



First, it must be noted that just a few verses earlier, in chapter 12:21 Paul describes his fear concerning the current state of the Corinthians church, saying, “many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.” In fact, based on Paul’s previous letter to the Corinthians, we know there was someone among them who continued in fornication and had to be temporarily excommunicated until he repented (1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:6-8). Paul’s worry in chapter 12 combined with this actual precedent in 1 Corinthians 5 demonstrate this is not just a theoretical possibility for Paul. Some of the Corinthian Christians had been sinning. And these historic facts present four difficult challenges to the Calvinist interpretation of chapter 13:7.

Number one, there is a moral problem. If, as the Calvinist view holds, God alone is capable of causing men to stop sinning, who is responsible for sin? Men are incapable of stopping on an ontological level. They literally can’t help themselves. No one can stop sin except for God. But God chooses to let sin continue. And, when you factor in that God alone could have made men incapable of sin from the beginning (or preserved their freewill in the matter all along), the Calvinist scenario makes God alone responsible for the existence and the proliferation of sin.

Number two, there is a practical consideration. In the Calvinist interpretation of the prayer in chapter 13:7 in which God is the sole agent who unilaterally controls whether or not people continue to sin, we would have the following scenario regarding 1 Corinthians 5. There is a man in the Corinthians church who is committing fornication. God does not cause this man to stop sinning. And, God does not cause the church to expel the man. Instead, Paul has to write the church to chastise them for not excommunicating the man sooner and command them to do so. The church does excommunicate the man, and only then, after he has suffered, does God unilaterally cause him to repent of his sin. This scenario is not only highly convoluted but it is also senseless.

What purpose does the punishment or the suffering serve? It can’t be something extraneous, something Paul cooks up unnecessarily because he writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to instruct the Corinthians to do it. Likewise, in the Calvinist view, the punishment and suffering aren’t instructional. In a Calvinist scheme, God unilaterally causes the man to stop sinning by acting irresistibly on his inner man, not through the external actions of the Corinthian church. And it’s not a teaching example to deter other Corinthians from sin. In a Calvinist scenario, men can’t stop sinning by considering external factors and exercising good judgment to repent. Only God stops men from sinning by virtue of his direct, irresistible actions on their inner man. So, what’s the purpose of the suffering of punishment when God can stop this particular man and any other man from sinning at will at any time? Either, there is no purpose and God is making men to suffer for no reason or the purpose is to glorify God, in which case we are left to conclude that God prefers to be glorified rather than to stop sin and suffering that are otherwise unnecessary and could be stopped at any time.

Number three, there are two textual contradictions for a Calvinist view of this prayer.

In 2 Corinthians 2:6-7, Paul attributes the man's remorse to the punishment inflicted by the church, saying, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." This shows us that Paul did not view the man's repentance as being a result of God's direct, unilateral action on his inner man, but as a result of the external efforts of church excommunication.

Next, there is the looming question of why Paul would charge the Corinthians with the responsibility to exercise obedience and turn from sin if Paul understood that they were incapable of doing so and only God could unilaterally stop them? The thrust of Paul's comments in the preceding verses in chapter 12:20-21 is Paul appealing to the Corinthians to stop sinning. Paul wouldn't bring up his fear and sorrow over the possibility that many of the Corinthians might still be sin without intending to impress on them to stop. And what of Paul's numerous other admonitions for Christians to stop sinning? 1 Corinthians 6:8-20 and 10:6-12 are but just a few examples. All those admonitions would be meaningless if Paul thought the Corinthians were actually powerless and incapable of stopping sin and only God Himself could unilaterally stop them.

Second, besides the nonsensical and contradictory scenario created by Paul's concern for sin among the Corinthians, chapter 13:5 also presents a challenge to the Calvinist interpretation. Here Paul instructs the Corinthians to, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Such admonition for self-reflection is inherently incompatible with the any interpretation of verse 7, which suggests that God must act unilaterally to cause men to repent because men are incapable of doing so of their own volition. And instruction for self-reflection suggests that Paul wants them to consider their actions for the purpose of changing them. It puts the power (and responsibility) to reflect and to change into the hands of the Corinthians. Given the close proximity between verses 5 and 7, it is increasingly unlikely that verse 7 was intended to convey that Paul expected God (and God alone) would cause the Corinthians to choose not to sin.

So far, we have seen at least 3 evidences in which Paul instructs and expects the Corinthians to turn themselves away from sin combined with his fearful warning recognizing the very real consequences if they do not. These 3 evidences include the role of church disciplinary action and remorse in the sinful man from 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2, the repeated plain instruction not to sin including the function of Old Testament events as teaching examples for Christians to learn from in 1 Corinthians 6:8-20 and 10:6-12 and 2 Corinthians 12:20-21, and the instruction for the Corinthians to examine their own behavior and attitudes here in 2 Corinthians 3:5. At the very least, these facts demand a cooperative process in which both God and man must voluntarily participate in order for success. But, these necessary conclusions still do not answer the

question of exactly what expectations we might identify in Paul's prayer in chapter 13:7. To answer that question, we turn again to the text.

**2 Corinthians 13:7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.**

When it comes to exactly what Paul expects God to do, there are two possibilities.

