

ROMANCING THE SAINTS AT COLOSSAE

Studies in the Book of Colossians

*“If Ephesians can be labeled the epistle portraying the ‘church of Christ,’
then Colossians must surely be labeled ‘the Christ of the church’”
unknown*

Text
Colossians 1:9-13

Topic
Paul prays for the believers at Colossae
to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will for their everyday lives

Title
“God’s Will Hunting”

Introduction

Triangles are made up of three line segments. They meet to form three angles. The sizes of the angles and the lengths of the sides are related to one another. If the triangle is a right triangle you can use simple trigonometric ratios to find the missing parts.

On a test a teacher drew a right triangle. He marked one side 3cm, one side 4cm, and one side x . The question he asked was “Find x .”

While most of his students used the Pythagorean Theorem to arrive at their answer, one math-challenged individual simply drew a circle around ‘ x ’ and wrote on his paper, “Here it is!”

The student answered the question correctly. He found ‘ x .’ The question should have been worded, “**Solve** for x .”

Sometimes how you ask the question determines your answer.

In the Christian life one of the most common questions you ask or hear is, “How can I discover God’s will for my life?” The way the question is worded indicates that God’s will is something mysterious to be discovered by those who are super-saintly using the proper spiritual disciplines.

Not according to the apostle Paul! He prayed for all the believers in the church at Colossae that they would “be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (1:9). As we will see, the idea of them being “filled” indicates something that God does for them, *not* something that they were to discover. It’s something they could receive from God every day in every circumstance.

It didn’t matter if they’d been Christians for a few days or a few years. It didn’t matter if they were experts in the Word of God or novices. It didn’t matter if they were leadership or laity. All of them, on an equal footing, could receive God’s will for their lives every day.

We should therefore ask, “How can I be filled with knowledge of God’s will for my life?” The answer is in our verses.

I’ll answer that by organizing my thoughts around two points: #1 Ask Your Father To Fill You With The Knowledge Of His Will For Today And Everyday, and #2 Thank Your Father For Filling You With The Knowledge Of His Will From Yesterday And For Tomorrow.

#1 Ask Your Father To Fill You With
The Knowledge Of His Will For Today And Everyday
(v9-11)

False teachers were troubling the Christians at Colossae. They devised new ways to approach God that involved numerous intermediate steps coupled with the observance of rules, rites, and regulations. The average believer was made to feel inferior and deficient.

In this opening part of the letter Paul emphasized their sufficiency in Jesus Christ and the simplicity of walking with Him through life. There are no complex ‘hoops’ to jump through. Just a daily enjoyment of fellowship with the risen Lord and with our Father in Heaven.

The Colossians, like all believers anywhere at any time, were concerned about knowing God's will. What Paul said to them about it is really quite remarkable.

Colossians 1:9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Epaphras had travelled from Colossae to visit Paul who was under house arrest in Rome. Epaphras gave Paul a report about the believers. That's what he means when he says "since the day we heard it."

Paul added them to his prayer list and indicated he "[did] not cease to pray" for them. I don't pretend to understand prayer and all of its spiritual impact. But here is one thing I'll say. Knowing others are praying for you is encouraging!

Paul didn't pray for the usual things. He prayed very specifically for one thing. He "[asked] that [they] may be filled with the knowledge of [God's] will."

"May be filled" puts the responsibility upon God. It is something He does to you. It is something He wants to do to you.

Negatively we would say that being "filled with the knowledge of God's will" is therefore not something to be discovered after a long, protracted spiritual search. No, it is something immediately available to you.

Paul qualified God's will by saying it is "all wisdom and spiritual understanding." The word "spiritual" qualifies both "wisdom" and "understanding." Paul means to remind them, and us, that God's will is often very different than the world's ways of doing things. He means to elevate our thinking. It's his way of saying, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven."

God's will for you is characterized by "all spiritual wisdom." "Wisdom" refers to what we believe as Christians. "Understanding" refers to how we should behave as Christians.

Paul has just established a context for my daily walk through this world while on my way home to Heaven. I have a spiritual outlook because I am saved and indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. My behavior is guided by my belief in God and in His eternal purposes for the universe and for my life in particular.

What, then, is God's will for me everyday in every circumstance?

Colossians 1:10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

"Worthy" is a word I can stumble over. In so many ways I am not "worthy" of the name 'Christian.'

But that is not how Paul is using the word. Remember, he is not talking about earning or deserving God's will. He's describing God filling you.

The word "worthy" here means *worth as much*. He's saying that your "walk" is *worth as much* as that of the Lord's when He was here.

Jesus said this to us:

John 14:12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

What Jesus meant was that after He ascended He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell us individually as believers and corporately as His church. He would multiply Himself all over the earth as we walked with Him empowered by His Spirit.

What does this have to do with being filled with the knowledge of God's will? A lot! My life on the earth has weight and worth. It has purpose and meaning. I am on a path with God and He has promised to bring me to a desirable end. He will complete the work He began in me. Thus every day, in every circumstance, I can know God is at work as a master craftsman honing my life. He may allow me to abound; He may cause me to be abased. He can bring blessing or buffeting. Either way, everything going on around me is spiritually significant.

I often miss knowing God's will precisely because I do not see my situation through the glasses of my worth as His child.

Going forward in verse ten I read we are to be "fully pleasing to Him." My life is really not my own to live anymore. I belong to the Lord. I thus prefer His will to mine.

