

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

How does the Holy Spirit lead someone to pray for the people of God—for the churches? Here is an aspect of “praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 1:20) that is particularly significant. In some circles, “praying in the Holy Spirit” refers to strictly personal prayers. Others see it as praying in a language that is unknown to the one who is praying.

There is no need for a lot of idle speculation in this area. The Spirit has provided us with prayers that reflect the mind of the Lord—and no prayer that does not reflect His mind can possibly be one that is “in the Holy Spirit.”

THE LORD’S PRAYER

I am particularly referring to the prayer of our Lord just prior to His betrayal in the garden. A cursory overview of that prayer will suffice to give us a feel for the content of effective prayers. This prayer is the seventeenth chapter of John.

1. Jesus asked the Father to glorify Him so He could glorify the Father (17:1).
2. He acknowledged the purpose for which the Father gave Him power over all flesh (17:2).

3. He stated the meaning of “eternal life” (17:3).
4. He confessed He had glorified the Father on the earth and completed the work He was given to do (17:4).
5. He asked for the Father to glorify Him with the glory He had with the Father before the world was (17:5).
6. He confessed He had made the Father known to the men He had given Him out of the world (17:6a).
7. He declares His followers had kept His word and knew that what Jesus gave them was from God (17:6b–7).
8. He affirms He had given the disciples the words the Father gave Him and that they had believed He came out from God and that God sent Him (17:8).
9. He states He is not praying for the world, but for those God had given to Him, for they belonged to God (17:9).
10. He confesses that all who were His were also God’s and that all who belonged to God also belonged to Him, and that He was glorified in them (17:10).
11. He asks the Father to keep His disciples through His own name that they might be one, even as the Father and the Son are one (17:11).
12. He confesses that none of His disciples had been lost, except Judas, that the scripture might be fulfilled (17:12).
13. He expresses His desire for His joy to be fulfilled in His followers (17:14).
14. He asks the Father to keep His followers while they were in the world (17:15).

15. He asks the Father to sanctify His disciples through the truth and defines what He meant by “truth” (17:17–19).
16. He prays for those who will believe on Him through His disciples’ words that they all may be one as He and the Father are one.
17. He asks that He, the Father, and His followers may all be made one, that the world may believe God has sent Him (17:21–23).
18. He states that He wants His followers to be with Him and behold the glory God had given to Him (17:24).
19. He summarizes the relationship of the world, Himself, and His disciples to the Father (17:25–26).

To give you a little flavor as to the emphasis of this prayer, there are forty-nine references to the Father, fifty-two to the Son, and forty-one to Christ’s disciples.

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Chapter 2

APOSTOLIC PRAYERS

The thrust of apostolic prayers is also very apparent. A brief review of some of these prayers will serve to prepare us for this series of devotions. In all of these examples, there is a certain direction seen in the prayers. This world is consistently made subordinate to the world to come. There is also an obvious concern for the maturity, stability, and productivity of the people of God. This will be very apparent.

WISDOM AND REVELATION. “That the Father would give the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself” (Eph 1:17). If God is not known, no other knowledge is of any consequence.

KNOWING WHY GOD CALLS. “That the eyes of the understanding might be opened to perceive the hope of God’s calling—the intent for which we have been called” (Eph 1:18a). If we do not know why God has called us, our lives will be off center.

KNOWING THAT WE ARE GOD’S INHERITANCE. “That the eyes of the understanding might be opened to see the riches of God’s glorious inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18b). The knowledge of what God intends for His people to be to Himself, is critical to living acceptably.

COMPREHENDING THE POWER TOWARD US. “That the eyes of the understanding might be opened to see the exceeding greatness of the power that is toward those who believe” (Eph 1:19). If we do not know the nature and greatness of the Divine power that is directed toward us, our ambitions will be too small.

STRENGTH IN THE INNER MAN. “That God would grant believers to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16). Christ will not remain in a weak and frail inner man.

CHRIST DWELLING WITHIN. “That Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith” (Eph 3:17). Christ will dwell within us in direct proportion to the measure of strength imparted by the Spirit, and according to our faith. A person with “little faith,” at the best, will have only a little of Jesus.

COMPREHENDING THE MAGNITUDE OF SALVATION. That, being rooted and grounded in love, the saints might be able to comprehend “what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:18–19). Rooting and

grounding speaks of spiritual stability and dependability. This brings the ability to perceive and appreciate the remarkable scope of salvation. A deficiency in this area is far more serious than ordinarily perceived.

ABOUNDING LOVE. That the love of the saints might “abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Phil 1:9). An abounding love toward one another requires perception, understanding, and sound judgment.

APPROVING THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT. That saints might “approve things that are excellent” (Phil 1:10a). The postulate is that God’s people are regularly exposed to spiritually “excellent things.” However, it is not the exposure that brings the blessing. Rather it is the hearty approval and embrace of them.

READY FOR THE DAY OF CHRIST. That saints might “be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Phil 1:10b). Sincerity is purity, and being “without offence” is a condition before God Himself. These are needful qualities.

FILLED WITH THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. That they might be “filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:11). Having some “fruits of righteousness” is one thing. Being “filled” with them is quite another matter. This equates with “much fruit,” wherein God is glorified and discipleship is confirmed (Jn 15:8).

FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL. That believers might be “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). There is such a thing as a keen and thorough awareness of Divine purpose and intentions. This is not a mere intellectual matter, but results in practical wisdom and an understanding of the things of the Spirit.

WALKING WORTHY OF THE LORD. That saints would “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col 1:10a). There is a spiritual condition in which the individual is especially pleasing to God – like a

man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

FRUITFUL IN EVERY GOOD WORK. That they would be “fruitful in every good work” (Col 1:10b). Godly works are not an end of themselves. It is the harvest, or result, of them that is especially honoring to God. To be “fruitful in every good work” is to enjoy the increase that God alone can give.

INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. That those in Christ would be found “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10c). This involves a personal acquaintance and familiarity with the Lord Himself – being knowledgeable of His ways, manners, and intentions.

STRENGTHENED WITH ALL MIGHT. That they would be “strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power” (Col 1:11a). It should be obvious that such strengthening has no limitations. It provides for thorough equipping, protection, and enablement. It brings sufficiency and adequacy to us.

PATIENCE AND LONGSUFFERING WITH JOYFULNESS. That Divine power in them would result in “all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col 1:11b). Being able to continue making progress to glory and endure all things is challenging enough. To do so “with all joyfulness” emphasizes the need for Divine involvements.

PERFECT AND COMPLETE IN GOD'S WILL. That believers would “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col 4:12). Perfection and completeness speak of spiritual maturity – growing up into Christ “in all things” (Eph 4:15). Attaining to that condition “in all the will of God” is a most arresting consideration.

COMPLETE SANCTIFICATION. That God would “sanctify you wholly . . . your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23). Salvation provides for the thorough dedication of every part of our being. Only God is capable of fulfilling this provision.

WORTHY OF GOD'S CALLING. That saints would be counted “worthy of this calling” (2 Thess 1:11). The calling of God not only involves extrication from the dilemma of sin, but also participation in the purpose of God. There is a certain worthiness that accompanies such involvement, and only God can bring it to pass.

FULFILLING GOD'S PLEASURE AND THE WORK OF FAITH. That God would “fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power” in the saints (2 Thess 1:11). This request stretches the mind and the heart. It involves the fulfillment of every Divine intention for the individual and the powerful effects of faith.

THE NAME OF JESUS GLORIFIED. That the “name of our Lord Jesus Christ” would be “glorified” in believers (2 Thess 1:12). Christ receives glory in believers when they complement His purposes and do not distract from them.

THE COMMUNICATION OF YOUR FAITH. That God would cause the “communication of thy faith” to “become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus” (Philm 1:6). The communication of one's faith occurs within the framework of doing the will of the Lord. The effects of faith are thus communicated to others, accruing to the glory of God and the benefit of saints.

GOD WORKING IN YOU. That God would make the saints “perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever” (Heb 13:21). The thoroughness of this work is refreshing to consider. Here is God working freely in individuals and congregations in such a manner as to fulfill His purposes and bring great satisfaction and pleasure to Himself.

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Chapter 3

AREAS OF DIVINE FOCUS

It should be apparent that these are all areas of Divine focus – filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, walking worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

While we are encouraged to make our requests known to God (Phil 4:6), there are certain stipulations concerning their fulfillment. They must be asked in faith without wavering (James 1:6–7). They must also be according to the will of God (1 Jn 5:14–15). As we approach the Lord, it must be in this manner: “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). Elsewhere Paul writes, “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim 2:8). Through David the Lord asks a telling question, and then answers it: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” (Psa 24:3-5).

We should expect favorable answers to prayers that relate more to what we are doing than to what the God of glory is doing. This does not at all suggest that it is out of order to pray concerning personal matters. It does suggest that there is some kind of correlation of those requests with the revealed purpose of God. Prayers must not be raised to God as though this world was the only world, and living in the body was the most

important thing. Each person has to work these matters out in their thinking. However, if the individual is really living by faith and walking in the Spirit, he will be able to make proper associations between earthly circumstance and eternal glory. God urges us to make ALL of our requests known unto Him, but that is not a license for thoughtless petitions.

God responds to our requests by granting a peace that will keep our “hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6–7). However, there are no such limitations placed on matters included in apostolic prayers. They are more directly related to the purpose of God and, thus, are the more guaranteed of fulfillment. These have more to do with God’s “eternal purpose” and, thus, must be given greater emphasis in our prayers.

On matters like this, those who are living and thinking “after the flesh” will have a lot of questions. Not being able to discern between good and evil, they will be prone to ask if it is right to pray for this or that. Attempting to define such parameters for another person is not wise. It is best to teach such an individual to “go on to perfection,” with the promise that they will soon be able to distinguish good and evil for themselves (Heb 5:14; 6:1).

WHERE GRACE IS ESPECIALLY EFFECTIVE

What child of God has not experienced disappointment in the matter of prayer? Something was fervently sought, yet it appeared as though, at the best, the answer was much delayed. Of course, Jesus affirmed that there are times when the Lord will “bear long” with us, delaying an answer to our prayers (Lk 18:7). This is done in order that a greater glory may accrue to Himself. In such cases, faith is seen to persevere, holding steadfastly to the Lord, even when circumstance suggests the prayers are in vain.

However, in the matters covered by apostolic prayers, there is no hint of delays. They are areas in which the grace of God is especially effective, and thus, it is to be expected that prayers concerning them will be

answered. God's grace is tailored, so to speak, for such things. When you pray within the context of God's purpose, you are far beyond the perimeter of mere possibility. God has committed Himself to His purpose, and will not abandon it. The more our prayers are in accord with that purpose, the more apt they are to be granted. John put it this way, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

How much confidence do you have when you pray? You will find that your confidence will be directly proportionate to your focus on the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom 12:1-2).

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Chapter 4

AREAS OF FRUITFULNESS

The areas mentioned in this text are all those in which fruit can be realized. They deal with things for which Divine power is intentionally adapted. Those who bear fruit in these areas will be more apt to be effective in all that they do.

AREAS OF PROPER PREPARATION

The areas covered by apostolic prayers, particularly those of Paul, also tend to prepare us for the world to come. Growth in these matters will enable us to stand confidently before the Lord in the day of judgment. They will produce a hearty anticipation of dwelling forever in the house

of the Lord. It is sad, yet true, that many prayers that are offered to God, were they answered, would not yield such results.

RARELY ARE APOSTOLIC PRAYERS CORRECTIVE

If you will study the prayers of the apostles for the churches, you will find they are rarely, if ever, corrective. I have provided twenty-four examples of such prayers. The nature of them is very apparent. Generally speaking, the apostles would deal with needed correction through doctrine, not through prayer.

GENERALLY PROMPTED BY GOOD REPORTS

A good report concerning those who were in Christ Jesus often prompted apostolic prayers of thanksgiving (Eph 1:15–16; Col 1:9; Phile 1:5).

REVEAL THE OBJECTIVE OF PROPER PREACHING

The focus of inspired prayer should also be the focus of sound preaching. There is a sense in which prayer and preaching should be harmonious – I say harmonious, not identical. One can only imagine what marvelous effects would come from preaching that was in full accord with the subjects of apostolic prayers.

