

# What to Pray For

*Colossians 1:9-14*



## Paul's Prayer

- ❑ After his thanksgiving (1:3-8), Paul states what he is praying for. Read Colossians 1:9-14.
- ❑ Paul asks God to “fill [them] with the knowledge of [God’s] will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9).

## Knowledge, Wisdom, Understanding

1. What do you think is involved in knowing God’s will? How can we gain the “wisdom and understanding” referred to in this passage? What is required? How does it happen?<sup>1</sup>

📖 “The fear of the LORD<sup>2</sup> is the beginning of knowledge...” (*Proverbs 1:7*)

📖 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (*Proverbs 9:10*)

- ❑ Knowledge of God’s will involves a right attitude toward God (*Romans 12:1-2*), and wisdom and understanding are given by the Holy Spirit (1:9; *Ephesians 1:17*).

2. What practical difference does this make in our seeking to know God’s will? How should this affect our reading of the Bible?



3. We live in a university community where the pursuit of knowledge is highly valued. How does “academic knowledge” relate to the knowledge Paul is talking about?<sup>3</sup>

## Purpose of Knowledge

4. Why does Paul pray that they would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will? (1:10)<sup>4</sup>

- ❑ The phrase “that you may live a life worthy of the Lord” (*NIV*) is more literally “that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (*NASB*).<sup>5</sup> The Bible often uses “walk” figuratively to refer to a person’s whole manner of life and conduct.<sup>6</sup>

📖 “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise” (*Ephesians 5:15, NASB*)

<sup>1</sup> Knowledge of God’s will requires revelation. God has revealed His will through His Word (recorded in the Bible) and ultimately in His Son (the Word become flesh). Wisdom and understanding are “spiritual” (1:9), which means they are given by the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 2:13-14). Thus knowledge, wisdom and understanding are God-given. However, to receive them, we must have the right attitude. See Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; and Romans 12:1-2.

<sup>2</sup> “the fear of the LORD” is acknowledgment of who God is, accompanied by a right attitude toward Him.


<sup>3</sup> “Knowledge of God’s will, and wisdom and understanding” go beyond (and perhaps correct) “academic knowledge” by integrating true knowledge of the world with the knowledge of the world’s Creator, Designer and Purpose-Giver. Knowledge of “facts” is not enough. We need to know how to use our knowledge in relationship with God and others.

<sup>4</sup> Knowledge of God’s will should result in changed behavior. Right knowledge leads to right conduct.

<sup>5</sup> A life (walk) “worthy of the Lord” is a life (walk) that honors the Lord.

<sup>6</sup> For other examples of the figurative use of “walk” (*peripatēsai*), see Ephesians 2:10; 4:17; 1 Corinthians 7:17; Romans 6:4; 8:4; 2 Corinthians 5:7; 1 John 1:6-7; 2:6 (using a more literal translation like the NASB or ESV). We all “walk” through life, but some walk along good & right paths while others walk along bad & wrong paths (Proverbs 2:12-20).

## A Walk Worthy of the Lord

- ❑ Paul states four characteristics of a life that is worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him.
    - “bearing fruit in every good work” (1:10)
    - “growing in the knowledge of God” (1:10)
    - “being strengthened with all power” (1:11)
    - “giving thanks [with joy] to the Father” (1:11)
- 
- ❑ The Christian’s life should “bear the fruit” of good works and Christ-like character.<sup>7</sup> Jesus said, we cannot bear fruit apart from him (John 15:4-5). So we must “walk in him” (Colossians 2:6).
  - ❑ The Christian grows in the knowledge of God as he/she “walks” in relationship with Him. We receive further knowledge as we are obedient to the knowledge we have already received.<sup>8</sup>
    5. Living a life worthy of the Lord may seem too demanding and difficult. How can the Colossians do it? (1:11) How can *we* do it? What can we do to receive the help we need? Will this make it *easy* to live a life worthy of the Lord?<sup>9</sup>
  - ❑ The Christian’s life should be a thankful life (1:11). We should give thanks “with joy” (a fruit of the Spirit). Since God is the source of all true blessing, believers should give Him thanks for every good thing, especially for His gracious gift of a “share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom<sup>10</sup> of light” (1:12) – that is, “the hope stored up for [believers] in heaven” (1:5).<sup>11</sup>

## Thanksgiving

- ❑ Paul further explains why believers should be thankful. Read Colossians 1:13-14.
- ❑ The “dominion of darkness” refers to the tyranny (oppressive power) of forces opposed to God, characterized by sin, bondage and judgment. The “kingdom of the Son” refers to the righteous reign of Christ, *now* experienced in the hearts of those who receive the King (i.e., Christ), and is eventually experienced in its fullness after Christ returns.
- ❑ This rescue and transfer is made possible by the “redemption”<sup>12</sup> we have in Christ (1:14).

## Reflection/Application

- Do you desire knowledge, wisdom and understanding? Of course! However, do you desire the knowledge of God’s will? Do you desire *spiritual* wisdom and understanding? Do you believe the Bible reveals this knowledge? If not, I encourage you to keep seeking and asking.
- As a believer, are you committed to know *and do* God’s will? Are you committed to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord?” Identify needed changes, and live the life by God’s grace.
- For believers, Paul’s prayer is a good model prayer – to pray for others, and to pray for yourselves. Read his prayer this week, internalize it, and pray in a similar manner.

<sup>7</sup> Christ-like character is consistent with the “fruit of the Spirit” – “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

<sup>8</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 47.

<sup>9</sup> First of all, God’s power is promised to believers, who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As believers, we must believe that God’s power is truly active and available, even when we do not see it or feel it like we want. We must admit our weakness and truly rely on God’s strength. However, we are not passive. We must step out in faith and persevere, trusting God so supply the resources we really need. This does not mean life will be easy. Developing “endurance” (*hypomonē*) may involve trials, pain and suffering. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). As we “walk in him” we can bear the fruit of patience and faithfulness.

<sup>10</sup> NIV adds the word “kingdom” because it is equivalent with “the kingdom of the Son” mentioned in verse 13

<sup>11</sup> We cannot earn “heaven” by living a life worthy of the Lord. Only God “qualifies” us, according to His grace (1:12).

<sup>12</sup> “redemption” (*apolutrōsis*) – basically, “liberation through payment of a price.” God’s redemption involves the price He paid to set sinful people free (to rescue them, or save them). The “price” is Jesus Christ’s blood, that is, his death