

Sunday, January 5, 2020—Colossians 1:9 Do Not Cease to Pray for You

Introduction

- Last week we finished our study of Paul’s greeting by looking at verses 3 through 8. In doing so, we considered the faith, love, and hope of the Colossians.
- This morning I want to build upon some of these concepts by beginning a study of Paul’s prayer for the Colossians beginning in verse 9.

Colossians 1:9

- **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;**
- Verse 9 is expanding upon Paul’s greeting found in verses 1-8. Recall from verse 3 that the “we” who were “giving thanks to God” and “praying always” for the Colossians was Paul and Timotheus from verse 1. Now in verse 9 we encounter and amplification and elaboration on Paul’s statement from verses 3 and 4.
- It follows that the “we” in verse 9 is also a reference to Paul and Timotheus. We already know from verse 4 that what promoted them to pray for the Colossians was hearing about their “faith in Christ Jesus and the love which ye have to all the saints.” Therefore, the phrase “since the day we heard it” in verse 9 answers to what Paul has already said in verse 4.
- Likewise, we already know from verse 3 that Paul and Timotheus were “praying always” for the Colossians. Consequently, the phrase “do no cease to pray for you” in verse 9 answers to Paul’s statements about prayer in verse 3. Paul was “praying always” or not ceasing to pray for the Colossians.
- Now let’s put this first portion of verse 9 together. What is the cause that Paul and Timothy upon hearing of the faith and love of the Colossians had not ceasing praying for them with respect to? The answer is found in the second half of verse 9 and extends to the end over verse 11 at a minimum.
 - that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding
 - That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;
 - Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

- The “cause” unto which Paul and Timothy were praying without ceasing on behalf of the Colossians was that they “might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” on the basis of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Put another way, Paul was praying for the strengthening and fortification of their inner man so that they might have worthy walk.
- Before breaking down the specific contents of Paul’s prayer on behalf of the Colossians I would like to look further at some things regarding praying without ceasing.
- Last week when we looked at verse 3, we noted that Paul practiced what he preached in terms of prayer. In verse 3 we see Paul giving thanks for the Colossians via the mechanism of “praying always” for them. This is consistent with Paul’s instructions regarding prayer elsewhere in his epistles.

Continuing Instant in Prayer

- I Thessalonians 5:17 —teaches a straightforward yet incredibly profound instruction regarding prayer. Pray without stopping.
 - This verse challenges our traditional conceptions of prayer. Many believers think or conceive of prayer as merely closing one’s eyes, folding one’s hands, and making oral requests and petitions to God in an audible manner. It is impossible for believers to pray in this manner “without ceasing.”
- The presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit has changed all of the rules when it comes to prayer.
 - I Corinthians 3:16—“. . . the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.”
 - I Corinthians 12:13—God the Holy Spirit is who places us into the body of Christ.
 - II Corinthians 6:16—“. . . for ye are the temple of the living God. . .”
 - Ephesians 1:13-14—“. . . were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”
 - Ephesians 4:30—God the Holy Spirit also takes up residence in your spirit and seals you into the Body of Christ until the day of redemption.
- Because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the place of prayer is now within the believer—in his or her inner man. Just as breathing is critical for the proper function of your natural life so is prayer critical for the proper function of your spiritual life as a member of the body of Christ.
- One of the first things Paul teaches us is that prayer is much more than a spiritual discipline to be entered into during certain times and seasons. It should instead be a close and as regular as your breath, integrated into every fiber of your being.

- Romans 12:12—in our fast food, instant in our fast food, instant gratification society this verse ought to make sense to us.
 - “instant” means to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to a thing, to continue all the time in one place
 - Romans 13:6—“attending continually upon” comes from the same Greek word translated “instant” in Romans 12:12. To be “instant” in prayer means to “attend continually” upon something.
- Philippians 4:6—Paul’s prayer formula is simple. Have a concern? Pray about it right then and there.
 - This is consistent with what we observed last week in Colossians 1:3-4. Paul offering prayers of thanking always for the Colossians.