1. A spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. (Eph 1:17)
2. Knowing why God has called us. (Eph 1:18a)
3. Knowing we are God's inheritance. (Eph 1:18b)
4. Comprehending the Divine power that is toward us. (Eph 1:19)
5. Strength in the inner man. (Eph 3:16)
6. Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. (Eph 3:17)
7. Comprehending the magnitude of salvation. (Eph 18-19)
8. That love would abound in all knowledge and judgment. (Phil 1:9)
9. Approving things that are excellent. (Phil 1:10a)
10. Being ready for the day of Christ. (Phil 1:10b)
11. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness. (Phil 1:11)
12. Being filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. (Col 1:9)

13. Walking worthy of the Lord. (Col 1:10a)
14. Being fruitful in every good work. (Col 1:10b)
15. Increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col 1:10c)
16. Strengthened with all might. (Col 1:11a)
17. All patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. (Col 1:11b)
18. Perfect and complete in all the will of God. (Col 4:12) – a prayer of Ephaphras
19. Being sanctified wholly – spirit, soul, and body. (1 Thess 5:23)
20. Being worthy of God’s calling. (2 Thess 1:11a)
21. God fulfilling all the good pleasure of His will in us and the work of faith with power. (2 Thess 1:11b)
22. The name of Jesus being glorified through us. (2 Thess 1:12)
23. The communication of our faith being effective. (Phile 1:6)
24. God working in us to do His will. (Heb 13:20-21)

It should be apparent that such noble objectives are not perceived in the common preaching of our day. I suggest that there can be no truly good or sound preaching independently of these objectives. Whatever good may appear to result from other doctrinal emphases is only imagined. It is not valid in the eyes of God and will bring Him no glory.

A person cannot be out of sync with the objectives of the Lord and have a proper and profitable ministry. Appropriate and effective ministries are the result of laboring together with God (1 Cor 3:9) and being yoked to the Lord Jesus (Mt 11:29–30). Where there is no fellowship with Jesus in intention, there can be no fellowship with Him in labor. Godly works require God’s presence. This should be apparent to us and will be confirmed in the prayer before us.

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Chapter 5

SINCE THE DAY WE HEARD, #1

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you . . .”

Here is a prayer that rises out of thanksgiving, like a fragrant odor to the Lord. It is stimulated by understanding, and driven along by a fervent love for the people of God. The nature of the Kingdom Comment 1 of God will be revealed in this prayer. Regarding those who have been reconciled to God, the focus is not on mere doing, but upon participation with God Himself. The purpose of godly intentions is not to have God identify with what men are doing, but to have men identified with what God is doing. This is fundamental to all valid working.

FOR THIS CAUSE

“For this cause . . .” The “cause” to which Paul refers is the report of the Colossians’ “love in the Spirit.” Their “love in the Spirit” was not an end of itself, but was the means to an end. It qualified them, so to speak, for real involvement with God and His purpose.

Divine Objectives

It must always be remembered that the blessing of man is not the ultimate purpose of God. Listening to the various religious emphases of men, however, one would think this was the case. Various religious thrusts ranging from soul winning and congregational expansion to acceptable interpersonal relationships and trouble-free living, are regularly bartered in the religious marketplace. Every honest soul is suspicious that such things are not true, for they do not match well with human experience. When a person begins to walk in the Spirit and live by faith, it is not unusual to find one’s foes being “those of his own house” (Matt 10:36). It may even be possible for such a soul to

experience “often infirmities” like Timothy (1 Tim 5:23) or even be a “beggar full of sores” like Lazarus (Lk 16:20).

In instances like those just mentioned, persons who have embraced a subjective, or self-centered, religion are prone to think the Lord has abandoned them, or that they are surely wretched above all people. Such poor souls are the victims of a distorted theology. They are candidates for prayers such as the one in our text. Thanksgiving is to be made for all who are living by faith and possess “love in the Spirit,” regardless of the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Note carefully, Paul is not being motivated to pray for the Colossians because of their adverse circumstances, but because of their “love in the Spirit.” That is the condition that prompted this particular prayer.

However, let there be no doubt concerning the propriety and necessity of praying for those who are experiencing adversity! We are, for example, to “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body” (Heb 13:3). When our brethren are subjected to the abuse of the ungodly, we are to pray God will deliver them “from unreasonable and wicked men” (2 Thess 3:2).

A HIGHER LEVEL

This prayer is at a higher level, calling for the personal perfection of the saints in order that they might see more of, and participate more with, the God who bought them through Jesus’s blood. The people of God must comprehend that there is more to be possessed, more to be known of God and His purpose, and more to do to the glory of God. The posture of the believer is ever forward – seeking to apprehend that for which he has been apprehended (Phil 3:12).

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Chapter 6

SINCE THE DAY WE HEARD IT, #2

“ . . . we also, since the day we heard it . . . ”

The condition and progress of the Colossian brethren was so significant that it had induced a godly response in Paul and Timothy from the very first: “since the day we heard it.”

The awareness of their condition was not the result of, what I will call, “church reasoning.” That is, because they had “accepted the Lord,” their faith and love of the brethren was assumed. The faithful report of Epaphras confirmed fruit, not mere human decision. It revealed the working of God, not only in turning to God, but going on to perfection.

FOCUSED PRAYER

It was so apparent these people had been singularly blessed that Paul immediately sought the Lord concerning them. The focus of his prayers was not their correction, but their continuance and advance in the Spirit—i.e., their “perfection” (Heb 6:1). There is a vast repository of Divine goodness that becomes available to all who are in Christ Jesus. All saints have access to this rich treasury, but all are not as aware of it as they could be. Between the child of God and the wealth grace brings, there are battles, enemies, trials, and all manner of distractions. Our “adversary the devil” stalks about “as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” and no saint is exempt from his attacks. That condition requires spiritual maturity and growth in “grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pt 3:18).

Institutionalized Christianity has hidden these things to casual disciples (if, indeed, there be such a thing). That is why this prayer is not heard in

most churches or included in most of the religious writing that is popular these days. This is all the more reason why we must give heed to this prayer. It will reveal to us the real nature of spiritual life, together with its involvements.

DO NOT CEASE TO PRAY

“ . . . do not cease to pray for you.”

The continuance of Paul’s prayers was not owing to a declining condition among the Colossian brethren. He was not praying because they were guilty of particular sins – like those in Corinth and Galatia. Rather, it was because their singular devotion to Christ and unfeigned love of the brethren had been duly noted by “the prince of the power of the air.” They were in the midst of a battle of gargantuan proportions. A few words on this matter will confirm this was the case.

SATAN’S ACTIVITY

Satan is solidly aligned against all who are in Christ Jesus. He is depicted as a fierce and determined adversary. Having been expelled from the courts of heaven, he has come down to earth “having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rv 12:12). The anger of the devil is focused on the people of God. With cunning wit and intention, he “makes war” with those “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus” (Rv 12:17). Those are the only people who pose any threat to his burgeoning empire. Satan’s aggression requires prayer for the saints. The aim is to forestall a falling from the faith.

Although the ultimate outcome of this war has been determined, those who will actually participate in the victory are being determined in the heat of the battle. Their victory is not automatic. It requires both their own activity and the help of the other members of the body. This is the manner of spiritual life. It is how God has arranged the “good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12), in order that He might receive proper glory and honor.

PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

The life of faith also involves grappling with a high order of spiritual foes. Whether the saints are aware of it or not, they are striving against forces that are vastly superior to the most advanced form of human intellect and power. They are described in the sixth chapter of Ephesians. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12).

The only way to survive this conflict is to put on “the whole armor of God.” Protection of every part of our being, from head to foot, is necessary. We must be versatile in handling both sword and shield, else we will be overcome (Eph 6:10–18). This circumstance requires our prayers for one another. In fact, that is part of our armor: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Eph 6:18).

ALL THAT IS IN THE WORLD

We are being saved in the very midst of the enemy’s camp—in a hostile realm populated with all manner of adversaries. It is true that we also occupy the “heavenly places,” where we have been placed by God Himself (Eph 2:6). That holy domain, however, is for our spirits. Our bodies are not there. They are in the world. We not only live with a consciousness of, and certain involvements with, the heavenly places, but we do so in the world as well. This constitutes a certain liability.

It is written, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 Jn 2:15–17).

The Spirit tells us of the present condition of things, their liabilities, and the sure outcome of it all. If the world did not have a strong drawing

power, we would not be told to refrain from loving it (1 John 2:15). It pulls at our souls, warring against it (1 Pet 2:11) with desires for fleshly gratification (lust of the flesh), covetousness (lust of the eye), and the vanity of worldly recognition (pride of life). For this reason, prayer must be made the saints of God, and it must be made fervently.

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Chapter 7

THE DESIRE

“ . . . and to desire . . . ” Other versions read “and to ask” (NKJV/NASB), “asking God” (NIV), “asking” (NRSV), “make request for you”(ASV), and “to beg” (DOUAY).

WHAT IS DESIRE

The word “desire” comes from the Greek word ai-tos-men-oi, which means “to ask, beg, call for, crave, desire, and require” (STRONG’S). It is an especially strong word, carrying the idea of “demanding.” This precise form of the word is used three other places.

1. When the Jews demanded that Jesus be crucified (Lk 23:23). In this text, the word is translated “requiring.”
2. When the Jews sought to have Paul made accessible to them so that they might kill him (Acts 25:3 and Acts 25:15). In these cases, the word is translated “desired” and “desiring.”

Other forms of the word include giving “to him that ASKETH of thee”

(Matt 5:42) and being ready “always to give an answer to every man that ASKETH you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Pt 3:15). The word is also used when describing the narrative between the mother of James and John and the Lord Jesus. It is said that she worshiped Jesus, “DESIRING a certain thing of Him” (Matt 20:20).

As you can see, the word “desire” does not speak of a mere wish—something Paul would like to see happen among the Colossians. This speaks of strong desire that is articulated to God Himself. It is something that is requested with zeal and fervently expected from the Lord of glory.

What is more, this is not something that is prayed with uncertainty about how it will be honored by God—like making your request known to Him (Phil 4:6). This petition is based upon an awareness of both the circumstances and the purposes of God. It is driven by faith, fueled by hope, and sanctified by an unfeigned love for the brethren.

I fear that many professing believers have never come to a point where such desires can be expressed through them. They live too close to the world and are blissfully unaware of the real circumstances that face the saints of the Most High God. This shrinks both the size and content of their prayers and makes their answer highly unlikely. A nonchalant professing Christian simply cannot pray like this.

The prayer that follows is the “desire” Paul mentions. It is how he phrased his request to God and is therefore very instructive. The man who prayed this had “obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful” or who had been “made trustworthy” (NKJV) by God’s mercy (1 Cor 7:25). It reflects the way a man who lives close to God prays for the people of God.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk

worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 8

THE ROLE OF DESIRE

This kind of desire—an expectation expressed to the Lord—is a key ingredient of spiritual life. It includes both personal desires and sanctified wants for our brothers and sisters. This is a strong and compelling quest for God’s blessing—blessing that is integral to His great salvation. John said it this way: “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we DESIRED of Him” (1 John 5:14-15).

From the personal perspective, David spoke of his focused desire in this way. “One thing have I DESIRED of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple” (Ps 27:4). Let me once again emphasize that this is not a silent desire kept within the heart. Rather, it is a desire that erupts from the mouth in supplication and prayer.

THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART

Through the Psalmist, the Lord said, “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the DESIRES of thine heart” (Ps 37:4). These desires are not limited to personal wants. They also include desires for the people of God—like the ones expressed in this prayer. Paul also spoke of his “heart’s desire that Israel be saved” (Rom 10:1). He desired that the Ephesian brethren “faint not at his tribulations for them” (Eph 3:13). He desired that fruit might abound to the Philippian’s account (Phil 4:17). The writer of Hebrews expressed his desire “that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (Heb 6:11).

Paul admonished the Corinthians to “desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy” (1 Cor 14:1). He had an earnest personal desire to be clothed with his resurrection body (2 Cor 5:2). Paul wrote to the Galatian churches about their misplaced desires (Gal 4:9,21). Paul had a “great desire” to be with the brethren at Rome (Rom 15:23). He confessed he had a “desire to depart and be with Christ” (Phil 1:23). The saints of old are said to have “desired a better country, that is an heavenly” (Heb 11:10). Peter admonished believers to “desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet 2:2).