First, it may be that this verse is not actually intended to identify specifically what Paul is petitioning God for. Instead, it may be that the phrase denotes the motivation for Paul's petition rather than the thing he is praying for itself. This possibility is suggested by the fact that this verse is constructed with two sets of paired contrasts. In the first half of the verse, the phrase "that ye do no evil" is contrasted with the alternate possibility "that we should appear approved." The second half of the verse parallels this same concept but with the opposite emphasis. Instead of saying "that ye do no evil," Paul says "that ye should do that which is honest." Instead of a negative, this is a positive. The same is true for the remaining phrase. In the first half of the verse, Paul says, "not that we should appear approved." In the second half he reverses the idea of approved and says, "though we be as reprobates."

It is clear that the second half of the verse is parallel in meaning to the first pair of phrases in the opening half of the verse. But, what is also clear is that the phrases "not that we should appear approved" is a description of Paul's possible motives for praying, not a description of what he is praying for itself. In other words, Paul is saying, "I'm not praying because I want to look good, I'm praying because I want you to stop doing evil. I don't care if we look like reprobates as long as the result is that you live honestly." This is Paul contrasting his potential motives, not Paul discussing what he is asking God to do. Whatever Paul was petitioning God to do, he was motivated by his desire to see the Corinthians live right, not by his desire to have other people congratulate him for his work among the Corinthians.

Second, if the phrase "that ye do no evil" is intended to identify what Paul is asking God for, it must still be noted that Paul does not specify by what mechanism or mechanisms he expects God to act toward this outcome. We have already seen that Calvinistic processes which are unilateral and irresistible do not fit with Paul's straightforward assertions that the Corinthians had it within their power to stop sinning. But are their mechanisms that are not unilaterally guaranteed? Again, there are two possibilities.

Number one, it is possible that Paul is petitioning God to give them wisdom so that they might judge correctly.

First, in the phrase "that ye do no evil" there are two words worth considering.

The word "no" just before the word "evil" is the adjective "medeis" (3367), which means "nobody, no one, nothing." We will note that the first two definitions listed

in the lexicon (nobody, no one) refer to persons, not things. In fact, out of the 91 times that “medeis” occurs in the New Testament, it is translated as “no man” 32 times. Given this phrase, it is possible that this phrase might be rendered, “that you do no man evil.”

The Greek word for “do” is the verb “poieo” (4160), which generally means, “to make” or “to do.” It is a widely used word and occurs 579 times in the New Testament. Of those 579 occurrences, there are a few interesting uses worth considering here. All of the following passages apply “poieo” to a person, further demonstrating potential viability for translating “medeis” as “no man.” But there are other reasons that make the uses of “poieo” interesting.

Acts 2:36 uses “poieo” when stating that, “God hath made (4160) that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Here “poieo” is used to refer to God appointing Jesus to a particular position. It also seems to intentionally contrast the Sanhedrin’s unjust judgment and punishment of Christ with God’s judgment exonerating and rewarding Christ. In this sense, “poieo” might be understood to convey to what you ascribe to a person in judgment.

Similarly, Hebrews 3:1-2 uses “poieo” when it says, “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus Who was faithful to him that appointed (4160) him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.” Here again “poieo” is used to directly convey the sense of appointment, favorable judgment, or esteemed someone fit for an office. In fact, Hebrews 4:15, 5:1-7, 7:26, and 8:3 all go on to connect Christ’s priestly status with his enduring temptation without sin and his righteous work, particularly his sacrifice for mankind. Lastly, we note that “poieo” is used in reference to both the appointment of Jesus and the appointment of Moses. Other passages, such as Revelation 1:6, 3:12, and 5:10, also use “poieo” in this sense of favorable judgment to reward and appointment of those deemed worthy.

1 John 1:10 uses “poieo” when it says, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make (4160) him a liar.” The “him” in question here is God as can be seen in verses 5-7. We see this again in 1 John 5:10, when John writes, “he that believeth not God hath made (4160) him a liar.” And, of course, we cannot actually turn God into an actual liar. This is interesting because it shows that “poieo” doesn’t have to mean that the person actually becomes what they are “made” into, but only that they are characterized that way by someone else, regardless of whether the characterization or judgment is actually true. In addition, it is also interesting that “poieo” is used in a negative rather than a positive sense. Acts 2 and Hebrews 3 both used “poieo” to speak of someone being deemed good. But 1 John 1:10 and 5:10 use “poieo” to speak of someone being portrayed in a negative light.

It should be noted that “medeis” and “poieo” are used in direct combination with each other only 2 other times in the New Testament. In Acts 25:17, we find the phrase “come hither, without (4160) any (3367) delay,” which might more literally be rendered “come hither, making no delay.” In 1 Timothy 5:21, which reads, “doing (4160) nothing (3367) by partiality.” Partiality has to do with unfair

judgment or being a respecter of persons in which one person is treated more favorably for some superficial or unjust reason. We can see this from the preceding phrase, “observe these things without preferring one before another.” Since the context so clearly has to do with fair and unfair standards of judgment and given the previous uses we’ve seen of “poieo,” this verse might be more adequately rendered “observe these things without preferring one before another, judging no man by partiality.” But even if 1 Timothy 5 is translated in reference to doing some thing, rather than how we esteem a person, these 2 other couplings of “poieo” and “medeis” hardly provide a trend regarding New Testament usage.

