

The Apostles Prayer 1

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev J.A.Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn out Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1 from version 4.

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

That you might walk worthy of the Lord and to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, and to all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and so on.

I suppose most of us, when we draw near together to pray, when we go on our knees and when we're standing in prayer like this, we're always afraid.

What should we pray for? One thing that we must always pray for is other people. And we must pray at home for ourselves.

[1 : 28] We must never stop praying for others, especially. You know, there's a danger that when we are praying for our Lord, that wants to be converted, for people in the community to be turned to Christ, once they're converted, that we sort of leave off the praying, that we tend to sort of, from then on, ease off a bit and say, well, they're okay, they're in the kingdom, they're saved, and that's it.

That's the most important thing. Now, Paul, he seems to have a totally different view. He says that once these people are converted, that's when you really continue to pray with as much strength as you can.

That's what he says there in verse 9, isn't it? For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you. For what cause?

Well, he's been turning his voice since verse 3, because he's giving thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we have heard of your faith in Christ, of the love which you have to all the saints, and so on.

Paul has heard that these Colossians are not only converted, but they have faith in Christ that is made known throughout the land.

[2 : 54] They have a love for the saints that is quite remarkable. People are speaking about it.

Now, if you were going to meet someone who could be described in these verses 3 to 8, you might have said, well, there's one person that we don't need to pray for.

Somebody who has known Christ, somebody who has faith in Christ, who has love for the saints, who has a hope for heaven, who has a love for the word of truth, who's bringing forth fruit, and so on.

And they have a love and a spirit in verse 8. If you meet someone like that, you might just be tempted to say, well, they don't need our prayers. But Paul says, we also, since the day we heard it, don't cease to pray for you.

We keep on praying. And he gives us a description of prayer. And it would be just lovely if all of us who are gathered here tonight would pray for one another as churches and as individuals.

This kind of prayer. What's he asking for? Very interesting. We have a description of many of Paul's prayers and of the Lord's prayers in the New Testament.

[4 : 20] And we should use these to part in our prayers. Now, what's he asking for? Well, first of all, it's that he might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

He wants them to have knowledge. Knowledge in particular of God's will. God's purpose. I wonder if we would all be willing to confess just how little we know of God's will.

Surely there wouldn't be anyone who would dare to stand up or to even say in their hearts, I know as much of God's will as I need to for my life here on earth.

Could it be that the evil one perhaps has crept into any heart and just said, you're all right? You know enough. Don't go overboard.

Don't be a fanatic. Don't drive yourself on and on. Don't. But our dear Lord says that we must continue to get to know him.

[5 : 40] To be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to know God's will.

That's a lifetime of study. To know what God wants you to do. How perhaps we have trivialised guidance with the books that come out on it sometimes that make things so succinct.

I said it only refers to people who are going to do missionaries, people who are going to be married and so on. I said it's only certain things that we need to know God's will for that we can live the rest of our lives in conformity to the world.

But no. To know how God wants us to live all the time that's knowing God's will. But not just to know it but to know it with wisdom.

The knowledge of his will in all wisdom. You know when you have wisdom you have that kind of settled frame of mind where you've come to know in a very wise way.

[6 : 58] It's not just a knowledge that's come to your attention and it's bursting around in your mind like at one of these things that we say they're hoppy horses.

that's not wisdom. This kind of knowledge is a knowledge that settled down into your mind and has become part of your way of thinking and has become part of fearing God.

Knowledge blended with that wisdom. Christ himself he grew in that wisdom. He grew in wisdom so we must be Christ like then we must be wise in our knowledge.

Stephen that wonderful man filled with the Holy Spirit he was and we're told that he had wisdom wisdom that was marked out because you see not every Christian is a wise Christian.

Just as not every Christian has much knowledge then it's also true that even those who have more knowledge than others that does not necessarily make them wiser.

[8 : 14] We've got to pray that we would grow in knowledge of God's will in all wisdom that it settles and becomes part of our thinking but also in spiritual understanding.

Understanding is where you take this wisdom and you apply it to the various situations in life. You gain the knowledge of God's will it becomes part of your wise way of thinking and then in understanding you're able to apply it to the various situations that you come up with in day to day life.

