

Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding
Colossians 1:9

It's been a little while since we last studied Colossians together, so before picking up let's do a quick recap of some of the things we learned in the opening verses of Paul's letter to the church in Colossae.

In verse 1 we saw how Paul recognized that he was an apostle of Christ and minister of the gospel **by the will of God**. This is an important theme in every believer's life – being led by the Spirit to do God's work and live within God's will. Being in God's will doesn't always make things easy; Paul had a rather difficult and challenging life after being *dragged* into gospel ministry, but it does mean we find true joy and peace knowing that whatever happens, God is **working all things together for our good** (cf: Romans 8:28).

In verse 3 we learned a little more about the relationship in the Godhead, specifically how God is the **Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**. We saw how God the Father and Christ the Son are clearly two distinct persons, each with their own will, however Christ always submits His will to the Father, even though the Father has given Him authority over all created things (cf: Eph 1:21-22). In the same way, we too must always submit our will to God through Christ.

In verse 5 we touched on the **hope laid up for us in heaven**, and how this hope is not something we have built or stored up by ourselves, but it is provided to us by God through Christ. It is a gift, and God keeps our eternal inheritance safely stored for us (guarded) until we go to be with Him.

Verse 6 showed us the importance of **bearing fruit** for Christ, which manifests in an unwavering faith and good works. While we are not saved *by* works, we are saved *unto* good works (cf: Eph 2:10), and these works are evidence of a saving, active faith. Faith without works is of no value and essentially dead (cf: James 2:26).

And in verse 7 we learned about the faith and ministry of **Epaphras, the beloved fellow servant** of the Colossae church and friend to Paul, who strived to teach the believers in his hometown how to follow and obey the true gospel.

We pick up at Colossians 1:9, which reads:

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Now, this verse is part of a discourse that spans through verse 12, so we'll just look at the first part of Paul's statement here.

For context, when Paul says "**from the day we heard**" he is likely referring to when Epaphras brought news of the situation in the Colossian church to his attention. He commended the church for their faith in Christ and love of the saints, and prayed for them to grow in these areas. As we saw in our introduction, this letter was not written to address a lot of doctrinal or sin issues in the church, but instead likely to help believers overcome some of the cultural influences and misguided beliefs the young church suffered with.

In any case, Paul reminds the church that "**we** (Paul and his companions, likely including Timothy and Epaphras), **have not ceased to pray for you.**" It goes without saying that most people like to be prayed for. Even unbelievers sometimes ask for prayer, which is an interesting testament to the truth of Romans 1:20. Christians covet prayers because we know that God hears the petitions of His saints, and in some miraculous way these prayers are woven into God's perfect, eternal plan, even if the answer isn't what we wanted or expected.

Paul prayed specifically that the believers would "**be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.**" This is a wonderful prayer and one of the few that Scripture teaches will always be answered in the affirmative. James 1:5 tells us, "**if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.**" This promise's stipulation is that one must ask in faith (James 1:6), but otherwise it seems God is pleased to give wisdom to all who humbly ask. Paul no doubt asked in faith, and I personally believe God would have given the knowledge of His will and spiritual wisdom to the Colossian church, as in doing so it not only would make them stronger in the faith, but would help them hold fast to truth, bear more fruit, and bring greater glory to the Father and Son.

We too should be praying for this. It so easy to keep our prayers focused on earthly matters... health and healing, safe travels, financial resources, whatever. And there is nothing inherently wrong with asking for these if they are tagged with, "Father, your will be done." But we should also be asking for **spiritual wisdom and understanding** for both ourselves and others, with, as James charged, a firm belief that God will give it abundantly.

The knowledge of God's will and spiritual wisdom and understanding allow us to discern right from wrong, hold onto truth, bear more fruit in our walk, understand scripture more deeply, love others more genuinely, and bless God more richly. And if we can be sure God will give it generously when requested in faith, why wouldn't we ask Him for it?

~Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece