

Colossians - Part 2: 1:9-12: “A Portrait Of Spiritual Growth”
Sunday, September 5th, 2021

I'm reading from the ESV, the English Standard Version:

Colossians 1:9-12:

[9] *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,*

[10] *so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

[11] *being strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;*

[12] *giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*

Intro:

We always want to try and gather some general background and perhaps a little history to whatever text we're looking at. We did a little bit more of an overview last week, to set the stage for this letter. Without covering everything from last week, it still might be helpful if we run through some of it to catch us all up.

Off the top:

- This was a letter written by the Apostle Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome
- Paul had written this letter without having visited Colossae prior to writing it.
- The church located in Colossae was started by a man named Epaphras
- The church in Colossae had fallen into some confusion about the truth of the Gospel

- Why?
 - Due to the errant teachings of some astute Jewish teachers that had been heavily influenced by a type of Greek philosophy
- Paul's chief aim in writing this letter was to correct all that and to reinforce and emphasize the truth that they were ALREADY made as acceptable to God as they would EVER be by virtue of the Person and Work of Christ. If you are in Christ, you cannot possibly be made any MORE acceptable to God than you already are. He has already done for US what WE could never do. Paul's intent and purpose in writing it was to reinforce the Gospel truth of Jesus Christ and the work that Christ had already done **IN** them. The truth that Christ alone is sufficient in their Salvation.

A couple takeaways from last week's look at the first 8 verses of Chapter 1 were:

1. Paul was thanking God for their faith, their hope, and the love they were showing towards all the saints. That they were faithful and loving BECAUSE of the hope laid up for them in heaven. When you begin to truly think about what awaits us in heaven as believers... who has time for anything petty and small? Who has time for gossip? Who has time for grumbling and complaining? Who has time for worry and fear? Who has time for anything less than faith and love because of the hope that awaits us? And so we are exhorted to be faithful and loving because of the Living Hope that we have in Christ. Not only the hope of a final Glory but also an ever-present help right here, in our day-to-day walk with our heavenly Father. "*Fear not for I am with you*" says the Lord. That hope.
2. That **WE** are who and what God has chosen to spread His Gospel. That He could have used Angels to fly around the world and shout the Gospel non-stop. But that He has voluntarily chosen to include us in His work to reach the world with His plan of

redemption through Christ. That WE are a part of what He is doing. That we get to see Revelation 7:9-10 play out before our very eyes in real time. That we are His witnesses.

Verses 9 & 10:

Paul starts with, “(9) *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you...*”.

What a powerful word, man. “Since we heard of you, we have not stopped praying for you”.

Let’s get honest with one another for a moment here. How many times have we begun in earnest prayer for someone, only to - over time - just forget? And stop praying for them altogether? We may start strong. We may dedicate a portion of time each day to intercessory prayer. But after a time, our earnestness wanes, it fades. Or worse yet: We see a prayer request on Facebook. Or a text message. And we either don’t pray at all or we tell the person that we’re sending our prayers when we really aren’t. I’m guilty of that. We all are.

We’re to always examine ourselves in light of scripture. The Word of God is a mirror to us - whether we like it or not. It’s our standard. It’s both a comfort and an iron rod. In a sense, it’s the mast that we hold on to in the storm. In another sense, it’s the chisel that breaks off the parts of us that don’t belong. Sometimes it’s very encouraging and sometimes it’s very painful. But it **IS** the Word of Life.

So Paul’s words sting when we view them in light of our own ceasing of prayer for someone else. I know it does for me - because it shows me just how far from the mark I am. Now though, I just make it a point to stop whatever I’m doing and pray. Boom. Just like that. Stop, lift that person or situation up and commit them to the Lord in prayer. And the point is to KEEP them in prayer.

Pray without ceasing. Talk to Him all throughout the day. Pray for people as the Lord prompts us to. Let's be exhorted to be more mindful of praying, in an intercessory way, for others. And then having prayed, KEEP them in prayer.

So what's Paul praying FOR exactly? He tells us in the last part of Verse 9 where he says, "...asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding...". Now Paul doesn't stop there. Paul's prayer is that they be FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL IN ALL SPIRITUAL WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING. Paul means to convey that he's speaking of a deep and thorough knowledge of the will of God (which is revealed in scripture).

- Ephesians 5:17, "*Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is*".
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality.*".
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*".
- 1 Timothy 2:4, "*...(God) who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*".
- 1 Peter 2:13, "*Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme.*".
- 1 Peter 2:15, "*For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.*".
- 1 Peter 4:19, "*Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good*".

So, what is God's will for our lives? From the scriptures we just looked at, here's a list: (7 verses)

- **Wisdom** (Eph 5:17): That we be wise by **learning** the principles of scripture
- **Sanctification. Abstinence from sexual immorality** (1 Thess 4:3): that we be continually transformed into His image and be made pure.
- **Thankfulness in all circumstances** (1 Thess 5:18): A heart of gratitude for all things: **both** pleasant things **and** difficult things
- **To know truth** (1 Tim 2:4): To know the Word of God and to practice it, to **apply** the principals we have learned from scripture
- **Submission to authority** (1 Peter 2:13): Submission **as unto the Lord** **because** we trust Him
- **Doing good** (1 Peter 2:15): Walking out our faith, showing love to the saints, empowered by the Holy Spirit
- **Suffering** (1 Peter 4:19): That we find ourselves in abject dependence upon Him and that in the midst of our suffering, we persist in gratitude, doing good, and trusting Him Who saves. Because He has promised to never leave nor forsake us. Who says to us, "Fear not for I am with you". Who is for you and not against you.

