

Chapter Ten: Walk Worthy of the Lord

Look at the opening chapters of Paul's epistles. After his greetings most of the letters include mention of Paul's prayers for the church or individuals (Romans 1:8-12; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; etc.). He usually thanks God for such things as their faith and love before moving on to their continued growth and knowledge. Though the specifics vary between epistles, the common bond is Paul's earnest prayers for the well-being of the brethren. In the opening of Paul's letter to the saints of Colosse he thanks God for their "faith in Christ Jesus" as well as their love for the brethren and the hope they have in heaven. In the verses that follow, Paul writes: "this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you" to: 1) Be filled with knowledge (verse 9); 2) Walk worthy of the Lord (verse 10); 3) Be strengthened with all might (verse 11); and 4) Give thanks (verses 12-14).

Paul begins his prayer expressing his desire for the brethren to be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9). Knowledge, *epignōsis* (G:1922), is "exact or precise knowledge" (Thayer 237), like noticing the wonder and complexity of the natural world. Wisdom, *Sophia* (G: 4678), is "insight into the true nature of things" (Vine 678), like the realization such complexities could not have occurred accidentally. Understanding, *synesis* (G: 4907), is "intelligence, the faculty of comprehension" (Strong 1646), like the logical conclusion someone must have created us and the world in which we live. Further insight and reason lead to God as the Creator of all things. It is this type of progressive and continued learning with which Paul desired the Colossians to be filled. Filled, *plēroō* (G: 4137), properly means "to fill up to the top...so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim" (Thayer 518). The image is that of a glass of water so full the water actually rises above the rim of the glass. The cup is so full just one more drop would cause the water to spill over the sides. Specifically, Paul prayed for the Colossians to be filled with the knowledge of God's will (verse 9). Will, *thelēma* (G: 2307), refers to "what one wishes or has determined shall be done" and is used "of the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ" (Thayer 285). The knowledge of God's will refers to our understanding of the will of God regarding the salvation of man and, by implication, obedience to that plan. In addition, the phrase includes all other elements and aspects of God's commands for our lives as Christians. "A mere empty notion of the greatest truths is insignificant. Our knowledge of the will of God must be always practical: we must know it in order to do it" (Henry *New* 9: 5).

The second aspect of Paul's prayer for the Colossians is to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the

knowledge of God” (1:10). Walk, *peripateō* (G: 4043), means “to live, conduct one’s life” (Strong 1636). Worthy, *axiōs* (G: 516), means “suitably” (Strong 1593). To walk worthy of the Lord, therefore, means to “live as becomes the followers of the Lord” (Barnes 1061). If we are filled with the knowledge of God’s will and allow that knowledge to develop into wisdom and understanding, then we will undoubtedly walk worthy of the Lord. Thereby, we please God through faithfulness and an increase in the knowledge of God. Fruitful, *karpophoreō* (G: 2592), means “to bear or bring forth fruit” (Vine 257). A good, *agathos* (G: 18), work, *ergon* (G: 2041), is an act that “being ‘good’ in character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect” (Vine 273). We must not only behave as followers of God but also work in such a way as to benefit ourselves and those around us. “Good knowledge without a good life will not profit. Our understanding is then a spiritual understanding when we exemplify it in our way of living” (Henry *New* 9: 5). Furthermore, being pleasing to God is exemplified by increasing our knowledge of God. Earlier, Paul prayed the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will (verse 9), a prerequisite to walking worthy of the Lord. Here, Paul prays for an increase in that knowledge, a requirement to maintain a walk worthy of the Lord. Increase, *auxanō* (G: 837), simply means “to grow” (Strong 1596). Notice this increase is not limited to the knowledge of God’s will but is expanded to the knowledge of God in general. We are to grow and mature in our Christian lives, getting to know God more and more with each passing day. The only place to find that knowledge to help us grow is the Scriptures. Paul admonished the Corinthians for not maturing to the meat of the Word, rather continuing to feed on the milk of the Word (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Knowledge of God’s will is like the milk of the Word while further knowledge of God is like the meat of the Word. We must search the Scripture daily, like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), in order to grow and mature in our Christian walk as we seek after the knowledge of God. “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:3-5). The knowledge of God does not come without effort, but it will come to those who truly seek it. Furthermore, the more knowledge and spiritual understanding we have the more we will be able to please God through fruitful good works. “And the more fruitful we are in good works the more we shall increase in the knowledge of God” (Henry *New* 9: 5).