I am persuaded that the church of our time is too weak in its desires. For those who do have desires, they are often misplaced, as they focus more upon life in this world. Their desires Godward are not strong enough, and they do not appear to be consistent.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THIS PRAYER

A brief word concerning the magnitude of this prayer is in order. This is not a “help them to be good neighbors” prayer. It rises higher than mere earthly relationships. In fact, God-honoring interpersonal relationships can only take place when this kind of prayer is answered. Notice the language: “filled with . . . all wisdom and spiritual understanding . . . walk worthy of the Lord . . . all pleasing . . . fruitful in every good work . . . strengthened with all might . . . His glorious power . . . all patience and longsuffering.”

In this prayer, we are standing on holy ground and aspiring to lofty heights. Such a prayer cannot even be uttered in the flesh. It is too majestic to be contained in a carnal mind. This is the expression of the “new man,” not the “old man.” It comes from a heart that has been ravished with the love of God. This is the prayer of a spiritually informed and understanding child of God. That makes it of the highest relevance.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray

for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 9

FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL

“ . . . that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will . . . ”

YE

Here is a prayer for the corporate assembly—male and female, bond and free, old and young, et al. [Comment 2](#) This is not a prayer for the leaders alone. It is not a particular prayer for the elders and deacons or those serving in some kind of official capacity. It is for the entire church—all of the saints in Colossae.

The prayer that follows is the standard for all who are in Christ Jesus. There are some “desires” that are appropriate for certain groups believers. For example:

- 1, Elders are to “feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensembles to the flock” (1 Pt 5:2–3).
2. “Young men” are to be “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tm 4:12), and “be sober minded. In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Ti 2:6–8).
3. Young married women are to “be sober, to love their husbands, to

love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Ti 2:4–5).

4. A widow is “at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39).

5. Servants or slaves are to “be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph 6:5–7) .

6. Masters are to “give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven” (Col 4:1).

These various roles, however, are not at the heart of the Kingdom of God. They all represent temporary relationships that are confined to this world. For that reason, they cannot become the core of sound doctrine. Rather, they are relations and duties that properly adorn the doctrine.

Further, no special apostles or Prophets were assigned to these groups. There are no special spiritual gifts that are being administered for these groups. The trend of specialists for these and other divisions of humanity are all of man’s making.

There is no question that these lower relationships are to be addressed by the church as required. However, after all is said and done, these were not the subject of Paul’s prayer. They were not at the heart of the Gospel he preached. Having said that, you may be sure that the prayer before us indirectly addresses every lower relationship of believers.

Those who do not seek the matters addressed in this prayer will be forced to resort to methods and humanly devised techniques to address interpersonal relationships. It is most unfortunate that this is the general approach of the contemporary church. The results of such efforts speak

for themselves. The larger congregations of our land have more assistant staff members than Jesus had apostles!

Here is a word that is addressed to everyone in the congregation: men and women, old and young, teachers and learners, bond and free. It is for the troubled and distressed, and the happy and knowledgeably blessed. All are included, and none are excluded.

WHY MAKE THIS POINT?

There is a reason for making this point. We are living in a religious culture that has established a new set of objectives for the church. They call for a professional clergy and specially trained religious experts, neither of which are identified in the Word of God. The work of these professionals is close to the world and can hardly be distinguished from crafts that are driven by the wisdom of this world. This new religious culture has contributed to even further divisions in the body of Christ.

This text recognizes no walls between believers. Paul will pray for things that all believers need. Those who are proficient in these areas will not be deficient in any needful facet of life.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 10

BEING FILLED

“ . . . that ye might be filled . . . ” The word “filled” means to make replete, to cram full, and level up: to fill to the full and cause to abound. (STRONG’S)

First, this indicates that we have remarkable capacities—capacities that need to be filled from heaven. This particularly has to do with the capabilities created when we are born again. Apart from Christ, men become “filled with all unrighteousness” (Rom 1:29a). The mouth can become “full of cursing” (Rom 3:14), and the heart “full of envy, debate, deceit, and malignity” (Rom 1:29b). The unsanctified tongue is “full of poison” (James 3:8). Peter spoke of some religious leaders whose eyes were “full of adultery” (2 Pt 2:14). The extent of man’s capacity for evil cannot be measured. It is like a bottomless pit.

However, in Christ, men are made new and given the capacity to be filled with good things from God. That is why there are frequent references to large measures of Divine benefits. In Christ, we are “enlarged” (Ps 119:32; 2 Cor 6:11,13)—enabled to receive much from God. This is part of becoming “a new creature” (2 Cor 5:17).

God is glorified when the capacities He has given are filled to the brim with His blessings. This is the aim of all valid ministries—to bring the people to the point where they are “filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:19). I have long lamented the minuscule spiritual appetite that is promoted by Western Christianity. Not only is it wrong, but it also contradicts the whole nature and intent of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In my opinion, it is highly unlikely that God will even work in such an environment. I understand this cannot be received by many people. However, the fruits that stunted spiritual appetites have yielded appear to justify such a conclusion.

Here are some of the things with which believers can be filled:

1. Goodness (Rom 15:14a).
2. Knowledge (Rom 15:14b).
3. Comfort (2 Cor 7:4).
4. All the fulness of God (Eph 3:19).

5. With the Spirit (Eph 5:19).
6. The fruits of righteousness (Phil 1:11).
7. The knowledge God's will (Col 1:9).
8. Joy (2 Tm 1:4).

There is also such a thing as the “FULL assurance of understanding” (Col 2:2), “the FULL assurance of hope” (Heb 6:11), and “the FULL assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22). Jesus spoke of being “FULL of light” (Mt 6:22).

There is a remarkable satisfaction in our day with elementary introductions to spiritual things. One could hardly associate the average church fare with any form of filling. At best, people are growing accustomed to a smattering of Divine provision.

We must rid ourselves of any tendency to associate the things of God with sparse measures. There should be a growing discontent with a “little” from God, and a growing appetite for an abundance from Him. In my judgment, spiritual growth cannot be realized without this “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Mt 5:6). Only those with a “hunger and thirst for righteousness” will be “filled.”

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL

“ . . . with the knowledge of His will . . .” Most versions read the same: “the knowledge of His will.” The few exceptions are “the knowledge of His purpose” (BBE), “a complete understanding of what He wants to do in your lives” (NLT), and “learn more and more how God works” (THE MESSAGE).

What does Paul mean by the words “His will”? Is this will centered in the individual believers—i.e., “the will of God for your life”? Is he speaking of a special and tailored plan the Lord has for your life—including your marriage, family, vocation, place of employment, and place of residence? Is this will subjective—having to do primarily with you? Or is it objective, having to do primarily with God Himself? Are you personally the aim of God’s will? Or is the intention for you to become involved in the Divine will that is larger than yourself?

THE KNOWLEDGE

This is not intellectual knowledge—like knowing mathematical tables or the facts of history. Technically, this is “precise or correct knowledge” (STRONG’S). This is speaking of discernment, perception, and understanding. It is a knowledge that brings a fellowship with God. That fellowship is realized in the apprehension of God’s will. This is a perception that enables the proper use of what is known as well as the facts involved in it. This is a knowledge that is precise and accurate. It makes no allowance for opinion or private views.

There is a phenomenal amount of inaccurate knowledge in the professed church. There are major denominational divisions over how people understand the Word of God. Subjects like the church, the coming of Christ, the death of Christ, and the new birth have actually become the causes of division. Someone does not have the knowledge mentioned in this text. They have an imperfect knowledge. They do not have discernment or perception. However acceptable this may seem, it is altogether at variance with the very nature of the Kingdom of God. The blessings of the Lord cannot be realized through imperfect knowledge!

At some point, those with a clear view of the things of God must pray for the saints to be “filled” with the kind of “knowledge” that glorifies God and transforms saints. This is involved in the renewing of the mind (Rom 12:2).

This is the kind of knowledge that includes perception, discernment, and understanding. It enables the one possessing it to handle the truth of God “aright” (2 Tim. 2:15) and realize its benefits—i.e., “ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:32).

HIS WILL

Here is the matter to be known: “His will.” God’s “will” is His purpose, determination, choice, and good pleasure. It is anchored in eternity and is therefore called God’s “eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11).

This is a “will” that centers in redemption as wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me” (Jn 4:34). Again He affirmed, “For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (Jn 6:38). Once more Jesus said, “I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me” (Jn 5:30).

Paul spoke of this will in the following way:

1. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph 1:5).
-
2. Again, showing the scope of this magnificent will, Paul wrote: “Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph 1:9–11).

3. “Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Gal 1:4–5).

This is “the will of God” concerning which Paul is praying. It includes what God is doing in the individual saints—but that is not its focus. The will of God is transcendent to men, even though they realize their ultimate benefit within that will. “His will” has primarily to do with what God is doing through Christ Jesus, who is the One who came to “DO” His will (Heb 10:9). It involves humanity, but is much larger than that. It touches upon every individual believer, but extends far beyond them.

God did not call us to participate in a salvation that centers in ourselves, our needs, our pleasures, and our welfare. In Christ, we become beneficiaries, but we are not at the heart of things.

There is a core “will of the Lord” that must be understood. It moves one away from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. This is precisely why Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mt 6:33). He did not say, “Seek ye first your personal well being, the resolution of your difficulties, and security and happiness in this world!” Yet much professed Christian activity actually holds these matters out as being preeminent.

The “knowledge” of which Paul speaks is the key to all other understanding. It deals with a lofty purpose that brings glory to God from among angelic hosts as well as humanity. Its most precise expression is found in Christ Jesus, and its most thorough declaration is found in the Gospel of Christ. This “will” has more to do with eternity than time, and the world to come than “this present evil world.” This “will” was settled before the world began and will continue after the heavens and earth that now have passed away. This is fundamentally God’s own will, not the will of man.

It is imperative that men be freed from all self-centeredness. Jesus died “for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15). Any other kind of life is simply not acceptable.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 12

ALL WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

“ . . . in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Other versions read “through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (NIV), and “with all wisdom and experience of the Spirit” (BBE).

IN

“ . . . in . . . ” The word “in” speaks of a “fixed position” or the area in which something is realized. For example, “redemption” is said to be “IN Christ” (Rom 3:24). That is, it cannot be realized anywhere else. “In Christ” is the fixed, or determined, position where redemption can be experienced.

The Spirit will now establish a kingdom technicality. It is critical that we grasp what He is saying. He will lift the “knowledge” of reference out of the academic realm. It will be placed in the context of fellowship with God and Christ—a fellowship into which salvation calls us (1 Cor 1:9; 1 Jn 1:3).

The spiritual qualities that follow are like containers in which “the

knowledge of His will” is carried and made useful. That is, the genuine possession of “the knowledge of His will” is made known, or confirmed, in “all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

This knowledge cannot be possessed or maintained independently of actual involvement in the will of the Lord. No one can possess, or become an able user of, the knowledge of God’s will whose heart is not in the matter. In Christ, there is no such thing as operating, or living, by rote.

ALL WISDOM

“ . . . all wisdom . . .” Notice the use of the superlative “ALL.” Our text is not speaking of some wisdom, a sampling of wisdom, or introductory wisdom.

The word “all” means of every kind, all manner of, whole, and thorough (STRONG’S). It deals more with the scope of wisdom than its individual components. Paul is not praying that the Colossians will become omniscient but that they will be blessed with the vast panorama of wisdom.

“Wisdom” has to do with knowing how to navigate in a certain realm and handle the things of that realm. For example, a wise wood craftsman knows the advantages of certain kinds of wood, how to produce articles from it, and how to use tools that have been made for woodworking. The kind of “wisdom” intended in this text relates immediately to eternal things.

DIFFERENT SPHERES OF WISDOM

There are different spheres of wisdom. Each of them depends upon a certain body of knowledge. The following represent areas that cannot yield a single Kingdom benefit. They are all impotent in things pertaining to life and godliness and have no role whatsoever in the wisdom declared in this text.

1. “Wisdom of words” (1 Cor 1:17). This has to do with cleverness of

speech, whereby men are manipulated by clever, but powerless, words.

