

Paul's Letter to the Colossians

3. A Prayer for Spiritual Understanding (1:9-12)

Little children are so smart! They are constantly watching what is happening around them, and are learning about how things operate in their little world. One of the first things an infant learns is who mommy and daddy are. It doesn't take long before the little one recognizes their familiar faces, and would rather be held by them than other people they don't know. Next, they start to figure out how to control their tiny arms and feet. Before, they were just randomly swinging their limbs. Now they can reach for their bottle, and grab hold of the dog's fur. Soon, they discover how to crawl, and zoom around the floor exploring their home. Now they can really get into trouble! Parents watch their children develop with excitement, cheering them on, helping them progress each step of the way.

Children of God are also growing and developing in our spiritual lives. We too must learn about our Heavenly Father, and discover how to walk in relationship with God. It is an exciting process as we move from being newborn babes in Christ towards spiritual maturity (*Heb. 5:13-14*). Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9-12 for the young Christians in Colossae (and for us today) was that believers continue to grow in spiritual understanding. The kind of knowledge does not merely expand one's intellect, but draws us into a deeper relationship with the Lord directing our hearts to live for Him.

I. A Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom and Knowledge: (v.9)

1. The Apostle Paul prayed on behalf of believers that they would "...be f_____ with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and u_____."

- With the danger of false t_____ creeping into the church at Colossae, there is no wonder the apostle earnestly prayed for these believers to have a fuller understanding of the truth of the gospel, rather than being duped by the so-called secret knowledge others claimed to possess.
- Baker points out that, "*Paul does not use the simple word for knowledge, but the intensive form (epignosis), which means 'full and complete knowledge.'*" (Understanding the Body of Christ, p.98)
- In the next chapter (2:8), Paul warns of "...hollow and deceptive p_____, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."
- He goes on to say (2:23), "These are matters which have, to be sure, the a_____ of wisdom...but are of no value..."

2. What is the danger if the believer remains in a state of spiritual infancy, and does not grow in their knowledge and understanding of God? Why would this happen in the life of the believer?

3. God doesn't want believers to wander around with a fuzzy idea of what the Christian life is about, or to have just a vague concept about who He is and what He is doing in our lives, but desires that His children be grounded in spiritual truth. We grow in understanding through:

- The W_____ of God – (Psalm 119:169; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- The S_____ of God – (1 Corinthians 2:12-13)
- T_____ who are equipped of God – (Ephesians 4:11-15)

4. Many Christians struggle with the question, “How can I discern the will of God in my life?” What do the following passages tell us (Psalm 143:10; Hebrews 13:20-21; Romans 12:2)?

II. Prayer for Lives that Please God: (v.10-12)

5. Good theology should lead to good l_____. This is one of the reasons it is so important to grow in our understanding of spiritual truth. Do you think the opposite is also true? Can you think of some examples of this?

6. The second part of Paul’s prayer is that as believers apply this knowledge they will be able to...

- ...w_____ in a manner that is pleasing to God.
- ...and p_____ Him in all respects.
- Expositor’s Bible Commentary notes,

Paul’s second petition, that the Colossians might “live a life worthy of the Lord,” is built on, and grows out of, the request for knowledge of the divine will; living a worthy life is thus represented as a result (or purpose) of knowing God’s desire for one’s life. This suggests that knowledge of God’s will is not imparted as an end in itself; it is given with a practical intent.

- The apostle reminds believers of our high calling in Christ. (see also Eph. 4:1; Thess. 2:11-12)

7. This kind of life cannot be achieved by sheer willpower on our part, or human determination. What does Romans 6:4-7 tell us about the source of our spiritual life?

8. As we allow God to shape our lives, we will see evidence that our hearts have been changed:

- “...bearing f_____ in every good work.” (Colossians 1:10; John 15:8; Gal. 5:22-23)
- “...strengthened with all p_____” (Colossians 1:11; Philippians 4:13)
- “giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the i_____ of the saints in light” (Colossians 1:12; Ephesians 1:13-14)

Personal Application:

- Am I allowing God to fill me with spiritual knowledge and understanding through His Word, Spirit, and teaching? Are there areas where I have been duped by worldly wisdom?
- Is the biblical knowledge I have gained more than mere intellectual understanding? Is my life being changed as the Holy Spirit applies God’s truth to my life? How is my life different?

Bibliography:

Baker, Charles F. Understanding the Body of Christ Grace Bible College Publications: Grand Rapids, MI 1985 (p.99-101)
Gaebeli, Frank E. Expositor’s Bible Commentary - Colossians Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI 1989-1997