Second, the context of 2 Corinthians also provides some corroboration that that these verses in 2 Corinthians 12 and 13 are intended by Paul as instructions about proper judgment in the church. Again, we note the backdrop of the precedent provided in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 in which Paul writes to Corinth in order to outright demand excommunication after finding out about a single sinner in the church. His second letter to the Corinthians does not fail to touch back on this same subject, even directly instructing the Corinthians to forgive and reinstate the sinner, who has since come to regret his sinful behavior, as seen in chapter 2:4-8. Moreover, in 2 Corinthians 12:1, Paul refers to his third visit and the potential to correct sin in Corinth to “two or three witnesses,” which is a reference to the protocols for excommunication given by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-20, a passage that Paul is directly referencing in 1 Corinthians 5:3-4, 9, and 13. And, in 1 Corinthians 4:21, right before instructing them to excommunicate the sinner, Paul warns the Corinthians and ponders whether he will have to be harsh or not when next he visits. This is very similar to the sentiment conveyed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:2-4, 10. Consider the similarities when the passages are viewed side by side.

**1 Corinthians 4:21** What will ye? **shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?** **5:1** It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. **2** And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. **3** For I verily, **as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present,** concerning him that hath so done this deed.

**2 Corinthians 13:2** I told you before, and foretell you, **as if I were present,** the second time; **and being absent now** I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, **if I come again, I will not spare:** **3** Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. **4** For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you... **10** Therefore I write these things being absent, **lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.**

Third, the two preceding verses immediately before verse 7 (in 2 Corinthians 13) are explicitly an instruction for the Corinthians to examine themselves. At first glance, the phrase “examine yourselves” may seem like something for each individual to perform in private reflection, but it is also possible, if not more probable, that Paul is referring to a collective procedure in which the church judges its members to determine if they have remained in Christ or if they are reprobates. It is in this context that Paul explains that he desires that they “make” or deem no man evil during this judgment. In fact, Paul explains more thoroughly stating that although he has instructed them to judge, he desires that they will not judge any as evil, not merely to avoid making Paul look good as a leader if they are all doing well, but to judge with integrity even if the result is that it makes Paul look horrible.

Let’s pull some of these pieces of information together. “Medeis” is often translated as “no man” in the New Testament. “Poieo” is at times clearly used to convey a judgment, appointment, or depiction of someone either for good or for bad. And both the immediate and larger context of Paul’s remarks suggests he is discussing the subject of the Corinthians exercising proper judgment toward sinners in their church. These factors lend support to the notion that the prayer in 2 Corinthians 13:7 would perhaps be better translated as something along the lines of, “I pray to God that you judge no man evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.”

Still, although we understand a lot more about the details of this verse, we haven’t quite answered the question regarding what Paul expects God to do? However, if this passage is indeed Paul’s instruction for how the Corinthians are to judge properly, then it seems well in line with biblical precedent that Paul’s petitions to God for the Corinthians would be a petition for wisdom. After all, in 2 Chronicles 1:11, God describes how Solomon “asked wisdom and knowledge” so that he “mayest judge my people.” How simple and natural it would be for Paul to instruct the Corinthians to judge and pray that God would give them wisdom, not so that they would judge anyone as guilty but so they could judge rightly, even if Paul’s work among them didn’t prove as fruitful. The prayer for wisdom and knowledge is a common biblical prayer.

Number two, there is also a simpler alternative. In the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:13, Jesus instructs his disciples to petition God, “lead us not into temptation.” We see similar sentiment from Jesus potentially in Matthew 26:41 and Mark 14:38, where he says, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” Luke 22:40 and 46 are likewise say slightly more straightforwardly, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.” But how would praying that God would keep the Corinthians from temptation relate to the desire for them not to do evil? In Galatians 6:1, Paul connects temptation directly to finding fault with others. The text states, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Consequently, it stands to reason that Paul would have been concerned that his instruction for the Corinthians to examine and judge one another’s behavior as a church would itself provide an occasion for temptation. In short, it

would make perfect sense in this context for Paul to petition God to keep the Corinthians from temptation so that they would not do evil themselves while judging others. In fact, this would be an exact parallel to Paul's own words in Galatians 6:1.

There are also a few other points that support the notion that Paul's remarks in 2 Corinthians 13:5-7 are about the church maintaining its integrity by properly examining the fidelity of its members to Christ's teaching. First, earlier in 2 Corinthians 7, Paul follows up on the circumstances of a man who was excommunicated from the Corinthian church as a result of Paul's direct command in 1 Corinthians 5. As he returns to this familiar circumstance, Paul commends the Corinthians for exonerating themselves by doing what was necessary to judge and expel the fornicator identified in 1 Corinthians. By conducting the matter as Paul had instructed them, the Corinthians showed themselves to be approved.

**2 Corinthians 7:8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. 9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. 11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.**

Second, in 1 Corinthians 5:6-13 we can see Paul's concern that if sinful conduct was left unaddressed by a local church, it would become a temptation to faithful members, similar to what we saw in Galatians 6:1 indicates as well. And in verses 12-13 Paul again reinforces the need for the church to judge its members just before he proceeds into chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians where he chastises the Corinthians for judging and taking action against each other for selfish rather than godly reasons.

And third, in 2 Corinthians 13:7 Paul expresses his concern for maintaining the integrity of the church during his remarks about appearing approved or unapproved, which he refers to as "reprobate." We also see similar concerns from Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:31-32 where he instructs "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." With these words, Paul explains the principle that we are judged by others precisely because we have not taken care to examine ourselves to make sure we are acting properly in accordance with Christ's teaching.

All of these factors support the conclusion that 2 Corinthians 13 is within this constant theme from Paul in his letters to this church. Paul wants the Corinthians to judge properly in their church, not to simply to look good or to make Paul look good. Not to judge for false, selfish motives, but to maintain fidelity to Christ's

teachings and to prevent the temptation that results among the church when a part of the church body is allowed to continue in sin unaddressed.

