

Keynotes from Sam Gordon's am Sermon on 18/07/2021

Title: "Why Pray?"

Text: Colossians 1 verses 9-14

Scripture references from the ESV or NSV

Colossians 1:1-14 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ²To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. ³We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹And 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, ¹⁰so 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; ¹¹being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The words in the second section of these verses shine a spotlight on the pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus. When Paul thinks about Jesus, he also thinks about the people who are followers of Jesus, those he refers to in **v2** (above). He is thrilled to see the deep work of grace in their hearts and lives, proving that the gospel really works and reinforcing his commitment to it. He singles out faith and love (**v4**). Their faith reaches up to the Lord Jesus and their love reaches out to all the saints, based on the hope they have laid up for them in heaven (**v5**). We definitely have something to look forward to! Paul also reminds us (**v6**) that today, and every day, God is moving by his Spirit and lives are being transformed.

Paul had never met the people to whom he wrote, but his input into their lives was massive. He prayed for them, touching the throne of God on their behalf. In doing so, he was securing God's blessing for them, both as individuals and as a congregation. That is what true prayer is.

This particular prayer of Paul's contains both petition (**vv9-11**) and praise (**vv12-14**).

1. Petition (vv9-11) It is good to pray for one another. We all need it and we all need to pray for one another. God answers prayer! The Bible gives us many examples of people praying for others. Moses prayed for Aaron, Samuel and David both prayed for Israel and Jesus prayed for his disciples to name but a few!

Paul prayed for other believers, some of whom he knew, but many he didn't.

Prayer helps us lift the lid on a most important ministry, and it's one of those jobs all of us can do.

It is obvious that Paul excelled in this role (**v9**). In every epistle, we read that Paul prayed for that particular church. He knew what it was to seek the Lord's face, to storm the gates of glory and to pour out his heart in adoring worship and faithful intercession. We often say we will pray for someone but then forget. Paul didn't forget.

Paul was acutely **God-conscious**. He knew the secret of a successful prayer life and ministry.

- He kept short accounts with God and ensured the lines of communication were always open.
- He lived with a real awareness of God's presence and was conscious of the nearness of God in every circumstance, whether good or bad.

Paul was also acutely **people-conscious**. He was very aware of their needs and left us a model of prayer to emulate in these verses. His great desire for the Christians in Colossae is expressed in **v9**. Paul repeats this prayer in other places, indicating that he sees this as the bedrock of the Christian life. As we pray this prayer, we will know God today, but find that we know him better tomorrow, deepening our relationship with him as time goes on.

V9 That you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding:

- Filled has the idea of being totally filled to overflowing, and being totally controlled by what is in us.
- God has revealed his will to us in scripture – it is our guiding light. We can all read it and take it on board.

If we want to know what God's mind is in a particular situation, we need to come before the Word with an open heart and allow God to guide us by his Holy Spirit as he has promised to do. (**John 16: 5-15** see p4). God's will is not a secret. It will be our food and drink if we are serious about growing in our Christian life.

**When we familiarise ourselves with the will of God (nothing more, nothing less and nothing else),
it will lead to spiritual wisdom and understanding.**

There are no quick solutions to life's problems and challenges and we are foolish if we try to circumvent the revealed will of God. That is a slippery slope to disaster.

- Wisdom means we will be wise as to what God would have us do in any given situation
- Understanding means we get on with it!

The principles we learn need to be applied in everyday life, with wisdom and understanding working in harmony.

- We need to be immersed in the precious word of God, soaking up biblical truth at every opportunity.
- As we submit ourselves to the word of God, its truths permeate our thinking and colour our outlook on life.
- We learn to filter everything through the grid of God's unchanging truth.
- We become those who live and work by the Book.

This is a prayer to pray for ourselves, our pastors and elders, new believers, our family and others.

Five effects become a reality in our lives when we know and do the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

- a) **We will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (v10).** The only way for us to please the Lord is for us to be what God wants us to be. There is a link between what we know to be the mind of God and how that shapes our conduct. There is no shortcut. If we are to secure the choice blessings of God, then we have to pursue God's plan and do things his way.
- b) **We will live a fruitful life (v10).** There is no need for us to be barren in our relationship with Christ. There will be vitality and fruitfulness, as we are united with Christ in the vine (**John 15: 1-11** see p4).
- c) **We will grow in our spiritual life (v10).** We have fervency and freshness, as evidenced by a growth in our love, combined with a faith that is enlarged. We'll be stretching saints – reaching out and up for more of what the Lord has for us!
- d) **We will have strength (v11).** The word signifies a continuous action, so we are strengthened day by day and the phenomenal power that is available to us is nothing less than the limitless power of God himself. God is omnipotent – there is no danger of him running out of power.
- e) **We will have endurance (v11).** Paul longs for us to have stickability and stamina in the ebb and flow of life. This is not about gritting our teeth and getting on with it, but rather being able to endure all the hassles and hurts of life with a perseverance that only grace and God are able to supply – and he does in all-sufficiency. We are able to do this with joy when we know the Lord who enables us to cope in times of crisis.

Winston Churchill's advice to students was 'Never give up' and Paul call us to have the same attitude.

It is always too soon to quit when it comes to following Jesus

2. Praise (vv 12-14) Paul makes much of the quality of thanksgiving. We are quick to whinge and whine, to criticise and condemn, but we are often slow to say thank you. It is the grace of gratitude, and we would all do well to be little more thankful in our intercessions.

We owe it all to God, we are deeply indebted to him and we have absolutely nothing without him.

Above all we can and should be grateful for our salvation, and that is what Paul focuses on in this part of his prayer.

(v12) giving thanks to the Father for the following – our inheritance, our deliverance and our transference

a) He has qualified you to share in the **inheritance** of the saints in light.

God is only our Father because we have been brought into a living relationship with him and are trusting him as sons. Before, he was our judge but now, he is our Father. He is the one who has qualified us to share in his kingdom splendour and he has done it through the finished work of Jesus at Calvary. He made a way for us when there was no way and we are now part of the family of God. Our inheritance has our name written on it. Eternity in heaven with the Lord and his people is our future (**1 Peter 1:3-5** see p4). He is preparing that for us, and preparing us for that, right now. It has nothing to do with us and everything to do with him, so all the credit goes to him alone.

b) He has **delivered** us from the domain of darkness and **transferred** us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

That is salvation! He has delivered us from the clutch of the enemy. He has lifted us from the sinking sands of sin and planted our feet on the rock of ages. No wonder we sing to him a new song (**Psalms 40: 1-3** see p4), no wonder we give him all the praise and honour. He is the only one who could do it.

From darkness to light, from death to life and all because of God's amazing love and boundless grace!

Paul has reminded us of where we used to be, and where we are now. The focus is very much on Jesus.

He is the One the Father dearly loves, and he is the One in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (**v14**). Jesus did for us what no one else could do for us, and what we could never do for ourselves. God has taken our sins and removed them from us as far as the east is from the west. (**Psalms 103:12** see p4) He has buried them in the depths of a fathomless ocean.

That is grace - that is God.

No wonder Paul exhorts us to give thanks to the Lord for all he's done on our behalf. We owe everything to him. We are debtors to mercy and to God. Let us give him all the glory and the praise.

**Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe;
sin had left a crimson stain, but Jesus washed it white as snow.**

That is what God has done and he is still actively working in all of our lives. He hasn't finished with any of us yet. When he has, we'll be safe on the other shore, enjoying the bounteous beauty and blessings of eternity itself. We will get to see the King in all his incomparable splendour and beauty.

**Jesus, then and now, is the centre of attraction. That is the prime reason why we bow
in thanksgiving
and lose ourselves in wonder, love and praise.**

That is why we pray!

John 16: 5-15 But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. ¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

John 15:1-11 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by

itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Psalms 40: 1-3 I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. ² He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

1 Peter 1:3-5 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Psalms 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.