

Lesson 1

Walk Worthily

Colossians 1:9-11

⁹For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,

¹⁰so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God,

¹¹being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, ...

Introduction

Paul and Timothy constantly prayed for the Colossian brethren. Note the unceasing nature of these prayers, even though they had heard a good report.¹ Paul's prayer here should be seen as a model for Christians. Are we praying these kinds of prayers for one another? Furthermore, what kind of lesson is Paul trying to instill in the Colossians by praying for them in such a manner and writing about it?

Prayer is not only necessary during bad times or moments of correction—it's also wise to pray for others when things are going well so that further spiritual progress can be made. We need to understand that during good times, Satan can attack with even more intensity since he lives to destroy God's people and their efforts in the kingdom.

1:9 – A Prayer for Knowledge, Spiritual Wisdom, and Understanding

Ephesians and Colossians highly value knowledge and its ability to strengthen and sustain the Christian life. Here, Paul prays that the Colossians be *filled with the knowledge of His will*. Here, the Colossians are placed in the passive role, with the action being done to them. In other words, God is the agent in the distribution of knowledge. In the original language, *filled* carries the meaning of being “fit out entirely,”² or being “totally controlled or dominated by.” Dominated by what?

Knowledge

Knowledge involves understanding something clearly and distinct, believing it to be true and valid. It *lays claim to personal sympathy and exerts an influence upon the person*.² Paul's intent is that the Colossians come to a deep and abiding understanding of the will of the Spirit. *The progress of Christian formation follows up rebirth with retraining*.³ When one knows God better, their spiritual formation will proceed as it should.

The Jewish connotation of *knowledge* is always connected to an obedient response. An excellent example of this is found in Proverbs 1:2-7. Acquiring knowledge is not merely about its acquisition, philosophy, or human tradition; it involves the proper response to God. Correct knowledge should lead to correct

behavior.⁴ We are given knowledge of God not to try to master or control Him, but to praise Him and to be mastered by Him. The call to move toward spiritual maturity and a lifestyle congruent to God's wishes is seen throughout the New Testament. This is why we see Paul construct his epistles as he does. Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Hebrews all contain significant sections of doctrinal truth followed by practical application. *Godly living is directly linked in Scripture to knowledge of doctrinal truth.*⁵

Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding

Spiritual wisdom and understanding are frequently found together in Scripture.⁶ These are inseparable from the knowledge that Paul has just spoken of. *Wisdom* refers to the ability to use the things learned in Scripture correctly.⁷ *Understanding* takes things to the next level by referring to applying spiritual principles in everyday life.

Practical Application

Think of how knowledge and wisdom are gained when we do God's will. When we submit to it and seek to accomplish it, we will gain an understanding of it.

Let's return to verse 9 and how Paul prays that his readers *be filled with the knowledge of His will*. Note again *who* does the filling. It is God through the Holy Spirit. We play the submissive role. The promise is that if we make ourselves available, God will fill us to the max with everything we need to know to live the life He calls us to. Will you make yourself available to Him? How much of a priority are you placing on quiet time in the word? Do you not just read the Bible for the sake of reading but read with the intent to change and conform your heart and soul to God's will?

We live in extraordinary times. Like never before, opportunities for getting in the word are all around. Many local churches offer a daily Bible reading. Hundreds of online blogs send posts out via email. Can you take a few moments to find one and subscribe? Many congregations embrace video technology and offer streaming worship, Bible classes, and special studies. Spiritual instruction must no longer occur in a church building only on Sunday or Wednesday evenings. You have daily access and opportunity to allow God a few moments to fill your heart and mind with knowledge of His will.

What does more excellent knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and understanding lead to?

1:10-11 – A Worthy Walk

In the New Testament, *walk* refers to our daily conduct or manner of life.¹ This imagery is familiar in Jewish writing, depicting a person's lifestyle as a path he or she walks along. The way we walk is an ongoing decisive choice we must make. On the surface, this may sound like a daunting challenge. *How can I walk worthily? Consistently?* Despite any doubts that may cross our minds, we find assurances throughout the New Testament challenging us to do so.

For example, we have been called to live as kingdom citizens. Paul, writing to the Philippians, said:

¹ See also 1 Thessalonians 2.12; Ephesians 4.1; Philippians 1.27.

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

– Philippians 1:27

Peter also wrote:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

– 1 Peter 2:9-10

Can you see your identity in these two verses? How does God define you now that you are in Christ? God has exalted you to a position in His kingdom, a saint projecting light—a priest performing spiritual sacrifices. We walk worthily by doing the things He wants. We look to Jesus. We walk in the way of humiliation, sacrifice, love, and mercy. John said it this way: *whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked*, 1 John 2:6.

When we do, we aim for the promise of being *fully pleasing to Him*. We aim to please God in everything. We are yielded to God's Spirit, who resides inside us. We consciously choose to bring the Word into our hearts.

Bearing Fruit

Knowledge leads to fruitfulness. Learning the truth will change your life. Note how James 3:17 is worded. Spiritual wisdom leads to *purity, peace, gentleness, reasonableness, mercy, good fruits, impartiality, and sincerity*. Every day, our spiritual life should become more productive, i.e., filled with praise, prayerful, and increasingly servant-minded.

