

July 7, 2019

Inside Paul's Prayer Closet

Colossians 1:9-12

Intro

"How do destructive people become constructive? How do out-of-control people become fruitfully self-controlled? How do rigid people become flexible? How do drifty people learn focus? How do hopeless people grow in hope? How do angry people learn to make peace? And even before we can ask How? we must ask, Why are troubled people troubled? What's wrong with us?" –**David Powlison**, "The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls," *JBC Spring 2005*, 2

- How does change happen? Where does growth come from?

Insights from Biblical Prayers

They reveal our needs

They reveal God's heart

They teach us priorities for prayer (and for life)

"To restrict ourselves for a moment to the petitions in the prayers of Paul, we must ask ourselves how far the petitions we commonly present to God are in line with what Paul prays for. Suppose, for example, that 80 or 90 percent of our petitions ask God for good health, recovery from illness, safety on the road, a good job, success in exams, the emotional needs of our children, success in our mortgage application, and much more of the same. How much of Paul's praying revolves around equivalent items? If the center of our praying is far removed from the center of Paul's praying, then even our praying may serve as a [testimony of the culture's effect on us in our life and thought]." –**D.A. Carson**, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, 76-77

They direct us how to pray and whom to pray for

*"...just as you learned it [the gospel] from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf⁸ 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..." (v. 7-9)*

- Insight for building a prayer closet: Does your prayer list include people you have never met personally?

They give us words to use in prayer

- *Praying the Bible* by Donald Whitney
- "Watchmen Workshop" (LCC App) – first session "Personal Prayer"

Praying with Paul

WHAT: Filled with the Knowledge of God's Will (v. 9)

- Paul regularly prays for knowledge for believers (Eph. 1:17; 3:19; Phil. 1:9; Philemon 6).
- *Filled* = to come under its controlling influence.

God's purposes...

- Seeing existence from a God-centered perspective. A deep appreciation of God's sovereign plan.

God's commands...

"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me" (Psalm 143:10)

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5:15-17)

God's direction...

- What is God doing in the current moment? How is the Spirit illuminating our circumstances?

WHY: To Please Christ (v. 10)

- This is the ambition of the believer. We want everything to answer to this. Why do we do the things that we do?

"So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him." (2 Cor. 5:9)

- You will give your thoughts and planning and energy to please something...

"Here is that most basic question which God poses to each human heart: 'Has something or someone besides Jesus the Christ taken title to your heart's functional trust, preoccupation, loyalty, service, fear and delight? Questions bring some of people's idol systems to the surface. 'To who or what do you look for life-sustaining stability, security and acceptance? ...What do you really want and expect out of life? What would really make you happy? What would make you an acceptable person? Where do you look for power and success?' These questions or similar ones tease out whether we serve God or idols, whether we look for salvation from Christ or from false saviors." –**David Powlison**, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair," *JBC*

- Paul wants the Colossians to see the omni-relevance of Jesus Christ.

"This is worth memorizing. If your heart ever wavers and grows cold, go here; *memorize this litany of glories and ask God to give you affections that correspond to the measure of this greatness.* If any person or any power or any wisdom or any love awakens any admiration or any amazement or any joy, let it be the greatest Person and the greatest power and the greatest wisdom and the greatest love that exists—Jesus Christ." –**John Piper**, "All Things Were Created Through Him and for Him" (8/12/07)

- If you don't feel this way about Jesus, your heart doesn't have to be static!

"Prayer to God is not only the place for divulging our heart but also developing our desires. There is power here. Prayer changes our hearts like nothing else—perhaps especially when we follow the prayers of the Bible, in the psalms and from the apostle (as in Eph. 1:17-21; 3:16-19; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12), as guides for the shaping and expressing of our desires toward God."

–**David Mathis**, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus Through the Spiritual Disciplines*, 104

HOW (v. 10-12)

Fruitful Living

Increasing Knowledge of God

"But as you get busy in the business of obedience, you get to know God better. That in turn impels you to more obedience, which in turn opens up new vistas in the knowledge of God and his will."

–**D.A. Carson**, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, 88

Empowered, Joyful Endurance

"Hallelujah nevertheless" was the song the pain couldn't destroy

"Hallelujah nevertheless, You're my joy invincible"

–Switchfoot, "Joy Invincible"

Thanksgiving

“Imagine you get a notice that someone left you some money, but for various reasons, you assume it is a very modest amount. You get busy and don't get around even to checking on it for quite a while. Finally, you do so and are thunderstruck to discover it was a fortune, and you had not been doing anything with it. You were actually rich but had been living poor. This is what Paul wants his Christian friends to avoid, and only through an encounter with God in prayer can they avoid it. This may be where you are. You are in him. You are adopted into the Father's family. You have the very divine life in you, the Holy Spirit. You are loved and accepted in Christ. You know about these things, and yet on another level you don't know them, you don't grasp them. You are still dogged by your bad habits, often anxious or bored or discouraged or angry. You may have many specific problems and issues that need to be faced and dealt with through various specific means. Yet the root problem of them all is that you are rich in Christ but nevertheless living poor.”

–**Timothy Keller**, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, 168-169