

ThanksLiving

Colossians 1:9-12

Sermon Outline

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A. Renewed (v. 9):

1. Since the day we heard, Paul had a clear understanding and was committed to doing what was necessary to address what Epaphus brought to his attention.
2. We did not cease to pray—Paul was unequivocally committed to incessantly prostrating himself before God, focusing on petitioning the Lord on behalf of these believers.
 - a) Paul’s prayer for the Colossian Christians is a model for us. As soon as he heard of the new faith of the Colossians, he began interceding with God for them, asking Him to give them knowledge, wisdom, strength, and joy. He prayed that the new believers at Colosse would grow into Christian maturity so that they might walk before God, pleasing Him and producing good works.¹
3. Ask that you may be filled with knowledge—Paul, respecting the power and authority of the Lord, requests that He completely control these believers' grasp of spiritual truths so that they achieve an intimate experience with God.
 - a) Gnostics valued the accumulation of knowledge, but Paul points out that knowledge is empty. To be worth anything, it must lead to a changed life and right living. His prayer for the Colossians has two dimensions, that they might understand what God wants, and that they might also have the power to do God’s will. Knowledge of God is not a secret that only a few can discover, it is open to everyone. God wants us to learn more about Him and put that belief into practice by helping others.
4. Knowledge of His will—Paul desires the spirit of God to influence these believers to come to a ‘full knowledge’ of God’s Word so that from their intimate experience of His Word, they learn what pleases Him and brings Him glory.

¹Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1999, S. Col 1:9-12

- a) The content of Paul's prayer is that the same Spirit of verse 8 will make them completely full so that they are in a state of being filled with a focused on being fully supplied (filled – perfect, passive, indicative) with a clear, full and exact knowledge of the will of God (2 Peter 1:3-5). This is exercised with mental excellence in its highest and fullest form because knowledge is being applied to real-life situations so that the Colossae believers may function in a skillful manner (wisdom) with the ability to put facts together so they can draw spiritual conclusions based on how the facts relate to scripture (understanding). Filled is a passive verb because the H.S. will do the filling of the active learning of the knowledge as stated in verses 5b & 6. However, wisdom and understanding are not acquired automatically with knowledge. Job recognized that wisdom could not be acquired anywhere on earth, it can only come from God. These three qualities of "knowledge," "insight," and "wisdom" were understood as gifts of God that He had imparted by His Spirit to the faithful members of the community. Instead, knowledge and wisdom in the Bible are practical and have to do with godly living.
- b) Practical obedience means pleasing God, serving Him, and getting to know Him better. Any doctrine isolating the believer from the needs of the world around him is not spiritual. Evangelist D.L. Moody often said, "Every Bible should be bound in shoe-leather." Paul would agree.
5. Wisdom and understanding – Understanding the Lord's will, because of the influence of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), allows believers to become skillful in applying God's Word in real-life situations. This is a result of skillfully balancing factual information against the knowledge of God for an application that manifests mental excellence (Philippians 1:9-11).
- a) But the words most often translated as "understanding" are "bin" and its cognate tebunah, appearing over two hundred times in the OT. The basic idea presented in "bin" is one of judgment. The person with understanding can make a distinction between options. The person is able to discern the best and right choice. By observing God's commands carefully, God's people could show His "wisdom and understanding" (Dt.4:6). Moses provided Israel with a basis on which to make distinctions and judgments and thus to know how to conduct their lives. No wonder the psalmist prayer, "Give me understanding, and I will keep your law" (Ps 119:34).
- b) The NT. The perspective of the OT must shape the interpretation of the Greek words for understanding. Understanding is a moral and spiritual issue, not an intellectual one. Although the mind is involved, one must be open and responsive to God to understand

spiritual realities. Synesis and syniemi are words that denote insight or comprehension, particularly of spiritual things. Paul prayed for the Colossians, asking that God would fill them “with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col.1:9). Information is essential. Still, it must be comprehended and applied to lead to a life worthy of the Lord (v.10).

6. Wisdom and understanding – When the Word of God is clearly exposed in the mind of a believer it becomes easier to understand the decision-making process. This allows them to function excellently under whatever circumstances they may be experiencing; Peter says they will not stumble (2 Peter 1:3-11).
 - a) Only in one’s relationship with God can wisdom master life’s challenges. The Hebrew view is practical in focus. Wisdom is expressed in godly living (Prov. 2:6,9-12). A wise person is one who is sensitive to God and willingly subjects himself to Him. It is only in wedding the Lord’s words to experience that wisdom can be found or demonstrated.
 - b) The understanding person accepts God’s revelation by faith and judges every experience by its standards. The essence of wisdom and understanding is grasping spiritual realities and using them to distinguish how to act in practical life situations.