2. “Wisdom of the wise” (1 Cor 1:19). These are those who are “wise” by the world’s standards. They are the “wise” the world recognizes and on whom it depends.

4. “Wisdom of this world” (1 Cor 1:20). This “wisdom” is confined to the temporal order. It is based upon the supposition that this world is primary and that the only realities are those attested to by the senses.

5. “Wisdom of men” (1 Cor 2:5). This is wisdom that originates with man and accrues to the glory of man.

6. “Wisdom” that is “earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:15). This is a wisdom that is actually perpetrated by the evil one and promotes his own diabolical agenda.

None of the above use, or depend upon, the Word of God. None are related to the will or purpose of God. The life of God is not found in any of them, and they will all perish when the earth passes away. The base of knowledge that is employed in such wisdom is not eternal and is frequently in obvious opposition to the wisdom of God.

What is more, these forms of wisdom cannot mix or blend with the “wisdom that is from above” (James 3:17). Having said that, a considerable amount of effort is being expended within the professed Christian community to merge these areas of wisdom with the wisdom of our text. All such efforts are vain and actually militate against the purpose of God.

THE WISDOM OF OUR TEXT

The wisdom of our text is related to holy prudence and godly discretion. Elsewhere this is called “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph 1:17). It involves knowing how to bring the truth of God to bear upon living—living that is directed toward the Lord.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 13

A WORD FROM A DEPARTED BROTHER

I want to share a word from a departed brother that touches on this matter. This was written during the late 1800s. It bears on the subject of wisdom and spiritual understanding, and also illustrates the manner in which a godly mind thinks about these matters. This assessment was written over one hundred years ago. One can only imagine what a person such as this would have to say about the educational systems of our day – particularly those found within a religious environment.

“Our educational system is radically defective at this point. As a rule, our colleges, under the auspices of the different religious denominations, are minus the school of the Holy Ghost. They educate the mind, but not the heart, sending out semi-infidels to occupy the pulpits. We have a few holiness colleges, and need a thousand more. These schools, like holiness revivals, recognize the Bible as the only authority, and the great Textbook to which all others are subordinated. We cannot depend on the dualistic system of theology to educate our young people, if we do not want them to graduate like Samson, shorn of his locks, to go out and grind in the mills of Dagon all of their lives. We must have teachers filled with the Holy Ghost. The holiness movement must take our schools into hand, if we would supply the world with able ministers of the New Testament. Instead of spending four years studying heathen authors as I did, and many others are now doing, we should make out our Latin course in the Latin Bible, and our Greek course in the Greek Bible, and likewise with the Hebrew. It is a shame on the escutcheon of

Christianity to educate our young people in the heathen classics. I would rather than a million of dollars today I had spent my four years in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew Bible, instead of the pagan authors. It is high time we would throw off this semi-paganism which we carried out of the Dark Ages. If we are going to save the world, we must have Spirit-filled teachers as well as preachers. We must wake to the fact that the Bible is the only Book, and let all others be merely subsidiary. The secret of the awful apostasy now so fearfully prevailing in the Churches is, that the pulpits are filled with intellectual giants and spiritual babies (in the same person).”

Comment 3 (W. B. GODBEY, 1833-1920 on Colossians 1:9. He spent seventy years in the capacity of a preacher and teacher of the Gospel, passing away at the age of eighty-seven).

Admittedly this kind of reasoning sounds radical. It certainly does not blend well with the view of Christian education that prevails in today’s United States of America. It is not mere coincidence that this man was associated with what is referred to as “the holiness movement.” This movement began in the United States in 1867, soon after the Civil war. It was a sort of extension of the Wesleyan concept of experiential sanctification, as compared to a mere philosophical view of godly separation from the world, and unto God.

While there are many things associated with this movement that are questionable, the fact is that it initially attracted large crowds, in excess of 20,000, who were acutely aware of the necessity of being holy. They were especially cognizant of the danger of attempting to blend worldly wisdom with “the wisdom that is from above” (James 3:17). During that time, there was a more keen awareness of, and interest in, the Scriptures themselves – as compared to various views of the Scriptures. Valid knowledge was perceived as being erected on the foundation of revelation, and the fundamental literature was the Bible. There was also a perception that an unholy person would not be given Divine wisdom, which required that the one receiving it should himself be sanctified to the Lord, and living in a clean vessel.

I share these things to stress that known advances in the Lord have always been attended with a consciousness of the need for wisdom and understanding being given to men by God. While academic approaches are not sinful of themselves, they do not hold the secret to the “wisdom and spiritual understanding” of our text.

As long as Bible Colleges and Seminaries produce laborers that only have a smattering of Scriptural knowledge, with an overload of the wisdom of this world, the present falling away will only grow worse. There are a number of godly people who are longing and praying for an awakening that will see the Scriptures as the preeminent literature, and the only source of factual and eternally beneficial knowledge. This kind of awareness also sees the Lord Jesus Christ as the theme of Scripture, the only means of access to God, and the solitary Person through whom we come to God. It also postulates the centrality of preaching and teaching.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 14

“ALL WISDOM”

“All wisdom” involves knowing how to “walk and to please God” (1 Thess 4:1). It is founded upon the Word of God and operates within the framework of the revealed will of God. It relates immediately with eternal things—things that will remain after everything that “can be shaken” has been shaken out of existence (Heb 12:27). This is a wisdom that has more to do with man’s “spirit” than his “soul” or his “body” (1

Thess 5:23). It is a wisdom that enables those possessing it to bring all things into subordination to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This wisdom makes sin unreasonable and righteousness reasonable. It moves one to prefer eternal things to temporal things. The person possessing such wisdom not only knows the truth, but is able to use it like a wise spiritual craftsman. It sensitizes the ear to hear Him who is speaking from heaven (Heb 12:25) and the heart to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:16).

ALL SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

The word “spiritual” means “pertaining to the spirit” (BARCLAY-NEWMAN). The word applies to both the wisdom and understanding mentioned in this text. It is the opposite of “worldly” or “carnal.” More particularly, “spiritual” refers to things relating to, and coming from, the Holy Spirit. These are realities that exhibit Divine qualities and bear the mark of Divine character (THAYER).

“Spiritual understanding,” therefore, is understanding that is acquired through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. John referred to this kind of understanding when he wrote, “But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as It hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him” (1 Jn 2:27).

The purpose of such an understanding is not to produce dignity among men, but to enable one to “abide” in Christ. To be “filled” with such an understanding results in a close and productive affinity with the Son of God. That will, of course, impact upon the entire manner of life.

There is a certain intelligence related to this understanding. It is a higher form of intelligence—a perception of, and acquaintance with, the things of God that erupts in godly usefulness. This is what produces spiritual maturity: “but in understanding, be men” (1 Cor 14:20). It is when the understanding is “enlightened” and the things of God are more clearly seen or discerned (Eph 1:18). Elsewhere, Paul spoke of “understanding

what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17) and “the full assurance of understanding” (Col 2:2).

Where there is “spiritual understanding,” there is maturity and stability. The Lord Himself is known, and there is an acquaintance with both His purpose and His ways. The Word of God is more fully comprehended, and a delight is found in Him.

If these two qualities—“wisdom and spiritual understanding”—were possessed by all professing believers, religious counselors would be put out of business. Most of them, together with sundry specialized ministries, thrive on the spiritual ignorance, juvenility, and immaturity of church people. This is what Scripture refers to as making “merchandise” of the people (2 Pet 2:3), and trafficking in “the souls of men” (Rev 18:13).

The answer to this prayer brings the resolution to many difficulties – difficulties that men tend to exploit for personal profit. By way of comparison, the salvation of God provides a permanent solution for the maladies of humanity. If it does not altogether remove them, it so empowers the child of God so they can live with a “thorn” without being unduly distracted by it.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 15

WALKING WORTHY OF THE LORD

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord . . .” Other versions read “that you may walk worthy of the Lord” (NKJV), “that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (NASB), and “that you may live a life worthy of the Lord” (NIV).

There is a reason why Paul prayed the Colossians would be “filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” The filling itself was not the point, but what would result from it. There was a holy objective that was targeted, and the Divinely appointed means to its realization was being “filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” What follows cannot be achieved without the filling. Conversely, it cannot fail of fulfillment if the filling is present.

THAT THEY MIGHT

“That ye might . . .” Paul prayed the Colossians—all of them—would be “filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding” in order that they might . . . Other versions read “so that you may,” (NASB), “we pray this in order that you may,” (NIV), and “and so be able.” (NJB). Mark it well, the intended benefit cannot be realized without the appointed means! You cannot have kingdom effects without kingdom causes!

WALKING WORTHY

“ . . . walk worthy of the Lord . . .” Here is a line of heavenly reasoning that can hardly be found within the professed church—particularly the American church. In fact, it stands in stark contrast to much that flies under the banner of Christendom.

The word “worthy” comes from a word meaning “appropriately, as becomes one, in a manner proper to, after a godly sort, and suitably” (STRONG’S). There is such a thing as living in a manner that contradicts one’s profession of faith. Such lives cause the Word of God to be “blasphemed” (Tit 2:5) and “give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (Tit 2:5). The Spirit also declares such off-centered living causes the name and doctrine of God to be blasphemed (Tit 2:5).

There is certainly a sense in which we are not worthy of what we have in

Christ Jesus. We can confess with Jacob, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant” (Gn 32:10). This, however, is not the usual manner in which the Holy Spirit deals with this subject.

GOD HAS SPOKEN OF WORTHINESS

Whatever may be said about being “not worthy” or “unworthy,” considerable is said about true worthiness. The following are most sobering words and are to be taken seriously by every professed believer.

1. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not WORTHY of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not WORTHY of me” (Mt 10:37–38).
2. “But they which shall be accounted WORTHY to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage” (Lk 20:35).
3. “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted WORTHY to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Lk 21:36).
4. “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted WORTHY to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41).
5. “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk WORTHY of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph 4:1).
6. “That ye would walk WORTHY of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (1 Thess 2:12).
7. “Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted WORTHY of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (2 Thess 1:5).
8. “Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count

you WORTHY of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power” (2 Thess 1:11).

9. “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are WORTHY” (Rv 3:4).

There should be no question about the validity and necessity of walking worthily. Our theology must be purged of any views that do not allow us to speak in this way.

There is an objective that is realized by obtaining “all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” That purpose is not to make us theological experts or to qualify us as scholars in biblical matters. Rather, it is to the end that we may “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” Actually, to be filled with such marvelous perception and comprehension has no other utility. It cannot be used to make an individual famous or to increase their monetary worth. The aim is to enable us to live in a worthy manner before the Lord.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 16

WALKING

“That ye might WALK worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing . . .”

Much is said in the scriptures about walking. When referring to His daily activities, Jesus said, “I must WALK today, and tomorrow, and the day

following” (Lk 13:33). He said those who followed Him would not “WALK in darkness” (Jn 8:12). He affirmed those who “WALK in the day” would not stumble, while those who “WALK in the night” would (John 11:9-10). As Jesus approached the time of His death, He said to the people, "Yet a little while is the light with you. WALK while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that WALKETH in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12:35),

God told Abraham, “I am the Almighty God; WALK before me, and be thou perfect.” (Gen 17:1). The Lord told Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will WALK in my law, or no.” (Ex 16:4). Moses told Israel, “Ye shall WALK in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess” (Deut 5:33). The Psalmist wrote, “Blessed is the man that WALKETH not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psa 1:1). And again the Psalmist wrote, "For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may WALK before God in the light of the living?" (Psa 56:13). Paul wrote of those who “should WALK in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). He said there “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who WALK not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8:1). He admonished, “Let us WALK honestly” (Rom 13:13), and confessed, “we WALK by faith, and not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). He reminded the Galatians, "This I say then, WALK in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16), and “If we live in the Spirit, let us also WALK in the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). Believers are exhorted to “WALK in love” (Eph 5:2), “WALK as children of light” (Eph 5:8), “WALK in wisdom” (Col 4:5) “WALK honestly” (1 Thess 4:12), and to “WALK even as He [Jesus] walked” (1 John 2:6). This is, then, a fundamental Kingdom concept – walking.

