

How to Pray for Others

Colossians 1:9-14

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

When boldly approaching God's throne of grace ever wonder how one should pray for others? Coming "face to face"¹ with an all-powerful and all-knowing God the last thing one wants to do is to babble like the pagans, using many words of repetition without consideration of their



spiritual meaning (Matthew 6:7), or ask for things for loved ones that would actually hurt rather than help them! Prayer is powerful and effective (James 5:16) but only when given in the Spirit and in accordance with God's truth (Ephesians 6:18; 1 Corinthians 14:15).² Living in a fallen world where truth is situationally dependent on situations that tend to change with the shifting sands of culture, means above all intercessory prayer must go beyond asking for superficial, temporal comfort but instead focus on what eternally matters, knowing and following God's

will in one's life.³ In today passage Apostle Paul gives us an example of his intercessory prayer for the Colossians. He started his prayer by asking God that the Colossians would not formulate truth based on cultural norms but stand firm and be filled with the absolute truth of the Gospel message. Paul then prayed that the church at Colossae would live their lives worthy of the Lord by bearing fruit, growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened by God and forever joyful for the deliverance and inheritance they were about to receive. In today's sermon we are going to look at each of these components of Paul's prayer for the Colossians not with the intent of "babbling" it mechanically but to use it as a model of how one can effectively intercede for our loved ones before a holy God!

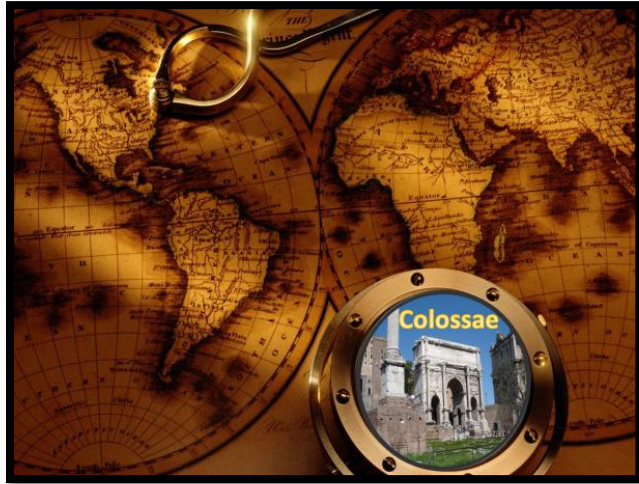
¹ Ian S McNaughton, [Opening up Colossians and Philemon](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 22.

² Ian S McNaughton, [Opening up Colossians and Philemon](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 22.

³ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 251.

Historical Setting

Before going to Paul’s intercessory prayer, it is important to first learn the historical context of Colossae to whom it was addressed. While Paul commended the Colossians for



having borne great fruit and their deep love in the Spirit (verses 6-10), he warned them that they were in danger of turning away from the Gospel to believe in mere human, false teachings!⁴ False teachers told the Colossians they “needed something more than their relationship with Jesus” to bring them into the presence of God.⁵ They taught that the key to defeating the demons that ran rampant in their world⁶ and the key to approaching God could only be found in receiving “special knowledge”⁷ as obtained from legalism or mystical experiences. This heresy was the beginning

of second-century Gnosticism⁸ which falsely claimed that salvation was to be found in special knowledge, not a risen Saviour! “Whatever claims the false philosophy might make, whatever knowledge, wisdom, or experience might be to offer,”⁹ Paul stated would not lead to pleasing God. He encouraged the church of Colossae to remember and stay fast to the Gospel message that they had received from his coworker Epaphras.¹⁰ Spurred on by their progress and the

⁴ Arthur G. Patzia, [Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 24.

⁵ Max Anders, [Galatians-Colossians](#), vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 289.

⁶ William Barclay, [The Letters to Philipians, Colossians, and Thessalonians](#), 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 111.

⁷ Max Anders, [Galatians-Colossians](#), vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 289–290.

⁸ Ian S McNaughton, [Opening up Colossians and Philemon](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 11.

⁹ Ben Witherington III, [The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians : A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 125.

¹⁰ Ben Witherington III, [The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians : A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 124.

possibility of their falling prey to these false teachings,¹¹ Paul felt it necessary to intercede in prayer on their behalf.

