Apostolic prayers - *Paul's Prayer in Colossians 1:9-12*

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Paul prayed for the saints to be filled with the knowledge of God's will in specific ways so that they would be empowered to know God in a deep way, walk worthy of Him, and be fruitful in ministry.

Col. 1:9-12 *[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, [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. [11] May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*

b. Paul did not cease to pray this, knowing that the Spirit would do more in them as he prayed more. Sometimes we can think "I've prayed this prayer before so many times I need a new prayer" but each time we pray the same prayer we are committing our hearts to that desire and it is getting more and more buried in our hearts.

2. Walking in the knowledge of God's will (Col. 1:9)

a. Believers are granted the privilege and miracle of partnering with God in His plans.

Col. 1:9 *asking that you may be filled with the <u>knowledge of his will</u> in all <u>spiritual wisdom</u> and <u>understanding</u>*

b. ***That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will***: The general will of God refers to that which is important for all believers to know—it includes what His Word reveals regarding who we are to Him, how we are to live, what we are to believe Him for, and what His main kingdom purposes are.

   i Our highest purpose is to receive and express God's love back to Him and to others. This comes ahead of seeking to make an impact or to be successful from man's point of view.

   ii The knowledge of God's will includes understanding specific aspects related to our personal life direction and ministry assignments as well as for the church, our city, nation, etc. The Lord's main ministry assignments in our life changes in various seasons of our life. It is a great blessing to have clarity and confidence in where to invest our time and resources.

   iii We express love to others in a greater way as we see more clearly the great diversity in His calling on other people and ministries—instead of being critical of them in subtle ways.

c. ***In all spiritual wisdom and understanding***: Receiving wisdom includes receiving insight on how to practically walk out God's ministry assignment in each season in terms of how much of our time and resources we are to invest in our family, other relationships, and in various ministry activities.

   i Receiving understanding includes receiving insight on how to interpret *what is happening* from God's point of view when His blessing on our circumstances increases or decreases and when His promises and provision are delayed by His hand or when it is hindered by the enemy.

   ii The sons of Issachar understood the times in that they saw what God was doing in His prophetic purposes in each season, and they knew what to do and what Israel should do in practical action.

1 Chr. 12:32 *Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do*

3. The goal of understanding God's will is to please Jesus (Col. 1:10)

a. Believers are blessed with the miracle of being empowered to please our glorious God. In verse 10 Paul gives the reason motivating his prayer for the saints to receive the knowledge of God's will.

Col. 1:10 *[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.*

b. ***That you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord***: To walk worthy of the Lord is to walk in agreement with His heart and ways. We are to have a ***worthy response*** to God by resisting compromise and embracing God's ways, thus, to be prepared or found worthy to walk in the fullness of our calling.

i In 2 Thessalonians 1:11, Paul prayed that God would count the saints in Thessalonica worthy to walk in the fullness of His calling.

2 Thess.1:11 *To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfil every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,*

ii In other words, he was praying that they be strengthened to walk in mature faithfulness that would put them in the position to walk in their highest calling in this age and the age to come. This included the Lord helping them see and gain victory over various unperceived "blind spots" in their life and ministry.

iii No one is "worthy" to receive forgiveness. It is a free gift because of Jesus' worthiness.

iv One important way to pursue this is by intentionally and diligently pursuing the grace to love Jesus with all of our heart—that the First Commandment be in first place in our lives.

c. ***Fully pleasing to Him***: We want to respond to Jesus' love and His excellent, kind leadership by doing what pleases Him. We want to invest our time and resources in a way that He delights in. Eternal rewards are about Jesus expressing how He feels about the way we loved Him in this age.

2 Cor.5:9-10 *So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. [10] For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

d. ***Bearing fruit in every good work***: To grow in knowledge of God and in the ability to bear fruit. Jesus chose us to bear fruit that would remain forever (v. 16). It is a most glorious reality for weak and broken people that, through the activity of the Spirit, we can do things or bear fruit that God esteems forever. Our life becomes great as we diligently press into a lifelong journey.

John 15:2, 5, 16 *[2] Every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit… [5] "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me [talks to Me], and I in him [I talk to him], bears much fruit… [16] I chose you…that your fruit should remain…"*

i ***Bearing fruit***: We bear fruit inwardly in our character and outwardly in our ministry and service to others—godly character (Rom. 6:22; 7:4-5; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; Heb. 12:11; Jas. 3:18) and ministry and service (Jn. 4:36; Rom. 1:13; 15:28; Phil. 1:22; Col. 1:5-6).

ii ***He prunes***: The Father is a vinedresser who *prunes* every believer who bears fruit. He takes initiative to intervene to prune so that His people are more focused and fruitful. Pruning is positive as it causes God's people to be *more focused* so they can be *more fruitful*.

e. ***Increasing in the knowledge of God***: There is no aspect of God's grace that more powerfully transforms our emotions or satisfies our heart than when the Spirit reveals the knowledge of God to us. The most transforming, exhilarating, motivating reality in the kingdom is knowledge of Jesus.

i Immediately after Paul's prayer here, he proclaimed the glory of the knowledge of God in Christ (Col. 1:15-20). Christianity is actively pursuing a Person. It is more than escaping from hell, obeying a code of conduct, and fulfilling a ministry assignment.

