

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: COLOSSIANS 1:9-14**

To understand the background and purpose of the letter to the Colossians.

Walk This Way

We learned in the first session that the Colossian church was not planted by Paul, but by, “Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf” (Col. 1:7). Paul had been informed by Epaphras in person of the church’s spiritual growth, and that excited Paul (Col 1:3-4). However, conflict had arisen in Colossae with a group of false teachers, and that is what prompted Paul to write the letter; to address the false teaching and correct it with sound doctrine. These false teachers posed a threat to the health and vitality of the church, and Paul sought to extinguish it before it could do any real harm. Therefore, his prayer for the Colossian church stems from that context: “For this reason also... we have not ceased to pray” (Col. 1:9). His prayer is that they would, “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” (Col. 1:10). We face the same threat of false doctrine today. Recrudescence of false doctrine is always an imminent possibility. The church today must be vigilant to do the same things that the Colossian church was instructed to do. In today’s lesson, we will take a deeper look at what it means to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord Jesus, and what it takes to do it.

God’s Will Matters

It’s easy (and important) to look at the details regarding what it means to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, but it’s also equally important to understand what makes this possible to begin with. Paul’s prayer is not

directly that they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. That is the *desired outcome* of his prayer. His prayer is for what is necessary to even be able to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. He says, “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” (Col. 1:9). *That* is the prayer. In other words, you can’t please God without first understanding His will, because what pleases God is obedience to His will.

It’s important to note that this being filled with the understanding of God’s will is a potential, not a promise. The word here for filled is translated, “that you may be filled,” because it’s in the

subjunctive mood. In other words, it is possible to be filled with the understanding of God’s will, but not guaranteed, hence why Paul is praying for it. The will of God is important. Jesus tells us to pray: “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Jesus said in John 7:16-17: “Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” Jesus was not only interested in but dependent on the will of His Father, and we are to follow His example. When we understand God’s will and we do it, the results follow.

Pleasing God

In verses 10 through 14, Paul gives an account of what it will look like to please God in our day-to-day lives. Below is an outline of the passage.

BEARING FRUIT IN EVERY GOOD WORK (V.10)

The first result of walking in God’s will is that we would bear fruit in every good work. The concept of bearing fruit comes from a basic understanding of the health (or lack thereof) of a tree. A healthy tree bears healthy, good fruit, and an unhealthy tree does not. It’s a popular illustration in the New Testament because it is simple, easy to grasp, and informative theologically speaking. Bearing fruit is not possible if you are not connected to Christ. This concept of bearing fruit in every good work is only possible for believers. Jesus says in John 15:1, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.” He goes on to say, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, *for apart from me you can do nothing*” (Jn. 15:4-5).

It is also important to note the presence of good works in the life of a true believer. While the message of the Gospel is wholly constructed on God’s grace (Eph. 2:8-9), the result of such a gift produces good works, and those good works are important (Matt. 5:16). Part of what it means to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord is to live a life of good works that bears fruit, and that fruit is evidence of the authenticity of their faith.

INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (V.10)

Secondly, he says, “increasing in the knowledge of God.” It’s difficult to understand God’s will and not really know much about Him. Our faith rests on a relationship with the Heavenly Father, and that relationship is

Subjunctive Mood

In grammar, the subjunctive mood relates to the mood of a verb that expresses what is imagined, wished, or possible. Below is an example of the difference between an Indicative and Subjunctive verb.

Indicative: “I am looking for the man in the red hat.”
Subjunctive: “I am looking for a man in the red hat.”

In the indicative example, it is implied that a man in the red hat exists, but in the subjunctive example, it is possible that there is no such man. Greek uses the subjunctive to express what is possible, but not definite.

developed in part by growing in our understanding of who God is, how He has revealed Himself, and what He is seeking to accomplish in our lives, and we get that knowledge from the *Scripture*. Scripture is the lamp that guides the believer's path (Ps. 119:105). We are to live by it and it alone (Matt. 4:4). It is capable of instructing us and equipping us to carry out every good work (2 Tim. 3:16). Part of what it means to grow in maturity and walk out our faith in a way that pleases God is to grow in our knowledge of Him through His Word.

STRENGTHENED TO ENDURE (V.11)

Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord means, additionally, to be able to withstand temptation and crisis. Paul tells us that understanding the will of God will, "strengthen us with all power, according to his glorious might." There are two Greek terms here for, "power." The first one is the Greek word δύναμις (dynamis), a general term for power which can be defined as, "the potentiality to exert force in performing some function." The second term, here translated as "might," is the Greek word κράτος (kratos) which means, "the power to rule or control." In other words, our power to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord comes from the Lord Himself. Power is a concept native to the Gospel (Rom. 1:16; Eph. 1:9, 3:7; Col. 2:12). Simply put, you don't have what it takes within you to please God; the power to do so comes from Him and Him alone. Specific to this passage, the power referenced here is the power to *endure*. He says, "for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience" (Col. 1:11). Contextually, what are the Colossians needing to endure? The false teaching that has crept in! Christians then should pray to understand God's will, for by doing God's will we are kept from being misled by false teachers and, thus, able to endure.