Life is like walking—there is progress toward a preferred destination. It

is like walking because there is effort and activity, and it takes place in measures, like a step at a time. Life is also like a walk because it is deliberate and marked by intention. Only the living walk. Walking is not for dead men.

Walking “worthy of the Lord” is walking “IN newness of life” (Rom 6:4). It is taking advantage of the salvation of God in your life—living in an awareness of the Lord and His blessing. To walk “worthy of the Lord” is to walk “after the Spirit” and not “after the flesh” (Rom 8:1,4). It is to “walk honestly” and not in sinful indulgence (Rom 13:13).

Walking “worthy of the Lord” is living “by faith, and not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). It is to be governed by the perception of the Lord and not the vision of this world. This is walking, or living “in the Spirit,” and thus not fulfilling “the lust of the flesh” (Gal 5:16).

THE PRACTICALITY OF THIS WORD

There is an unusual degree of practicality in this word. If it is true that being filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding is to the intent of enabling us to walk worthy of the Lord, then we must conclude the following. Where a life worthy of the Lord is not eagerly sought, this wisdom and understanding will not be granted. There is no way to avoid this circumstance.

To put it another way, if a professing Christian is not seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, such a one is confined to the realm of spiritual ignorance. Such will not be able to discern the purpose of God, nor truly profit from His Word. This is the manner of the Kingdom, and it helps us to understand the deplorable condition of many people who wear the name of Jesus. Unless they are recovered from that state, there is no hope for them. Many people have a difficult time understanding the things of God because they are not walking, or living, with a proper focus.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray

for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 17

UNTO ALL PLEASING

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing . . .” Other versions read “fully pleasing” (NKJV), “to please Him in all respects” (NASB), “please Him in every way” (NIV), “unto all well-pleasing” (DARBY), and “always honor and please the Lord” (NLT).

UNTO

“ . . . unto . . .” This is the objective of the walk—of the godly life. “Unto” is the direction toward which worthiness is pointed.

ALL PLEASING

“ . . . all pleasing . . .” No one is “worthy of the Lord” who is not pleasing to Him! Nor, indeed, does God ever represent Himself as bestowing benefits upon, or reserving eternal rewards for, those who are not pleasing to Him. Further, our text does not say “unto pleasing,” leaving the matter open to human interpretations. The Spirit says “ALL pleasing,” or pleasing in all things, and in every way. When it comes to our living and its relation to God, it is all or nothing!

This is a life that abandons all opinions of men as a foundation and rejects the “carnal mind,” refusing to allow it to dominate the affection and will. “All pleasing” has to do with the conclusion, or outcome of life and how it is lived.

If I read this text with the nominal church in mind, it will appear to be speaking of an advanced stage of spirituality—one that is attained by

very few. However, keep in mind the ones for whom this prayer is made. It is not for the leaders of the Colossian assembly. It is for all of them—male and female, young and old, servants and masters! This is, in fact, the standard of conduct for the child of God. Those who live in any other way are in imminent danger!

The state of “all pleasing” is described in these words: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col 3:17). And again, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Col 3:23). And again, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).

This is not speaking of a desire alone, but of a life that is being lived out for the glory of God—a life that is a thank offering to the Lord. Such a life cannot be lived independently of Divine involvement. The Lord is the One who “fills” us with “all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” which are essential to living a life that pleases Him.

AN OBSERVATION

We are living in spiritually superficial times. In the present religious climate, the expression of a desire to please the Lord is equated with actually pleasing Him. Even though such a desire is noble, if the pleasing life is not lived, the desire counts for nothing. It is far easier to say one wants to please the Lord than to actually set out to do so.

NOT IN TALK

The Kingdom of God is not in talk, but in power. As it is written, “For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1 Cor 4:20). Other versions read “For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power” (NASB), and “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” (NIV).

This prayer is a plea for the power to be given to God’s people. It is intended to bring the people of God into a life with which the Lord is well pleased. Each believer must be serious enough about their

relationship to God to examine their life with a critical eye. If they are honest, they will find a need for the power revealed in this prayer.

In the meantime, let us have done with imagining that people who lack the wisdom and spiritual understanding of this text can “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” If such a thing was possible, there would be no need for a prayer like this one.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 18

FRUITFUL IN EVERY GOOD WORK

“ . . . being fruitful in every good work . . . ” Other versions read “bearing fruit in every good work” (NASB), and “AS you bear fruit in every good work” (NRSV).

The “good work” itself is not the point, but what comes from it—its “fruit.” Ordinarily, one might suppose “good works” themselves to be fruit. Here, however, they are a means to fruitage—something God uses to produce a glorifying yield.

BEING FRUITFUL

The work itself is not what is fruitful, but the one engaging in the work. The Kingdom of God involves a network of various fruits. For example, the Gospel produced fruit in the Colossians, as it did “in all the world” (1:6). Now, the Colossians are called into the matter of bearing fruit, being themselves productive.

Because of a proneness to forget this, I must again remind you that this is a prayer for all the saints—not a select few. Fruit bearing is a family matter, with every member of Christ’s household being involved. Jesus affirmed that the one abiding, or remaining, in Him would “bring forth much fruit” (Jn 15:5). That is the manner of the kingdom. It is the nature of true spiritual life.

Wherever the Holy Spirit is not quenched or grieved, He produces a rich bounty for the glory of God—“the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22–23). This not what the Spirit might do, or is capable of doing, but what He actually does. Our text is showing the appointed means through which this fruitage is produced. It comes by being “filled with the knowledge of” God’s will—something that results in “all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” In turn, that marvelous comprehension produces a life that is “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” The result of that pleasing life is fruitfulness “in every good work.”

Being “fruitful” is multidimensional. There is an inner fruit that enhances human character: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal 5:22–23). There is “fruit” brought forth to God Himself (Rom 7:4), which includes thanksgiving (Heb 13:15), a holy life (Rom 6:22) or righteousness (Heb 12:11), and converts (Rom 1:13).

IN EVERY GOOD WORK

This is a statement of the greatest magnitude, challenging both heart and mind: “fruitful in EVERY GOOD WORK.”

THE OPPOSITE OF LABORING IN VAIN

This is the opposite of labor being “in vain,” something Paul zealously sought to avoid. He stated his concern for the Galatians in these words: “I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain” (Gal 4:11). Again, he wrote to the Philippians, “Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain” (Phil 2:16). He also wrote to the Thessalonians, “For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not

in vain” (1 Thess 2:1). Again he wrote, “For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain” (1 Thess 3:5).

THE RESULT OF CHRIST’S INDWELLING

Being “fruitful in every good work” is the result of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17). It is actually Jesus that lives in us, producing rich fruitage in all that is done in His name. That is why Paul confessed, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

THE RESULT OF GOD’S WORKING

Being “fruitful in every good work” is also the result of God’s own working: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). Those who are filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding are brought to a point where they are made “perfect in every good work to do His will, [God] working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb 13:21)

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 19

A COMPARISON WITH ISRAEL

Being “fruitful in every good work” is the result of a life that favorably corresponds to the labor God has expended upon us—for we are “His

workmanship” (Eph 2:10). A person or a generation in whom God has invested much is expected to produce much to the glory of God. Where such results are not found ignorance, unbelief, rebellion, and hard-heartedness are present. The one who believes the Scriptures trembles at the thought of being found fruitless before the God of all.

By way of comparison, ponder Israel. Their lives did not yield an appropriate harvest to the Lord. When they corrupted themselves, Moses chided them: “Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee, and established thee?” (Deut 32:6). They were not “fruitful in every good work.” God Himself said of them: “Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?” (Jer 2:21). They were not “fruitful in every good work.”

Through Isaiah, the Lord lamented: “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Is 5:4). They were not “fruitful in every good work.”

THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL

Ponder how God’s initial work with Israel is described. "Now will I sing to my Wellbeloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard. My Wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes" (Isa 5:2). More than adequate provisions were made for Israel to produce much for God. Initial hindrances were removed as their enemies were neutralized. A fence of Divine protection was placed around them so they could develop their lives before Him. He gathered the hindering stones out of them, judging and removing such men as Achan, Nadab and Abihu, Korah and his rebels, and those who murmured and complained.

In developing Israel, God used the choicest seed. Their progenitors were men of faith: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. They were given the best teacher in Moses, and the best leader in Joshua. The Lord faithfully sent to them His holy prophets, “rising up early and sending them” in plenty of time for waywardness to be aborted, and correct conduct established (Jer 7:25; 26:5; 29:19; 32:23; 35:15). There were frequent expressions of His tender love in deliverance, miraculous provisions, and seasons of plenty. There were severe chastenings to awaken them from lethargy, and establish to them that they were drifting away from Him.

It is no wonder that the Lord of glory asked, “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isa 5:4). Who is the person who would dare to say God had not done enough for Israel, or given them enough time, or failed to tell them enough? Where was He deficient or untimely in dealing with them. What could He possibly have done better? The Israelites were nonplused by the question, just as humanity is to any question God addresses to men – questions like He asked Adam (Gen 3:11), Eve (Gen 3:13), Cain (Gen 4:10), Abraham (Gen 18:14), and others.

And what shall be said to those who “for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Lk 8:13)? What more could the Lord had done for them? Was it not enough that Jesus died and took away their sins (Heb 9:26)? Was there something deficient in the reconciliation they realized (Rom 5:10)? Was there anything lacking in the teaching of grace (Tit 2:11-12)? Was the “whole armor of God” in any way insufficient (Eph 6:10-18)? Was the “new creation” flawed (2 Cor 5:17)? Was God’s “workmanship” in any way defective (Eph 2:10). Was the intercession of Jesus (Heb 7:15) and of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26-27) untimely or in any way incomplete? Was the newness of life weak or ineffective (Rom 6:4). Was the New Covenant lacking in its provisions (Heb 8:10-12). Did the Scriptures come short of their assignment to make “the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work” (2 Tim 3:16)? Did their temptations come without a way of

escape (1 Cor 10:13)? O backslider, tell us why you have drawn back when so much was given to you?

And for those who have held on their way, continuing to fight the good fight of faith, you have done so because of the adequacy of the things provided you in Christ Jesus, and your refusal to let them go. Such people shall not disappoint the One who has invested such a plentitude in them!

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 20

THIS IS NOT A COMMANDMENT

Being “fruitful in every good work” is not a commandment. It must not be approached as though it was spoken from Mount Sinai. Fruit bearing is necessary, but necessities are not always fulfilled by means of a commandment, or by providing a detailed list of personal involvements. Notice how the Holy Spirit approaches the matter of bearing fruit—good fruit. It is not from the standpoint of Divine demand.

1. Good fruit invariably comes from a good tree (Mt 7:17).
2. The quality of a “tree” is known by the fruit it produces (Mt 12:33).
3. When the “good seed” of the kingdom is heard and understood, it does bring forth fruit (Mt 13:23).
4. When the Word of God is kept in an honest and good heart, the individual will “bring forth fruit with patience” (Lk 8:15).

5. The one who abides in Christ, and in whom Christ Himself abides, “bringeth forth much fruit” (Jn 15:5).
6. Being made “free from sin,” we have our “fruit unto holiness” (Rom 6:22).
7. We are “married” to Christ in order to “bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom 7:4).
8. Fruit is the result of the Spirit’s own work (Gal 5:22; Eph 5:9).
9. When the chastening of God is received, it produces the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11).

THE HARMONY OF OUR TEXT

Our text is in complete harmony with these representations of the production of fruit. Being “fruitful in every good work” is traced to walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Walking “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” is the result of being “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Being “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” is a condition resulting from prayer to God—it is the result of God’s own working!

This working, however, does not exclude our own involvement in the process. That is, in fact, why this prayer is being raised to the God of heaven. There will, in reality, be no progress in spiritual life until the people themselves are involved. There is no such thing as an impersonal salvation, where God uses people like a puppet master uses a puppet. The people of God are not like dummies sitting upon the lap of a Divine ventriloquist. They have been “joined to the Lord” and are “one spirit” with Him (1 Cor 6:17). Knowing this, and upon hearing of the faith and “love in the Spirit” of the Colossians, the apostle is praying for the deeper and more productive involvement of the saints. He knows the objective of salvation and the nature of living by faith, and therefore, he

prays in this manner.