B. Revived (v. 10):

1. Walk worthy – Once we experience the blessing of the Holy Spirit because we now have a full knowledge of God’s will, we can effectively develop a lifestyle that is pleasing to God.
2. Walk worthy—The ability to balance the issues of life against the Word of God, as a result of the influence of the Holy Spirit, blesses us to once and for all experience the inner strength that comes from the Holy Spirit and live at a high level of maturity.
 - a) Two words summarize the practicality of the Christian life: walk and work. The sequence is important: first, wisdom, then walking, then work. I cannot work for God unless I am walking with Him, but I cannot walk with Him if I am ignorant of His will. The believer who spends time daily in the Word and prayer (Acts 6:4) will know God's will and be able to walk with Him and work for Him. Paul wants spiritual intelligence to lead to practical obedience.
 - b) “Walk” is *peripateō* (περιπατεω), “to order one’s behavior, to conduct one’s self.” “Worthy” is *axiōs* (ἀξιως). When this word is used with the genitive case as it is here, it means, “having the weight of (weighing as much as) another thing.” It means, “of like value, worth as much.” The saints are to see to it that their manner of life and conduct

weighs as much as the character of their Lord. He is to be their example in life, and the copy must be like the example.

3. Walk worthy for the Lord—When Christ is Lord of our lives, we are empowered to live at a high level of maturity.
 - a) The purpose of them gaining knowledge which leads to wisdom and understanding is for them to develop a righteous behavior (walk) lifestyle. This causes them to demonstrate that they are worthy of having the Lord in their life, and as a result, they gain favor because they seek to do whatever God desires (pleasing). This behavior leads to continuous spiritual development, producing spiritual attributes (bearing fruit) in every bit of energy (work) that benefits or is profitable (good) for the body of believers. This leads to continual growth (increasing) in the clear, full, and exact knowledge of the will of God (without this people become dull of hearing (Matthew 13:14-16; Hebrews 5:11-13)).
4. Pleasing Him in all respects—Our inner desire to walk in a manner to please God, coupled with our commitment to living at a high level of maturity, causes us to focus on gaining God’s favor as bondslaves.
5. Bearing fruit—This spiritual commitment to Christ indicates a continuous process whereby a believer experiences the fruit of the Holy Spirit permeating their lives.
6. In every good work – This spiritual disposition, empowered by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, not only pleases God but also produces a useful ministry that benefits others.
7. In every good work, this spirit-filled life is energized to walk by faith, a labor of love that benefits the person engaged in it and those around them.
8. Increasing in the knowledge of God - The practical application of God’s Word grows to an even greater understanding of God’s Word, stimulating a greater intimacy with God and ‘mental grasp of spiritual truths.’ This matures a believer to have a thorough participation in the Word of God.
 - a) Since the participles which define the walking worthily are all in the present tense and stress a notion of progress, it is probably correct to conclude that the Colossian Christians would receive further knowledge as they were obedient to the knowledge of God they had already received. Paul has prayed that we might have spiritual intelligence and that this intelligence might result in practical obedience. But there is a third request that completes these first two; and without it, the Christian life could not be mature.

C. Empowered (v. 11):

1. Strengthen with all power – When the ministry of the Holy Spirit blesses us to gain spiritual wisdom and understanding while increasing knowledge; we can experience His supernatural ability to overcome obstacles in the face of our troubles and dangers. This is what allows us to “do all things through Christ who strengthens us.” (Philippians 4:13) We are also more than conquerors (Romans 8:37-39).
2. His glorious might - When we function in this manner the divine nature of God (2 Peter 1:3-4) becomes more of who we are, so like Paul, “I no longer live, it is Christ that lives in me..... .” (Galatians 2:20) This experience empowers us to live in His supernatural strength while displaying His divine nature.
 - a) Particularly notable here is the thought of divine glory as a manifestation of power (like the radiant energy of the sun), a thought equally rooted in the folk memory of the fearful numinous power (*mysterium tremendum*) of such theophanies (Exod. 19:16–24; Num. 16:19–35; Isa. 6:4–5). In Paul, this is understood as beneficial power, transforming for the better (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:18; the parallel with Ephesians here is 3:16), though with double effect in 2 Thes. 1:9–10. Since transformation into heavenly splendor (glory) is part of the hope for heaven (see also on 1:27 and 3:4),²²⁰ the prayer is in effect for that process to be forwarded already here on earth (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16–5:5; see also 1:27; H. Hegermann, ³EDNT 1.346–47). That this train of thought is in mind here is confirmed by the strong eschatological and realized eschatological note in the next two verses.
1. For the attaining of all steadfastness—The inner strength that matures us to become like Christ and live in His supernatural power enables us to endure long trials, blessing us to be able to wait on God while also being patient with others who may have wronged us.
 - a) This steadiness of character must lead to the ability to stand firm in every respect (endurance - is the grace to bear up under, the bravery of perseverance in the performance of one's God-given task in the spirit of every hardship and trial, the

²²⁰Note particularly Segal’s thesis that Paul uses the language of transformation gained through contact with Jewish mystical apocalypticism to express the hope of ultimate salvation (*Paul* ch. 2; see also Morray-Jones, “Transformational Mysticism”).

³EDNT *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. H. Balz and G. Schneider (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–93)

refusal to succumb to despair or cowardice) and to do so with exuberant joy and gladness of heart (joyfulness). Another distinction is that longsuffering is shown in one's attitude not to things but to persons. Endurance and longsuffering are both divine gifts and are considered human virtues (Rom. 15:5; Gal. 5:22), and both are inspired by hope, by trust in the fulfillment of God's promises (Rom. 8:25; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:2,8; Heb. 6:12).

