

## Praying for Others Colossians 1:9-14; 4:2-4

One day as Sam was walking through the church vestibule, he saw Bob coming toward him. He said to himself, “Oh great! Here comes Bob. I told him I’d pray for him! Dear God, help Bob. Amen.”

As the two met, Sam enthusiastically reached out his hand to Bob and said, “Hey, Bob, been prayin’ for you!”

If I was a betting man, I’d say we have all been guilty at one time or another of being a Sam, saying we will pray for a friend and then forgetting until we see them again.

Or we may remember we are to pray for someone, but forget what it was they asked us to pray about. So, we offer a prayer like Sam’s “God, thank you for being all knowing. You know what’s going on in Bob’s life, even though I don’t. Help him with whatever it is.”

Today we will consider how we can pray for others. Often times it is for things that are tangible. Someone is sick, so we pray for them to get well. Someone has an injury, so we pray for healing. Someone is grieving, so we pray for comfort. Someone has an interview, so we pray for peace. Someone is laid off, so we pray for a job. Someone has an unexpected bill, so we pray for God’s provision.

**Philippians 4:6-7** tells us to pray about everything, to bring all our requests to God in prayer with thanksgiving. **But how do we know if someone’s illness isn’t a result of God’s discipline for some sin? How do we know if their financial need isn’t the result of some bad money decisions? How do we know if their unemployment isn’t because of some unethical behavior that cost them their job?**

**How do we know for sure those things are God’s will when we pray for them?** We don’t really, so we pray hoping they are His will, but contenting ourselves with the certainty that whatever may happen in those situations God’s will is going to be done, even if it’s not in how we may have prayed.

But in the passage we consider today, we can know that these are God’s will to pray on behalf of others.

From our passages we will look at three points.

The petitions we ask

The praise we offer

The proclamation we declare

### I. THE PETITIONS WE ASK – 1:9-11

Paul begins with a phrase that draws our attention to the previous verses where he gave thanks about what he had heard about the faith of this church. As far as we know, Paul never personally visited Colossae in his missionary journeys. All indications point to Epaphras as being the one, who after his conversion through Paul’s teaching in Ephesus, took the gospel to Colossae that began this church.

This letter to the fledgling church is a result of Epaphras visiting Paul while he was in prison, reporting on their spiritual status. Paul had heard about their faith, but also heard about the false teaching of the Gnostics who taught that more knowledge was necessary for spiritual growth. This letter was to encourage them to stand strong in their growing faith and not give in to the heresy. **“For that reason”** Paul wrote to them and began with a prayer for them, one we would do well to repeat as we pray for one another.

Paul gives us two abiding principles in the opening of **verse 9** that bear repetition. The first is that corporate nature of prayer. **“since the day we heard about you, WE have not stopped praying for you.”**

Paul indicates that he isn’t the only one praying for these believers. Although we don’t know who all was praying for them besides Paul, we can certainly assume Epaphras was faithfully talking with God about these believers. If we look at the closing of the letter, Paul mentions that Luke and Demas, who were with him in Rome, were sending greetings. This letter was written before Demas had deserted him, so we can assume that the **“we”** may have included these two companions as well. There may have also been others, but we are left to speculate who that may have been.

The point to make is that we should be joining together with other believers to pray for one another as well as for other congregations, even those we may have never met in person. For example, we support four indigenous pastor/missionaries who

shepherd congregations in Togo, Azerbaijan, Russia, and India. We can pray for them.

The second important point from Paul's opening is the ceaseless nature of prayer. We have looked at this principle already from **Luke 18:1** where Jesus admonishes to **"always pray and not faint"**. It is the same principle in Paul's exhortation to **"pray without ceasing"** in **I Thessalonians 5:17**.

Again, the point we have made in the past is that we should always be in a conscious state of being in God's presence so that we can pray.

We see an accident, so we pray.

We hear something on the news, and we pray.

We see our neighbor watering the lawn, so we pray.

In every opportunity of the day, there is something to pray about.

Now, what Paul mentions here are always appropriate to pray for on behalf of others, even for yourself. Paul says he had not stopped praying for them. The word **"prayer"** here is the general term for pray while the word **"asking"** is more specific and refers to petitions or requests we offer. We find out what Paul is asking in this verse. Notice first that the requests are concise.

### **A. The Requests Are Concise – v. 9**

The first request is to know God's will.

