

“Lord, Teach Us to Pray” X – (Prayers of Paul; Col 1:9-12, Phil 1:9-11, Eph 3:14-19)

Introduction – Beyond the Lord’s Prayer, how should I pray for others? How should I pray for my spouse, for my children, for my brothers and sisters in Christ? How should I pray for missionaries? How should I pray for the elders? How should I pray for myself? We should be learning to pray in much the same way we see our two and three year olds learning to pray – they imitate their parents, their elders in the faith. And so we recite the Lord’s Prayer and sing the psalms, the inspired prayer book. We can also learn by imitating an elder brother like the apostle Paul. What if we prayed these prayers for one another?

Colossians 1:9-12 – Paul is writing this (and all three epistles) from prison in Rome. He probably has never ministered to the Colossians except through Epaphras. How do you use your times ‘in prison’? How do you pray for those you do not know well personally? Having given thanks for the great news of their faith in Christ Jesus and their love for all the saints, Paul says –

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, - As we have seen in our study through the Lord’s Prayer, when prayer is received as an opportunity, when we realize the breadth of the prayer Jesus taught us, and when we realize how dependent upon God for everything we are, it is possible to begin to imagine never ceasing from prayer. **and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;** - He first petitions for knowledge of God’s will, and to be *filled* with it, in all *wisdom*.

10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, - Here is the reason for the petition – so that we might walk worthy of our name – Christian. Then, this worthy walk is described.

fully pleasing Him, - Fully, not just sort of...which means it is possible to do so (to be blameless, not sinless).

being fruitful in every good work - walking in His will, having His blessing on every work, and fruit blessed for the sake of His kingdom, for the glory of God.

and increasing in the knowledge of God; - “filled with the knowledge” and then “increasing in the knowledge”. Paul is praying for the center focus of the Colossian’s life to be upon God, full upon God, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; - In the midst of any suffering or trial, Paul is not praying simply for release, but strength – how much? *with all might*, According to what? *His glorious power*, For what? *ALL patience AND longsuffering WITH joy*. This is the attitude of the disciple who has knowledge of God, and it must be sought in prayer. It is not naturally in some and not in others.

12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. - The joy is spelled out here; great thankfulness that God is our Father, that He has qualified us, that He lets us pray and approach Him, that He has given us an eternal inheritance of light and glory – unbelievable.

Philippians 1:9-11 – First, in verse 3 and following, Paul gives thanks for these brothers and sisters in Christ. We know that He knows this church very personally. How does he pray?

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more - This love is the love of God and towards on another. While he praises what he hears about them, he longs for still more and more.

in knowledge and all discernment, - Love filled with knowledge, not a zeal without knowledge (Rom 10:2). Paul’s use of this word, epignosis, knowledge, over and over again, is not simply a cerebral knowledge of a list of propositions, but rather a full, intimate acquaintance with the Divine. And discernment, like wisdom, is the moral and ethical living out of that knowledge/relationship.

10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, - The same idea as in Colossians, a ‘worthy’ walk. Our lives are to prove, test, and justify our profession. We may not be hypocrites, nor be insincere. This occurs by grace and not in our flesh and so we must pray for it and continue to pray for it.

11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. - Here is what we must have to pass the test. These are the fruit of Christ’s life in us. Constantly pray for a deep-rooted work of Jesus Christ Himself in the hearts of believers by which the tree will be filled with fruits of righteousness. The end of this will be the glory and praise of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19 – Paul has spent three chapters telling the Ephesians who they are in Christ. Now, before he moves on to the chapters of commands, he pauses to pray that the truths of what God has done would take deep root in us.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, - Do we far too easily brush over our

physical position before the Lord? It is not just about what is going on in our heart. Bowing is an act of humility, of humiliation and acknowledgement that Someone Else must lift us up. Notice also that Paul is addressing the Father.

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, - Praying for one another is motivated by our understanding of who we are in Jesus Christ. We are a family under one name - the Triune God of Scripture, all baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

16 That he would grant you, - This is simply a gift; it is nothing that we can earn or conjure up.

according to the riches of his glory, - First - how much does God have at His disposal? Paul knows that in Christ he has access to immeasurable riches of glory. Second - Paul does not hesitate to pray with great confidence to access all of the riches of Christ's glory. These are inspired prayers. This is the way God would have us pray.

to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; - We are Christians. We are not strengthened by looking deep within ourselves. We are strengthened with a mighty and miraculous strength of the Holy Spirit in our inner man, that is, the soul, the conscience, the heart of man.

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; - Christ already is in the hearts of believers. This idea of dwelling has much more of the idea of inhabiting and 'settling in' as well. We are praying that it would be obvious that Christ is at home and is the Lord of this home. This occurs by faith, not by works, not by trying hard.

that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, - Christ dwelling in our hearts results in a rooted and grounded love from and for Christ. This root produces fruit. And part of this fruit is more comprehension of love, as Paul says...

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; - Love that encompasses everything. Love that cannot be measured. Love that has no walls, no bottom, no ceiling. Love that lives and moves and has its being in the Triune God of scripture. Love that is God Himself.

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. - Paul prays for the impossible. How can we know that which passes knowledge? How can we be filled with the fullness of the infinite? And these two things are connected. The knowledge of the love of Christ is the fullness of God dwelling in us. This is beyond us. But this is for us. Paul prays this for the church. We should pray this for one another.

Simple Applications - Pray the Lord's Prayer and these prayers of Paul word for word. Pray the psalms and other prayers in scripture word for word. Let them shape the way you pray and what you pray. Pray these prayers of Paul for yourself and for those you know. Pray these prayers for those you are asked to pray for but do not know well. Pray these prayers for your elders and for this congregation generally. May God grant a reformation of faithful praying in our homes and in this church. Amen.

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