

Prayer

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for we can have confidence in You. You have our best interests at heart, even though we do not fully understand how and why our lives unfold as they do. Give us the courage to hand our problems over to You, O Lord, and trust that all things will work together for good; and when we cannot see how this can possibly be so, surprise us by the miracles of Your grace and compassion. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your care: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Travel

Pray for those who travel in dangerous parts of the world, where there is strife or war. Pray for the safety of vulnerable people in such circumstances, especially small children.

On-going prayers

- *Pray about issues of privacy and information kept by governments*
- *Pray for small businesses trying to keep going during recession*
- *Give thanks for the opportunities we have to share our faith*

Meditation

When everything happens around me all too fast,
Lord Jesus, slow me down.

When everything I see appears in chaos and disorder,
Lord Jesus, bring me peace.

When everything challenges what I think to the core,
Lord Jesus, grant me perspective.

When everything I come across is incomprehensible,
Lord Jesus, give me understanding.

When everything around appears to be out of control,
Lord Jesus, keep my faith secure.

When everything I do meets opposition from others,
Lord Jesus, give me courage.

When everything in this world denies all that I believe,
Lord Jesus, show me love.

For You are the Master of all things, the great organiser,
Lord Jesus, we place our hope in You.

Bible Study - Colossians 1:9-14

⁹ *For this reason, from the day we heard of it, we have not stopped praying and interceding for you, so that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,* ¹⁰ *conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Lord in order to meet His approval, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.* ¹¹ *May you be made strong with all power according to the supreme might of His Glory, so that you may have*

endurance and patience in all circumstances,¹² Joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has made you able to take your share in the inheritance of the saints in the Light¹³ For He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of His dearly loved Son¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Review

Paul had already told the Colossian church that he prayed for them with great fervour (1:3) and after his opening word of introduction (1:3-8) he now told them about this prayer. It was not a prayer full of personal feeling because Paul did not know the people he was addressing, but it was a prayer of great spiritual intensity and power. It meant everything to Paul to know that the Gospel he preached had been carried by others to new places and that other churches had been founded (in this case, by Epaphras, see 1:7), and the power of this prayer is testimony to his passion for the Gospel and its growth. Paul not only asked God to bless the young church with knowledge and spiritual wisdom (1:9) which would lead to 'being fruitful' (1:10), he taught them, within the prayer, some of the important and powerful truths of the Gospel concerning salvation and redemption (1:13,14). His prayer was also designed to encourage the church; he says, for example, 'may you be made strong with all power ...' (1:11), and he demonstrates a considerable level of pastoral care and concern for all the Christians in Colossae.

Addressing problems Paul could have written to address the particular problems of the Colossians immediately. He did this in other letters (see Gal. 1:6f. and 2 Cor.1:3f.), but in this letter he took some time to do this, eventually speaking about specific problems in the second chapter (see 2:8f.). But because Paul wrote to encourage people he did not know, his words have easily reached beyond the time of the Colossians and touched the lives of countless millions of people of later times who have found real inspiration from his words. I recall attending a conference in my youth in which we were required to memorise the 'Authorised' version of this text as a reminder of the Gospel heritage in which we stand. It has stayed with me a long time!

The prayer This passage is a prayer which is packed with memorable ideas and phrases. The connection between the 'knowledge' of God and living 'in a manner worthy of the Lord' (1:9,10) is highly significant, and indicates the importance of getting to know the faith and spending time with God's Word and in prayer. Of itself, this leads to further 'knowledge of the Lord' (1:10), and it is a powerful reminder of the way in which a disciple can grow in the things of God. The prayer is also full of confidence, for Paul was trying to say to his readers that if they stuck to the core beliefs Epaphras had taught them they would not go wrong. He called on the Lord to make them strong 'with all power according to the supreme might of His glory' so that they could endure any problems and difficult situations they faced (1:11), and thus ensure their place in the inheritance of God's people (1:12). Words such as this are important to us now, not only to those who first read them. Each part it will speak to people according to their needs and build them up as God's people; this is part of the purpose of Paul's recording his prayer.

A blessing, not a curse! There is a great deal for us to discover within this prayer. Nearly every commentary on this passage of Scripture contains lengthy discussions about the meaning of each sentence and phrase. However, there is a way for us to let this passage come alive for us and allow the Lord to speak His truth to us in a personal and direct way. This is to remember that this is a prayer of blessing, and is intended always to be a blessing. Certainly, if we read any of it and find that we are worried or anxious about whether we are doing something right or wrong in our faith, then such a spiritual challenge will be for our benefit, and not for our defeat, or to make us depressed. Too many Christians live as if the Scriptures were designed to make life hard and difficult for us, and

the best thing would be for us to have a good direct relationship with God without the hassle of having to try and read too much or get involved in too much 'doctrine'. In truth, the Word of God can set us free, because the true Good News is always a blessing to the soul. It is not a burden or an intellectual 'mountain to climb'; and if we read this text as Paul's blessing of the Colossian church together with an affirmation of the truth of the Gospel, then we will not go far wrong.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Which of the four aspects of discipleship mentioned in this prayer of Paul for the Colossians is something you feel is true of your life?
2. Which of the four aspects of discipleship is something you feel is not true of your life?
3. Discuss within your group what you think is meant by the last two verses of this prayer.

Discipleship

Personal comment:

This passage contains a great deal of blessing, and the church today needs to be blessed. I have attempted to try and encourage other people to memorise this passage of scripture, but to no avail. I wish they would, and be blessed by it as I have been blessed. The words of Scripture reap significant rewards when they are lodged deeply within the human soul! Paul did indeed have much to say to the Colossians, and we also have much to say and do in the life of the church. But let us start with the good things of God, and bless each other, then we will be able to reach the conclusion of our work and know even greater blessings!

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Read this passage carefully, and make sure that you understand the discipleship that it represents. There are clear guidelines to Christian discipleship that will bless us if we can identify them and apply them, but we will need to work at them first!*
- *Pray for those who find it hard to be blessed, because they do not feel themselves to be worthy of blessing.*

Final Prayer

Bring us to that place of contentment, Lord God, where all that happens to us begins to make sense, and we can perceive Your hand at work within our lives. Even if we only catch a glimpse of all You are doing, may we rejoice to know You have included us in Your eternal plan. Thank You, Lord God: AMEN