Ultimately, whether we interpret 1 Corinthians 13:7 as a petition for wisdom in judgment or a petition for God to keep the Corinthians from temptation, as long as the vocabulary reasonably allows for it, we should favor interpreting 2 Corinthians 13:7 in terms of well-established biblical mechanisms, rather than Calvinist mechanisms that are not specifically identified in the text.

But before we leave 2 Corinthians 13, we need to turn our attention to verse 9 where we find another prayer from Paul.

**2 Corinthians 13:9** For we are glad, when we are weak, **and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection (2676).**

First, notice that the word “also” appears right before the prayer. This suggests perhaps a second petition separate from the one mentioned in verse 7.

Second, the Greek word for “perfection” here is the noun “katartisis” (2676), which means “strengthening.” It is derived from the verb “katartizo” (2675), which means to render, to complete, to mend or repair, to equip, to put in order, to ethically strengthen.” Given the context of 2 Corinthians 13 and Paul’s concern for healing in the church after the excommunication of a sinner, the need to receive him back after he’d repented, and the general need for the Corinthians to judge themselves regarding sin, it would make simple sense to understand verse 9 as a prayer for “mending” and “repair” among this church that was going through such difficult issues in their church body. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:9-12, his instructions regarding these matters were not to damage the church. Rather his instructions were for their benefit and after their faithfulness in such an ordeal, he desired to see them comforted. Additionally, we have already examined at length that the New Testament described how the external evidence of miracles was considered a powerful tool for strengthening conviction as well. In fact, Paul spoke in these terms in chapter 1:6-8 of his first letter to the Corinthians, as we have also already seen. So, it is also possible that Paul’s brief reference to perfection here is again part of the familiar of strengthening the conviction of the church through the confirmation provided by the miraculous gifts.

Third, perhaps more generally we might consider whether Paul is simply praying that God would not give up on them but continue all the efforts he had undertaken toward them so far, including sending preachers like Paul, providing supernatural gifts, and giving wisdom to local leaders so they can govern and teach well. Petitioning God not to give up and withdraw his efforts toward the Corinthians would make perfect sense given that Paul has just finished lamenting in chapter 12:21 that, “many” “have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.” Given that Paul had instructed the Corinthians to excommunicate a man for such sins in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, it makes sense that he would fear (and that he might perceive the Corinthians would fear) that God might cut them off. After all, in Romans 11:18-22 Paul speaks of

God cutting off those Gentiles who were grafted in if they afterward turn to unbelief. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 10:5-11, Paul speaks of God removing those among the Jewish nation who came out of Egypt under Moses and persisted in fornication and other sinful behaviors. In this sense, Paul's prayer in verse 9 would be a common intercessory prayer in which one person petitions God to be merciful or continue to be merciful toward sinners rather than curtail their progress by ending his generous efforts to persuade them to faith and repentance.

Fourth, it should be noted that any petition for God to bring Christians to completion is not compatible with Calvinism. Asking God for something logically entails the perception of a need that will not necessarily be filled without God's intervention (or continued intervention) in the circumstance. In this case, in order for Paul ask God for the Corinthians to reach completion, Paul would have to perceive that the perseverance of the Corinthians was in jeopardy. And Paul's concern would have to be real enough for him not only to petition God to take action regarding this dilemma but also real enough to write and warn the Corinthians to try to persuade them. Consequently, in order for Paul to be concerned that the Corinthians might not continue to the end of the process, Paul could not have believed that the perseverance of the saints was guaranteed to occur.

#### Note 40 – Ephesians 6:18-24

**Ephesians 6:16** Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. **17** And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: **18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;** **19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,** **20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds:** that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. **21** But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: **22** Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts. **23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with (3326) faith,** from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **24** Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

There are three passages that we should draw upon to compare to this prayer in Ephesians 6:18-19.

First, we might consider what is meant by praying that “utterance may be given” to Paul. There seems nothing here that would go beyond what Jesus speaks about in Matthew 10:18-20 and Mark 13:11. For instance, in Matthew 10:18 Jesus declares, “ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.” In verses 19-20, Jesus goes on to explain, “when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak:

for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not yet that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” In a context like Ephesians 6:20 in which Paul mentions his role as an “ambassador in bonds” awaiting trial before the Romans, it makes perfect sense for Paul to ask the Ephesians to pray for God to give him words to speak. His thoughts were on Jesus’ teaching and his impending testimony given before the rulers of the Gentiles. As such, this is either a basic prayer for wisdom or perhaps a prayer for inspired speech akin to prophecy. In either sense, this petition constitutes nothing more than a petition for a kind of supernatural gift such as a word of wisdom, word of knowledge, or simply the gift of prophecy itself as described in 1 Corinthians 12:8.

Second, with regard to the petition for boldness in verse 19, we can recall our previous discussion of Acts 4.

**Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. 31** And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. 32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 **And with great power (1411) gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus:** and great grace was upon them all.

In verse 29 of Acts 4, the apostles petition the Lord for boldness, but in verses 30 and 33, we see that the apostles expected God to grant this request, not by unilaterally or irresistibly causing them to have a bold attitude, but by giving them supernatural power to perform miracles. (Notice once again, the use of “*dunamis*” in verses 33 in direct association with the prayer for miracles in verse 30 and as the means to bear witness to Jesus.) Consequently, Paul’s prayer for boldness in Ephesians should likewise be understood as a petition for God to supply him with supernatural gifts (such as supernatural wisdom to speak or perhaps other miracles) so that he might have confidence before his jailors and judges

Third and finally, we turn our attention to the closing petition for “Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith” that is found in verse 23. Here we might consider whether Paul is petitioning God to cause the Ephesians to have faith.