Pray they will be Filled with Knowledge of God's Will (verse 9)

To fully “understand God’s grace”¹² Paul prayed that the church of Colossae might be filled with knowledge of God’s will. The knowledge they were to be filled with was not “some speculative of intellectual gnosis that was characteristic of the false teachers of their day”¹³ but



God’s will for their lives. 1 John 5:14 states if we ask for anything according to God’s will then He will not only hear but grant our request! While knowing God’s will in the Old Testament came primarily from the law,¹⁴ priestly ministry and Urim and Thummin, Paul made it clear to the Colossians that knowing God’s will was now attainable through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ “The Spirit is the source of the wisdom and understanding that the Colossians require as they negotiate their way through the maze of first-century worldview options.”¹⁶ One was not saved by being filled by this knowledge, but to

grow beyond fundamentals (Hebrews 5:12, 14) and avoid falsehoods,¹⁷ one must be filled with

¹¹ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 119.

¹² Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 93.

¹³ Arthur G. Patzia, [Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 21.

¹⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 251.

¹⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 251.

¹⁶ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 94.

¹⁷ Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation,”](#) in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2141.

the truth as divinely given by the Spirit. To be filled with the knowledge of God’s will suggests that “such knowledge was to pervade all of one’s being – thoughts, affections, purposes and plans.”¹⁸ Being filled also meant for Paul that the Colossians might “experience what God wanted for them”¹⁹ and thus would mean their lives would be enriched²⁰ and they would “live in a way that befits God’s children.”²¹

Pray they will Live a Life Worthy of the Calling (verses 10-12)

In the first part of verse ten Apostle Paul prayed that the Spirit-given insight into the will of God (1 Corinthians 2:6-16)²² would produce in the Colossians an “attitudinal realignment”²³ in their walk as co-workers with Christ (Ephesians 2:10).²⁴ Since “walking was a Semitic idiom for lifestyle” (Exodus 18:20; Psalms 86:11),²⁵ “knowledge was not to be merely theoretical but practical as well.”²⁶ One of the reasons why the Gospels give details of the life of Christ is to invite believers to become His hands and feet²⁷ by doing deeds in accordance with the will of

¹⁸ Curtis Vaughan, [“Colossians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 177.

¹⁹ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, [A Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 15.

²⁰ Curtis Vaughan, [“Colossians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 177.

²¹ F. F. Bruce, [The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 45–46.

²² Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 94.

²³ Michael F. Bird, [Colossians and Philemon](#), New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 42.

²⁴ Ian S McNaughton, [Opening up Colossians and Philemon](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 23.

²⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 250.

²⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 251.

²⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 252.

the Father.²⁸ Paul prayed that the Colossians might be filled with the knowledge of the will of God not to boast in having acquired teaching unique to themselves²⁹ but to humbly allow His



will to formulate their every thought, word and deed. While “Paul did not hesitate to commend good works (Rom. 3:7; 13:3; 2 Cor. 9:8; Gal. 6:10; Phil. 1:6; 2 Thess. 2:17; Eph. 2:10), he made it abundantly clear that it was not by works but faith and grace that one was saved (Ephesians 2:8-9).³⁰ Daily giving Christ His “eternal due”³¹ by imitating His desire to live a life according to the will of the Father was the key for the Colossians to honor and please their Creator. Let us now turn to the four elements of living a

life worthy of the calling that Paul now prays for the Colossians:³² they would bear much fruit, grow in knowledge of God, be strengthened, be given the ability to patiently endure hardships, and a heart of joyful thanks.

Paul prays that in living a life worthy of the calling the Colossians would “bear much fruit in every good work” they did (Ephesians 4:1; John 15:2-8).³³ “Bearing fruit and growing is language rooted in the creation story, carrying the implication, perhaps that God is seeking through response to the Gospel to confirm His original purpose in creation and establish human beings in His own image.”³⁴ “What rain and sunshine are to the nurture of plants; the

²⁸ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [*Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 252.

²⁹ Curtis Vaughan, [“Colossians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 178.

³⁰ Ben Witherington III, [The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians : A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 124.

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³² Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation,”](#) in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2141.

³³ Ian S McNaughton, [Opening up Colossians and Philemon](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 23.

