

The Wisdom and Knowledge Found in Jesus Christ
Colossians 1:9-14

Introduction

1. Since the beginning of time, God has revealed Himself through His Creation and through His Word (initially spoken and then spoken and written)
2. And, since the beginning of time, mankind has rejected what God has plainly revealed about Himself and tried to figure Him out on their own
3. Unfortunately, this is even true of much of what is called Christianity:
 - a. Many reject what has plainly been revealed about God and His will in the Scriptures and claim it's not enough
 - b. They claim to be able to know God more fully, more deeply, more intimately through a host of non-Biblical, un-Biblical, and anti-Biblical means and practices
 - c. A perfect example of this is the success and popularity of the Jesus Calling books by Sarah Young; listen to what she wrote in the introduction to her first book:

“...I began to wonder if I could change my prayer times from monologue to dialogue. I had been writing in prayer journals for years, but that was one-way communication: I did all the talking. I knew that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more. Increasingly, I wanted to hear what God had to say to me personally on a given day. I decided to listen to God with pen in hand, writing down whatever I believed He was saying. I felt awkward the first time I tried this, but I received a message. It was short, biblical, and appropriate. It addressed topics that were current in my life: trust, fear, and closeness to God. I responded by writing in my prayer journal...My journaling had changed from monologue to dialogue. Soon, messages began to flow more freely, and I bought a special notebook to record these words. This new way of communicating with God became the high point of my day. I knew these writings were not inspired as Scripture is, but they were helping me grow closer to God...I have continued to receive personal messages from God as I meditate on Him.”

- d. Notice what she revealed: she wasn't satisfied with God communicating to her through His Word; it wasn't enough; she **“yearned for more”** and wanted God to speak to her directly
- e. She later claimed, **“This practice of listening to God has increased my intimacy with Him more than any other spiritual discipline...”**
- f. In the original introduction to her book, something she changed in later editions after receiving push back, she acknowledged her indebtedness to a book titled God Calling which was written by A.J. Russell in 1932; he claimed the material for his book came from two New Age “listeners”, women who claimed to have received and recorded messages directly from God
- g. Sarah Young isn't alone in her desire for more; apparently, much of the Church desires more than what God has revealed about Himself in His Word:
 - 1) Jesus Calling has been translated into over 30 languages and has sold over 45 million copies
 - 2) It has been expanded to include children's devotionals, Bible story books, journals, seasonal books, a digital and print magazine, a podcast, a television program, a website, and an iPhone and Android app
 - 3) Just recently Young published a new book titled, Jesus Listens, which is a bit ironic because she started the whole Jesus Calling thing because she wasn't satisfied with Jesus listening

4. Sarah Young is just one example of how many Christians mistakenly try to grow in their wisdom, knowledge, and experience with God:
 - a. There are others like Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Brennan Manning, Richard Foster, and even Dallas Willard who have introduced and promoted mystical teachings and practices drawn from eastern religions, all with the promise that they will lead to a fuller, more intimate personal knowledge and experience with God
 - b. We have churches that have built labyrinths in their courtyards, introduced monastic practices like contemplative prayer and Lectio Divina (divine reading) into their services and youth groups, and charismatic and Pentecostals churches which overly focus on spiritual experiences, manifestations of God's glory, extrabiblical revelation, signs, wonders and miracles
5. The Colossians were no different; they were being tempted to adopt all kinds of non-Biblical, un-Biblical, and anti-Biblical practices to enhance their wisdom and knowledge of God
 - a. Paul wrote this letter to warn and challenge them not to allow themselves to fall prey to such things
 - b. They were a trap that would lead them further away from faith in Christ alone and true spiritual wisdom and understanding
 - c. In our passage today, Paul focuses on the wisdom and knowledge found in Jesus Christ:
 - 1) It's only the wisdom and knowledge found in Jesus Christ that allows us to **KNOW** God and His will
 - 2) It's only the wisdom and knowledge found in Jesus Christ that allows us to **PLEASE** God and **DO** His will

