

Colossians 1:9-14

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Paul expresses his hope for the Colossian church (and all believers) and shows how the acts of Jesus paved the way for those desires to become realities.

The transition language here is important: *for this reason also*. It connects what was said before with what is to follow. In verses 3-8, Paul applauds the Colossians and Paul's fellow minister Epaphras as their emissary. He celebrates all that was presented to them and done through them, and that it was done under the headship of Christ. It is *for this reason also*, namely, the headship of Christ, that Paul and Timothy (and those with them) have acted/proclaimed.

This further reinforces the bond between author and audience. This unity of effort has been established *since the day we heard of it*. "It" being the *reason* the Colossians are lauded as faithful servants—the gospel, which is both the source and the aim for all believers.

These are qualifiers for what is to follow. Why? *For this reason* (the gospel). When? *Since the day we heard of it*. And now the what—we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Paul reveals his desire for the Colossians—that they *may be filled with knowledge*. Not a general knowledge. In fact, the word for *knowledge* here, "epiginosis," means "a precise and correct comprehension." A deeper *knowledge*. Paul is asking (via his prayers) for a precise knowledge of the *will* of God. A synonym for *will* is "wish" or "purpose"—a deep desire. Paul wants the Colossians to comprehend and align with God's heart.

This is done by coming to *precise knowledge in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*. In this context, *wisdom* could be described as the ability to discern, the practical choices one makes. In Paul's case, he desires that the Colossians have *spiritual wisdom* to see things as God sees. The word for *understanding* here is "synesis," which means "a running together, flowing with." Think of the word synergy. It is about aligning in such a synchronized way that something greater than the sum of the parts flows from it. This is what is meant by *understanding* ("synesis") here. By seeing things from God's perspective, a true understanding of reality is accomplished.

Wedge between *wisdom* and *understanding* (in the Greek syntax) is the word *spiritual*. It means "non-carnal", not the flesh. So, not the twisted and inverted wisdom and understanding the world claims is right, but the true and eternal knowledge of reality and purpose.

Consider the metaphor of Russian nesting dolls.

1. The biggest one in this passage is *the reason*, or the gospel.
2. The next is intercessory *prayer* of Paul and his team.

3. The third, only slightly smaller, is that the Colossians be *filled* with the *precise knowledge* of God's will.
4. The fourth "doll" is *all spiritual wisdom and understanding*.

They all fit within one another. It is a trickle-down, transcendent vision.

1. The gospel is *the reason*.
2. Because of the hope of the gospel, the apostles *pray* and intercede.
3. Through their intercession and guidance, the Colossians are inspired and shown the way to *be filled with precise knowledge*.
4. Through this filling, the believers gain the *wisdom* to act and the *understanding* ("synesis") that allows them to commune with God and be in the flow of His will.

Paul then describes the next doll, number 5: *So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord*. Behavior, practical living, does not happen in a vacuum. It is informed by those other "dolls," the way we perceive and believe. The way we discern and comprehend. Our choices of who or what to trust informs our perspective, and both of those create a mental structure, a path of least resistance for our choices to take action, based on our perceptions of what is in our best interest.

Paul prays that the Colossian believers be *filled with all wisdom and understanding* because he knows it is the way to bring lasting behavioral improvement, and therefore experiential blessing. The Colossians will only *walk in a manner worthy of the Lord* when they can rightly *understand* what that *manner* is. This requires redeeming their perspective, to see things with wisdom. To see life as it is, from God's perspective.

Acting rightly is what God wants from us. Paul wants the Colossians to *please Him (God) in all respects*. In how they think (*knowledge/understanding*), how they perceive/ the perspective they choose (*wisdom*), and what they do/the choices they make (*walk*).

This alignment of living according to God's will produces positive results. Paul says the outpour of this is *bearing fruit in every good work*, as Epaphras and many others have done. Paul mentioned in verse 6 that the gospel is already *bearing fruit* throughout *the world*; he is now explicitly inviting the Colossians to participate in that success. The *fruit* that is a *good work* means that it is a product flowing out of a renewed mind, a true perspective, that aligns with the truth of the reality of God's created order.

Another positive, fruitful result is that the Colossians are *increasing in the knowledge of God*. Living in this way produces dividends. The more one lives aligned with God, and produces the *fruit* of the gospel, the more *knowledge of God* one can expect. The *knowledge of God* that comes through living by faith is a spectacular, once-in-an-existence opportunity.