#### **1. Know God's Will**

The word **"knowledge"** is more than just an accumulation of facts. Paul is referring to Biblical knowledge, which is practical in nature and has to do with godly character and conduct. Biblical knowledge should lead to right living.

The Greek word is Ginosko and it means to know. It's the same root word where the Gnostics got their name. They boasted in having super knowledge, but Paul retrieved the word and put it in Biblical perspective adding a prefix to the word to state that he was praying these believers would have a super knowledge of God's will. And what Paul prayed for was that these believers would be filled full of the super knowledge about God's will.

The word **"fill"** means fill to completeness and can also mean to be fully equipped. The word was used in secular Greek to describe a ship that was made ready to sail. Before they left the harbor, they made

sure the ship had all the supplies needed for however long they were going to be at sea.

Paul prayed that they would have a complete knowledge of God's will for their journey in this life as a believer. Our prayer shouldn't be that we get these things, but to realize that we already have them and need only to appropriate them.

The word **"filled"** in the New Testament always means to be controlled by.

When it says we are not to be filled with anger, it means don't be controlled by that anger.

When it says we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, it means we are to be controlled by the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 5:18**).

Paul is praying that these believers would be controlled by knowledge, but not just any knowledge. His prayer is that they would be controlled by the knowledge of God's will.

**Does God's will control how you live?**

When we talk about God's will there is His general will and there is His specific will. God wants us to know His will. It is not a secret and it's found in Scripture.

It is God's will that you be saved –

**I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9**

It is God's will that you be filled with the Spirit –

**Ephesians 5:17-18**

It is God's will that you be sanctified or set apart to God in holy living, allowing His Spirit to work in you by making you holy –

**I Thessalonians 4:3**

It is God's will that you submit to God –

**James 4:7-8**

It is God's will that you suffer –

**I Peter 4:19; I Thessalonians 5:17**

Those are just some of the general things related to God's will for you revealed in Scripture. His specific will isn't quite so cut and dried, but His specific will for you will always agree with His revealed general will. God's general will, will always help guide you when His specific will may seem unclear. The key is that you must be in His Word to know what it reveals about His will. God wants you to know His will and we are able to know it by getting knowledge of His Word.

We are to desire knowledge of God's Word –

**John 7:17**

**Hosea 6:13**

We are to depend on the Holy Spirit to gain knowledge of God's Word –

**I Corinthians 2:10-12****John 16:13-14**

We are to study Scripture to learn the knowledge of God's Word –

**I Timothy 2:15****II Timothy 3:16-17**

Paul requests that these believers know God's will. Paul requests that these believers know God's wisdom.

**2. Know God's Wisdom**

Notice that our text tells us exactly where this wisdom comes from. It is spiritual, meaning it comes from God. Proverbs provides us with a lot of general wisdom, common sense things that are good whether a person is a believer or not. Paul prays for spiritual wisdom. **James 1:5** tells us that God will generously give us wisdom if and ask for it. He won't withhold it from us. The wisdom James speaks of is the ability to face trials with pure joy. Wisdom is not the accumulation of knowledge or information or facts. It is practical insight that has spiritual connotations.

**Proverbs 9:10-12****Proverbs 1:2-4****Proverbs 2:10-15****Proverbs 4:5-9**

**James 3:13** says that the wise person demonstrates his wisdom through his good life, evidenced in humility.

In our passage, wisdom is a broader term that refers to the ability to organize Scripture in a way that guides the person's life. Paul prays that they might have God's wisdom, but then narrows it with a more specific request praying they would know God's understanding.

**3. Know God's Understanding**

This refers to the application of those principles learned through wisdom and knowledge that will direct your steps every day of your life.

Walvoord and Zuck describe it as clear analysis and decision making in applying knowledge and wisdom to various problems. The emphasis again is on the ability to use Scripture for those decisions

and that wisdom is from God, it's spiritual.

In **Exodus 31:3** the knowledge and wisdom given to Bezalel in making everything for the Tabernacle was given by the Holy Spirit.

**Isaiah 11:2** refers to the Spirit as the Spirit of wisdom and understanding who will rest on the Branch that comes from the lineage of Jesse – a reference to the coming Messiah.

Understanding then, is the ability to use Scripture right and like wisdom only comes from God.