- b) **Endurance** is the grace to bear up under, the bravery of perseverance in performing one's God-given task in the spirit of every hardship and trial, and the refusal to succumb to despair or cowardice. It is a human attribute and is shown in connection with things, that is, circumstances in which a person is involved: affliction, suffering, persecution, etc.

D. Gratitude Attitude (v. 12):

1. Patience; joyous – We can become so drunk with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:15-19) that in the midst of hardship or opposition for others, we can experience exuberant gladness leading to dancing and leaping with intense joy. David modeled this for us in Psalm 34 and Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19. This is because the fruit of the Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22-23). This is the object of everything that God is doing for us in this passage.
 - a) Longsuffering characterizes the person who, in relation to those who oppose or molest him, exercises patience, refusing to yield to passion or to outbursts of anger. In the writings of Paul, it is associated with such virtues as kindness, mercy, love, goodness, compassion, meekness, lowliness, forbearance, and the forgiving spirit (Rom. 2:4; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12,13). In distinction from endurance, this longsuffering is not only a human but also a divine attribute. It is ascribed to God (Rom. 2:4; 9:22), to Christ (1 Tim. 1:16), as well as to man (2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12,13; 2 Tim. 4:2). Another distinction is that longsuffering is shown in one's attitude not to things but to persons. Considered as human virtues, both endurance and longsuffering are divine gifts (Rom. 15:5; Gal. 5:22), and both are inspired by hope, by trust in the fulfillment of God's promises (Rom. 8:25; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:2,8; Heb. 6:12).
2. Giving thanks to the Father – When we experience all that the Lord is doing for us and how that powerfully transforms our lives, providing inner strength to make it through each storm we will be grateful to the God who is responsible for beginning this spiritual journey.

- a) The results of this power walk of God are due to the believer's commitment to walk worthy, allowing Paul to continuously give our Father (notice he did not say God) gratitude for His benefits and blessings (giving thanks). Our Father has qualified us to participate in our portion; He has for us as His heirs (inheritance) as set aside believers who are relentlessly committed to holiness, truth, the glory of God, and His life that is all stimulated through His Spirit (light).
3. Who qualified us to share in the inheritance – We are blessed because of the salvific work of God (John 3:16) we are able to fully (Titus 3:5) share in the ministry of the Holy Spirit as promised by Christ in John 14:16-17. (Ephesians 3:16-21)
- a) **Inheritance:** One receives an inheritance as a gift, but one does not earn it. It is emphasized by the words, "Who qualified you." The best comment on this verse is Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 3:5: "our sufficiency is from God." It is God who makes those who are not worthy worthy and thus enables them to have a share in the inheritance.
4. Saints of light – Because we share in God's divine nature and are therefore not corrupted by the world, because 'we no longer live it is Christ who lives in us....' Our lives reveal truth and righteousness so that we become, like Christ, 'sons of light.' (Luke 16:8)
- a) Light and dark symbolize the kingdoms of God and Satan. Believers have moved from darkness to light under the same God who moved the original creation from dark chaos to enlightened goodness.⁴
- b) The thought is so close that it must help illuminate the meaning here. "Light" here presumably denotes the light of heaven, that transcendent illumination that alone gives clarity of vision, including clarity of self-perception (e.g., John 1:4–5; 3:19–21; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:13–14; 1 John 1:5, 7; 2:8). Those who have received this inheritance in the light⁵²⁵ and live accordingly can be called "sons/children of the light" (as in Luke 16:8; John 12:36; 1 Thes. 5:15); the Qumran covenanters understood themselves in the same way. In both cases, the antithesis is explicit with the "sons of darkness," that is, those who by self-deception or demonic deception fail to understand the true nature of things (see further on 1:13).

⁴Hughes, Robert B. ; Laney, J. Carl ; Hughes, Robert B.: *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2001 (The Tyndale Reference Library), S. 611

⁵²⁵"In the light" probably goes with the whole phrase, not just with "the saints" (see Lohmeyer 39 n. 3).

5. Saints of light – When we are blessed with spiritual wisdom and understanding while growing in the knowledge of God we are empowered to consistently portray a lifestyle pleasing to God as we walk worthily. This leads to good works, while continuously increasing in God's knowledge empowering us to withstand all the attacks of the Devil. We become saints (totally separated unto God), and salt and light to the world (Matthew 5:13-16).

a) The word light used in close connection with:

- Holiness, being sanctified (Acts 20:32; 26:18, 23). These passages are especially important because they occur in Paul's winning speeches.
- The divine revelation: truth, and insight into that revelation: knowledge (Ps. 36:9; 2 cor. 4:4,6).
- Love (1 John 2:9,10)
- Glory (Isa. 60:1-3)
- Peace, prosperity, liberty, and joy (Ps. 97:11; Isa. 9:1-7).
- "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). As such, God is in Christ, His people's salvation. Light and salvation are, therefore, synonyms (Psalm 27:1; Isa. 49:6). So is light and divine grace or favor (Psalm 44:3).