Well, I ought to! If I remember my life here is spiritual, and that it has worth and God is completing a great work, I will be more likely to want to prefer His will to mine in everyday life.

Still in verse ten I read, "being fruitful in every good work." Language scholars say what Paul wrote in the original language was that you produce "fruit" in, or during, "every good work." He seems to mean that God has begun and is doing His good work in you and when you realize it and yield to Him it produces sweet spiritual "fruit," or we would say, the fruit of the Spirit.

Verse ten ends with, "increasing in the knowledge of God." "Knowledge" was a buzz-word being used by the false teachers. They were telling the Colossians that they were deficient in the 'true' knowledge of God. In order to attain this 'knowledge' they must jump through religious hoops of various kinds.

Paul obliterates that idea. He says that you "[increase] in the knowledge of God" by simply realizing He is at work in your life and yielding to His work. You're the branch to His vine and can bear amazing spiritual fruit without effort.

Paul emphasizes the effortlessness of it in the opening words of verse eleven where we read,

Colossians 1:11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power...

"Strengthened" is in the tense of *being strengthened*. "Might" is the word we get our word *dynamite* from. "All" means *all*. Paul is saying that in every circumstance you can be strengthened by God's dynamic power to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

“According to His glorious power” means that when you bring forth this fruit people will understand it can only be by the “glorious power” of God working in you and through you.

What does this look like to those looking on?

Colossians 1:11 ... for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

“Patience” literally translates, *remaining under*. We use the word endure. “Longsuffering” translates, *long-tempered*. It means self-restraint.

Patience has to do with circumstances and longsuffering involves people:

- The fruit produced by God in and through us by His glorious power is to remain patient. We are empowered to endure our circumstances because, remember, we know they are designed by God to further the worthy work He’s begun in us.
- The fruit produced by God in and through us by His glorious power is to be longsuffering. We are empowered to be long-tempered with other people because, remember, we know God is using them to further the worthy work He’s begun in us.

Here’s the clincher: All of this is “with joy.” Patience and longsuffering do not usually issue forth in “joy.” Usually I’m asking for prayer to get out of my circumstances, not to endure them with joy. Or I am wanting God to change people, not for me to be longsuffering with them and have joy doing so.

Today and everyday until He comes for me God has promised to work in my life to bring me to completion. I can be filled with the knowledge of His will today and everyday. I can bear the fruit of patience and longsuffering with joy so much that people understand it can only be by God’s glorious power producing His fruit through me. That is His will.

Next time someone asks for prayer, pray that in their circumstance with certain people they would be filled with this knowledge of God’s will. Pray for patience and longsuffering so that their life will bear fruit that can only be attributed to God.

Paul finishes his thoughts about being filled with the knowledge of God's will by giving you a theological reminder in verses twelve and thirteen.

#2 Thank Your Father For Filling You With
The Knowledge Of His Will From Yesterday And For Tomorrow
(v12-13)

While verses nine, ten, and eleven are grounded in your daily experience with God, verses twelve and thirteen look back and forward. They put your daily walk in the bigger context of God saving you and bringing you home at last.

Colossians 1:12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints...

This verse is a promise to each and every saint. It is not something to be earned but something you received the moment you were saved. When God saved you, when you believed on Jesus Christ, you were "qualified... to be [a partaker] of the inheritance of the saints..."

If you've every bought a home or a car with a loan you had to be qualified for it. The moment you were saved God "qualified" you. You cannot become disqualified when it comes to partaking of "the inheritance of the saints." Paul was not talking about your individual rewards, earned by deeds done for Christ. He was talking about the eternal inheritance of each and every believer. He was talking about things like the promise of a new, glorious, resurrection body; of a mansion in Heaven; of spending eternity with the Lord in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem.

Whatever earth holds for you (and it can be brutal), Heaven awaits with its beauty and blessing. That's why you can always "[give] thanks to the Father."

At the end of verse twelve Paul uses the phrase "in the light," which dovetails into verse thirteen,

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

You have been once-for-all “delivered... from the power of darkness and conveyed... [into the light]..., the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

That’s a mouthful! This whole section is a mouthful. Verses nine through twenty are one continuous 218 word sentence.

It’s really very simple. Like every other human being you are born under the “power,” or *authority*, of “darkness.” You are born with a sin nature and you sin. You are born spiritually dead.

When you get saved you are “delivered” from darkness and “conveyed” to a new authority. “Delivered” has the idea of being *rescued*. “Conveyed” means *removed*. But removed in the sense of being relocated.

You’ve been rescued and relocated to the authority of the Son of God whose kingdom is one of “light” ruled by the “Son” Whom the Father loves.

Calling Jesus the “Son,” by the way, is a challenge to the false teachers. They minimized the person of Jesus to that of a created being. Calling Him the “Son” puts Him in a unique relationship to the Father. It puts Him not only above all other created beings but makes Him equal in nature, power, and authority with God.

When you are struggling everyday to be joyful in your patience with circumstances and your longsuffering with people you can meditate on what God did for you yesterday and what is waiting for you tomorrow:

- ‘Yesterday,’ on some wonderful day, He saved you. You were rescued from the darkness of this world.
- ‘Tomorrow,’ when He comes for you to resurrect or rapture you, you will see the Son He loves and whom you love and remain together for all eternity.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Too often the trials and sufferings of ‘today’ drown out the glories of ‘yesterday’ and ‘tomorrow.’ Instead ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and in all spiritual understanding. And when you pray for others,

ask God to do the same and remind them that God can cause them to be joyful in their patience and longsuffering.