THE TIME FOR EXAMINATION

It is time for every child of God to examine themselves. How do they stand in regard to being “filled with the knowledge of” God’s will? To what degree do they possess “all wisdom and spiritual understanding”? Is their life “worthy of the Lord,” and does it fall into the category or “all pleasing”? Are they being “fruitful in every good work”?

An honest appraisal of these things will confirm to your heart that there is still a lot of room for growth. There are heights still to be reached and levels of participation still to be realized. In fact, as long as we are in the body, this condition will remain. We are not in heaven yet, and until we are, there is room for significant advancement in the Lord. While we are traveling the highway raised in the desert, we need much grace.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 21

INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

“ . . . and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Other versions read “growing in the knowledge of God” (NIV) and “learn to know God better and better” (NLT) . Let me again emphasize that this is the manner of the Kingdom.

AND

“ . . . and . . .” This is what is called a coordinating conjunction. That is,

the word “and” links together two things that occur simultaneously. Not only, therefore, does Paul pray the Colossians will be “fruitful in every good work,” but that their fruitfulness will be accompanied by another condition.

INCREASING

“ . . . increasing . . . ” The word “increase” appropriately describes the nature of the Kingdom of God. Increase, or growth, is not only a sign of life in this world, it is also a quality of spiritual life. It is the nature of life from God to increase and to do so in exponential measures.

God Himself “gives increase” (1 Cor 3:6–7). It is not something that occurs occasionally, but is itself an evidence of His hand at work. In matters relating to the body of Christ, the “increase of the body” in spiritual qualities is the aim of every spiritual gift (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19). The Lord causes His people to “increase and abound in love one toward another” (1 Thess 3:12).

This is a different way of thinking, yet it is the standard manner of thought in Christ Jesus. I do not know of a “church growth” plan or organization in existence that does not emphasize numerical growth. In fact, the words “church growth” have come to be synonymous with an increase in attendance or church membership. The modern American church is driven more by a financial budget than the Spirit of God, and is therefore keenly interested in numbers. But such mundane objectives cannot be found in the prayer to which we are now submitted.

Properly seen, “increase” has to do with obtaining more of what salvation brings. It is realizing a greater harvest of what God Himself has planted. Thus believers are urged to “grow in grace” (1 Pet 3:18). Behold now the area in which Paul prays for kingdom increase.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

“ . . . in the knowledge of God.” This is a parallel to Peter’s exhortation, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pt 3:18). It is also what Paul prayed for the Ephesians. “That

the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph 1:17).

Right here we soar beyond the limited confines of institutionalized religion. As of 2011, I have been personally and intimately involved with the work of the Lord for over fifty-seven years. I have been exposed to all manner of local congregations, ranging from small to very large. I have preached to over 200 congregations, and to over 15 different denominations. I can easily count the number of congregations that were increasing in the knowledge of God. In fact, the very terminology is strange and does not fit well with the emphasis of the average church. You will be hard-pressed to find a single person who even will know what you are talking about if you refer to “increasing in the knowledge of God.”

Of all of the Christians I have known, a very small percentage of them give any evidence of increasing in the knowledge of God. Many of them have been speaking about the same things for decades without a single enlargement of their view, or any new or fresh perspective. Their understanding of God, Christ, and salvation appear to be static and motionless. They know absolutely nothing about the day dawning and the “Day Star” rising in their heart (2 Pet 1:19). Expressions like “abound yet more and more” (Phil 1:9; 1 Thess 4:1) and “increase more and more” (1 Thess 4:10) are not even in their vocabulary. This is an abnormal condition and is in sharp variance with the revealed purpose of God. It cannot be justified, and there is no satisfactory explanation for it.

WHAT IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD?

This is not knowledge about God, although the one possessing such knowledge will know much about the Lord. This is an acquaintance with God Himself—an acquaintance that is cultured within the framework of fellowship and faith. It is the circumstance to which Eliaphaz referred (although his understand of it was imperfect) when he said, “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace” (Job 22:21).

RECOGNIZING WHEN HE SPEAKS

When Samuel was young, God spoke to him, but he did not know it was the Lord. The Spirit's explanation for this lack of understanding is this: "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord" (1 Sam 3:7). Eli, on the other hand, was familiar with the Lord. As he thought upon Samuel's experience, "he perceived that the Lord had called the child" (1 Sm 3:8). After Samuel had received a word from the Lord and delivered it to Eli, the aged priest responded "It is the Lord" (1 Sm 3:18). Knowing the Lord, therefore, involves being able to recognize when He is speaking (Heb 12:25). In regards to this reality Jesus said of His people, "they know His voice" (John 10:4). And again, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). It is not possible that this is not a true statement.

A New Covenant example of this kind of recognition is found in the Thessalonian's response to the Gospel. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess 2:13).

KNOWING HIS WAYS

Prior to Christ, few people knew the ways of the Lord—the manner in which He conducted His kingdom. One of the few men who did know His ways was Moses. It is said of him, "He [God] made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel" (Ps 103:7). The Israelites only saw with their eyes what God did. Moses saw WHY He did it. His knowledge of the ways of the Lord is what enabled him to effectively intercede for Israel when God was about to destroy them (Num 14:13–20).

The knowledge of God is a particularly fertile area of human involvement. It is one of the primary pillars of the New Covenant. It is stated in the covenant itself, "They shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest" (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11).

This is not a static or unchanging knowledge – like knowing mathematical tables. It is one that is characterized by growth, advancement, and increase. Divine fellowship is realized to the degree that we know the Lord, are familiar with His ways, and think His thoughts.

It must be remembered that eternal life is knowing the Lord. As Jesus prayed, “As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (Jn 17:2–3). John referred to this relationship in the following words: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:3).
PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 22

INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS NOT SIMPLISTIC

“ . . . and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS NOT SIMPLISTIC

Increasing in the knowledge of God is not a simplistic matter. It requires more than taking a Bible course or becoming more familiar with scriptural texts that speak of God and Christ Themselves. There is difficulty associated with this kind of increase—the kind of difficulty

that requires the involvement of God. That is why Paul is praying as he does. When we pray for something we are doing, or should do, we are calling upon the name of the Lord to grant the power and resources necessary to the task of reference. In the case of this particular prayer, it is not driven by mere friendship with the Colossians, but by a familiarity with the purpose of God. Paul knows what God expects from His people. He knows Divine expectations are not optional. He realizes the nature of the New Covenant, and the involvements of spiritual life. These provide a context in which the words of this prayer are framed.

Paul does not pray that the people may be better husbands and wives, and fathers and mothers. He does not pray that they will do better in making a living, or providing the necessities of life for their families. In this prayer, he does not pray for their health, their wealth, or their prosperity – not in this prayer. It is certainly not that it is wrong to pray for such things. It is wrong, however, for them to be the fundamental matters for which we pray. It simply is not right for temporal matters to be the dominate subject of our prayers. It is not right because they are temporal, and our hearts are set on an eternal destiny, an eternal home – a house not made with hands, and being forever with the Lord. We have been called to an “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Our posture in life involves looking "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:18). Everything else falls to a place of secondary importance.

Even though it may appear as though I am advocating a neglect of these areas, this is not at all the case. They are all best addressed within the context of “greater things” (John 1:50), “more excellent things” (Heb 8:6), and “better things” (Heb 6:9). In the Divine economy, the superior overflows into the inferior, and the primary sanctifies the secondary. “The knowledge of God” has an undeniable impact on the totality of life, and a lack of it does as well. Hence, Paul prays that the people of God might increase in that knowledge – that essential familiarity and acquaintance with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to increase in the knowledge of God, and in accordance with this text, the following must take place.

1. God must fill us with the knowledge of His will: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will . . ." (Col 1:9).
2. That knowledge must result in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: “. . . that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding . . . ”
3. Wisdom and spiritual understanding must result in a walk that is worthy of the Lord: In order "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord . . ." (Col 1:10)
4. The walk that is worthy of the Lord must be pleasing to Him: “unto all pleasing. . .”
5. Fruitfulness in every good work will accompany an increase in the knowledge of God: “. . . being fruitful in every good work, AND increasing in the knowledge of God . . . ”

It is evident that such things cannot be achieved in by natural means, or in the energy of the flesh. That is why Paul labored in prayer concerning the matter and told the Colossians he was doing so. Without the “help” that comes from God, through Christ Jesus, and by the Holy Spirit, these objectives are simply beyond the reach of men.

It is time for the professing church to make their unwavering aim to enjoy such an increase – increase in the knowledge of God. War must be made on the ignorance of God and His ways. The Lord has supplied us with spiritual weaponry that addresses this matter: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, and bringing

into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" (2 Cor 10:4-5)

A certain discontent with a failure to know what God is doing in Christ must be found among all professed believers. In the New Covenant, God IS known (Heb 8:11; John 17:3; 1 John 5:21)!

Tomorrow: "Strengthened With All Might"

PRAYER POINT: Father, in the name of Jesus Christ I thank You for the blessing of knowing You. Grant me grace to excel in this holy familiarity. PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." — Colossians 1:9–11

Devotion 22 of 31

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PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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Chapter 23

STRENGTHENED WITH ALL MIGHT

“ . . . Strengthened with all might . . . ” Other versions read “strengthened with all power” (NASB), “made strong with all the strength” (NRSV), and “in all might being made mighty” (YLT).

STRENGTHENED

To be “strengthened” is to be made strong or enabled – to be made equal to the task set before you. Because we have the treasure of God in “earthen vessels” (2 Cor 4:7), dwelling in “houses of clay” (Jb 4:19), we must be fortified with a strength that is not our own. There is no hope of being filled “with the knowledge of His will,” having “all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” walking “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,” being “fruitful in every good work,” and “increasing in the knowledge of God” if we are not strong! Such requirements supersede all natural abilities. No amount of education can produce such effects or make one able to receive them from God. No amount of personal discipline, regardless how rigorous it may be, can put such noble objectives within our reach. A person with multiple earned PhD degrees needs Divine assistance in these matters just as much as the lowly peasant who lacks such earthly advantages.

Yet these things must be seen as essential. They must be found in the

people of God. There is no promise of good to those who have no knowledge of God's will. An eternal inheritance is not held out to a people who lack wisdom and spiritual understanding. Glory is not promised to those who are not pleasing to God in their walk of life. Jesus makes no commitment to bless those who are not fruitful, nor does He promise to abide with those who are not increasing in the knowledge of God. Search and see if these things are not true!

I do not believe the average American Christian has the faintest notion of the necessity of these things. That is why we hear so few prayers concerning them and perceive so little effort to obtain them. People are being taught to rely on fleshly strength. They trust in scholarship, the studies and accomplishments of others, church identity, and even theological positions. Some rely on their training, their education, their natural ability, or their imagined mental capacity. Professed Christians are seeking "strength" from psychiatrists, counselors, educators, motivators, and the likes. They are going down to Egypt for help, and it is as vain a pursuit for them as it was for Israel (Is 31:1). Formerly, the children of Israel tended to trust in horses and chariots "because they are many" and "horsemen because they are strong" (Is 31:1b). They refused to look "unto the Holy One of Israel," and thus, they failed miserably (Is 31:1c).

In our text, Paul is looking to the Lord to strengthen His people. It is the kind of strength that is required to safely navigate from earth to glory and through time to the portal of eternity. He knew the people needed to be "strengthened."

God is not glorified by a weak and vacillating church that lacks the strength He alone can give. He has commanded His people, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor 16:13). And again, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph 6:10). And again, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tm 2:1).

Again, permit me to emphasize that this is a prayer for the whole church. It is uncomely for any member or group of members of an assembly to be weak, ineffective, and without strength! If you are a man, be strong! If you are a woman, be strong! If you are a young person, be strong! If you are an aged person, be strong! If you are a servant, be strong! If you are a leader, be strong! You do not have a right to be weak. Jesus died for you when you were “without strength” (Rom 5:6), but He did not do so in order that you might remain in that condition!

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 24

ALL MIGHT, #1

Paul does not pray for ordinary strength—or strength as men define it. He prays the saints will be strengthened with “all might.” This is real, not feigned, power. It is sufficient to accomplish what is expected of those who are in Christ Jesus.