Col. 1:15-20 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by[i] him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

ii Paul gladly gave up everything as he saw the magnificence, the excellence, of Jesus! If we can see what Paul saw about Jesus, then we can live like he lived.

Phil. 3:8 *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ*

iii The best-kept secret in the Church is Jesus' magnificence. We are liberated from the inferior pleasures of sin by experiencing the superior pleasures of the beauty of Jesus. Without having a sense of awe in our relationship with God, we will live spiritually bored and be more vulnerable to Satan's tactics. A spiritually bored believer is weak. A believer fascinated with the Lord is strong. The Spirit longs to be our escort into the treasure of the deep things of God's heart.

1 Cor. 2:10-12 *[10]The Spirit searches…the deep things of God…[12]We have received…the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things…freely given to us by God.*

John. 16:13-14 *[13]The Spirit of truth…will guide [escort] you into all truth…[14]He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*

iv God is raising up ministries to bring the Church to the knowledge of the deep things of Jesus. The most neglected subject in the kingdom of God is God Himself. Instead, we talk about relationship skills, leadership principles, economic principles, ministry skills, and how to be happy and make life easier. The Spirit wants to reveal the knowledge of God to His people.

Eph. 3:8 *[8]To me…grace was given that I should preach…the unsearchable riches of Christ…*

v Jesus is our greatest treasure, but He is "hidden" until we seek for more of Him with all our heart. The Spirit will escort us into the divine treasury of the magnificence and beauty of Jesus. Our life is to be a treasure hunt into the knowledge of God, which becomes our gold.

Prov. 2:3-5 *[3]Yes, if you…lift up your voice for understanding, [4]if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; [5]Then you will…find the knowledge of God.*

4. Strengthened to persevere with joy (Col. 1:11-12)

a. Paul gives us clarity and assurance for the Holy Spirit's help to strengthen us

Col. 1:11-12 *[11] May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, **12** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*

b. ***Strengthened with all might***: Paul prayed that the Spirit would strengthen the saints so that they would have patience and endurance in pressure—physical, financial, verbal (accusations), delayed promises, etc. We pray that the Spirit ***strengthens our inner man*** (mind and emotions) to enable us to love and obey Jesus. It takes God's power to love God and to understand His heart.

Eph. 3:16 *…that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,*

c. ***For all endurance and patience with joy*** (1:11): This speaks of not quitting under pressure. Paul connected three virtues to help us understand trials—endurance (patience), character, and hope.

Rom. 5:3-4 *More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, [5] and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

i **Endurance** (perseverance): This speaks of our fortified resolve to continually press in or "reach" to love, obey, and pursue God and His promises. We refuse to quit or draw back from contending for fullness. Pressure causes us to ask deep questions about the purpose of our life and the condition of our relationship to God. It causes us to rehearse the consequences of persevering in God compared to giving up (quitting). Pressure causes us to work our "faith muscle."

ii **Character:** Those who persevere without quitting under pressure will grow in godly character.

iii **Hope**: Hope is confidence that Jesus' leadership is good, that love is being imparted in us during the process of the trial, and that our life is successful in God's eyes as we grow in love.

d. ***Giving thanks to the Father***: We give thanks by believing in God's good leadership. We interpret our lives through the lens of grace that sees that the Father has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. We embrace the beauty narrative of our life, empowering us to grow in obedient love for Jesus with deep gratitude and humility.

i **The beauty narrative**: We embrace the truth about a beautiful God who has a beautiful plan for our life, in which He uses His power to impart beauty into our life that continues forever (Rom. 8:28). All things work together for "good"—in terms of growing in love and humility.

ii **The dark narrative**: The enemy wants to entrap us into a negative narrative of how bad we are treated, how hard things are, what we do not have, how much we fail, etc.

e. ***Qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance***: There are many implications to the glorious inheritance of the saints. Through Christ we have been brought into a glorious, eternal future as sons of God. By seeing and enjoying this inheritance both now and in the hope of what is still to come we are empowered to live out lives pleasing to Him and endure to the end.

Col. 1:13-14 *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.*