Number one, just a few verses earlier in Ephesians 6:16, Paul instructs the Ephesians to “above all, take the shield of faith.” In saying this, Paul places both the ability (and the responsibility) to exercise faith onto the shoulders of the Ephesians. This is not a depiction of faith coming to them unilaterally and irresistibly from outside while they are passive in the process as Calvinism teaches. It is a depiction of them having the choice to walk in faith or not, to summon it themselves or fail to do so, to metaphorically arm themselves with it or walk without it. In this context, it is simply not plausible that Paul would go on to

portray faith as something that God causes the Ephesians to have and to persevere in irresistibly and without their cooperation. Since faith is already present in the Ephesians and something they can exercise at will, at the most verse 23 could be a petition for God to strengthen their existing faith. But again, this would be problematic for the Calvinist since it necessitates that Paul was concerned their faith might be weak and could fail, which is incompatible with the Calvinist doctrine of perseverance (and the view of faith that necessitates such a doctrine).

Number two, notice the word “with” in the phrase “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The English preposition “with” is translated from the Greek preposition “meta” (3326), which means “with, after, behind.” In Revelation 6:8, “meta” is used in the phrase, “A pale horse and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed (190) with (3326) him.” The Greek word for “followed” is “akoloutheo” (190), which means, “to follow one who precedes.” We see these two words paired again in Revelation 14:13, which says concerning the saints that, “their works do follow (190) (3326) them.” In this case, “meta” isn’t even translated separately but merely jointly translated with “akoloutheo” as the single English word “followed.” In both these cases, we see that “meta” can be used to describe those things that follow after something else. But what would such usages suggest about “meta” in Ephesians 6:23? If we apply this connotation to Ephesians 6:23, Paul would be saying that peace and love from God come after faith. It would be very natural to take this as stipulating that faith is a condition that must be present to receive more love and peace from God. In fact, the idea that faith is a precondition for receiving anything from God is plainly declared elsewhere in scripture. James 1:6-7 instructs, “let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” and explains that “he that wavereth” will “not...receive any thing of the Lord.” Hebrews 11:6 famously declares, “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” In short, Paul’s petition would be for peace and love, but faith would be the condition for receiving them rather than one of the items received. Consequently, due in part to the use of “meta,” there is nothing in Ephesians 6 that is out of line with what we’d expect if peace and love from the Father follow after faith is already present, if faith is a condition for reconciliation with God.

Number three, it is possible that this is not actually a prayer. It could simply be Paul expressing God’s love and goodwill toward the Ephesians. In other words, the phrase “Peace and love from God the Father,” might be equivalent to a salutation like, “Your uncle sends his love.” Rather than a petition for your uncle to love you, this is a declaration of how your uncle already feels about you, which functions as an encouragement.

Ultimately, there is little basis for insisting that this brief phrasing at the end of Ephesians was intended to convey that God unilaterally and irresistibly puts faith into people.

**Note 41 – Philippians 1:2-11 and Colossians 1:2-14, 2:1-3, 6-7**

**Philippians 1:2** Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. **3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; 6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: 7** Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, **and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel,** ye all are partakers of my grace. **8** For God is my record, how greatly **I long after** you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. **9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness,** which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

There are a couple of items worth noting here. First, it should be noted that thanking God for the Philippians wouldn't automatically entail the Calvinist notion that God unilaterally caused these particular Philippians to believe and accept the Gospel by acting inwardly and irresistibly on their decision-making faculties. After all, it was God's decision to send Christ to atone for men, to extend that opportunity for atonement and divine acceptance to the Gentiles in general, to send missionaries to Philippi in particular, and to no doubt provide the customary miraculous proofs alongside the preaching to the Philippians. (We see a good hint of this in verse 7 which refers to the "confirmation of the gospel.") All of these actions on God's part would provide sufficient grounds to thank God "for" the Philippians without inferring Calvinist expectations.

Second, in verse 4 Paul begins to speak of what he petitions God to do for the Philippians. This starts in the phrase "in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." Verse 5 begins with the phrase "for your fellowship in the gospel."

Number one, notice that here Paul would be identifying the continued fellowship of the Philippians as something that is not guaranteed. It could theoretically cease, and this possibility would be real enough to fuel Paul's prayer for it to instead continue. This fact, in itself, would contradict the Calvinist doctrines of irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints, which prohibit the idea of anyone falling away from fellowship in the Gospel once they have already received it.

Number two, is Paul petitioning God for them to have fellowship? Or is Paul petitioning God "for you" and "for your fellowship" in the sense that these are the benefactors of Paul's prayers? For example, the phrase "I bought a car for my son," the son is not what is bought. The son is the benefactor of the action of buying. Likewise, this phrase would denote simply that Paul is petitioning God with the Philippians as the benefactors.

Number three, even if Paul was asking God to continue the Philippians' fellowship, such a petition conforms to a pattern for God to continue having mercy upon them rather than cutting them off. As such, it does not infer that God is the cause of their will to continue in fellowship but rather that God is the source of the mercy that allows acceptance for those who choose to come to Him.

Number four, this hint at the potential for cessation of fellowship is probably what prompts Paul immediately in verse 6 to reaffirm his confidence that God will continue to work in them. It may well be that having acknowledged the possibility of their falling out of fellowship in the preceding verse, Paul wanted to avoid discouraging them and so felt the need to assure them that God was still on their side.