That's something we must pray for isn't it? how much we've heard since we were little most of us having grown up and reformed backgrounds sermon after sermon reading good books from when we were toddlers well here we are we've learned much and sure but are we able to say we understand it spiritually are we able to apply it to each situation that we come up with come up against Christ himself at the age of twelve the age of twelve the teachers in the temple were amazed at his understanding not just at his knowledge but how he was able to apply this knowledge as a boy of twelve to life that's what amazed it wasn't part of fashion learning it was learning that they could apply to life and it's spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding why because you can't earn it you can only receive it you can never get it from universities not even from theological colleges not even from books this is spiritual work and if it's spiritual work then the spirit must be the driving force behind it and he must also be the one that enables us to receive what has come to us spiritual work you know at the very center of God's will what do we find

Christ that's the very center of God's will in him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in him we can learn as we have so often heard from people all about the ten peaks of the tabernacle we can learn about all the little fine details here and there in the scripture and I don't think we should despise that all these things were written for our learning but what we should learn more than anything is how the whole will of God focuses in on Christ and then focuses out from Christ to the whole universe that's what we must learn that's what our knowledge must consist of everything we're learning relating it to Christ in a wise way in a very understanding way and we can only do it with the help and the aid of

God's spirit he must open our understanding just as he opened the understanding of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus so we must pray for knowledge knowledge of God's will do you do it could we drive this home in any way to our own hearts do we actually pray for an increase in knowledge of God's will how much did it figure in your prayer this week has God's will been important is it something you want to know more about or have you perhaps backslid and it's so

easy for all of us to come down to a level where we don't feel the need to rise knowledge the second thing he prays for follows on from that and that's transformation of character he wants this knowledge of God's will why well verse 10 that he might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing why should we grow in knowledge it's so that we can boast so we can be good in arguing so that we can down found the world without wisdom knowing there may be some people and they're saying that they would wish to see a greater transformation in their own lives they're quite aware that they're spiritually at a low end and that they're far far from being

[14:18] Christ like and they would love to be more transformed than they are well could it be that partly the reason for your low spiritual state is that you simply haven't been praying that you would know God's will the way you should have been when you do have that knowledge of God's will increasingly there will be a transformation of character this is what he says that you might walk worthy of the Lord and to all please get to know God's will why is it so that you can say well I'll live up to the standard of the community in which I live or I'll grow in the knowledge of God's will so I'll be able to live to the standard of the church in which

I worship or some people would say what I would like really is just to be as holy as I am able to be but even that isn't enough we must walk worthy of the Lord he is our standard not the world obviously not even the believers not even the best believer in the church is to be our standard he can be our example but not our standard our standard and our goal is to walk worthy of the Lord himself Christ his passion he is the one that we are to walk worthy of not just to imitate him but to walk worthy of him you know there's a difference there you can imitate a fool but you can't walk worthy of a fool it's not just imitating

Christ it's realizing that Christ is someone who is worth your following he is worth you change your whole lifestyle to be like him all our lives it's difficult though it's difficult to walk worthy of the Lord in all pleasing there are some and I'm sure we all fall into the same shot we want to walk worthy of the Lord so that we can be satisfied so we can feel at the end of the day we can write in our diaries I did it today I never sinned that sin today

I managed to keep my goal but could we write in the same diary today I lived to please Christ I lived to please him that's much more difficult we can live to please the minister the elder we can live to please the world to please our families to please our mother father but that's worth nothing in the eyes of the Lord it's living and walking worthy of him in all pleasing that's difficult to do it in everything all pleasing one of the other versions puts it in every way to please in every way to please what will be the consequences of knowing

God's will and then walking worthy of the Lord into all please four things that we'll look at very briefly first of all there will be fruitfulness being fruitful in every good work that's what we've been called to we've been ordained that we might bring forth fruit whoever is a Christian here tonight you are to bear fruit for the Lord it's a process it's not something that happens automatically it's something that is a process but you are to bear fruit so that you be useful in the eyes of the Lord and in the kingdom of Christ usefulness is fruitfulness if you're content to be doing nothing if you're content not to be doing work for the

[19:42] Lord whatever way and we don't mean just ministry of the word or being an elder or a deacon we mean every work that you do that it would be a good work for the Lord that it would be useful in his eyes that it would be glorifying to him that's the kind of fruitfulness that will flow from a knowledge of his will that we use to walk worthy of the Lord to please fruitfulness but then secondly knowledge of God and you might say well it's not just repetition that we're asking the Lord to fill us with a knowledge of his will so that we might have a knowledge of God but do you notice the difference in the first place you're asking to know

