



## Getting to Know God

**No. 2**  
**Series: Colossians**

**Colossians 1:9-14**

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### Text

*[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. [13] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

### Introduction

- Arouse Interest:
  - One of the most important lessons every kid needs to learn is the difference between needs and wants.
    - You need food to survive. But you only want Taco Bell.
    - You need clothes, but you don't necessarily need those new Jordans.
  - It's important to distinguish between what you need and what you want, because in life, there are all kinds of things you can spend your time, money, and prayers on.
  - But you are going to be in a lot of trouble if you spend everything on the things you want before really taking care of the things you need.
- Surface Need:
  - For the Christian life, what exactly are the things that we need? What are the things that the Bible says we ought to invest in? What are the fundamentals of the spiritual life that we need to make it to the end?
- Orient to Text:
  - One way you can tell what you need, biblically speaking, is by looking at the different prayers throughout Scripture.

- D.A. Carson did a study on the apostle Paul's prayers throughout the New Testament. The title of his book is called, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*.
- It's interesting to read through Paul's prayers. Fundamentally, the most consistent thing that Paul prays for is that believers would know God and be filled with the knowledge of his will.
- This is what Paul prays for here in our passage today. Here, Paul reminds us of what is essential to the Christian life. As we're going to see in our study, ***God's people pray for greater knowledge of him.***

#### Organizational Sentence:

- Our study this morning is going to break into three parts. In verse 9, we're going to look at Paul's prayer itself. Then in verses 10-11 and 12-14 we'll look at two reasons why Paul prays for this.

#### Requests (9)

- So let's jump into the text this morning. Look with me at verse 9:
  - [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,
- Now, just to remind everyone where Paul is, Colossians 4:3 states that Paul is in jail (probably in Rome) while writing this letter.
- And while he's there Epaphras a fellow minister came to Paul concerned about his church in Colossae. And so Paul sends this letter back with Epaphras to be read to his church.
- Now this is significant, because from all we know, Paul himself had never been to Colossae. He had never met these people. And yet in spite of this, Paul prays for this church.
  - From the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you.
- Carson explains here that Paul isn't simply offering prayers whenever they come to mind. No, what Paul is saying is that he has dedicated times when he is praying for this church on a regular basis.
- And what is he praying for?
  - V.9. That you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

#### Application

- Friends, I don't know what your prayer life is like. I know my own. I know that I rarely pray for people I don't know, and when I do, I almost never pray that they would have a deeper knowledge of the will of God.
- Most of the time when we pray, we're either praying for ourselves or those close to us. and what we're praying for is often a lot more basic.

- Heal so and so. Provide for this person. Help him or her have patience with their boss at work. Help me Lord to find a parking spot during rush hour.
- And I want to be clear, none of these prayer requests are bad. I've been living in Chicago for almost 10 years. I pray for parking spots. And the great thing about God is that he's big enough to make time for even mundane prayer requests.
- But there's a problem when we never find ourselves praying the way the Bible actually teaches us to pray. And we need to think about this. According to Paul, the most basic thing a Christian should ask for isn't money, health, or even food. No, the most basic thing a Christian needs is deeper knowledge of God and his will.
- And this is such an important aspect of the Christian life, that even in jail, Paul prays for this on a regular basis.
- What are we praying for these days? Who are we praying for? Are we striving for these depths of the Christian life that we are aiming to pray for churches around the world that they too might gain a deeper knowledge of the depths of God?
- This is why ministries like Operation World or the app unreached of the day are useful. They remind us that there is a great big world out there with people who need our prayers, churches who need a deeper knowledge of God to persevere through extraordinary hardships.
- Friends, this is one reason why prayer meetings are important. Last Wednesday, James designed a prayer night where we just prayed for different aspects of our neighborhood. That's good. That's discipleship. That's one way where we as a church can learn what to ask for in our prayers beyond the normal day to day requests.
- Even in jail, Paul prayed that Christians might grow in their knowledge and obedience to the will of God. And that's convicting for all of us.
- At the same time, it's also comforting. Friends this verse reminds us that there is a great big church out there made up of people who are reading this same Bible, and who are also praying for us. Who are petitioning God to give us here a deeper knowledge of him. And in hard times, that's encouraging to know.