³⁴ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 96.



knowledge of God is to the growth and maturing of the spiritual life.”³⁵ To keep knowledge from leading to spiritual stagnation and regression back into sinful patterns,³⁶ it must not only be sought but habitually obeyed! Paul prayed that having been freed from the power of sin (Romans 6:7) and therefore able to abandon earthly standards rooted in their old natures,³⁷ the Colossians would not only know good from evil³⁸ but do good by obeying the laws written upon their hearts (Jeremiah

31:33). Paul taught that by doing good works that aligned with God’s will, the Colossians would experience transformed lives capable of continuously bearing much fruit.³⁹

The second element of living a life worthy of the calling for Paul was growth in the knowledge of God. “Jesus said that if we obeyed his teaching we would know the truth (e.g., John 8:31–32), which suggests that we must first risk and follow what little we do understand before we gain deeper insight.”⁴⁰ The greater knowledge one seeks and receives from the hands of a holy God⁴¹ the easier it becomes to know His will. Because God’s ways and thoughts are not naturally our ways and thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9) it takes much fasting, prayer, and meditation to know and understand God’s will in our lives. Knowledge of God is not as the Gnostics suggested, specialized and only given to a precious few enlightened individuals, but is available in God’s holy word for all to read and for those who believe in the Son to understand

³⁵ Curtis Vaughan, [“Colossians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 178.

³⁶ Arthur G. Patzia, [Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 22.

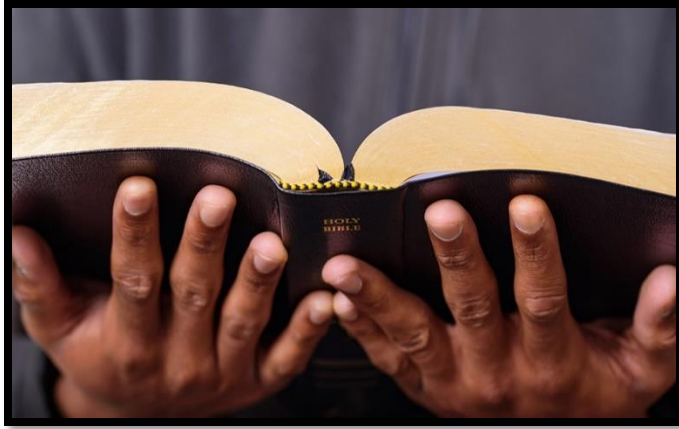
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⁴⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 252.

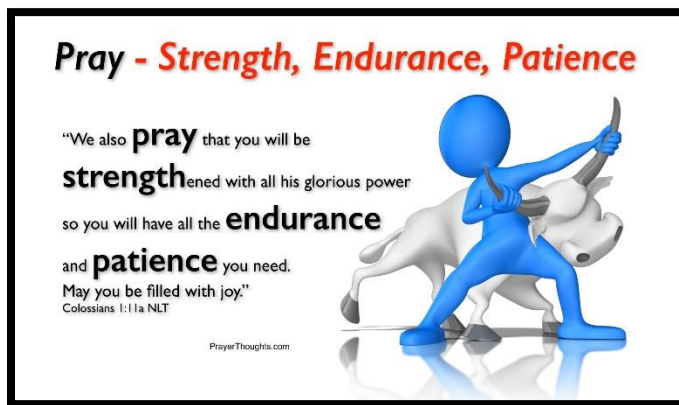
⁴¹ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 250.



through illumination of the Holy Spirit. Paul prayed that the Colossians might increase their knowledge of God not to amass information as a badge of honor but so that through their better understanding⁴² they would choose works that constantly align with God's nature and will. Paul prayed that the Colossians might obtain greater knowledge of God not only to safeguard them from the heresies of their day but also so that they might

grow spiritually through doing deeds that better align with God's word and will!⁴³

Since "living a life worthy of the Lord is a high and difficult calling,"⁴⁴ Paul prayed that God would strengthen the Colossians so that they might have great endurance and patience. Paul



was not requesting "physical strength or prowess"⁴⁵ but divine strength that only comes from the same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of God (1:18-20).⁴⁶ Continually living a worthy life inevitably meant that the Colossians would have to "bear up" and patiently endure trials, tribulations and persecutions.⁴⁷ Paul prayed that the Colossians, whose belief in Christ would inevitably lead to them to wrestle

⁴² Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 252.