Person A: "Well, what's God's will for my life?"

Person B: "That you apply what you've learned."

Person A: "But I want more of Him."

Person B: "You can do that by applying what you've learned."

Person A: "That doesn't make sense."

Person B: "Clearly - because you haven't applied what you've learned."

Now, moving a little further into the next part of Paul's prayer in Verse 10, he continues, "...so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;". 3 powerful exhortations:

1. Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him.
2. Bearing fruit in every good work.
3. Increasing in the knowledge of God.

Breakdown:

1. "...so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him...".

We are to **identify** with our Lord that saved us through not only WORD but equally as importantly, that we are to identify with the Lord through our ACTION. That we are to actually LIVE in a way that is consistent with our identification in Christ. How many of us talk like Christians? But we **act** like we belong to the devil himself. And I'm not talking about perfection here. So as to WALK in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him. We must walk like Christians. Not just TALK like Christians - WALK like Christ is actually our Lord. Because we all know talk is cheap. Talking is easy. There are talkers and there are doers. Don't be a talker. And by the way, just so that we are crystal clear - we are NOT talking about works unto salvation here. And again, we aren't talking about perfection in our conduct, we're talking about an ever-increasing pattern of walking in a manner worthy of our Lord. Now the 2nd strong exhortation for us from Verse 10:

2. "...bearing fruit in every good work...".

The 2nd strong word for us is the **result** of applying the first exhortation which is to WALK in a manner worthy of the Lord. Spiritual fruit is the by-product of living a righteous life. In Hebrews, the author writes, "*For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* (Heb 12:11)".

Spiritual fruit is also evidenced by adopting and displaying a **holy attitude**: In his letter to the

Galatians, Paul writes, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23)”*.

3. “...and increasing in the knowledge of God...”.

No spiritual growth can take place APART from the knowledge of God. Peter said this, *“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—”* (1 Peter 2:2). And also, *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)”*. Evidences of spiritual growth:

- A deeper love for God’s word. The Psalmist in Psalm 119 says, *“Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. (Psalm 119:97)”*.
- Obedience. From 1 John we read, *“And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. (1 John 2:3-5)”*.
- Increasing faith. Paul’s words to the Thessalonians, *“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. (2 Thess 1:3)”*.
- A greater love for others as Paul told the church at Philippi: *“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment... (Phil 1:9)”*.

Verses 11 & 12:

Looking at Verses 11 and 12, we read *“...being strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.”* The hallmark of every true, real, authentic Christian - not just those who profess to be Christians - but those who truly possess

Christ; those who submit to God's word and Spirit, the hallmark is SPIRITUAL POWER.

Spiritual power. The spiritual power AVAILABLE to all of us who are in Christ. There is no caste system in Christendom. We ALL have access to this power.

To be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might is to be so strong spiritually, that we become totally overtaken by the Lord. More of Him, less of us. Our comprehension of God's fullness, our understanding of Who He is COMPLETELY is impossible while we're on this earth. It's just one of the limits of our humanity - we aren't equipped to understand Him all the way. BUT. We as believers CAN experience the greatness of our God in our lives as a direct result of our devotion and submission to Him.

Paul goes on to say, *"...for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."* And that's the purpose.

That's what he's been praying for. That they be strengthened with all power, according to God's glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the father who qualified them to share in the inheritance that belongs to all believers. Endurance with patience and joy. They describe the attitude we must have in our trials and tribulations. We have all been exhorted from this very pulpit that we ought not pray to get OUT of a trial. But rather to get EVERYTHING OUT of a trial. Why are we in it? What is God showing us? What is He teaching us? Is it to teach us patience? Yes. Then Lord, let me stay in this trial until I learn it. Is it to teach me endurance? Yes. Then, Father, please don't let me leave this trial until I learn to endure.

And in ALL these things, He is always causing us to draw closer and closer, and to depend on Him more and more. And let us experience joy in the middle of tribulation. Not because troubles are joyous; but rather because of what these trials will PRODUCE. Which as James says, "let patience have its perfect work, that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing".

And finally we conclude today with Verse 12 where Paul says something that we could spend weeks talking about. He says, "...*giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*". We ARE qualified - truly qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. But we are ONLY qualified because God Himself has done so ONLY by virtue of the finished work of Christ. Apart from Christ, do you realize what we would ALL be qualified to receive? The well-deserved Justice of God and the undiluted Wrath of the Almighty. So you bet your bottom dollar that we thank the Father who ALONE qualified us to inherent GRACE and not the Justice we deserve.

And what's the inheritance of the saints in light? Our inheritance is Christ! We inherit Him and He inherits us. Christ inherits a redeemed people and we inherit a Redeemer. And we did absolutely NOTHING to earn it. We did absolutely NOTHING to deserve it. We are qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints because Christ Himself paid for it with His blood because ours isn't good enough. Ours will NEVER be good enough. So I urge you to choose Life today if you haven't yet come to know Christ.