The third aspect of Paul’s prayer for the Colossians is found in verse eleven: “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” Strengthened, *dynamo* (G: 1412), means “to make strong” (Thayer 160). Might, *dynamis* (G: 1411), is “power in action” (Vine

406). In order to walk worthy of the Lord we must be made strong with the active power that can only come through God. This strengthening is a product of our increased knowledge of God and leads us to “patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” The Greek words translated patience and longsuffering have similar meanings and are often found together in the Scriptures (e.g. 2 Corinthians 6:4-6; 2 Timothy 3:10) (Vine 247). Patience, *hypomonē* (G: 5281), is a perseverance, endurance” (Strong 1651). Longsuffering, *makrothymia* (G: 3115), is “patience, forbearance, internal and external control, in a difficult circumstance” (Strong 1625). “Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial” while “longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation” (Vine 247). Both patience and longsuffering, when properly managed, require joyfulness, *chara* (G: 5479). Or “delight” (Vine 335). The Christian life is not a sullen and sore existence but a happy, content and joyful life in Christ. We can only walk worthy of the Lord if we have the strength, fortitude and calm delight necessary to maintain our faith despite the various trials, affliction and temptations we face on a daily basis. “Where there is spiritual life there is still need of spiritual strength, strength for all the actions of the spiritual life” (Henry New 9:5).

The fourth aspect of Paul’s prayer for the Colossians is for them to maintain a grateful attitude toward God (1:12-14). Paul lists several reasons why they, and we, should be thankful. The first reason is because God “hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (verse 12). Meet, *hikanoō* (G: 2427), means “to render fit” (Vine 401). Partakers, *meris* (G: 3310), indicates “an assigned part” (Thayer 400). God has qualified us to receive our part of the “inheritance of the saints” which makes us “heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). The second reason to be thankful is God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness” and brought us into the light (Colossians 1:13). Delivered, *rhyomai* (G: 4506), means “to rescue from, preserve from” (Vine 157). “He has rescued us from the state of heathenish darkness and wickedness. He hath saved us from the dominion of sin, which is darkness (1 John i.6), from the dominion of Satan, who is the prince of darkness (Eph. Vi.12), and from the damnation of hell, which is utter darkness (Matt. Xxv.30)” (Henry New 9:7). God has brought us into the light by translating “us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13).

The word here rendered ‘translated’ [*methistēmi* (G: 3179)] is often used in the sense of removing a people from one country to another...It means here, that they who are Christians have been transferred from one kingdom to another...They become subjects of a new kingdom, are under different laws, and belong to a different community. (Barnes 1062)

This transference indicates a complete change in character and way of life. It hinges on redemption through Christ, the final reason Paul gives for thanksgiving (verse 14). Redemption, *apolytrōsis* (G: 629), means “a releasing, for (i.e., on payment of) a ransom (Vine 516). The blood of Christ is the payment of the ransom and results in “liberation from the guilt and doom of sin and the introduction into a life of liberty” (Vine 516). Thus redeemed, our sins are forgiven, *aphesis* (G: 859), or pardoned (Strong 1597). Without the blood of Christ as payment of the ransom our sins can not be forgiven; we can not be translated into the kingdom of light; we can not be delivered from darkness. As Christians, however, we have been ransomed and forgiven; we have been translated; we have been delivered. Truly our salvation is cause for great joy. It is our duty to thank God for the blood of Christ and the consequent hope we have of heaven from that sacrifice.

To walk worthy of the Lord is to live our lives appropriately before God. To do this we must fill ourselves with the knowledge of God’s will, gaining the spiritual wisdom and understanding necessary to obey that will. “True knowledge of God’s will is inseparable from walking conformably to it” (Jamieson 1315). Our knowledge of God’s will must continue in the knowledge of God himself, maturing from the milk of the Word to the meat. Such knowledge will enable us to be fruitful in our active obedient lives and strengthen us for the performance of that duty. Thereby, we are prepared to meet the trials and temptations we will face along the way. Furthermore, we must be truly thankful to God for the redemption and forgiveness we receive through the blood of Christ. May we all “live as becomes the followers of the Lord” (Barnes 1061).

Questions:

1. For what four things did Paul pray for the church at Colosse? _____

2. What is the difference between knowledge, wisdom and understanding?

a. What is meant by “the knowledge of God’s will”? _____

b. What does it mean to be filled? _____

3. What does worthy mean? _____

a. To what does a worthy walk lead? _____

b. How do we increase our knowledge of God? _____

4. What is the product of being “strengthened with all might”?

- a. What is the difference between patience and longsuffering? _____

- b. How are we to endure the trials we face? _____

5. What reasons did Paul give to be thankful? _____

- a. How do we become heirs according to hope? _____

- b. How have we been delivered? _____

- c. How have we been translated? _____

- d. How have we been redeemed? _____

- e. What is the common bond between our hope, being delivered, being translated and being redeemed? _____

6. Use your own words to explain what it means to walk worthy of the Lord.