“ALL” is a favorite word of the Holy Spirit. It speaks of the plentitude of Divine provisions, with nothing lacking. Thus we read of the following:

1. “ALL joy and peace” (Rom 15:13).
2. “ALL knowledge” (Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 1:5a).
3. “ALL utterance” (1 Cor 1:5b).
4. “ALL comfort” (2 Cor 1:3).

5. "ALL the promises" (2 Cor 1:20).
6. "ALL diligence" (2 Cor 8:7).
7. ALL grace" (2 Cor 9:8; 1 Pt 5:10).
8. "ALL bountifulness" (1 Cor 9:11).
9. "ALL patience" (2 Cor 12:12).
10. "ALL spiritual blessings" (Eph 1:3).
11. "ALL wisdom/prudence" (Eph 1:8).
12. "ALL the fulness of God" (Eph 3:19).
- 13, "ALL lowliness/meekness" (Eph 4:2).
14. "ALL goodness" (Eph 5:9).
15. "ALL prayer/supplication" (Eph 6:17)
16. "ALL boldness" (Phil 1:20).
- 17, "ALL gladness" (Phil 2:29).
18. "ALL your need" (Phil 4:19).
19. "ALL wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col 1:9).
20. "ALL pleasing" (Col 1:10).
21. "ALL might" (Col 1:11).
22. "ALL riches of the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2).
23. "ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3).
24. "ALL the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2:9).

25. “ALL the will of God (Col 4:12).
26. “ALL the good pleasure of His goodness” (2 Thess 1:11).
27. “ALL longsuffering” (1 Tm 1:16).
28. “ALL godliness and honesty” (1 Tm 2:2).
29. “ALL purity” (1 Tm 5:2).
30. “ALL scripture” (2 Tm 3:16).
31. “ALL good works” (2 Tm 3:17).
32. “ALL good fidelity” (Ti 2:10).
33. “ALL meekness” (Ti 3:2).
34. “ALL joy” (James 1:2).
35. “ALL grace” (1 Pt 5:10).
36. “ALL diligence” (2 Pt 1:5).

In Christ, we are separated from all forms of mediocrity! We are brought into the realm “allness”—Divine plentitude. Nothing that is required to please God is withheld from those who live by faith and walk in the Spirit.

This is more than Divine kindness. It is nothing less than the provision of what God Himself requires from us.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 25

ALL MIGHT, #2

“Strengthened with all might . . .”

The agent used to strengthen the believer is called “all might” or “all power” (NASB, NIV). SOME “might,” or “power,” will not be sufficient for the task. The saints need “ALL might.” Whether religious men think this or not, it seems as though the general desire of professing Christians is to have “some might,” “some power,” some kind of power they can control, which is required at some times, but not at others. But this is a wholly erroneous view of things. There is no such things as a legitimate salvation from God that can be carried to its culmination by human strength alone, or by a mixture of human strength and Divine strength. Salvation is wholly “of the Lord” – not of the Lord and of man. If men truly knew this, they would cease and desist from their attempts to develop ways for men to recover from enslavement to sin and its effects. The fact that this has become so common is proof enough that religious men have grown obtuse regarding both the nature and effectiveness of the salvation of God. They perceive that salvation as something that is easily obtained, and more easily maintained. They are, however, deceived in these perceptions.

Paul is praying with the objective of God in mind, not a mythical ideal of what men ought to be. He knows full well that if any man is going to be saved, it will require all of his effort. That effort, however, must be infused, as it were, with “all might” from God, else it will be in vain – totally in vain.

The word translated “might” or “power” (dunamis) applies particularly to the Lord. That word is used one hundred and twenty-three times from Matthew through Revelation. Ten of those times, it has reference to

“mighty works”—i.e. Matt 11:20; 13:58; Lk 19:37). This is the word Jesus used when He told His disciples they would “receive power” (Acts 1:8). It is used to describe the “miracles” Jesus did (Acts 2:22). This was the “power” with which the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of Christ (Acts 4:33). The Gospel announces that Jesus has this kind of “power” (Rom 1:4). The Gospel itself is characterized by this kind of power (Rom 1:16). Christ Himself is called “the power of God” (1 Cor 1:24). Paul’s speech and preaching was characterized by this kind of power (1 Cor 2:4).

Some of Satan’s hordes are referred to as “powers” (Rom 8:38), but they do not have “ALL power,” or “ALL might” in the sense of our text. When it is said that a “wicked” despot would arise, coming “after the working of Satan with ALL POWER and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thess 2:9), it is called “all power” in that it is designed to carry out Satan’s purpose of deception. It does not equate, however to the “all might” possess by the Lord, for he shall be destroyed “with the brightness” of the Lord’s coming (2 Thess 2:8).

Jesus spoke of some who said they had done “many wonderful (dunamis) works,” but Jesus denied their claim saying they “work iniquity” (Matt 7:22-23). “All might,” or “all power,” belongs to God. David once confessed, “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.” (Psa 62:11). Any display of legitimate power is the result of God delegating that power: whether it was to the apostles (Acts 1:8), Philip (Acts 8:13), the Gospel (Rom 1:16), the ability to serve God though hindered by infirmities (2 Cor 12:9), or holy angels (2 Thess 1:7).

This speaks inherent power or a power that is resident in, and originates with, the Lord. With men, such power is given to them – they have, at best, delegated power. With God, it naturally resides in Him, or is part of the “Divine nature.” No one gives the Lord power. It is part of His being. When we add the word “all” to this power – “all might” – we have a superlative of the highest rank. This is power that has no

competition. It dwarfs all other forms of power, and is in no way deficient or partial.

The meaning of this text is that we are “strengthened” with God’s own powerful nature. It is the same as saying, “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph 6:10). There is no limitation in this power. By it, the Lord is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20). There is no Divine requirement that cannot be met through this power. More emphatically, Divine requirements can ONLY be met through His power. “All might” means God has no reservation about conferring this great power upon those who are in Christ Jesus. It is “toward us” or intended to be employed by us. It only remains for us to know this, and to live in a lively awareness of its reality. That is precisely why Paul is praying as he does.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 26

HIS GLORIOUS POWER, #1

“ . . . according to His glorious power . . . ” Other versions read “the might of His glory”(ASV), and “the great power of His glory” (BBE).

ACCORDING TO

Being “strengthened with all might” will be achieved through God’s “glorious power.” The New Revised Standard Version captures this perspective: “May you be made strong with all the strength that comes

from His glorious power” (Col 1:11). Other versions read “through His glorious power” (GENEVA), and “in accord with His glorious might” (NAB).

This is not a special power, but a particular working of God’s power—a particular way in which it is made known, for the glory of a thing is what is made known of it. There are a number of things that are said to be accomplished by God’s power.

1. “He draweth also the mighty WITH HIS POWER” (Jb 24:22).
2. “He divideth the sea WITH HIS POWER ” (Jb 26:12).
3. “Man did eat angels’ food: He sent them meat to the full. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and BY HIS POWER He brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: and He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations” (Psa 78:25–28, NRSV).
4. “He hath made the earth BY HIS POWER ” (Jer 10:12).
5. “Behold, God exalteth BY HIS POWER : who teacheth like him?” (Jb 36:22).
6. “He ruleth BY HIS POWER for ever” (Ps 66:7).
7. “For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth BY THE POWER OF GOD. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you." (2 Cor 13:4)
toward you." (2 Cor 13:4)
8. "Who are kept "Who are kept BY THE POWER OF GOD through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet 1:5)

9. "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT." (Rom 15:13, NKJV)

Something that is "according to" is something pertaining to or joined with. In this case, the agent that is employed (glorious power) is tailored to produce the stated objective. It is particularly adapted for that work.

The objective that will be revealed will not be accomplished through the kind of power that draws the mighty into His purpose. This is not the kind of power that divides the sea or causes a south wind to bring in an abundance of quail. It is not the kind of power through which the world was made or through which the Lord rules over all.

Those things can only be accomplished by the power of God, to be sure. But they are not the "GLORIOUS power" of our text. What is prayed for the saints can only be accomplished through a certain kind of Divine working. Its chief display will be identified – the primary exhibit of the kind of power that enables us to be "strengthened with all might."

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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Chapter 27

HIS GLORIOUS POWER, #2

When the Lord revealed Himself to Moses, He declared He was "glorious in power" (Ex 15:6). Frequently the Spirit wraps "power" and "glory" in the same sentence (1 Chr 19:22; Ps 63:2; 145:11; Mt 6:13; 24:30; Mk 13:26; Lk 21:27; 2 Thess 1:9; Rev 5:13).

“Glorious power” is particularly revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ. God has always been “glorious in power,” but it was never before seen to the extent to it has now been revealed. Regarding its nature, this power is expounded more fully in the book of Ephesians. In Colossians, the way in which that power is utilized is the emphasis.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul prays that the eyes of the understanding might be opened to see “what is the greatness of His power to usward who believe,” or “what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe” (NASB). This power is now at work within believers, and through it God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20). But this power has been displayed, unveiling something of its nature.

After praying that the eyes of our understanding might be opened to see the “exceeding greatness” of this power, the apostle unveils how it has been displayed. “According to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, WHEN HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, AND SET HIM AT HIS OWN RIGHT HAND in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: AND hath put all things under His feet, AND gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:19–23). This is the premier work of “His glorious power.” Behold what it has accomplished!

1. It raised Jesus from the dead.
2. It set Jesus at the Father’s right hand in the heavenly places.
3. It placed Jesus far above all forms of rule and power.
4. It put Jesus above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come.
5. It put everything and everyone under Christ, subordinating all to Him.
6. In the capacity as Head over all things, God gave Jesus to the church to supply, protect, and lead it to glory.

This “glorious power,” therefore, invaded the regions of the dead and brought Jesus back. It invaded the area ruled by the prince of the power of the air, as Jesus returned to glory to be enthroned. It subordinated all delegated power, making it subservient to Jesus. It brought honor and dignity to Jesus that is not realized by any created being. It enabled Him to bring many sons to glory.

Is that not a magnificent power? How does it compare with the power made known in the creation? What kind of comparison can be made between this “glorious power” and the power revealed in the flood of Noah’s day? Is there any person who does not see its superiority to the power made known when Israel was delivered from Egypt? This is a transcendent power that has no parallel. Through it, God is more fully revealed. The extent of His might and influence are more thoroughly displayed in His “glorious power”—particularly as it has been revealed through Jesus Christ.

How will such power be employed by the saints of God? To what end or objective is this “glorious power” utilized by those who are in Christ Jesus? That is the point to which Paul now addresses himself. The same power required to raise and exalt Jesus is required for the accomplishment of these objectives. Therefore, there is difficulty associated with their attainment.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 28

ALL PATIENCE AND LONGSUFFERING WITH JOYFULNESS

“ . . . unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” Other versions read “for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously” (NASB), “so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully” (NIV), “for all endurance and patience with joy” (RSV), and “so that you may undergo all troubles with joy” (BBE).

The fact that God’s “glorious power” is devoted to the accomplishment of these things confirms their priority and difficulty. You will nowhere find God’s “glorious power” associated with resolving interpersonal relationships, being highly successful in this world, or experiencing health and wealth. It is not connected with any fleshly experience, however noble it may appear.

When one young man attempted to have Christ resolve a domestic dispute, Jesus replied, “Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?” (Lk 12:14). Jesus was not saying He despised such resolutions. Rather, He was showing us that is not the purpose of His “glorious power.” The reason for His answer reveals more of the root of the matter and is stated in the next verse. “And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Lk 12:15).

The words that follow will chaff against institutional agendas and mere human perceptions of valid and honorable kingdom accomplishments. However, every “honest and good heart” will perceive the priority of these matters. You can go to heaven and lack both health and wealth. You can also go to heaven with your foes being members of your own house. But you cannot dwell in the house of the Lord forever if you are lacking in the areas that follow. You had better make it your business not to fail in these things—especially since God’s “glorious power” has been given to ensure their realization.

FULL MEASURES

Divine objectives are for us to have full measures of blessing, not introductory ones or mere samples. Our minds are to be stretched to

think in terms of grandness and thoroughness. Thus far, we have read of “ALL the saints,” “ALL the world,” “ALL wisdom and spiritual understanding,” and “ALL might” (1:4,6,9,10,11). Now we will read of “ALL patience and longsuffering.”

