

HOW TO PRAY FOR THE CHURCH

Colossians 1:9-12

Last week: Why Pray for the Church?

The Church Is Worthy of Prayer Because It Displays the Transforming Power of the Gospel. 1:3-8

The Church Is Worthy of Prayer Because It Displays the Glory of the Lord of the Church. 1:13-20

He is God 1:15

He is Lord of Creation 1:15b-17

He is Lord of the New Creation 1:18-20

The _____ of Paul's Prayer for the Church 1:9

The _____ of Paul's Prayer for the Church 1:10a

Four characteristics of _____ of the Lord 1:10b-12

Colossians 1:3-23

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

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks¹ to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

How to Pray for the Church

May 15, 2022

Open: When you pray for your church, what sorts of things do you pray for?

Read & Discuss: Colossians 1:9-12

1. When Paul says he had not ceased praying for the Colossian church, what do you think he meant? (*See also 1 Thess. 5:17.*) What may have motivated Paul to pray in this way?
2. The first part of Paul's prayer is that these believers would "be filled with the knowledge of [God's] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (v. 9). What word or words would you use to summarize this idea? How might *spiritual* wisdom and understanding differ from *human* wisdom and understanding?
3. The end goal of being filled with spiritual wisdom is that believers "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (v. 10a). What do you think might be key components of walking in a manner worthy of the Lord? How do you manage to stay focused on this goal as you live out the Christian life?
4. Paul prays that the Colossian church will bear fruit "in every good work" (v. 10b). How would this be the natural result of the progression outlined in Paul's prayer so far? How might we assess whether or not we—individually and as a church—are bearing fruit in this way?
5. One characteristic of walking in a manner worthy of the Lord is an increase "in the knowledge of God" (v. 10c). Do you think Paul is referring to knowing God *relationally* or knowing *about* God? Explain your answer. How might being filled with spiritual wisdom contribute to an increase in our knowledge of God?
6. What does verse 11 tell us about how Paul pictures the Christian life? If we were not able to count on "being strengthened with [God's] power," what would the Christian life be like? Why is it important to ask that God strengthen us with power in our prayers for the church?
7. Paul desires that gratitude to God would be a significant dimension of the lives of these believers (v. 12). How might the previous parts of Paul's prayer serve as fuel for such gratitude? What has helped you to be thankful to God when you think of His Church?

Apply: From Paul's prayer here, how are you challenged to pray for the church in new ways?

Pray: Pray for each other—and for our church—along the lines of Paul's prayer in these verses.

Colossians 1:9-12

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(ESV)