

apostle writes in connection with his instructions in the truth to the saints at Colosse, "We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might."

The whole ground and range of obligation and responsibility regarding prayer is brought into view in connection with this joint prayer of the Apostle Paul and Timothy, with which Paul, by implication here and evidently later, associates Epaphras, whom he styles, "Our dear fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ for you."

They had received "the word of the truth of the gospel which had come unto them, and it was to bring forth fruit in them of faith in Christ Jesus and love towards all the saints, on which account the apostle says that since having heard it they gave thanks to God and prayed continually for them, because of the hope which was laid up for them in the heavens, (Gr); and further, now that Epaphras, their faithful minister, had also declared to them their love in the Spirit (their love in the Spirit towards the apostle and Timothy, his delegate, with regard to the apostolic office and authority is meant here, I believe), augmenting and confirming what they had formerly heard, they also prayed without ceasing and desired for them that the work of grace might be fully completed in them." And why? The reasons are given in the apostles' ensuing words.

(1) Because "the Father has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance (or portion) of the saints in light, having delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Gr)

By delivering us from the power of darkness and translating us into light—into the kingdom of the Son of His love, the Father has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance (or portion) of the saints in light. Therefore the apostle prays for them what the younger son who became a prodigal asked for himself, namely, "Father, give them the portion that falleth to them."

(2) Because "in the Son of His love we have redemption, through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" the forgiveness of sins insuring the consummation of the completed "redemption from all iniquity and purification of us unto Himself as a peculiar people—a people for His own possession—zealous of good works;" (for there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared); and subsequently the redemption of our body at the coming of the Lord; "the redemption of the whole purchased possession to the praise of His glory."

(3) Because "the Son of His love is the image (or visible representation) of the invisible God," unto whose image the Father has predestinated us conformed; being "the Word made flesh, who dwelt among His brethren on earth full of grace and truth; and whose glory, also full of grace and truth (the fulness referring both to the Word made flesh and also His glory). Peter, James and John beheld the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" ("His glory is the fulness of the whole earth" (Isaiah 6:3. Heb.) John declaring that "of His fulness they had all received, and grace for grace" and that "the things written to us are in order that we may have fellowship with them, truly with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." As "the only begotten of the Father," "He is the first-born of all creation" (Gr); therefore

He is heir to all, and "we are joint heirs with Him."

(4) Because as "first-born of all creation, in (Gr) Him, the Son of His love, were all the things (Gr) created that are in the heavens (Gr) and that are upon (Gr) the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all the things (Gr) were created through (Gr) Him and unto (Gr) Him; and He is before all," both in respect of existence and eminence, "and in (Gr) Him all the things (Gr) consist (or subsist together)." "We are created in Him unto good works which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them."

(5) Because "the Son of His love, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead" in order "that in all things He might have pre-eminence, is the Head of the body, the church," of which we are the members, "from which Head all the body by joints and bands," that is, by its various parts or members, and the bonds of the gospel—the things enjoined by the word of the truth of the gospel; thus by the Spirit, "having nourishment ministered and being knit (or united) together, increaseth with the increase of God."

(6) Because "in the Son of His love all the fulness (that is, "the fulness of the absolute God-head") was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all the things to itself, whether the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens, having made peace through Him, through the blood of His cross" (Lit. Gr).

(7) Because "you who once were alienated and enemies in mind in wicked works, yet now has it (the fulness) reconciled, in the body of His flesh through death, to present you wholly, and unblemished, and irreproachable before it" "the presence of His glory;" "the fulness" manifested in glory; "if indeed ye abide in the faith," "the word of the truth of the gospel." "founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard, which has been proclaimed in the whole creation which is under heaven" (Lit. Gr).

(8) Because "I, Paul, became (Gr) a minister of the gospel."

(9) Because, as such, "I became (Gr.) minister of Christ's body, the church," of which you are members, "according to the dispensation of God which is given me towards you to complete (Gr) the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to His saints."

(10) Because "God would make known to His saints what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations (Gr) which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

(11) Because "we proclaim Christ, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, to the end that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (Lit. Gr).

(12) Now the apostle goes on to say, "I would have you know what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh. (This, as well as the fact that he was a prisoner in bonds, makes it obvious that his great combat was in prayer) that their hearts might be comforted, being knit (or united) together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge (Gr) of the mystery of God, and

of the Father, and of Christ, in whom (or wherein) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," adding, "and I say this lest any one (or to the end that no one) may delude you by persuasive speech" (Lit. Gr), thus summarizing and defining the object of his prayers for the children of God as their perfection and preservation. As before remarked, these reasons together with the remainder of the epistle bring into view the whole ground and range of obligation and responsibility regarding prayer on the part of both the representative ministers of Christ and His people. Accordingly the apostle himself acknowledged and fulfilled it, and he testifies that Timothy, who was associated with him, did likewise.

Concerning Tychicus, a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord, Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, Aristarchus, his fellow-prisoner, Marcus, and Jesus called Justus, it is evidently implied by the apostles' commission, commandments, commendations and testimony, "These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God which have been a comfort unto me," that they did likewise. Concerning Epaphras, the faithful servant of Christ for the saints at Colosse, he obviously did likewise, for the apostle says that he was "always labouring fervently in prayers for them that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God," adding, "Bear Him record that he hath a great zeal (or he labours much) for you, and them in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis."

The salutations of Luke, with his commendations as "the beloved physician," and those of Demas, imply that they likewise acknowledged it.

The apostle's directions "to Archippus to take heed to the ministry which he had received in the Lord to fulfill it," fixes it likewise upon him; and also his directions to "cause his epistle, when read among them, to be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans, fixes it likewise upon them."

Further, the apostle also says to them, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (You know the apostle James also says, "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights). And yet again he says, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving, withal (or at the same time) praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance (or of the word) to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds, that I may make it manifest as I sought to speak," thus fixing it likewise upon them.

And what shall we say to these things?

We have the whole ground and range of our obligation and responsibility shown to us in "the word of the truth of the gospel;" we have the Lord's personal commandments; then we have His commandments by the hand of His holy apostles; and finally we learn from Samuel, a prophet of the Lord, that it would be sin on the part of a representative minister of God to cease to pray for His people; and therefore by parity of reasoning, sin also on the part of any of us

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"Perfect obedience would be perfect happiness, if only we had perfect confidence in the Power we were obeying."—Anon.