John MacArthur states: *“Believing, submissive Bible study leads to the knowledge of God's will. A mind saturated with such knowledge will also be able to comprehend general principles of godly behavior. With that wisdom will come understanding of how to apply those principles to the situations of life. That progression will inevitably result in godly character and practice.”*

Paul's requests are concise. Pray to know God's will, pray to know God's wisdom, pray to know God's understanding. They will guide us in making right decisions as we endeavor to live godly lives. When we pray such concise requests, the results then are clear.

**B. The Results Are Clear – vs. 10-11****1. Our walk will please the Lord – v. 10a**

This speaks of our conduct, how we live. When the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding controls us, our conduct will be directly changed so that how we live pleases Him.

Paul urged the Thessalonians to live worthy of the Lord (**I Thessalonians 2:12**). He said the same to the Ephesians (**Ephesians 4:1**) and also the Philippians (**Philippians 1:27**).

Living godly in our conduct is impossible in our own strength. That's why Paul tells us in **Galatians 2:20** that our source for godly living is in Christ. To the Corinthians (**II Corinthians 5:17**) he wrote that in Christ we are a new creation. All the old way of living has passed away. **Romans 8:1** says we have been set free from the law of sin that once ruled us and **verse 9** continues by saying that if we are controlled by the law of sin, we cannot please God. He urges us not to let sin reign in our bodies, but to

live a life that pleases God. As a Christian, we are not controlled by sin but by the Holy Spirit in us. Here are some ways our walk pleases God:

- a. Walk in humility – **Ephesians 4:1-3**
- b. Walk in purity – **Romans 13:13**
- c. Walk in contentedness – **I Corinthians 7:17**
- d. Walk by faith – **II Corinthians 5:7**
- e. Walk in good works – **Ephesians 2:10**
- f. Walk different from the world – **Ephesians 4:17-32**
- g. Walk in love – **Ephesians 5:2**
- h. Walk in light – **Ephesians 5:8**
- i. Walk in wisdom – **Ephesians 5:15**
- j. Walk in truth – **I John 3:4**

**Does your conduct please God? Is it worthy of the Lord?** The word “worthy” means of equal weight meaning our conduct is to equal the standards of Christ. In other words, we are directed to be holy because Christ is holy. Now, we can’t be totally holy in this life, but we can strive to that standard.  
**I Peter 1:15-16**  
**I John 3:2-3**

The word “please” means pleasing in every way and speaks of anticipating what the Lord wants us to do and then doing it.

**Ephesians 5:8-10** “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.”

Warren Wiersbe notes that “Spiritual growth and maturity can come only as we yield to God’s power and permit Him to work in us.”

When we walk in His power, we can’t help but please Him in our walk. That’s one result. Another result of knowing God’s will is our life will bear fruit.

## 2. Our life will bear fruit – v. 10b

When you live a righteous life, you will bear fruit. **John 15** tells us that when we abide in Christ, when we live in Him, we will bear much fruit.

**What kind of fruit is your life yielding?**

Fruit is defined in different ways in the Bible.

- a. New believers are called fruit – **Romans 1:13; I Corinthians 16:15**
- b. Praise is fruit – **Hebrews 13:15**

- c. Giving money is fruit – **Romans 15:26-28**
- d. Godly living is fruit – **Hebrews 12:11**
- e. Holy character developed by the Spirit is fruit – **Galatians 5:22-23**

**John 15:4-5** tells us that fruit is produced when we abide or live in Christ. That means we are in union with Him.

**James 3:17** says that wisdom is a prerequisite to bearing fruit so that if we lack wisdom, the result is we will lack spiritual fruit.

**What kind of spiritual fruit are you producing?**

## 3. Our knowledge of God will increase – v. 10c

Knowledge of God increases our spiritual growth. The Greek language indicates that we will mature in Christ. It will happen as we read, study and apply what we learn about God in His Word.

**I Peter 2:2** “Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”

- a. Growth is evidenced by an increased deeper love for God’s Word – **Psalms 119:97** “Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long.”
- b. Growth is evidenced by an increased desire for obedience – **I John 2:3-5** “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.”
- c. Growth is evidenced by an increased faith – **II Thessalonians 1:3** “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged.”

A fourth result is seen in **verse 11**.

## 4. Our strength to live a godly life is according to God’s glorious might – v. 11a

The word “strengthened” is in the present tense indicating that it is continuous action, meaning that we are constantly be strengthened throughout our walk with Christ in this life. It’s not a one-time booster jet that gets us going and the rest is up to us.