⁴³ Arthur G. Patzia, [Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 23.

⁴⁴ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 97.

⁴⁵ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, [A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 17.

⁴⁶ Douglas J. Moo, [The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 98.

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against powers of this dark world (Ephesians 6:12), would not resort in complaining⁴⁸ but lead to joy and assurance all things could be done through Christ who strengthened them (Philippians 4:13).⁴⁹ Longsuffering was especially needed when dealing with difficult people (2 Timothy 4:2).⁵⁰ To not resent or retaliate⁵¹ but to do good to one's enemies (Matthew 5:44) can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit who enables one to see the image, albeit seriously flawed, in the eyes of one's perpetrators and love them! Paul's hope was that the Colossians might rely on God's continuous provision of strength⁵² so that nothing would distract them from joyfully doing His will and bearing much fruit.

The final element of living a life worthy of the calling that Paul prayed for the Colossians was that they might feel the eschatological joy⁵³ that comes from knowing that the Father, through His Son had enabled them to enter the true Promised land!⁵⁴ Due to false teachings the Colossian Christians needed to be reassured that the atoning sacrifice of Christ had truly liberated them from the dominion of darkness⁵⁵ and are now in the kingdom of God's Son.⁵⁶ The redemption price was paid by Christ on the cross (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14)⁵⁷ and through His grace and by their faith the Colossian believers were forgiven their sins and could celebrate their new found union with

⁴⁸ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, [*A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 18.

⁴⁹ Curtis Vaughan, "[Colossians](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 178.

⁵⁰ Ian S McNaughton, [Opening up Colossians and Philemon](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 24.

⁵¹ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, [*A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 18.

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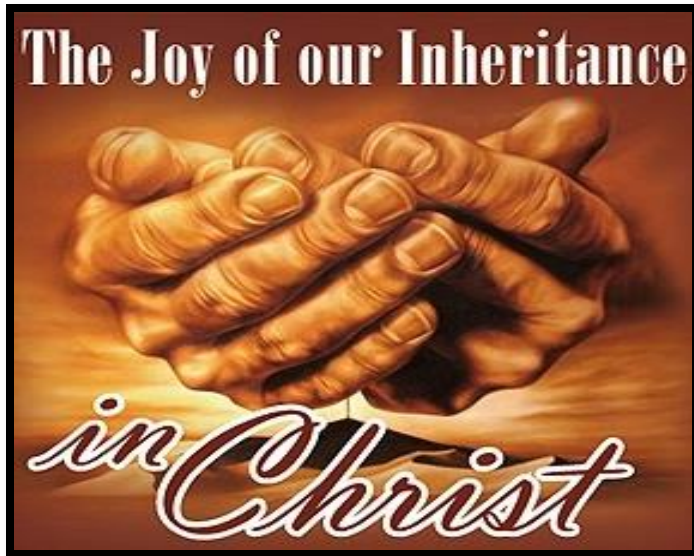
⁵³ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 250.

⁵⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.](#), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 253.

⁵⁵ Douglas J. Moo, "[The Letters and Revelation](#)," in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2142.

⁵⁶ Curtis Vaughan, "[Colossians](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 179.

⁵⁷ Michael F. Bird, [Colossians and Philemon](#), New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 44.



Christ!⁵⁸ Paul prayed that having been rescued from the dark realm that had held them prisoners⁵⁹ the Colossians might shout for joy for they were now free to walk as “children of the light,” bear and thus “fruit of the light” (Ephesians 5:8–9),⁶⁰ in Christ’s kingdom until He returns and they obtain the eternal life that is “incorruptible and undefiled”⁶¹ that awaits them in heaven as God’s very own heirs and children (1 Peter 1:4)! Like Paul my prayer for you is that you become filled with the knowledge of the will of God so that you with great

endurance, patience and unspeakable joy you might live your lives worthy of His calling until the day Christ returns to take you to your eternal home!

⁵⁸ Curtis Vaughan, [“Colossians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 180.

⁵⁹ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, [A Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 19–20.

⁶⁰ Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation,”](#) in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2142.

⁶¹ Ian S McNaughton, [Opening up Colossians and Philemon](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 24.