A. It's only the wisdom and knowledge found in Jesus Christ that allows us to **KNOW** God and His will (READ 1:9)

1. By God's will I am referring to the general will of God that applies to all of mankind, and especially believers; it not only refers to how God knows and interacts with us, but how He expects us to know and interact with Him
2. There are at least three things we can learn from Paul's prayer:
 - a. The first is that understanding the God's will BEGINS with faith in Jesus Christ:
 - 1) V. 9 begins with **"For this reason also, since the day we heard of it..."**:
 - a) The word **"it"** here refers to their faith in Jesus (see 1:4): **"...since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus..."**
 - b) Their journey to understanding God and His will began with their acceptance of the Gospel and their faith in Jesus Christ
 - 2) In much the same way that the Old Testament declares, **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"** (Proverbs 9:10), the New Testament reveals that faith in Jesus is the beginning to understanding God and His will
 - 3) In fact, one cannot begin to truly understand God and His will without first understanding the Gospel and placing one's faith in Jesus, because these are foundational to God's plan and purpose for us
 - b. The second thing we learn from Paul's prayer is that we can KNOW God's will:

- 1) In fact, it's not just possible to know it but to know it definitively, thoroughly, and fully (that what the Greek word Paul uses here means; see Colossians 2:2; 3:10)
- 2) It would be useless for Paul to pray that the Colossians might be **"filled with the knowledge of His will"** if it wasn't possible to know such a thing:
 - a) Technically, **"His"** refers to Jesus here, but since Jesus and the Father are one, they share the same divine will
 - b) Therefore, to be filled with the knowledge of Jesus' will is to be filled with the knowledge of God's will
 - c) In other words, to know Jesus is to know God
- 3) The reason we can be filled with a thorough or full knowledge of God's will is because He has revealed this knowledge to us in His Son, Jesus Christ:
 - a) John 5:19: **"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."**
 - b) John 5:30: **"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."**
 - c) John 6:38: **"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."**
 - d) John 14:7: **"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him"**

Even Mike from Streamline recognized that every other world religion leaves us to fumble around in our own feebleness and fallen mind to try to discover the truth about God; but God has revealed everything He wants us to know about Himself and His will through Jesus Christ and His Word

- c. The third thing we can learn from Paul's prayer is that we cannot know the will of God apart from the HOLY SPIRIT: **"in all spiritual wisdom and understanding"**:
 - 1) Understanding God's will requires **"spiritual wisdom and understanding"** and this is something given ONLY by the Holy Spirit (READ 1 Corinthians 2:1-16)
 - 2) We see two ministries of the Holy Spirit here:
 - a) INSPIRATION (or REVELATION) of the Holy Spirit: This refers to the Holy Spirit's role in revealing the thoughts and mysteries of God to us
 - In Old Testament times He did by speaking directly to some (like Adam and Eve, Cain, Job, Abraham, Moses, David, etc.); through prophets like Isaiah and Elijah; and through the written Word
 - In New Testament times, He did this by speaking directly to the Apostles like Peter, Paul and John; through prophets like the Apostles and others within the local church bodies; and through the written Word
 - In both the Old and New Testament eras, this ministry of inspiration of the Holy Spirit was halted temporarily—there was a 400 year gap between the Malachi (the last OT prophet) and Christ, and there appears to be a gap between the end of the 1st century and close of the Canon of Scripture and the end times (with the introduction of the two prophets)

- b) ILLUMINATION of the Holy Spirit: He helps us to know, understand, and accept what He has already been revealed in the Scriptures about God and His will
- 3) This is precisely why Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit:
 - a) John 14:16-17: **"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."**
 - b) John 14:26: **"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."**
 - c) John 16:13: **"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."**
- 3. Takeaway: The wisdom and knowledge we find in Jesus Christ is what makes it possible for us to know God and His will; in fact, apart from faith in Jesus and the wisdom and knowledge found in Him, it is impossible to know God and His will!

B. It's only the wisdom and knowledge found in Jesus Christ that allows us to PLEASE God and DO His will (READ 1:10-14)

- 1. Paul and Timothy prayed that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of Jesus' will so that they would **"walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects"**:
 - a. In the simplest sense, this is what it means to do God's will
 - b. God's will is that we please Him in all respects:
 - 1) This was the example Jesus set for us (John 8:29): **"And He who sent Me is with me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him"**
 - 2) Our ambition should be the same (2 Corinthians 5:9): **"Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."**
 - 3) In fact, we should strive to excel at pleasing the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:1): **"Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more."**
 - c. We do this—we please Him—by walking in a manner worthy of our Savior:
 - 1) To walk in a manner worthy of Jesus means that we behave in the way Jesus deserves
 - 2) We see this concept of walking in a worthy manner repeated elsewhere:
 - a) Philippians 1:27: **"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,"**
 - b) Ephesians 4:1: **"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,"**
 - c) 1 Thessalonians 2:12: **"...walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."**
- 2. So, what does it look like to walk in a manner worthy of Christ and therefore please God? Paul uses four participles to give us a picture:
 - a. The first thing that is worthy of Jesus is that we are **"bearing fruit in every good work"** (10a):