This power is constant in our lives. This power is according to His glorious might. **“Glorious”** refers to God’s attributes being made known. **“Might”** is a different word for power and refers to strength in action. The power that is constantly at work in us is limitless because its very source, God Himself, is limitless.

This power at work in us is through the Holy Spirit who lives in the believer. It is that same power Christ promised His disciples would experience to proclaim the gospel (**Acts 1:8**). Paul prayed that the Ephesians would **“be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit”** (**Ephesians 3:16**), and to the Romans, he wrote that the God of hope would fill them with abounding joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit (**Romans 15:13**).

When the believer is filled with the knowledge of God’s Word, we have that power available to us.

One last result of the knowledge of God’s will is that our endurance and patience is with joyfulness.

### 5. Our endurance and patience is with joyfulness – v. 11b

This speaks of endurance in trials. Both endurance and patience are closely related. Endurance has to do with circumstances. Patience has to do with people. We can experience trials from both. In the one we need endurance, while in the other we need patience. Both refer to a strength that helps us not give in under the suffering. Whether it is a trial from circumstances or from people, we need to be strengthened with a power that can only come from God to make it through them. It’s the kind of power **James 5:10** describes the prophets received when facing their trials. When we are strengthened by God’s mighty power, joy accompanies our endurance and patience.

Paul gives us clear requests with concise results. Those are the petitions we offer on behalf of others. But prayer is incomplete if we forget to give thanks. In **verses 12-14** we see the praise we offer.

## II. THE PRAISE WE OFFER – vs. 12-14

Notice first that we have a guaranteed inheritance.

### A. We Have A Guaranteed Inheritance – v. 12

Paul says the Father has **“qualified”** us. That means

we have been made sufficient or fit and implies that we have it now. **Romans 8:16-17** says we are heirs with Christ. That isn’t something that happens later. Before God stepped in, we were not fit or qualified to receive anything from God. When Christ went to the cross and bore the wrath of God by taking on Himself our sin, God’s grace through our faith now qualifies us to receive an inheritance from God. We are incapable of doing anything that would otherwise qualify us for what God has to give us.

When a couple adopts a child, they pay all the legal fees necessary to adopt that child. The Judge then qualifies that child to become part of that family granting him or her the right to receive what the adopting family will give them.

Jesus paid all the legal fees so that we could become part of God’s forever family and receive the inheritance He has prepared for us. It includes eternal life (**Matthew 19:29**) and all the promises of God (**Hebrews 6:12**). And this inheritance is eternal (**Hebrews 9:15**). It will never fade away or be taken away (**I Peter 1:4**). But while we have it now, it is something Peter says is reserved for us in heaven, waiting to be given when we arrive there. Paul says that this inheritance is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit who acts as a seal or pledge of the promise given by God (**Ephesians 1:13-14**). For this inheritance we are to be thankful.

This inheritance is in the kingdom of light, which points to the second thing we are to be thankful for.

### B. We Have A Guaranteed Deliverance – v. 13

A kingdom can refer to a location, like a nation. It can also speak of authority or dominion or rule. That’s its meaning here. The kingdom of darkness is the rule of Satan. It is from this kingdom that we have been rescued.

**I Peter 2:9** **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”**

Paul describes in **Eph. 6:12** the battle we are in as one against the rulers and powers of this dark world. When Paul writes that we have been rescued or delivered it literally means He has drawn us to Himself. When we trust Christ as our Savior, we

have instantly been delivered from darkness.

**II Corinthians 5:17** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is (right now) a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.”

**Romans 6:2, 7** tell us that when we received Christ as Savior, we died to sin and are no longer its slave.

Being rescued from the dominion of darkness means we are no longer under its rule but under a new king – Jesus Christ.

**Are you thankful your deliverance is guaranteed?**

### **C. We Have A Guaranteed Transference – v. 14**

To be fit for this kingdom we receive as an inheritance we must be delivered and that comes through redemption. It was used to speak of a slave who had been freed from bondage. Another word for it is emancipation. We know that term from the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Lincoln thereby making all slaves free. They were no longer bound to remain enslaved. There were free. Their ownership was transferred and it was paid for by those who fought and died to free them.

Our freedom was paid for by Christ who died in our place. When we recognize we are bound by sin and claim His finished work on the cross for our sin, His shed blood has set us free and in that moment we are forgiven of our sins.

