

### Pray for Spiritual Growth

#### Colossians 1:9-10

Colossians 1:9-10 - *“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; <sup>10</sup> that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”*

#### Background Notes

Colossians is one of Paul’s four “Prison Epistles,” because he wrote this letter from his first imprisonment in Rome, in the early 60s AD. Paul was actually under house arrest in this situation, as we learn from the last two verses of the book of Acts. He was able to have visitors and write letters, but he was chained at all times to a Roman soldier.

One of the visitors to Paul’s rented house was a man named Epaphras, who came from the church at Colossae (v7). Epaphras informed Paul that the church was standing firm, but some false teaching circulating in Colossae. It had not yet penetrated the Colossian church, but it was around. So one of Paul’s main reasons for writing this letter was to warn the Colossians not to be taken in by the false teaching.

After his greeting or salutation (v1-2), Paul wrote a section of thanksgiving, which was typical of letters in that day (v3-8). In verses 9-14, Paul included a prayer for Christian growth. The apostle wanted to see the Colossians grow and become stronger Christians so that there would be no danger that they would be taken in by this false teaching.

God wants **us** to grow strong, too, so that we will not be taken in by false teaching.

#### Doctrinal Points

##### 1. God wants His children to be “spiritually sensitive.”

In the prayer for Christian growth (v9-14), Paul made four requests for the Colossian believers. The four requests are interrelated and interdependent, but for the sake of better appreciation and application, let’s consider them as four separate requests - the first two in this Talk and the second two in our next Talk.

Paul’s first request was that the Colossians would be **spiritually sensitive**. Verse 9: *“[We] ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”* Although Colossians is a 1st century letter from Paul

to the believers in Colossae, and it is the Word of God to us as well - teaching us that God wants all His children to be spiritually sensitive.

“Spiritually sensitive” believers have wisdom and spiritual understanding, and knowledge of God’s will. “Knowledge of His will” is not so much the idea of guidance (i.e. what does God want me to do?), but more an ***understanding of the ways and desires of God.***

How about spiritual wisdom and understanding? The idea here is not having a high I.Q., but rather ***spiritual insight into the things of God.*** Having a knowledge of His will is to know ***what God wants***, and having spiritual wisdom and understanding is to know ***why God wants it.***

Consider an illustration of a father and son. The father is a church leader – he’s quite involved in the Lord’s service. He and his son have a good relationship, but at first when the son is young and immature, the son doesn’t really understand the father’s work or purposes. He’s not sensitive to the father’s interests. At this point the son sees the father as the allowance-giver and the permission-granter - those kinds of things. But as the son grows older and begins to mature, he begins to understand his father’s work. He begins to care about it, pray about it, and even help in the ministry.

That’s spiritual sensitivity. And that’s what Paul wanted to see in the Colossian believers. That’s what God wants to see in us as well. He wants us to become spiritually sensitive – to have a knowledge of God’s will, and to have spiritual wisdom and understanding.

## 2. God wants His children to have a “worthy walk.”

The second request in Paul’s prayer for the Colossian believers is found in verse 10: *“That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”*

What do we mean by a ***worthy walk***? “Walk” here is speaking about how your feet move you around – it’s referring to your ***way of life***. “Walk” implies both ***direction*** and ***progress*** in your life. Notice that a worthy walk is a result of having spiritual sensitivity.

There are three things here that characterize a worthy walk: (1) A ***pleasing*** walk, (2) a ***fruitful*** walk, and (3) a ***knowledgeable*** walk.

- ***A pleasing walk:*** *“that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him...”* in all areas of life. God wants to see a pleasing walk in our lives at home, at our job, in sports, in the literature we read, in the TV we watch, even our thoughts. 2 Corinthians 5:9 says, *“we make it our aim or goal to be pleasing unto Him.”* How do you spend your “alone” time? Is it spent in self-discipline - or self-indulgence? Is it pleasing to God?

- **A fruitful walk:** *“being fruitful in every good work.”* The word “work” here is not speaking of our salvation – it’s speaking of our service. As you know, we are not saved **by** good works - but we are saved **for** good works! Remember the familiar verses in Ephesians 2:8-9, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* But going on to verse 10, we see that “works” do have a place - but it’s in reference to service. Ephesians 2:10, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* And Titus 3:8 says, *“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.”*

So we are to have a fruitful walk, bearing fruit in every good work. If we’re going to have a worthy walk, we’ll be involved in serving the Lord in some way. Are you active in some type of Christian service? At your church, are you only an attendee? Do you only come to church for what you can get out of it? The Lord wants us to have a walk that is fruitful - that is involved in good works of service. That’s part of having a worthy walk.

**A knowledgeable walk:** *“increasing in the knowledge of God.”* How well do you know God? The idea is not knowing a lot of heavy theology, and knowing all the facts about God – but in really getting to *know God*. A worthy walk is characterized by knowing God more. You get to know God more through the study of His Word.

It’s interesting to notice that **knowledge** is mentioned in both of the requests that Paul made. Verse 9, *“knowledge of His will,”* and verse 10, *“increasing in the knowledge of God.”* This is significant, because the false teachers around Colossae (the so-called “Gnostics”) prided themselves on their knowledge. They considered themselves to be “elite few,” and they believed that they possessed more knowledge, including even secret knowledge. That false teaching is refuted here. “Knowing God” and “having knowledge of His will” is available to all Christians, not just a select elite few!

## Practical Applications

### 1. Let’s pray like Paul would pray for our family and friends.

Do we pray for spiritual sensitivity for our family and friends? Do we pray for a worthy walk for our family and friends? Often we pray for our friends if they’re sick, or if they need a job, etc – and there’s nothing wrong with that! But how do you think Paul would have prayed for his family and friends? I can tell you. If they weren’t Christians, he would have prayed for their salvation. If they were Christians, he wouldn’t have been praying only for their health or a job – he would have been praying for their spiritual sensitivity, and that they would have a worthy walk!

When was the last time you prayed that your Christian friend would increase in the knowledge of God’s will, and would increase in wisdom and spiritual understanding? That’s convicting for all of us. Let’s pray for our family and friends as Paul would pray.

## 2. Let's walk as if we're being watched!

A worthy walk is a **pleasing** walk. How do you check to make sure your way of life is pleasing to the Lord? Here's one suggestion: walk as if you're being watched – **because we are being watched.**

Here are two different aspects to this idea of being watched. One is that God is watching everything we do. He sees where we go, and with whom, and what we do. He sees the TV programs we watch, He's looking over our shoulder at the literature we read. He's even watching our thoughts. That's why we should *"bring every thought into captivity to Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The other aspect is that God is watching our performance. Just as a child wants to do his best in sports when Dad and Mom are at the game, so we will tend to perform better as Christians when we realize our performance is being watched. I'm sure we would waste less of God's time and money if we really caught the concept that God is watching us! Not only watching everything we do, but watching our performance – how we do it! How great it is to be able to go about our lives with the knowledge that **our Father - God!** - is watching our performance.

This idea of being watched is in view in Hebrews 12:1 - *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."* Let's walk as if we're being watched!