#### Keeps Us Grounded (10-11)

- Of course this raises the question why? Of all the things Paul could have asked for, why pray for this? Why request for a deeper knowledge of the will of God?
- Well the first reason Paul prays for this is that a deeper knowledge of God keeps us grounded. This is what we see in verses 10 and 11.
- Part of the reason that Paul is asking for this is because the Colossian church is being tempted by different kinds of knowledge. This is a major theme throughout this book. Colossians 2:8 reads:
  - See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.
- There are a lot of studies out there on what this particular false teaching or worldly philosophy in Colossae is supposed to be. But no one knows for sure.

- What we know is that the Colossian church was tempted to walk away from Christ was the same reasons that you and I are often tempted to walk away from Christ.
- For whatever reason this whole following Jesus thing wasn't working out the way they thought it would, and many of these Colossian believers are starting to seek out alternative to Christ.
  - If Jesus can't give me the happiness that I seek, maybe Buddha can, or Chopra, or some other guru or influencer might offer me the deeper insight that I need to get the results that I want.
- Paul wants to be clear here. There is no greater spiritual knowledge available to us other than the knowledge of God in the face of Christ Jesus. And everything we need to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to him can be found in Jesus.
- And in hard times, when the pressures on and the perils of this life are tempting us to try something new, in those times, Paul asks us to go back to something old. According to Paul it's in the hard times that you and I need to double down and be reminded of what God has done for us in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.
- As we will soon see, when Paul speaks of true knowledge and spiritual wisdom, he's mainly talking about what God himself has done in Jesus Christ to save us from our sins.
  - You can see this in Colossians 1:27
    - [27] To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. [28] Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.
  - In Colossians 2:1-4, Paul writes,
    - [1] For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, [2] that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, [3] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. [4] I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

#### Application

- According to Paul, the true key to authentic spirituality is not found in chasing after the new, the popular, the fads of this world. No, the true key to Christian spirituality is to go back to the basics, go back to the fundamental things God has revealed about himself in his Word.

- Carson has this great insight in his book that's helpful for me in my own thinking on this passage. He says friend, if you want to be stable and steadfast in a world with ever changing values and beliefs, stick with the Bible. Here you have the revealed Word of God himself which has stood the test of time for thousands of years.
- At the same time, if you want to be prophetic in our society today, If you want to challenge the norms and social conventions of the day, and really speak truth to power in a meaningful way in our world, the answer is still the same, stick with the Word of God.
- Even now, the Word has a way of overturning all human traditions, of revealing the ways that we all need to repent and relinquish some of our old allegiances.
- Even if you're here today, and you are not a Christian, can I challenge you? If you want to get serious about evaluating this whole Christianity thing, if you really want to see if this is something worth believing in, if Jesus is really someone worth trusting, start reading this book for yourself. Start getting to know this Jesus in the way that he's given himself to be known.
- I promise you this, Jesus will surprise you. He will overturn all our expectations of a liberal Jesus or a conservative Jesus, and he will bid us all to in our own ways to die to ourselves, take up our crosses and follow him.
- And if in your walk with the Lord, you're no longer being challenged by this Jesus, if you think you've got everything about him basically figured out, I just wanna let you know this morning, you probably don't know Jesus as well as you think you do.

#### Explain

- Now some of you might have been walking with the Lord for a long time. And you might be asking right now, "Theo I've been walking with the Lord. I know this stuff inside and out, and I'm still in a dry season of life. What am I suppose to do now?"
- Maybe some of you today are even in a really painful season of life. How does the knowledge of God's will help us when we are in pain?
- I can't answer all of these questions, and I'd be happy to talk with you after the service more about these things later. But for now let me point out one thing we might try in seasons of dryness or tragedy.
- Notice in verse 10, this is not just about knowing facts about Jesus. Paul lists out four participles here which are meant to flesh out what it means for us to walk worthy of the Lord.
  - For Paul, walking worthy means bearing fruit in every good work
  - it means increasing in the knowledge of God
  - it means being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might
  - Finally, it means giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints.

- And what's interesting about this list is that there is a sort of cyclical logic to this kind of Christian spirituality. As you can see in verse 10, knowledge of Christ is meant to lead us to be fruitful in good works. And at the same time, being fruitful in good works is meant to lead to greater knowledge of God.