- 1) In John 15:8 Jesus said, **“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”**
- 2) This fruit includes doing good which is why the New Testament epistles are FILLED with commands to do good works:
 - a) Galatians 6:9-10: **“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”**
 - b) 2 Thessalonians 3:13: **“But as for you, brethren, do not grow wearying of doing good.”**
 - c) Titus 2:7: **“in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified,”**
 - d) Titus 3:1: **“Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed.”**
 - e) Titus 3:8: **“This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.”**
 - f) Titus 3:14: **“Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.”**
 - g) Hebrews 10:24: **“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,”**
 - h) Hebrews 13:16: **“And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”**
- b. The second thing that is worthy of Jesus and therefore pleasing to God is when we are **“increasing in the knowledge of God”** (10b):
 - 1) To their credit, the Colossians wanted to grow in their knowledge about God but were being tempted to go about it in all the wrong ways: philosophy, elementary principles of the world, visions, angel worship, man-made rules and religious rites, even self-abasement and severe treatment of the body
 - 2) However, as we’ll see throughout this letter, Paul draws their attention back to Jesus Christ and makes the case that everything they need to know about God is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ and their relationship with Him
 - 3) Paul uses the Greek word epignosis here again which if you remember is not only full or thorough knowledge about something, but experiential knowledge; this is more than just head knowledge, but knowledge that is confirmed through our experience with God through Jesus Christ
 - 4) Peter reflects this in his second letter (READ 2 Peter 1:2-8)
- c. The third thing that is worthy of Jesus is when we are **“being strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might...”**
 - 1) The example of Zerubbabel:
 - a) When King Cyrus allowed 50,000 Israelites to return to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon and rebuild the temple, construction was stopped due to opposition from Israel’s neighbors
 - b) Zerubbabel was the governor of Jerusalem who was responsible for overseeing the temple construction, and to encourage him to continue building the temple in spite of this opposition, God sent Zechariah to him with this message (Zechariah 4:6):

“This is the Word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘**Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.**”

- c) God was encouraging Zerubbabel to complete the job not by relying on human might or power, but rather God’s power and might through His Holy Spirit
- 2) The example of Paul:
 - a) Paul struggled with something he called a thorn in his flesh
 - b) Paul prayed to God three times to remove the thorn from his life, but God refused
 - c) Instead, the Lord said, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness**” (2 Corinthians 12:9a)
 - d) Paul responded by writing this: “**Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.**” (12:9b)
- 3) It is through God’s power, according to His glorious might, rather than through our own power and might that is worthy of Jesus, and it is through this that we attain “**all steadfastness and patience...**” in our walk with Christ
- d. The final thing Paul mentions that is worthy of Jesus is when we are “**joyously giving thanks to the Father**”:
 - 1) He even provides two reasons we should be giving thanks:
 - a) God “**has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.**”
 - b) And, He has “**rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**”
 - 2) In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 the Bible says that it is God’s will in Christ Jesus that we give thanks in all things
 - 3) In Hebrews 13:15 it says, “**Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.**”
 - 4) Giving thanks to God is worthy of Jesus because He Himself offered up thanks to God; the Gospels record at least five times when He did this:
 - a) He thanked God for hiding things from the world’s wise and intelligent and revealing them to infants (Matthew 11:25)
 - b) He thanked God before feeding the 4000 and again before feeding the 5000 (Matthew 15:26; John 6:11)
 - c) He thanked God before raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41)
 - d) He thanked God before sharing bread and wine at the Last Supper (Luke 22:17-19)
- 3. Takeaway: the wisdom and knowledge we find in Jesus Christ is what allows us to please God and do His will:
 - a. The Bible declares that without faith, specifically faith in Christ, it is impossible to please God (READ Hebrews 11:6, 12:1-2)
 - b. It is the wisdom and knowledge we find in Jesus that makes it possible for us to walk in a manner that pleases Him, and therefore please God

Conclusion

1. When it comes to knowing God and His will it’s pretty simple

- a. It doesn't require secret knowledge or wisdom
 - b. It doesn't require mystical practices
 - c. It doesn't require man-made philosophy, religious rites, or historical traditions
2. The only thing it requires is faith in Jesus Christ and growing in our knowledge and understanding of Him as revealed in God's Word
- a. We don't have to go outside of Jesus or God's Word
 - b. In fact, when we do, it distorts our understanding of God and His will