UNTO ALL PATIENCE

“. . . unto all patience . . .” “Patience” is steadfastness (NASB) and endurance (RSV). It is constancy and continuance or duration (STRONG’S). The person who is “patient,” or endures, is not moved off course. Even the greatest trials and afflictions will not cause the “patient” one to leave the race that has been set before him (Heb 12:1–2).

The one who is “patient” keeps fighting (1 Tm 6:12), continues running (Heb 12:2), and does not stop wrestling (Eph 6:12). If he falls down “seven times,” he rises again to continue the trek to glory (Prov 24:16). He may be troubled, but he is not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but he is not destroyed (2 Cor 4:8–9). Like those noble warriors of Zebulun, those who are “patient” are able to “keep rank” and are not of a “double heart” (1 Chr 12:33).

The “patient” person does not become weary in well doing and does not faint or quit (Gal 6:9; 2 Cor 4:1,16).

“Patience” is perseverance and persistence. It is when a person, like Jacob, will not let go until he obtains the blessing (Gn 32:26).

Our text speaks of “ALL patience.” That is persistence in prayer—fainting not (Lk 18:1). It includes enduring “to the end” (Mk 13:13) and not being “weary in well doing” (Gal 6:9). This includes being a faithful steward (1 Cor 4:2), enduring all manner of persecution, and pressing relentlessly “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:14). It involves not fainting when we are “rebuked” by the Lord (Heb 12:5).

“All patience” includes “enduring unto the end,” even when we are “hated of all men” for Jesus’s sake (Mt 10:22). It is standing firm when iniquity is abounding all about us and “the love of many” is waxing “cold” (Mt 24:12–13). It is continuing in the faith and entering the kingdom “through much tribulation” (Acts 14:22).

“All patience” is standing “fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” and not being “entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Gal 5:1). It includes holding “fast the form of sound words” and not being thrown off course by the theological fads of the day (2 Tm 1:13). There is also the matter of enduring “hardness as a good soldier” (2 Tm 2:3) and continuing in “the things which thou hast learned” (2 Tm 3:14). “All patience” involves giving “the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb 2:1). It is maintaining “the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (Heb 3:14) and having the “full assurance of hope unto the end” (Heb 6:11).

It is through “faith and patience” that we “inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12). Unstable and unfaithful people do not obtain the promises of God! I do not believe the average American Christian has any understanding of this. There is too much vacillation, unfaithfulness, lukewarmness, and disinterest. All of this means the people are not experiencing God’s “glorious power.” The reason they lack this power is that they have really seen no need for it. They are not doing something that requires the power, so they have not received it. People are looking for this marvelous power—the power that raised Jesus from the dead—to accomplish things that are of little eternal consequence. They will not receive it! But for those who are engaged in the good fight of faith, and running with patience the race set before them – ah, that is another matter.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 29

UNTO ALL LONGSUFFERING

“ . . . and longsuffering . . .” Longsuffering is a sister to patience. The meaning of this word is very close to that of patience. Both involve persistence and endurance. Patience has to do with continuing in the race. Longsuffering has to do with enduring all of the afflictions, hindrances, and trouble that assaults the person during the race. It is bearing up under a burden and entering the Kingdom “through much tribulation.”

This is patience under trial, when it is necessary to subdue inclinations to retaliate, avenge, and return evil for evil. This is when suffering does not move the individual to respond in an ungodly manner or cease to run the race set before him: long - suffering!

This is a Divine trait, for God Himself is “longsuffering” (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; 2 Pet 3:9). This particularly has regard to forgiveness. As it is written, “The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression” (Num 14:18). This is not an attitude of indifference, as though God had no hatred for sin. The above verse continues, “And by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation” (Num 14:18). This, then, is not the indifferent toleration of iniquity.

Longsuffering involves genuine suffering. Pain has been inflicted upon the soul, and what was done to the longsuffering one was wrong—and is to be recognized. Yet longsuffering endures the wrong, seeking the recovery of the wrongdoer and being willing to forgive.

One of the qualities that confirms a person is a “minister of God” is “longsuffering” (2 Cor 6:4–6). This is also a trait of genuine love: it “suffers long,” “enduring all things” (1 Cor 13:4,7). This includes “forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2).

“All longsuffering” is having a gentle and forbearing spirit when ill treatment is experienced. It involves holding back emotion, which is most difficult, if not impossible for us to control. That is precisely why we need God’s “glorious power” to do so.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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Chapter 30

WITH JOYFULNESS

“ . . . with joyfulness.” The Holy Spirit now moves us even higher. For some, it is challenging enough just to endure to the end – but what of enduring all kinds of trial and bearing up under all manner of abuse and ill treatment. However, our text does not even leave us thinking that is an appropriate use of “glorious power.” The Spirit adds these pungent words, patience and longsuffering “WITH JOYFULNESS.”

WEAKER VERSIONS

Some versions attach the words “with joyfulness” to the following verse: i.e., “joyously giving thanks” (NASB) “and joyfully giving thanks” (NIV), and “while joyfully giving thanks” (NRSV). They say this reading is based on a view of the Latin manuscripts.

The text itself makes more sense when the joyfulness is attached to “all

patience and longsuffering.” That would involve being “strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.” There is a natural association of joy with thanksgiving, because true thanksgiving flows from insight. However, there is a supernatural affiliation of joyfulness with the patience and longsuffering.

The idea here is that endurance and longsuffering are made more productive when “joyfulness” is being experienced. This is also in keeping with the doctrine of scripture.

1. “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:2–3).
2. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Mt 5:12).
3. “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets” (Lk 6:22–23).
4. “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Col 1:24).

Having seen this truth, when the apostles were subjected to suffering, they continued to be patient and longsuffering, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41).

THE REASON FOR JOYFULNESS

The reason for joyfulness is not found in the experience of trouble itself. The need for endurance is not the ultimate reason for joyfulness. Nor,

indeed, does persecution and tribulation of itself produce joy. Joyfulness springs from hope, which is cause to shine more brightly when hardships and afflictions are endured. Thus Jesus told His disciples to rejoice “for great is your reward in heaven” (Mt 5:12).

Romans 12:12 refers to “rejoicing in hope,” and Romans 5:2 speaks of “rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.” When the heart is joyful, we can “abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13). Joy is, therefore, more immediately related to hope—the anticipation of good things to come. Thus we read of “the rejoicing of the hope” (Heb 3:6).

Because of God’s “glorious power,” the impediments we encounter in the race to glory, and the sufferings we endure along the way, only serve to accent what is ahead. The “much tribulation” through which we must enter into the kingdom (Acts 14:22) thus causes the star of hope to shine all the brighter.

JOYFULNESS IS NECESSARY

This kind of joy is not a spiritual luxury, it is a necessity. It is not a sign of advanced spirituality, but of spiritual normalcy. That is why joy is also associated with faith itself: “the joy of faith” (Phil 1:25).

The necessity of joy is affirmed in the book of Hebrews with unquestionable firmness. “But Christ as a son over His own house; whose house are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb 3:6). Those with a propensity to legalism often tell us what we need to do. Rarely, however, do they ever mention “the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” There are also those who are disposed to continually emphasize what is required to be identified with Christ. You will not hear them mention holding fast “the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

This is of such critical importance that the Spirit identifies “the rejoicing of the hope” with being part of the “house” over which Jesus presides. Is there any person of sound thought who will affirm we can

be saved without being part of that “house”? What can any person hope to receive from Christ who is not in this “house”? Jesus is a “Son over His own house.” That house is God’s house, for “He that built all things is God” (Heb 3:4). Some of the other versions read that Jesus is “over God’s house” (NIV/NRSV). This should not surprise us, for the church is specifically called God’s house: “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tm 3:15).

Make no mistake about this! We are part of that house “IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” That sheds a great deal of light on the prayer of Paul for the Colossians.

A KNOWLEDGEABLE JOY

James also said to “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, KNOWING THIS, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:3). Trials, or tests, are the appointed way of producing patience or perseverance. When they are approached in faith, they actually make the believers more determined to finish their “course” (2 Tm 4:7).

TOO DEMANDING FOR NATURE

But all of this is not a mere exercise of self-discipline. The perceptive heart knows these things are too demanding for natural abilities.

We must have power from outside ourselves in order to be “strengthened with all might.” If the objective is to have “ALL patience and longsuffering with joyfulness,” we need help “from above” (James 1:17; 3:17). That help comes in the form of “His glorious power”—the kind of power that raised Jesus from the dead and enthroned Him at God’s right hand, invested with all power in heaven and earth. That is the kind of power it takes to realize these required results, and that is the kind of power God will give us. It is right for us to seek such power and expect to receive it.

PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” — Colossians 1:9–11

Chapter 31

CONCLUSION

We have been exposed to the heart of the Kingdom of God—the appointed objective for the people of God. It is apparent that it differs vastly from the perceptions extant in the contemporary church. These are matters concerning which very little is being said from the pulpits of the land. You will rarely hear any prayer request that is remotely associated with this prayer. As a general rule, these things are simply not seen as important, much less essential. In other words, practically speaking, the purpose of God has been upstaged by the will of men. In fulfillment of Paul’s prophecy, professing Christians “will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim 4:3-4). It is not that it is remotely possible that this will happen, it has taken place. Professing Christians, as a whole, will only listen to those who tickle their ears. They bark to the preachers and teachers, “speak to us smooth things” – pleasant things, things that make us feel good in the flesh (Isa 30:10). They cannot endure “sound doctrine,” but rather prefer intellectual dainties that carry with them no profound implications, and make no demands of faith, hope, and holiness, in the people.

All of this indicates that, as in Isaiah’s day, truth has “fallen in the street” (Is 59:14). As in Jeremiah’s day, “truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth” (Jer 7:28). As hard as it may be to receive, “a wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so” (Jer 5:30–31).

“Another gospel” ((2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6) , which is really no gospel at all, is being foisted upon the church. It has largely to do with life in this world and very little to do with eternity. It is the kind of Gospel that does not require “glorious power.” It does not demand that those who embrace it be “filled with the knowledge of His will.” In fact, one can remain abysmally ignorant of God’s will and still be a member in good standing.

This neo-Gospel does not move people to seek for a knowledge that erupts in “all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Throughout the land, professed Christians wander about in the field of truth like groping blind men, unable to comprehend or apply the truth of God by which men are sanctified. The average churchman is not noted for being either wise or understanding in things pertaining to life and godliness.

This is a day when there is little insistence that people walk “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” Pleasing the institution is actually of greater importance than pleasing God. Some mention is made of being fruitful, but hardly ever do you hear of being “fruitful in every good work” and “increasing in the knowledge of God.” And what of possessing “all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness”? Is there anyone in all the world who does not know this is an uncommon thrust?

THIS IS NOT UNDULY HARSH

All of this may appear to be unduly harsh and negative. However, when one ponders the situation, such imaginations will instantly be cast down. Our text has revealed the prayer of a righteous man—one who received mercy “to be faithful.” He was counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and Christ was living in him. He had an understanding of salvation and of the things integral to it—an understanding that had been given to him by God (Eph 3:4–11).

His prayer focuses on matters relating to the Lord Himself: “the knowledge of HIS will . . . worthy of THE LORD unto all pleasing . . . increasing in the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD . . . and HIS glorious power.”

There is a plentitude that requires sober thought: “ALL wisdom and spiritual understanding . . . ALL pleasing . . . EVERY good work . . . INCREASING . . . ALL might . . . ALL patience and longsuffering.”

Such things require more than human strength. They call for “glorious power,” which comes from God alone!

How can a lack of emphasis on such things possibly be excused? In fact, the weakened condition of the modern church is largely owing to its failure to speak of such things. The religion of the day is not demanding. It does not require an aggressive quest for the Lord, His power, and His will. It is too accommodating to the flesh and, thus, is powerless in every sense of the word.

Remember, this prayer was prayed for a people who had given evidence of the working of the Lord within them – “we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints” (Col 1:4). It reflects the nature of the kingdom, the expectancies of the Lord, and the need of the hour. These are matters that cannot be ignored—either in preaching or in praying. They are not ancillary matters, but are at the very heart of God’s dealings with His children. They must be sought and obtained.