Illustrate:

- The best example of this kind of Christian spirituality can be seen if you spend some time with older Christian saints who have been walking with the Lord for a long time.
- These are the saints who haven't simply read the verses about God's providential faithfulness in Matthew 6, but through their own endurance through trials and hardships they've actually experienced what it means for God to provide for them in hard times.
- And there is a sort of steadfast confidence with older Christians who have put their faith into practice time and time again year after year. A hard earned peace and joy.
  - When they lost their job, they still saw the Lord provide their daily bread.
  - When they fought against their sins, they found on the other side a deeper love and appreciation for their Savior.
  - When in hard seasons, they still stepped out in faith and prayer, they found God to be faithful and loving in ways they couldn't have imagined.
- Friends, there is a kind of confidence that comes when you actually see God keep the promises that he's made. But that kind of confidence, that kind of faith, is built over a lifetime of walking with the Lord.
- And this is why in hard times of life, it's important for us to both stay in church and stay active in our faith. Some of you are going through seasons of intense tragedy and pain. And I'm so sorry for what you're going through. I would never wish these things on anybody.
- But these are the seasons of life when you and I have an opportunity to either retreat in fear or step out in faith and see what the Lord can do. And when you do put your faith into practice, God promises to show up in ways you never expected. And in doing so, he gives us even more reasons throughout our lives of why we can continue to trust in him.

Makes Us Grateful (12-14)

- This leads us to the second reason why Paul prays for a deeper knowledge of God's will. Not only does this deeper knowledge ground us in a chaotic world, but as we see in verses 12-14 it also makes us grateful to the Lord.
- This is one of the sweet secrets of the Christian life. If you're serving God right, you'll find yourself serving God because you want to serve him not just because you have to serve him.
- It's interesting in verse 12, Paul mentions that part of what it means to walk worthy of the Lord is to walk grateful for what God has done for us. But that

raises the question, what has God done for us? Look with me again at verses 12-14:

- [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. [13] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- Now on the one hand, there isn't really anything here that's new for a Christian who's been walking with the Lord. Again, Paul wants us to grow by going back to the old things and taking a closer look.
- But when we do take a closer look, we realize that what Paul is doing here is actually pretty amazing. This whole section filled with language from Israel's Exodus out of Egypt. The inheritance reminded Israel of their inheritance in the promised land. The language of deliverance is the same language used to speak of God delivering Israel from their captivity in Egypt. The wording of redemption is the same words that were used of slaves being purchased and set free from their former slavery.
- In other words, Paul is using the imagery of the Old Testament exodus to describe our New Testament salvation.
- If God's people back then ought to have been grateful to God for what he did back then, how much more should God's people today be grateful for what God has done for us now?
  - Back then, Israel was given an inheritance in the promised land, but you and I are given an inheritance in heaven.
  - Israel was delivered from the kingdom of Egypt, but those who are in Christ by faith have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness itself.
  - Israel was redeemed from their slavery to Pharaoh, but you and I have been redeemed from our slavery to sin through the blood of Christ which was paid to set us free.

#### Application

- Friends, you and I have so much more to be grateful for, and even then we still haven't plummed the depths of this Gospel quite yet.
- One of the things Evangelicals tend to uncritically assume is that Jesus is really the loving person in the Trinity, and the Father is really the wrathful part of God that needs to take out his anger on the Son before he could love us.
- And I know most of us wouldn't say that, but we subtly tend to think that. But friends, I just want to say if that's your impression of God, that's gonna wreck your prayer life. That's gonna wreck your engagement with this God. You won't want to spend time with a God like that.
- And the beautiful thing is that if you go deeper in the gospel, you'll realize you don't have to spend time with a God like that. Look again here at verse 12. It is the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints. Verse 13 it is the Father who delivered us from the domain of darkness. I would even argue

in verse 11 that it is the Father who is strengthening us with his power for all endurance and patience with joy.

- Friends, I'm not saying that the dry season that you're in is easy. I can't make any promises on how long this will last in your life.
- All I can say is that God is good, and he loves you more than you can imagine. And if the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has been working from all eternity to bring about your salvation, what makes us think God won't do all the rest to ensure that we all get to heaven to be with him.
- Friends, I know we don't always think or feel like we have a good God like this, but those are the moments when we need to dig deeper into God the most. When we need to go back to his Gospel, go back to his word, go back and remind ourselves of who this God is that we're trusting and following, and then step out in faith and obedience to see how God will show up in our lives.
- Friends these are the seasons when we need to go to church and hear people sing the great truths of the Bible so that our souls can remember who it is we are worshipping. These are the times when we need to grab another brother and sister in Christ and say simply, I'm not doing okay, can you pray for me.
- I can't promise you that you're dry seasons will end immediately, but I can promise you this. God hears these kinds of prayers and he is eager to answer and show himself to you afresh. Take the step of faith, and see what God will do.