Number five, although verse 6 is often taken to infer the Calvinist doctrines of irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints, two factors argue against such a conclusion. One, Paul has just expressed the need to pray for the Philippians' perseverance. There would be no basis for Paul to petition God to prevent a cessation of fellowship if a cessation of fellowship were not possible. Consequently, we cannot conclude that God's work in verse 6 is guaranteed to reach its intended effect on the Philippians (i.e. their salvation on the day of Jesus Christ). Two, the assertion of assurance that God would continue His efforts is compatible with both the unilateral view of Calvinism and the cooperative view of Freewill theology. In a Freewill model where each individual's salvation depends on the continuation of both God's efforts and man's efforts, to simply assert that God will keep up his effort does nothing to either guarantee the outcome or to rule out the role of human cooperation. It is simply and solely an assertion that one party will keep up their end of the bargain. Whether there is another party who must cooperate is plainly outside of confines and the contents of the remark.

Third, the phrase "long after" in verse 8 simply refers to how great Paul's love for the Philippians was. The Greek word here is "epipotho" (1971), which means, "to long for, desire, pursue with love." This reflects Paul's efforts on their behalf. It was this great love that prompted him to pray for their benefit. But nothing in this notion suggests Calvinist doctrines.

Fourth, in verses 9-11, Paul recounts his prayer "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." A Calvinist might insist that Paul is praying for God to cause the Philippians to "abound in love," to "be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" and to "be filled with the fruits of righteousness." But two factors argue against this conclusion.

Number one, the prayer itself is an acknowledgement of the possibility that God might not cause the Philippians to be sincere or continue without offence till the day of Christ. This possibility is so real that Paul feels it is necessary to petition God to act against it. If God's efforts to bring a man to sincere belief and

fellowship with Christ were always, irresistibly successful, then there would be no basis for Paul to petition God to act in any way (even simply giving knowledge) against insincerity or offences against Christ. And the reference to being “without offence till the day of Christ” infers that salvation is conditional even after God has begun his good work in you as seen in verse 5. Those who do not remain without offense would not be saved or accepted when Christ returns. Consequently, this prayer actually shows that Paul does not hold the Calvinist doctrines of unconditional election, irresistible grace, or the perseverance of the saints.

Number two, given these factors showing that Paul’s prayers are incompatible with Calvinism, we have all the more reason to accept the available alternative interpretation, which is already legitimate in its own right even if the Calvinist options were still viable. Specifically, we note the Greek words “hina” and “eis” in this portion of the passage.

### **2443 hina**

probably from the same as the former part of 1438 (through the demonstrative idea, cf 3588); TDNT-3:323,366; conj  
AV-that 486, to 76, misc 8; 570  
1) that, in order that, so that

### **1519 eis**

a primary preposition; TDNT-2:420,211; prep  
AV-into 573, to 281, unto 207, for 140, in 138, on 58, toward 29, against 26, misc 322; 1774  
1) into, unto, to, towards, for, among

“Hina” appears twice, once near the start of Paul’s prayer in verse 9 and again midway through verse 10. It expresses causality and translates into English phrases like, “in order that” or “so that.” “Eis” appears at the start of verse 10 and means “into, unto, towards, or for.” Here we have the basic concept of some action or thing operating in the direction toward something else. In fact, this connotation can be seen in its second occurrence at the end of verse 10 in the phrase “till (eis, 1519) the day of Christ.” In this sense it can refer to the intended purpose of an action or thing. Consequently, like “hina” it can reflect causality.

It is important to note that this string of items mentioned in verses 9-11 begins with a simple petition for God to add knowledge and wisdom to the love the Philippians have. In short, this is a request for God to confer knowledge. The first part of this petition in verse 9 is phrased in a way that would allow for Paul to be praying, not for them to love, but for God to provide them with knowledge and wisdom in which their love could flourish. Likewise, the use of “hina” and “eis” naturally allows (although admittedly does not necessitate) that Paul goes on to list the outcomes he intends to result from knowledge. In other words, verse 9 identifies what Paul is asking God for. But verses 10-11 do not. Rather than listing what Paul is asking God for, verses 10-11 express why Paul is asking God to give the Philippians knowledge. Knowledge will move them toward being able

to test and approve what is right and good. Knowledge is evidence, which convinces and motivating sincerity and fidelity and perseverance to abstain from sin until the end. Peter articulates similar ideas in 2 Peter 1:5-11. Here Peter expresses his desire for Christians to add knowledge to their faith so that they will be fruitful in that knowledge and never fall short. He goes on to affirm the conditionality of salvation by stating that ensuring their salvation and entrance into Christ's kingdom depends on "if" they do these things.

It is also not surprising that Peter affirms that adding or not adding such things as knowledge and love remains within the power of choice of the individual Christian.

**2 Peter 1:5** And beside this, **giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance;** and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; **7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9** But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. **10** Wherefore the rather, brethren, **give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.**

While Paul petitions God to give knowledge, Peter here demonstrates the cooperative rather than unilateral nature of this petition by making each Christian responsible for whether or not they pursue and grow in knowledge. Ultimately, these two considerations argue against the Calvinist interpretation of Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:9-11.

We might also consider Colossians 1, which is another passage containing prayers and thanksgivings.

**Colossians 1:2** To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus,** and of the love which ye have to all the saints, **5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; 6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: 7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; 8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. 9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work (2041), and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened (1412) with all might (1411), according to his glorious**

**power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; 12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:**

First, we see that near the heart of Paul's point in this passage is the long and constant duration of his prayers offered on the Colossian's behalf. He uses phrases like "praying always for you, since we heard of your faith" in verse 4 and "since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you" in verse 9.