GRATEFUL (VS.12-14)

Finally, he says we are to, "joyously give thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). Walking in a worthy manner means being grateful for what God has done on our behalf. What has God done? In this passage alone, he says that God has, "qualified us to share in the inheritance with the saints in light." The word qualify here, ἱκανόω (hikanoō), means, "to authorize or make sufficient." He has brought us up to the standard necessary to share this inheritance, and Paul even explains what God has done to make this sharing possible: "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). The imagery here suggests we formerly had citizenship in one place (the domain of darkness), but now have a new citizenship in Jesus' kingdom. A positional move has taken place.

The work of the cross makes it possible for this transfer to take place. We are all under the curse of sin and deserving of death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23), and thus we deserve to remain in the domain of darkness that Paul speaks of. Grace, the undeserving gift of God, says otherwise. In Christ we find, "redemption, the forgiveness of sin" (Col. 1:14). The word redemption here, ἀπολύτρωσις (apolytrōsis), means, "to buy back a slave or servant." This is a deeply theological reality that is being fleshed out here by the Apostle Paul. To put it all together, this passage envisions us as slaves or servants to a domain of darkness, sin, and Satan (Eph. 2:1-3). However, because of God's unmerited favor towards us, He sends Jesus to lay His life down in our place to pay the penalty of sin, which is death (Rom. 6:23), and God accepts this payment (Heb. 10:8-18). This sacrifice also acts as payment for us, and ownership is transferred from sin to Jesus; Jesus is our new master. After the payment is made, the transfer takes place (think: Amazon Prime), and we are moved from the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of Christ. Paul's contention here is that when we truly understand what has happened on our behalf, we are to live in a state of gratitude towards the Father and the Son, "joyously giving thanks to the Father" (Col. 1:12).

Putting It In Action

You can understand after reading through these characteristics why walking in a manner worthy of the Lord is only possible for a Christian. How can one live with gratitude towards the Father because of what He's done for us, if they are not the recipient of such grace? How can one endure without being empowered by the Gospel of God? How can one bear fruit if they are not connected to the True Vine? Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord is, essentially, living your life in view of God's mercy on you on a day-to-day basis. We need to be reminded of the Gospel. We need to be reminded of God's love and grace that was freely given and completely undeserved, and those reminders motivate us and direct us in the way we live our lives. Wanna walk in a manner worthy of the Lord? Live your life in view of what the Lord has done for you.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Colossians 1:9. What does Paul pray we will be given?

2. Read Colossians 1:10. What two things does Paul identify in this verse as characteristics of walking in a worthy manner?

Day Two

1. Read John 15:4-5. What does Jesus say He is? What does Jesus say the Father is? Why is it necessary for us to be connected to Him? Can we do anything of our own accord?

2. Read Colossians 1:11. What are we strengthened with? What does this strength translate to, practically speaking? (Hint: See above notes)

Day Three

1. Read Colossians 1:12. What has the Father done for us, according to this verse? What does it mean to be qualified (Hint: See above notes)?

2. Read Colossians 1:13: What has the Father done for us, according to this verse? Where were we transferred from? Where were transferred to?

Day Four

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-3, Hebrews 10:8-18, and Romans 6:23. When you put these verses together, what picture do you get of the gift of salvation and how does it make you feel?
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2. Read Colossians 1:14. What do we have in Christ, according to this verse? What does, “redemption,” mean? (Hint: See above notes)
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Week 2 Discussion: Gratitude

In Colossians 1:9-14, Paul spells out what walking in a worthy manner looks like. For one, it is not possible without understanding the will of God. Doing the will of God requires knowing it! However, once you begin walking according to God’s will, part of what it means to live a life worthy before the Lord is to be grateful for what God has done for you in Christ. Talk as a group about gratitude, and how it is practically lived out in your life.

1. Icebreaker: Would you consider yourself a grateful person? Would other people consider you a grateful person? Why or why not?
2. Why is growing in our knowledge of God’s Word important to living a life of gratitude?
3. Whenever you give a gift to someone, how does it feel when the recipient of that gift responds with gratitude? In other words, is gratitude a generally positive thing? Why or why not?
4. Write down 5-7 things you are grateful for. Choose some practical things and some spiritual things, and share them with the group.
5. Challenge: Commit to pray every day this week, and joyously give thanks to God not only for your salvation, but for every good gift God has given you.

Takeaways:

1. You can’t do God’s will if you don’t know it.
2. Walking in God’s will is essentially the same thing as walking in a manner worthy of the Lord.
3. Christians have much to be grateful for; God has taken extreme measures to redeem His people.

PRAYER REQUESTS: