

preeminence. To be a servant in a church means to serve the church, not run it. The more we engage our energies in being fruitful in every good work the less time we have to rule others, and the less inclined we are to desire to rule them. Do not overlook the Old Testament parable of the bramble bush. (Judges 9:8-15) In the parable the various trees decided they needed a ruler. They first asked the olive tree to rule over them, but the olive tree declined. He couldn't produce olives for the benefit of others and rule over other trees. Next they asked the fig tree. The fig tree gave the same answer as the olive tree. His divinely assigned role was to grow figs, not rule over other trees, and he knew that he couldn't do both. Then they asked the vine to rule over them. Are you surprised? The vine gave the same answer as the olive and the fig. To take on the role of ruling over other trees the vine would have to "leave my vine...." He couldn't produce grapes and rule over other trees. In desperation the trees appealed to the bramble to rule over them. The bramble was all too happy to rule, but he required rather imposing conditions on all the trees. Either they surrendered to the bramble bush, put all their trust in him, and chose to live under his shadow, or else he would send fire to burn them up. Such is the character of people who seek to rule rather than serve. What shall we do with our life's work? Shall we serve God's people by producing godly fruits that edify and bless them? Or shall we demand that they do what we want them to do, or face the fires of our personal wrath?

4. **...increasing in the knowledge of God.** God never tells us that we have arrived at an acceptable plateau of knowledge. He

never tells us that, once we have learned a certain amount about Him—and from Him—that we can put our minds into neutral and coast the remainder of our journey. Every day we need to awake with a compelling hunger to know more about God and more about His Word than we knew yesterday, and to put more of it into our footwork.

5. **Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power....** The power of our life and its influence needs to reflect God and His “glorious power,” not our personal “bramble bush” fruitless flicker. In God’s blessing and power we can deal with whatever obstacles and difficulties we face in life. Scripture does not promise that faithfulness enables us to avoid trials, the disillusioning and deceitful motto of so many charismatic teachers in our time. Scripture teaches rather that our faithful service to God brings His blessings and power to bear on our behalf in the trials of life.
6. **...unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.** Interestingly, we can readily find a patient Christian. The greater challenge is to find a patient Christian who patiently endures his trials with longsuffering and joy. We can find an abundance of grumpy, growly semi-patient Christians. New Testament Greek scholars usually indicate that the Greek word translated **patience** or **patient** refers to our dealing with situations, while the word translated **longsuffering** refers to how we deal with difficult people. I must confess that at times I struggle with difficult people far more than with difficult situations. My own challenge especially appears when the difficult person by knowledge and background should be a mature, exemplary Christian, but his/her actions fall distinctly short of mature, God-honoring, other-centric actions. Pray for me!
7. **Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light...** Paul understands who is the one and only true and rightful Head over all things to His church, and He alone receives the thanks for our spiritual blessings.
8. **...Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son...** The true kingdom of our citizenship, our true homeland, is from God. We belong to the “kingdom of his dear Son.” How

clearly do we show in action our true homeland and her noble traits?

9. **...In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins...** Redemption deals with debt. We owed God an impossible debt, but He paid it Himself. Forgiveness deals with relationships. We were spiritual lepers, isolated and out of touch, but God healed our leprosy, cleaned us up, and sent us back to the family circle of His church. He has wondrously forgiven us. How clearly do we live out that forgiveness toward our brothers and sisters?
10. **...Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature....** We shall examine this and the other verses in some detail, but notice for the moment the “big picture.” He cannot be the precise image of God unless He fully possesses all the essential attributes of God—unless He is God, and that He is. His position as the firstborn of every creature does not mean that He is the first material being that God created. Rather it means that, in His Incarnation, His human coming, He is the preeminent One over all others.
11. **For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him....** Neither this world nor the church where we meet, worship God, and relate to each other were created for our personal indulgence. We exist for His glory, not our own, and our lives should shout the preeminence of His work and grace in us.
12. **...And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.** When people impose their false interpretation onto Scripture, God always throws a curve into their designs. For the errant teaching that Jesus is the first and most preeminent of created beings, a lesser deity of a different kind and quality to Jehovah God, God slipped this verse into the context. How can He be the agent by whom all things created consist if He Himself was created? Did He create Himself before He came to exist? The point Paul intends here is that Jesus is the preeminent One, God Incarnate, and, as God, He created all things that exist in God’s creation.

This list serves as a mere outline of the content of Paul’s prayer for the Colossians. Think about the

prayers you pray for your brothers and sisters in the faith. Do your prayer items match up with these? If you are asked to offer public prayer, don't repeat this list, and don't repeat a memorized, even if personal, prayer. Give thought to how comfortably your petition to God integrates with this list. Truly talk to God.

Paul's prayer divides into two natural sections. In one section, the "petition section," he lists things for which he asks God to give to the Colossians. In the other section, the "thanksgiving section," he explains the reasons for which he thanks God for the Colossians. The petition section does not contain things that God intends automatically to force onto the Colossians whether Paul prays for them or not, and whether the Colossians work to implement them or not. These items come from God and enrich His children who put them into practice, but they come with specific and specifically stated conditions attached to them. When someone tells you that God requires you to do something, but not to worry; He always performs in you what He requires you to do, beware. They are ignoring the clear and consistent teaching of Scripture. God never puts you on autopilot, programmed like a computer chip to obey Him. He gave each of His children a natural mind and will, and at regeneration, a spiritual mind, along with a spiritual will. He teaches us by Scripture and by the joint-witness of His law written within us to do these things, but He also teaches us that we must engage our wills, minds, and energy to implement these things. God gives us the ability, but He directs us to engage our will, mind, and active energy. There is no doubt that we are able to obey Him; He gave us that ability in regeneration. There is doubt that we are always willing and engaged to obey. Are you ready to take that giant step? Are you willing to walk out of the shadow of your own bramble bush and begin to serve God by serving others? You'll never be the same if you do. Let's grow fruit, not burn those around us.

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
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