Second, verses 4-6 list a series of items including "your faith in Christ," "the love which ye have to all the saints," and "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." While the Calvinist might suggest that Paul is thanking God for putting faith, love, and hope into the Colossians, the text requires no such notion. It is important that these items follow after the phrase "since we heard" and they are, in fact, a list of items that Paul has heard of, not necessarily things that Paul petitions God for. Paul is identifying the starting point of his praying for the Colossians. And verses 4-6 simply identify that Paul began to pray for the Colossians when he heard of their faith, love, and hope.

Third, with regard to verses 3-4, the close association between thanksgiving and prayer in verse 3 suggests that the gratitude is for those petitions God had answered over this long duration, rather than gratitude for the Colossians themselves. In other words, Paul would pray for the Colossians constantly and would thank God for answering his prayers on their behalf. These phrases don't entail Paul thanking God for the Colossians themselves. Nor do they entail Paul thanking God for their faith, love, and hope.

Fourth, phrases like "bringeth forth fruit" do not suggest that God is causing the Colossians to believe the gospel and, in that way, to become fruit. Certainly, the preaching of God's Word is compared to sowing seed and producing good fruit in prominent, early New Testament passages like Matthew 13:1-23. However, one of the central, inextricable messages of this parable in Matthew 13 is that the seed of the Word of God does not always produce fruit. Whether or not preaching results in fruit is determined by the type of ground. Jesus specifies that in the parable the ground represents the human heart. Sowing the seed of the Word does not unilaterally or irresistibly produce fruit. If it did, everyone into whom it was sown would produce fruit. But that is not at all the case in the parable. Consequently, while the seed of God's Word does produce fruit, it requires the right, cooperative and sustained response from the human heart, which has the potential to either accept or reject it.

When we pull these four points together, we arrive at the following. Calvinists would have us believe that Paul is saying that since the time he first heard of the Colossians' faith, love, and hope, he has not stopped thanking God for causing them to have faith, love, and hope and also that he has not stopped praying for them since that time as well. However, the text only necessitates that Paul has

been petitioning God for things and thanking God for things on the Colossians behalf for a long time since he first heard that they responded to the preaching of the Gospel with faith, love, and hope. The text simply does not require the critical component of the Calvinist interpretation.

Fifth, after having spelled out the timetable when he began to pray at length in verses 4-6, in verses 7-8 Paul states that they also heard this same positive report about the Colossians from Epaphras. And then, verses 9-13 expound more specifically on what Paul has petitioned God to do for the Colossians and what he is thanking God for doing. The first item that Paul lists as part of his petition in verse 9 is “that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” In short, this is a prayer for God to give the Colossians wisdom and knowledge. Verse 10 then lists the results Paul expects to follow if God gives them knowledge and wisdom. Paul expects that if God gives the Colossians knowledge and wisdom, the result will be that they will walk worthy, be fruitful in every good work, “be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power,” and have patience and endurance and joy. We will talk more about this “strengthening with might” momentarily. But for now, it is important to note that this phrasing does not necessitate that Paul is petitioning God to unilaterally and irresistibly cause the Colossians to walk worthy and be fruitful, etc. Rather, it only requires that Paul is petitioning God to give them knowledge because knowledge has the potential to indirectly result in obedience, fruit, and endurance, etc. The mechanism for how this happens is no mystery, and it certainly isn’t an internal mechanism acting unilaterally or irresistibly on decision-making faculties.

When people have correct information, it produces conviction and correct action, even in normal, everyday situations between one human and another in secular circumstances. If a lawyer presents evidence to a jury, the natural effect is to convince them and prompt them to take right action. If a professor teaches his students, it educates them how to work in their field. If a boss gives training materials to his employees, it creates a mandate for them to not only know what they are supposed to do but also how to do it as well as the mandate to do both. None of these situations involves an internal, irresistible, or unilateral action on the decision-making faculties of the human mind. But in all of these cases, persuasion and proper behavior is the expected, normal result. Paul’s expectations here demand nothing more and provide no basis for suggesting anything more.

Sixth, as already noted, verse 10 uses the term “every good work (2041)” and verse 11 then goes on to use the phrase, “Strengthened (1412) with all might (1411), according to his glorious power.” The Greek word for “work” here is “ergon,” which we have already seen connected to “asking” and doing “greater works” than the miracles of Jesus according to John 14:12-14. Likewise, in the very next chapter, John 15:3-11 makes “asking,” “receiving,” and our “joy being full” dependent on our remaining in Jesus’ teachings. In addition, the words “strengthened” and “might” are the Greek words “dunamoo” (1412) and “dunamis” (1411), which we have seen repeatedly used in reference to miraculous works in the New Testament. Consequently, we can see that there are 2

component parts of Paul's petition as identified in verses 9-11. Number one, Paul asks that God would give the Colossians knowledge and wisdom. And number two, Paul asks that God would confirm or strengthen that information by miraculous works among them. The other items that are listed in these verses in association with these normal scriptural petitions can easily and reasonably be understood as things that Paul hoped and expected would normally follow from good information accompanied by sound evidence, including increased conviction, effort, and endurance. And, as we have seen through everyday examples in the paragraph above, these types of reactions occur by means of natural mechanisms and do not require unilateral or irresistible action directly or internally on human decision-making faculties.