Paul writes in Ephesians 3:10 that angels and other spiritual beings are watching the church (believers) to understand the "manifold wisdom of God." These beings have been in the presence of God and have been taught directly by Him. And yet they are watching us, believers, to understand God's manifold wisdom. This must be because we can know by faith, and they can

only know by sight. Believers gain this amazing benefit of the *knowledge of God* when we *walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects*. Living a life that is pleasing to God is the path we can choose that leads to our greatest possible fulfillment.

As we align with God, living in a manner that pleases Him, we are *strengthened with all power according to His glorious might*. This is not about worldly power-dynamics, fame, and fortune, but *for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience*. The power God promises is not power to control circumstances or eliminate difficulty. It is the power to steward faithfully and live with spiritual peace.

The earthly reward for this knowledge, alignment, and right behavior is often suffering. Or, better said, the reward is to grow in *steadfastness* (or long-suffering) and *patience*. To endure pain more effectively. Not avoid it. To endure through difficulty and remain faithful pleases God greatly, and stores up the greatest of riches in heaven, riches that will endure forever (Colossians 1:5; 3:23-24).

And in the midst of difficulty, *joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light*. Earlier in verse 5, Paul set the stage by talking about “the hope laid up for you in heaven.” All of this is an exercise in delayed gratification. The end purpose is not ease or circumstantial comfort; it is *pleasing the Lord* and participating in His Kingdom. That is the *inheritance of the saints*.

Paul will later call this the “reward of the inheritance” (Colossians 3:23-24). This inheritance is laid up in heaven for us as a reward. Some inheritance in scripture is unconditional. A certain level of relationship with God is always the inheritance for any believer (Romans 8:17a). God will never reject one of His children (2 Timothy 2:12). But other forms of inheritance are only possessed through faithfulness, similar to Israel only possessing the land that had been granted to them when they were faithful to enter the land and possess it. An example of this in the New Testament is that believers will inherit being a co-ruler with Christ, sharing His authority, only if we suffer as He suffered, and learn to serve as He served (Romans 8:17b; 2 Timothy 2:12; Hebrews 12:1-2; Revelation 3:21).

The *Father* has *qualified us to share in this inheritance* by the life and death of Jesus. This is a reminder of that biggest and most important truth—the headship/supremacy of Christ. Jesus is the hope of Heaven. He has made possible a fulfilling life, a life that *pleases God* and fulfills our deepest desires. Our capacity to live this sort of life is endless, because we have access to the resurrection power of Jesus through a walk of faith.

For he rescued us from the domain of darkness. Without the reality of God, we are not capable of the alignment necessary for living a meaningful life. We are without hope in the absence of the intervening act of God. Being present on earth makes us a part of *the domain of darkness*. But Jesus’ death on the cross *rescued us, and transferred us to the kingdom of His (God’s) beloved Son*. This is a key message of the gospel. The hope of our lives.

Jesus came to earth and brought an *inheritance* to share with mankind. He lived and was crucified, paying the price for our admittance out of the *domain of darkness* and into the

Kingdom of light. Part of this inheritance is being unconditionally accepted into God's family, and is independent of our actions. But our fullest experience of this gift depends upon our choices. Paul desires the Colossians to understand that the ways of the world are the ways of *darkness*. To see things from God's perspective, to gain His wisdom and walk in His ways through the power of His resurrection gains us access into the *kingdom of His beloved Son*.

It is *in* [Christ] *we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*. After living the perfect life, the death of Jesus served as a substitution for our spiritual death. He became the ultimate sacrificial lamb. By His death and resurrection, *we have redemption*. We have been justified and declared righteous in the sight of God. All our sins were nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). This means we now have the opportunity to move from the *domain of darkness* into the *Kingdom* of light. We have received *the forgiveness of sins*. We are no longer shackled by our imperfections, but have been given a way to overcome. This is an unconditional gift that sets up an amazing opportunity. Whether we gain benefit from that opportunity depends our choice.

What Paul has done in these verses is show how the way we think about God and the commitment we have toward Him informs our daily behavior. This sets up all of what Paul will talk about in the verses and chapters to come. As he gets in the weeds of daily living and addresses some of the particular struggles of the Colossian church, he has established these verses as a foundation for what they are all trying to achieve together, as a team, and why.

Biblical Text

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.¹³ For He rescued 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.