

## Paul's Prayer for the Colossians

Col. 1:9-13

### Introduction:

1. The letter to the Colossians begins by recognizing the faith, love and hope that Paul has heard that they have.
2. Epaphras, one of their number (4:12), had informed him (1:8).
3. Having been informed of their love Paul's response was to pray for them. His request was three-fold: that they might be "filled with the knowledge of God's will;" that they "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord;" and that they be "strengthened with all power." Knowledge, practice and empowerment are three critical elements in Christianity.
4. In this study our objective will be to examine each of these three elements in the lives of the Colossians and in our own lives. What do we need to do to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, walk in a manner worthy and be strengthened?

### Discussion:

- I. Paul prays for the Colossians to "be filled with the knowledge of God's will."
  - A. The word that is translated "be filled" is in the passive voice. In Eph. 5:18 the passive voice is used again of "being filled with the Holy Spirit."
    1. The idea is that you are not filling yourself but are "being filled." When you fill a glass with water the glass is passive. You fill it.
    2. There is a sense in which God fills us with the knowledge of His will and as God's agent Epaphras had begun the process of filling the Colossians by teaching them about the grace of God.
  - B. Yet there is an active element involved in "being filled with the knowledge of God's will."
    1. Luke (Acts 17:11) says that those at Berea "were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica." What was the difference? "With great eagerness they received the word examining the Scriptures."
    2. Scripture is the source of the knowledge of God's will. We can receive it with eagerness and examination. This stands in contrast to those to whom Stephen spoke. He said, "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murders you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it" (Acts 7:51-53).
  - C. Heb. 1 and 2 makes it explicit.
    1. God has spoken in His son (1:1-2a).

2. We “must pay close attention” (2:1-4).
  3. The word of God is alive and it will do its work, if we receive it. The word had already worked in the Colossians (1:5b-6).
- D. Paul prayed that they might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will “in all spiritual wisdom and understand.” We might try to distinguish between wisdom and understanding. It might be that we see understanding as comprehension and wisdom as the application that stems from the comprehension, but there is probably very little difference in this text. Spiritual wisdom and understanding involves one having received the things communicated by God. The Colossians are warned against that which has the “appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body” (2:20ff).
- E. We need to recognize the power that the word of God has and the lack of power in other communications. The Bible is not just another book like all other books. It is different in that is communicated from God.

## II. Paul prays that they “will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.”

- A. This idea of walking is an image used to speak of the Christian’s way of life.
1. Eph. 4:17ff contrasts the Christian’s walk with the walk of the Gentiles, i.e., those who are unbelievers.
  2. Col. 2:6-7 is a brief statement about this walk but elements of this walk are fleshed out in the rest of the epistle.
- B. To walk in a manner worthy of the Lord implies something about the value of what the Lord has done for us.
1. Paul reasons from the blessings we enjoy in Christ (Eph 1:3ff) and what God has done for us (Eph. 2:4-10) to our walking in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called (Eph 4:1).
  2. Given what the Lord has done for us it is appropriate that we walk in a way that tries to please Him in all respects (Col. 1:10). Namely, that we should bear fruit in very good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Anything else runs counter to the nature of what God has done for us. It makes what He has done through Christ cheap and it show disrespect to the magnitude of His love for us.

## III. Paul prays that they will be “strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might.”

- A. The execution of God’s power after our initial conversion may be something that does not receive enough attention in our teaching.
1. We know that God has given His Son (Eph 1:19-20).
  2. We know that He operates to bring us to spiritual life. A fact confirmed in Col. 1:12-14. Cf. Rom. 6:4.
  3. But Paul’s prayer here involves the application of God’s power after raising us from

the dead that we might continue in steadfastness and with patience.

4. 1 Pet. 1:5 says we are “protected by the power of God through faith.” Eph. 6:10ff says, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God.” It speaks of having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace or using the shield of faith to extinguish the arrows of the evil one and the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, with prayer and petition.
- B. If God has used His power to give us life would He not use that same power to bring us to completion (cf. 1:28-29). This is a power that we need to recognize and tap into.
- C. It is a power that we should “joyously give thanks for.” He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Conclusion:

1. We began our walk with Christ under the power of God.
2. We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.
3. We are raised to spiritual life by the power of God and continue under the influence of His power on an on-going basis.
4. When we are filled with the knowledge of His will we will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and will receive strength from God for steadfastness and patience.
5. As Paul prayed for the Colossians so we should pray for one another.