Seventh, it is interesting that as presented in this passages, Paul's prayers are conditional. He twice states that he began to pray as a reaction when he first heard about the Colossians faith and love. In other words, Paul's intercession for God to do good things for the Colossians was in response to the presence of certain qualities already present in the Colossians. This, in turn, reveals that Paul perceived the God Himself acted conditionally on behalf of people who exhibit certain traits. (Of course, there are notable times and ways in which God helps sinners, but nevertheless there is also a scriptural principle that faithfulness to God is generally and normally a prerequisite for God hearing our prayers, even as taught by Jesus in John 15:3-11 and echoed in John 9:31 and James 5:16.)

Eighth, in verse 12 Paul uses the phrase "Giving thanks unto the Father." It could be suggested that "thanking God" is part of Paul's petition so that Paul is asking God to cause the Colossians to thank him. However, such an idea is not necessary. Based on the way these verses are phrased, Paul could simply and easily be stating that he himself thanks God as he prays for the Colossians, rather than asking God to cause the Colossians to give thanks. After all, verses 3 is very much a parallel summary of verses 9-12 and it begins by saying, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." Since both the thanks and the prayer in verse 3 are things that Paul is doing, we should also conclude that both the prayer and the thanks in verses 9-12 are also things that Paul himself is doing, not something he is asking God to cause the Colossians to do.

Ninth, we can also consider what Paul is thanking God for here.

**Colossians 1:12** Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath **made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:** **13** Who hath **delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:** **14** **In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.**

As we can see, in verses 12-14 Paul's thanks is expressed specifically for things pertaining to God's general provision of deliverance and inheritance through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Through Christ's atoning work we have been made heirs, delivered from the devil, made citizens of God's kingdom, and forgiven.

There is no mention or hint here of thanking God for causing us to have faith by means of a unilateral or irresistible action on our decision-making faculties.

In summary, from start to finish, Colossians 1:2-14 declare simply that when Paul heard of the Colossians faith and love, he began to petition God to help them and to thank God for helping them. Among those things Paul specifically says that he prayed for are knowledge and wisdom and miraculous works to strengthen or confirm them (or the message among them). Among those things that Paul thanks God for are sending Christ's to atone for men's sins so that we can become heirs of the kingdom, be forgiven, and be delivered from the devil. And what does Paul expect to result from God performing these requests? The very natural, everyday process that good information and evidence will result in increased conviction, effort, endurance, and joy. There is nothing in such comments that require or suggest that Paul is operating based on Calvinist mechanisms.

Having examined Paul's prayers and thanksgivings in Colossians 1, we can continue into Colossians 2. Below are excerpts from both the King James Version and the NIV.

**(KJV) Colossians 2:1 For I would that ye knew 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; 2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.**

**(NIV) Colossians 2:1 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. 2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. 5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. 6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.**

The most important thing about Colossians 2 is that there is no mention of prayer or praying. The word "comforted" here in verse 2 is "parakaleo" (06870), which can mean, "to exhort or instruct." And while the King James begins, "I would that

ye knew what great conflict I have for you,” the NIV translation clarifies this somewhat as “I want you to know how hard I am contending for you.” The NIV even begins verse 2 with the phrase “My goal is.” In other words, what follows here is a list of things that Paul intends his own efforts to accomplish. And this makes perfect sense. Paul was a missionary and a teacher. Naturally, he would expect and intend such work to produce the items he lists here, including to encourage them, to unite them, and to increase their understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, to inoculate them against deception, and to remind them that it brings him joy when they do well. All these things would result from missionary and teaching efforts, including writing epistles such as this one.

Moreover, when we arrive at verses 6-7, we see that Paul instructs the Colossians to “continue to live your lives in Christ, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflow with thankfulness.” Given the instructive nature of these statements, the logical implication is that Paul understood these were things that the Colossians had the power to choose to do or not to do and he was encouraging them to exercise their power of choice to do what they “were taught,” include to persevere, grow, and give thanks to God.

Consequently, nothing about Colossians 2:1-7 suggests a prayerful expectation that God would cause the Colossians to do anything in an irresistible or unilateral manner.

Finally, we turn to another brief reference to prayer in the last chapter of Colossians.

**Colossians 4:12** Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, **always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that (2443) ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God**... 18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

Here in verse 12, Paul describes that Epaphras was “always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Calvinists might suggest that Epaphras asked God to cause the Colossians to “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” But there are three reasons not to accept the Calvinist conclusion.

First, like previous prayers that we have analyzed from Paul, this kind of prayer would actually demonstrate that the perseverance of the Colossians was not guaranteed by God. There was a chance of God’s will not being completed in the Colossians. And this potential was real enough to motivate Epiphra to petition God to take efforts to prevent it. This would undermine the Calvinists doctrines of irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints.

Second, the word for “that” which begins the last phrase in verse 2 is the Greek word “hina” (2443), which means, “in order that, so that.” As such, verse 2 intends to convey that Epiphra was “always laboring fervently for you in prayers, in order that ye may stand perfect and complete.” In this way, the latter half of

verse 2 is not an identification of what Epiphra was specifically asking God to do. Instead, the latter half of verse 2 is a declaration of what Epiphra was expecting would result if God did grant the things he petitioned God for.

Third, this is a case where the principle of perspicuity or clarity is in play. In other words, this passage does not identify specifically what things Epaphras is petitioning God to do for the Colossians. It does identify what is motivating Epaphras, specifically his love for them and desire to see them complete in God. But in light of this lack of specificity combined with the similarity to other such prayers offered by Paul, we can conclude that Epaphras was likely praying for God to provide knowledge, wisdom, mercy and forgiveness, laborers to preach, and miracles to confirm and encourage the Colossians.