Instant Prayer in Action

- Think for a moment about the number of people and assemblies Paul was responsible for in his ministry. Paul’s habit must have been that as he thought of individual believers and assemblies that he would “make mention” of them before the throne of grace. It might have been a short one sentence prayer, or perhaps more, but it seems certain that Paul did not stop everything he was doing and make long dissertation to God on behalf of every believer and/or every assembly or he would have had little time for much else. It seems highly impractical that Paul would have function in accordance with traditional concepts of prayer.
- Romans 1:9—“make mention of you in my prayers”
 - Mention—“A hint; a suggestion; **a brief notice or remark expressed in words or writing**; used chiefly after make.” (*Webster’s 1828*)
 - Paul does not make a long-winded dissertation on behalf of the Romans. Rather he makes mention, i.e., a brief remark on their behalf.
- Ephesians 1:16—“making mention of you in my prayers”
- Philippians 1:3—“upon every remembrance of you”
 - The English word “remembrance” is a translation of the same Greek word rendered “mention” in Rom. 1:9 and Eph. 1:16.
 - Remembrance—“**The retaining or having in mind an idea which had been present before, or an idea which had been previously received from an object when present,**

and which recurs to the mind afterwards without the presence of its object.

Technically, remembrance differs from reminiscence and recollection, as the former implies that an idea occurs to the mind spontaneously, or without much mental exertion.

The latter imply the power or the act of recalling ideas which do not spontaneously recur to the mind.”

- In other words, “remembrance” is something that one is giving mental attention unto. Having previously been in the presence of the Philippians Paul is diligent to keep the saints at Philippi on his mind, i.e., he is actively recalling his time and ministry among them.
- The fact that the King James translators rendered the Greek word variously as “mention” and “remembrance” indicates a connection between these two concepts. Before I can “make mention” of a particular saint or assembly don’t I first have to be holding that saint or assembly in “remembrance.” To hold them in “remembrance” is synonymous with “making mention” of them. This means that Pauline prayer is more of a spiritual state of mind than an outward religious activity.
- I Thessalonians 1:2—“making mention of you in our prayers”
- II Timothy 1:3—“remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day”
- Philemon 4—”making mention of thee always in my prayers”
- Paul’s epistles confirm that he did not pray for people only when they needed or asked for prayer. Throughout Paul’s epistles we see Paul praying for saints either when they came to “remembrance” or when he heard reports how they were doing. Paul did not wait for prayer requests; instead he prayed short “making mention of you” prayers whenever specific saints and assemblies came to mind. In short, in Paul’s thinking and practice to make “remembrance” of someone was to pray for them.
- How might adopting this thinking and approach to prayer revolutionize and change your life, your family, or your assembly? Pauline prayer during the dispensation of grace is not supposed to be a source of doubt and guilt. Pauline prayer is not a religious action as it is traditionally conceived but an active state of mind that communes with God over his word for yourself and others.
- I am **NOT SAYING** that:
 - Prayer **IS NEVER** oral—sometimes it is.
 - Prayer **IS NEVER** public—sometimes it is.
 - Prayer **IS NEVER** long—sometimes it is.
 - Prayer **IS NEVER** hard—it often is.

- One should **NEVER** keep or maintain a “prayer list” or list of prayer requests—if it helps you keep people and issues in your “remembrance” maybe you should.
- What **I AM SAYING**:
 - Pauline Prayer **SHOULD BE** continual— i.e., “without ceasing,” and “instant” or “continually attended” unto
 - Pauline Prayer **IS NOT PRIMARILY** a physical religious activity— i.e., hands folded, eyes closed, head bowed
 - Pauline Prayer **IS PRIMARILY** a spiritual state of mind—i.e., “remembrance”
 - Pauline Prayer **CAN BE SHORT, SWEET, AND TO THE POINT**—i.e., “make mention”
 - Pauline Prayer **IS THE BELIEVERS PRIMARY** means of communion with God and serves as a point of contact between the believer and God’s written word.
 - Pauline Prayer **SHOULD NOT BE** a source of care, worry, or anxiety—Rather prayer was given to combat care, worry, and anxiety in the lives of believers, according to Philippians 4:6.
- As grace believers who believe in following Paul’s example this would include following his example with respect to prayer as well. We ought not to place more pressure upon ourselves to “perform” in our prayer life than Paul did. If Paul was content to view the act of “remembrance” and “making mention” of saints and assemblies as prayer, we ought not to demand a higher standard than our Apostle himself demonstrated.