

Pray without Ceasing

By Mary Kane

Paul was a man of prayer. He prayed for the Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians and all the saints in Christ. He prayed and fasted, prayed always, prayed in everything, did not cease praying, continued in prayer, prayed night and day exceedingly and prayed without ceasing. Legend has it that Paul's knees were like leather due to the many hours he spent in prayer. Praying is hard work! Paul faced many serious battles with the enemy— hence, his dedication to prayer. Like Paul, the battles we face in our lives will be won or lost by the discipline of prayer. Let us learn from Paul's example and dedicate ourselves to prayer, unceasing prayer ... prayer without ceasing.

Please read Colossians 1:1-11.

To whom did Paul write this letter?

Why were Paul and Timothy thankful for the believers in Colosse (verse 4)?

If someone were to remark that they had heard of your church because of its " _____ , " what word would you use to fill in the blank?

We have a duty to pray for the Christian churches of the world—that they be strengthened in their faith in Christ. Sometimes when I am praying in the mornings on my way to work, I also pray for Christians all around the world, especially those in hostile countries, to have the strength and courage they need to continue walking with Jesus.

Please fill in the rest of verse 9, "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, _____ , and to ask that you may be filled with all knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding:"

Paul stated that since the day he heard of the faith of the church in Colosse he had not "ceased praying for them." The word for cease in this passage means what you think it means "to quit, to cease, to desist." Again, I am impressed by Paul's commitment to prayer. What is the longest that you have persevered in prayer for someone or something? Usually, if I have committed to pray for something long term, I am directly involved with the situation, such as praying for a sick loved one, a concern for one of my children or a problem in a ministry with which I am involved. According to Colossians 2:1, Paul had never personally visited the church in Colosse. Can you imagine "praying without ceasing" for a

group of people you never even met? The word for pray in this passage is the very familiar proseuchomai which means all different types of prayer.

Paul also uses another verb in verse 9, “we do not cease to pray for you and to _____ that you may be filled...”

The Greek word for ask in this verse is aiteo which means “to ask, beg, call for, crave, desire, require” (BLB). Paul prayed (proseuchomai) for the Colossians in general, and then he begged (aiteo) God to act specifically on their behalf. According to verses 9-11, Paul noticed three things that the church in Colosse required in order to continue to grow.

Look over these verses and please write the three specific prayer requests Paul made for the Colossians.

1.

2.

3.

Let’s take apart Paul’s prayer requests and consider them one by one to see what we can learn and apply to our own lives:

“...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” For those of us who have tried to live according to our own will, we know how important this first request is for every Christian. I’ve learned from experience that being filled with my own will is a very bad plan. My “will” by definition is developed according to the desires of my flesh and God’s Word states that no good thing dwells within our flesh. When I lived according to my will, destruction came to my life through my poor choices. I needed to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will.

Now, let’s turn our attention to the next concept. Go back and read verse 9 again. The word filled in this verse means to fill to the brim, to fill a hollow vessel, to be satisfied (emphasis mine). Choosing God’s will over our own, causes the empty places of our lives to be filled with purpose and meaning. And when all the empty places are filled, we will finally be satisfied and find rest and peace. When I lived according to my own will, I was always empty, always searching and always fearful.

Do you have an empty place or a hollow place that needs filling?

Is this empty place due to living according to your own will?

Use the space provided to turn this empty place over to God to fill it.

Paul prayed that the Colossians be “filled up” with the knowledge of His will. In this verse knowledge means “to know thoroughly and accurately, to perceive, and to ascertain, to understand” (BLB). This same word for knowledge is used in Ephesians 1:18 whereby our accurate knowledge of God helps us to partake in the riches of the glories of the inheritance in the saints. In 2 Peter 1:2, again we find the same word for knowledge by which we can gain grace and peace. I want this kind of knowledge in my life, don’t you? — Knowledge that brings blessings and keeps me from making mistakes. I want to be filled up with what God wants for me. If this isn’t thrilling enough, Paul prayed that they be “crammed” with the “knowledge” of His will. (This is where the digging gets really exciting!) In Christian circles we speak frequently about the “will of God.” We pray that His will be done in our lives and the lives of our friends and families. When I first became a Christian, I was rather afraid of the “will of God.” I thought the “will of God” would wreck all the plans I had worked out, according to my will for an enjoyable life.

How I wish I would have known the meaning behind the word will at that time; I would have saved myself a lot of pain and worry! With that in mind let’s take a deeper look at the word will. The original Greek word for *will* is thelema which means to determine, to will, choice, desire inclination and pleasure. Reflect on the following information: “to love to like to do a thing, be fond of doing to take delight in, have pleasure, to prefer, of the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ (BLB emphasis mine).

Please go back and reread the above information and record your thoughts on what these concepts mean to you right now.

God’s will, will ultimately bring us great joy and pleasure. At first glance, it may seem at times that His will may bring pain as we give up our own will for His perfect plan. At times God has had to pry my fingers apart, one at a time, in order for me to release something to Him that was not of His will for my life. The prying can be painful! While pain may be a part of His plan for our lives, it will result in something beneficial if we wait for His purposes to be completed for us. We need to trust Him through the pain. Don’t give up. Remember, our Father desires to bless us through Christ!.

Have you ever given up something that was important to you in order to follow God's will?

What was the outcome?

Can you see any way in which you have been blessed by your decision to follow the God's will instead of your own?

Is there anything God may be calling you to give up now in order to follow His will?

If you are not sure about His will for your life concerning a certain issue, during your prayer time symbolically lay that item on the altar of sacrifice and ask God to work His perfect will. If you don't feel that you are able to do that, pray and ask God to make you willing. Don't wait for your feelings to come around before doing the right thing. Right feeling will follow right actions and decisions. God will honor anything we sacrifice in order to follow Him.

Let's continue with our study of this verse by focusing on the word wisdom. Please go back and reread verse 9 to refresh your memory. Paul prayed for the Colossians to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom. Probably everyone has heard of the Greek word for wisdom which is sophia. Sophia means broad and full of intelligence, knowledge of things human and divine, science and learning, sage advice, the act of interpreting dreams, devout and proper prudence when dealing with men who are not disciples of Christ, the knowledge and practice of the requisites for godly and upright living. Sophia was derived from the Greek word sophos which means "forming the best plans and using the best means for their execution" (BLB).

How does the concept of wisdom apply to you right now?

Do you need a little wisdom pertaining to any facet of your life?

In closing, we'll reconsider the meanings behind the Greek words we have studied and reconstruct verse 9 according to these definitions.

Please supply the definitions for the following words

:

1) Filled:

2) Knowledge:

3) Will

4) Wisdom:

Now please rewrite your verse using the above information:

The following is my prayer for you:

"I ask God to fill up every empty place in your soul, that you would be able to discern good from evil and therefore avoid errors and be blessed by making good choices in every area of your life, which will result in you experiencing great joy and satisfaction from our Father."

We will continue our study of this section of scripture in our next lesson! Until then, be blessed and remember to pray without ceasing!

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Mary Kane