



**Sunday morning January 7<sup>th</sup> 2017 at CBC**

**Sermon outline: Colossians 1:9-14: A prayer for the New Year**

As we conclude our CBC week of prayer (but not our prayers), we are thinking about how we can pray for each other during the year. That is why we are looking at Paul's prayer for the Colossians.

**[1] ARE WE THE PEOPLE TO WHOM THESE WORDS ARE ADDRESSED?**

The first thing we need to know is whether we are the people for whom these words are intended. In the first instance, the letter is addressed to:

*"God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ."* In other words, this letter has always been intended for Christians. And what better time than at the start of a new year to ask ourselves whether we are Christians or not.

**[a] our response**

How did the people at Colossae become Christians?

They had heard ... the true message of the gospel [5] which brought them news about hope (certainty) laid up for them in heaven [4]. They had heard it and truly understood God's grace [6]. They learned it from the man who had brought it to them, namely Epaphras [7]. And it has an effect upon them. It bears fruit in them, producing amongst other things love [8] just as it does in other people in other places who have heard the message [6].



Does that sound familiar? Have we heard and understood the grace of God in the gospel?

### **[b] God's work**

No Christian conversion happens without the activity of God. So Paul reminds the Colossians that God has **qualified them** (notice Christians do not qualify themselves) to share in the inheritance of his holy people [12], **rescued them** from the kingdom of darkness, **brought them** into the kingdom of his son [13], through whom he **has redeemed them**, which is to say that he has forgiven them in Christ. Is this also true of us?

## **[2] IF WE ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD, HOW SHOULD WE PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER?**

### **[a] we should pray for one another with hearts that care for one another**

It is obvious that Paul cares for the Colossian believers. And surely we should pray for one another in the same spirit. After all if we do not love our brothers and sisters – whom we have seen – we cannot love God whom we have not seen. Scripture is quite clear about that:

*1 John 4.20* *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.*

So – we should pray for one another with hearts that care.

**[b] we should pray for one another, asking the Lord to do His work**

Who is going to fill the Colossian believers with the knowledge of God's will? – only God can do that.

**[i] The scope of what is being asked for**

Paul's point is that this remarkable fullness of knowledge is not for a few, special, 'higher level', Christians (which is what false teachers were suggesting to the Colossians), but this is available for all Christians.

**[ii] Where and how can this knowledge be found?**

The most obvious context in which God will impart his wisdom and fill his children with knowledge will be the same context in which they have come to faith, namely through the ministry of the word of God?

**[c] we should pray for one another, asking the Lord that we will do our work**

What is this work?

Or to put it another way, as the Lord imparts the knowledge of his will to us, what should we expect to see? What should we pray for, for one another? We can find at least four elements which overlap to some extent.

**[ ] a consistent Christian life**

The first effect of the increasing *'knowledge of God's will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives'* in the life of the Christian should be that the believer lives in such a way that the name *'Christian'* is a suitable one for them.

### **[ii] a fruitful Christian life**

The second effect of the increasing *'knowledge of God's will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives'* in the life of the Christian should be that fruit is produced in the life of that Christian.

*Fruitfulness = spiritual maturity;*

*Fruitfulness = spiritual usefulness*

### **[iii] a determined Christian life**

The third effect of the increasing *'knowledge of God's will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives'* in the life of the Christian should be a determination to keep going. The reality is that anyone who takes the Christian faith seriously will need endurance and patience.

### **[iv] a joyful Christian life**

The fourth effect of the increasing *'knowledge of God's will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives'* in the life of the Christian should be a joyful expression of Christian faith.

## **CONCLUSION**

So, let us determine with God's help to pray for one another this year. Let us pray that God will do his work, filling us *'with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.'* And let us also pray that as God does his work, we will do ours, living increasingly consistent, fruitful, determined (committed) and joyful Christian lives.