**I Peter 1:18-19** “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

**Psalms 103:12** says those sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west.

**Micah 7:19** says those sins have been hurled into the depths of the sea.

We sang this chorus at camp when I lived there.

My sins are gone

And will not be remembered,

God in mercy tenderly forgives.

He lives within, assuring my salvation

giving confirmation that his Word is true,

Someday heaven I will see, all its joys forever

share,

But until that eternity, I will tell it everywhere

It's real, it's sure, His promise is secure

Since he said it's so, by faith I know...

My sins are gone.

Forgiveness of sin is always rooted in the blood of Christ. He paid the price for sin in order that our citizenship could be transferred to His kingdom. If you have not yet made a transference from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light, admit you are a sinner and trust Christ as your Savior. It is an instantaneous change that guarantees an inheritance in heaven, deliverance from sin, and transference to a new kingdom. Your sins are gone. For that, we are to give God thanks.

There is one more point I want to make from **4:2-4**.

### **III. THE PROCLAMATION WE DECLARE – 4:2-4**

In **verse 2** we see our priority.

#### **A. Our Priority In Prayer – v. 2**

Paul links three important terms together. Pray, watch and give thanks.

We are to devote ourselves to prayer. The KJV renders it continue. It means to be steadfast, to endure. The verb form means to be courageously persistent, to hold fast and not let go. It is used in the way the disciples prayed just after Jesus ascended to heaven.

**Acts 1:14** “They all joined together constantly in prayer.”

It's how the earlier church prayed as they met together daily (**Acts 2:42**). They prayed for one another, and they prayed with one another.

Again from the pen of John MacArthur who writes “there is a tension between boldness and waiting on God's will. That tension is resolved by being persistent, yet accepting God's answer when it finally comes.”

I really want to encourage you to come out Wednesday night for Pathway to Power as we pray together. Corporate prayer is important.

Not only were they to pray but they were to watch, to keep alert. It has the idea of not falling asleep during prayer.

Jesus told the disciples to pray and watch so they wouldn't fall into temptation.

As the Israelites were rebuilding the wall, threats came from outsiders who wanted to disrupt their work. In **Nehemiah 4:9** we read that they prayed and watched by setting a guard around the clock in the event of an assault.

In **I Kings 18:43-44** Elijah told his servant to go and watch while he prayed.

Pray about everything.

Be ready for anything.

Give thankS for all things.

The word **“watch”** has a broad scope meaning that we should be alert for things to pray for.

Praying for your boss who is having a hard day.

Praying for the spiritual well-being of someone who needs Christ.

Praying for your spouse, children or grandchildren.

Every situation or person we encounter has the potential for something to pray about.

And then as we have already studied, prayer should include thanksgiving. Just think of what we have because of Christ for which we should be thankful.

1. **God's presence – Psalm 75:1**
2. **God's provisions – Acts 27:35**
3. **God's pardon – Romans 6:17**
4. **God's promises – I Corinthians 15:57; I Peter 1:3-4; II Corinthians 1:20**
5. **God's purposes – Romans 8:28**

**Do we take the priority of prayer seriously?**

**Are we watching with anticipation what God will do as we pray? Are we expecting God to hear and answer?**

**Are we praying with thanksgiving?**

Prayer is to be a priority.

John MacArthur suggests that **“prayer is the most important speech we can utter. It is the strength of the believer's fellowship with the Lord and source of his power against Satan and his angels.”**

Paul then has a personal request. **Verses 3-4** show us our priority in preaching.

## **B. Our Priority In Preaching – vs. 3-4**

We can make this person as well in our proclaiming the gospel.

A mystery was something that had previously been hidden in the Old Testament about Christ that has now been revealed. And Paul was asking for three specific things that they could pray about for him.

**He asked that he could preach publicly.**

**He asked that he could preach perfectly.**

**He asked that he could preach plainly.**

He wanted an open door to proclaim the gospel.

He wanted the proclamation of the gospel to be complete.

He wanted the proclamation of the gospel to clear.

**I Thessalonians 2:2b-4 “But with the help of our God we dared to tell you His gospel in spite of strong opposition. For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.”**

**I Corinthians 2:4-5 “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.”**

Paul didn't want gimmicks or a snappy presentation. He wanted the gospel to be clear and complete and even he wanted prayer for boldness.

When we don't know how to pray for others, Paul offers a good template. We would do well to pray these both for ourselves and for each other.