

“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, and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ Strengthened with all might, 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.” (Col 1:9-12 AV)

Last week we saw that the gospel had brought faith, love and hope to the church at Colosse. This is because the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and brings the deep, true knowledge of the grace of God (vs. 6). Paul rejoices that the gospel has had this fruit among the Colossians, living as they did in a pagan, worldly society

The verses I read a moment ago are the beginning of one of the great prayers of Scripture, and this is one of the most sublime passages in the Bible.

But let us look at the words. What is the content of Paul's prayer for the church at Colosse:

vs. 9. "Filled with the knowledge of his will." "filled" filling out to completeness. Several things are necessary if we are to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. This is "true knowledge" deep knowledge.

1. We must know the true God. He has revealed Himself and His will for us in Jesus Christ. It bugs me when people think they know what I am going to do or what I might do when they have not taken the time to know anything about me. "I believe in God, but I don't believe the Bible is His word." The idea of God is just a flutter in the brain.
2. We must know ourselves. These two things are joined. What God's will is for someone else is not necessarily God's will for us. We must know our own gifts.
3. We must know our times and our opportunities.

"Wisdom" True wisdom is in the true knowledge of God's will.

"Spiritual Understanding" That which is known only by the Holy Spirit. "Animal men" do not understand the things of God--I Cor. 2:14. You can mine your own understanding to its very depths and never find the knowledge of God.

James 3:17ff. which contrasts human wisdom with spiritual wisdom.

The wisdom of the world puffs up, but does not teach the soul: I Cor. 1:20; 2:5,6,13; 3:19

"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

"My speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours."

Understanding means the application of this basic wisdom to the various problems of life. You must have the wisdom of God, taught by the Holy Spirit, in order not to continue to make a complete fool of yourself in this world. --in the eyes of God's people and those who have this wisdom. Not the eyes of the world; because they do not have this wisdom, they may think you are acting in a completely reasonable way, and even pat you on the back when you act the fool.

vs. 10-12. Several words are used in verses 10-12 which describe the fruit of this wisdom and understanding.

1. Walk Worthily

As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk ye in him. Col. 2:6,7. Live what you profess. True knowledge changes the inner man. Not to be conformed to the pagan world around them, but rooted and ground in Jesus Christ. The true soil of Christian faith is Jesus Christ, not human philosophy or the vain-glory of the Judaizers, the twin temptations the church faced in Colosse. Be changed by what you know, and live accordingly.

"all pleasing" Pleasing God in all things. Not pleasing yourself or other people. Bowing before God in utter submission. This is worthy of the Lord Himself. Living entirely with the view of pleasing God, and not yourself, or other people.

Every good work: We do not put a limit upon ourselves: as if this or that were enough.

2. Being Fruitful in Every Good Work. There is no end to the productivity of the Christian that is so filled with true knowledge. Notice how often Paul refers to true knowledge in the these passages. There are so many representations of truth in the world. There was then, and there is now. What do you believe? False knowledge does not change the soul and the character, but simply confirms the soul in its evil way. True knowledge transforms and changes the soul, and makes it fruitful: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, etc.
3. Increasing in the Knowledge of God. The knowledge of God is basic to any spiritual or moral growth. If any man thinks he knows something, he doesn't know anything yet as he ought to know it. Life means growth in understanding and knowledge.
4. Strengthened. Here we come to the heart of Paul's prayer. None of this will be accomplished without a powerful and effective work in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

We are weak and helpless without the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. This is through the Gospel.

I am not strengthened by being told my duty, although it is necessary that I be told my duty. I am strengthened by the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to everyone that believeth. The Gospel tells me that Christ loved me and died for my sins. In his death I see my death to sin, and in His resurrection I see my new life by the power of His Spirit. This energizes me to love Christ and from this love comes the strengthening of the inner man. See Ephesians 3:16ff.

This strength is in patience and longsuffering: Longsuffering means to endure the abuse of sinners without retaliation or revenge; Patience means settled and satisfied in the Lord, not casting always around for some better thing. But this patience is not passive, but active: running persistently to the goal. Not being weary in well-doing, but satisfied that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

With joyfulness: Joy is the strength of the Christian. Not stoic facelessness in suffering; not indifference; but joyful fellowship with Jesus Christ in the midst of trials and troubles.

Vs. 12 Thanksgiving.

- A. The true Christian life is one of Thanksgiving. Those who are filled with the true knowledge of God cannot but be thankful. A thankless heart is a graceless heart. He to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. Are you thankful that you are not in hell? Then you need to be filled with the true knowledge of God, for then you would know this:
 - 1. If you are a believer, it is the bitter suffering of Christ that stands between you and the awful judgment of God.
 - 2. If you are not a believer, it is the mere longsuffering of God which has postponed your judgment, for you richly deserve it.
- B. This is the work of God:
 - 1. Made us Meet. Made us fit. Prepared us. Qualified us for the inheritance. God prepared Israel for their entry into the land of Canaan and their inheritance of the land. So He prepares us for heaven: See Hebrews 12:9-11.
 - 2. When we obtain the true knowledge of God, we know why we have an inheritance: it is because God has fitted us for it. The inheritance is not made for those who were fit for it, but it was made for those who were made fit for it.

What God did to make us fit for the inheritance, we will see next week.

God bless you