This was Peter's idea when he urged Christians in 2 Peter 1:5-7 to use all diligence to apply spiritual virtues to their life. Verses 10-11 of the same chapter detail the result of our diligence:

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

– 2 Peter 1:10-11

Spiritual Maturity

Next, we come to the third thing Paul mentions in verse ten. Knowledge leads to increasing our *knowledge of God*. In this, we're focusing specifically on **increasing**. We should always place an emphasis on growth. Right now, you are not where you can be. There is always progress to make—progress in becoming more like Jesus, progress in living the way (as expressed in our attitudes and actions) God prescribes.

A tremendous parallel passage to the idea Paul is expressing here is found in Ephesians 4:13-15, where we are told to move forward with an eye toward maturity, *to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*.

Strengthened with Power

This again refers to the continuous work of God that is ongoing throughout our Christian life. We have constant access to it through the Holy Spirit, who is present in us, Ephesians 3:16. In Romans 15:13, Paul wrote, *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.* In Ephesians 1:18-20, Paul goes even further in detail, describing this power in terms of *immeasurable greatness*. The same power God exerted in raising Jesus from the dead and exalting Him to the right hand of His throne is the same power available to every Christian.

Endurance, Patience, and Joy

The gift of God's power enables Christians to stand firm in the face of suffering and trial ... which will test the quality of their faith. Trials present us with an opportunity to display God's power.

Let's connect this back to verse nine and the importance of being filled with knowledge. Knowledge of God's promises helps you endure suffering and disappointment. *Endurance* is where we hold on to the most basic and essential of our commitments. *Patience* is our capacity to do so.² We trust in passages like James 1:2-4 that remind us there is a purpose for the trials we endure. We hold up passages like 1 Corinthians 10:13 that instruct us God will not allow us to bear more than we can handle. We trust that God is at work in perfecting us in all things.

Perhaps one of the greatest biblical examples of endurance, patience, and joy can be seen in Paul's writings in Philippians 4:11-13. What fueled Paul's contentment was his assurance of God's continual strengthening and working. When we know God, know His promises, and know His purposes, our endurance will keep us going.

We can respond to all these difficulties with *joy*! We know that God knows what He is doing. We know a time is coming when we will be freed from life's problems. We can get through anything when we know God, His purposes, and His promises!

Conclusion

In this lesson, we have explored Paul's prayer for the Colossian believers, emphasizing the importance of continuous prayer, spiritual wisdom, and understanding. Paul's unceasing prayers for the Colossians serve as a model for us today, reminding us that prayer is essential not only in times of need but also during spiritual prosperity. His prayers encourage believers to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, which is crucial for spiritual growth and maturity.

Paul's prayer highlights that knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and understanding are God-given gifts that enable us to live lives worthy of our calling. This knowledge is not merely intellectual but is deeply practical, guiding us to live in a way that pleases God and bears fruit in every good work. By embracing this knowledge and wisdom, we can endure trials with patience and joy, knowing that God's power is at work within us.

² Wall, Robert W. Colossians & Philemon.

Furthermore, Paul reminds us that our walk with God is an ongoing journey that requires daily commitment and submission to His will. We are called to live as kingdom citizens, reflecting the light and love of Christ in our actions and attitudes. As we grow in our knowledge of God, our lives become more fruitful, and we move closer to spiritual maturity, becoming more like Jesus in every aspect.

Ultimately, Paul's prayer and teachings encourage us to prioritize God's word in our lives, seek His wisdom, and allow His Spirit to transform us. By doing so, we can walk in a manner worthy of our calling, bearing fruit and growing in our knowledge of God while experiencing the strength, endurance, and joy that come from a deep and abiding relationship with Him.

For Discussion

1. How can we incorporate the unceasing nature of Paul and Timothy's prayers into our daily prayer routines for others? What practical steps can we take to make our prayers more consistent and intentional?
2. In what ways does spiritual wisdom differ from general knowledge? How can we cultivate spiritual wisdom in our daily lives?
3. How does the Jewish connotation of knowledge, which involves an obedient response, change our approach to learning about God? Can you share an example from your own life where knowledge of God led to a specific action or change?
4. Paul often follows doctrinal teachings with practical applications in his epistles. Why do you think balancing doctrinal knowledge with practical living is essential? How can we apply this balance in our spiritual growth?
5. How can knowing God's promises help us endure trials and challenges? Can you share a personal experience where a specific scripture helped you through a difficult time?
6. What does it mean to walk worthy of the Lord? How can we ensure that our daily conduct aligns with this calling?
7. What are some practical ways we can bear fruit in our spiritual lives? How can we measure or recognize this fruitfulness?

8. Paul mentions that God, through the Holy Spirit, fills us with knowledge and strength. How can we be more receptive to the Holy Spirit's work in our lives?
9. Paul emphasizes the need for continuous growth and maturity in our faith. What are some signs of spiritual maturity, and how can we strive towards this goal?
10. Considering the numerous resources available today (like online blogs, streaming services, and Bible reading plans), how can we effectively utilize these tools to deepen our knowledge of God's will? How can we encourage others in our community to do the same?

¹ The unceasing nature of their prayers simply means that Paul and his associates viewed everything in relation to God. Praise can be offered on high when thinking about positive things and the advancement of the gospel. When bad things arise, we call upon God because we understand His tender loving care.

² Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon...*, p. 26.

³ Wall, Robert W. *Colossians & Philemon*. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

⁴ See Philippians 1:9-10; Romans 12:2; 15:14; Philemon 6.

⁵ MacArthur, John F., Jr. *Colossians*, p. 28.

⁶ Exodus 31:3; Deuteronomy 4:6; 1 Chronicles 22:12; Isaiah 10:2; 29:14; Daniel 2:20.

⁷ Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon...*, p. 886.