God's will in the second place it's that you would know God himself increase in the knowledge of God knowledge it's not it's knowing his will so that you can live a pleasing life increasing in the knowledge of him it's not what eternal life is it's in this what our life is supposed to be not just living by a set of rules not even being able to remember the Bible and regard to people it's increasing in the knowledge of God it's this fellowship where you're actually growing and your God is increasing in stature before you because you're gaining knowledge about him and you're having communion with him is this the kind of God that you and I have have you increased not just in the knowledge of God's will but in the knowledge of God as a passion those who are married when they get married first of all they know one another to some degree the 20 30 40 years on they know one another so much deeper they've increased in the knowledge of one another and their relationship deepens is

that what has happened to us because we will never arrive we will never feel that we know God enough so don't despair tonight my friend if you feel discouraged it might be one of the most lovely things in your heart tonight but you're so unsatisfied with your knowledge of God pity the poor person who feels he has learned enough of him because the more you learn of God the more you realize it's just like a vast ocean that you just hissed on and all eternity will never bring you to fully exhaust knowledge of God the third consequence will be strength you'll be strengthened with all might that's what he's wanting in prayer to know the will of God so that you walk worthy of the Lord to all places why will you be strengthened with all might have you ever tried I'm sure you have to please God have you found it easy have you tried to be fruitful in every good work has it been easy you see if you don't try you'll never reach the end and the limit of your strength if you don't try to be perfect you'll never feel your own weakness but when your goal is to walk worthy of the

Lord and do all pleasing then you will soon reach the very limits of your strength and you'll cry out to the Lord strengthen me more strengthen me more and that's what Paul says here you will have that strength that's what we pray for that you be strengthened with all might according to his glorious power we mustn't you see measure our resources to live that God pleasing life by anything other than the infinite power of God we mustn't say we can only do so much to please God and beyond that by nature

[25 : 30] I have to let go I have to sin we must never say these things we all do I know what we should say is the Lord will give me grace that is sufficient and strength that is in accordance with his own power sufficient for me to live a holy life to please it now he will do it do you think that somehow you please God by your own strength it cannot be that's spurning God that's saying to God you don't need him but what God says is pray to me ask me for the strength with all might according to my glorious power then you will live a life worthy of the

Lord and it's very interesting that word strengthened in the Greek it's a present it's not as if the Lord gives you a burst of strength at the beginning of your Christian life and then you keep on going it's that the Lord is continually making his input into your spiritual life day by day his faithfulness is there his compassion fail not the joy of the Lord is always our strength he is there he is there I will never leave you nor forsake that's not his mere presence that's the promise of power to conquer in his name so he gives all the strength to live for him and he'll give it continually in response to prayer and if we have that power you see we will have three things patience long suffering and joy patience that's where you're able to persevere to endure to persist you're endeavouring you know you haven't arrived but you keep on enduring how are you enduring perhaps some of you have trials and difficulties tonight how are you coping it's not by your strength

I hope it's because of his infinite power that's giving you that patience that endurance long long suffering long suffering is what you have in the face of provocation when you don't retaliate but you suffer long you've put up with things for long when somebody speaks bitter words to you as a young Christian you're tempted just to blast back if somebody hits you your son is tempted just to head back but that's not long suffering when we're living in our own strength you see bitter words will come out of our mouth so quickly but if we're strengthened with all might according to his glorious power then we will have long suffering we'll be able to say with Christ perhaps father forgive them for they know not what to do see them at the same and also we will have joyfulness you can see some people they're enduring they're not retaliating but are the joyful it takes considerable strength to be joyful while you're enduring while you're suffering long it's one thing to be able to persevere with a long face with no joy in your heart as a matter of duty it's quite another matter to endure to have long suffering with joyfulness that requires

God's strength God's strength joy in the fourth thing is thanksgiving of course giving thanks unto the father who has made his mean to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in life is not perhaps a most beautiful thing thankfulness do you pray for the spirit of thankfulness the spirit of thanksgiving do you long that in your heart there will be that wonderful sense of gratefulness for all that God has done for you in Christ that he has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in life well my friend if you want to have that gratefulness pray for it pray for it because it will only come as you grow in knowledge of his will and begin to walk worthy of the

Lord and to all pleased there shall hold series of great teachings and verses that follow from later that will have to leave with the year for the moment let's bow our heads and pray the Lord Lord our God he hath said in the Bible he hath not because he asked not or forgive our foolishness and our

blindness that we haven't all have seen the goal the way we should that we have been too content to live in the spiritual shouts grant this Lord who truly has our aid to walk worthy of the Lord and to all please to be conformed unto the image of

[32 : 47] Christ we thank thee Lord that thy Holy Spirit who has given to us and our regeneration is one who breathes within us a desire for sanctification we pray Lord that thou give us them to be spiritually minded to have our minds set on the things of the spirit and not the things of the flesh watch over us Lord we pray bless our congregations we thank thee Lord for the oneness that we have in Christ Jesus grant Lord to bless thy word as it goes forth every Lord stay in every prayer that it may be accomplishing a transformation in our character that will be pleasing to thee hear us and watch over this for we ask to think by his name

Amen Two