



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Colossians 1: 9-14

Lesson 2 of 15

2018

"Knowing and Walking"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Mark. We have begun a new series in the book of Colossians. We began it last week when we looked at verses 1-8 of chapter 1, and now we're continuing with verses 9-14. In that introductory statement where Paul is giving thanks to the Colossians, he states that he prayed for them always. And now, in verses 9 and following through 14, he gives us an indication of what it was he prayed for them.

<sup>9</sup>For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup>so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup>strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously <sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. <sup>13</sup>For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1: 9-14

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we do thank You for Your blessings. We thank you for the rain, as Mark has expressed a moment ago. It is a blessing for You to give us what we have needed for a long time and to bring the rain.

And yet it's even a greater blessing to be here with your people, and to be refreshed with the Word of God. And I pray that that will be the result of our time together this morning; that You would guide us and teach us as we look at this great text of scripture from the book of Colossians; all the things that Paul prayed for his Colossian friends, those he'd not met, but who he knew of and cared greatly about, and prayed continually for. And what an enlightening passage it is to learn what he prayed for, the things that he considered very important: The knowledge of God and how practical that is. Help us to know that, Father. Teach us that, and all of the great doctrines and truths that are present here: The hope that we have, the inheritance that we as believers in Jesus Christ have with the "...saints in Light..." —As we consider that great expression, that great description.

Teach us and build us up in the faith and give us encouragement on how to live in the meantime, as we look forward to the great hope that's ours. It should shape the way we live and the way we conduct ourselves. So Lord, we look to You to teach us and bless us and build us up in the faith. And gives us the right perspective on living today from all of these great promises and these truths that are contained in this prayer.

Make this a profitable time. We look to You to do that—This is time when we come together, and we open our Bibles, and we read and study together. But ultimately, the teacher is the Holy Spirit, and He must illuminate our minds and guide us in our thinking and make the applications to us; and even beyond that, give us the will to do it; to act upon the things that we learn. So we pray for that, and pray that our lives would be lived in a manner that's worthy of You—to Your glory.

Bless us Lord, not only spiritually, but in the material things of life. We have a list of prayer requests for some of the saints who are in need; who are facing surgery or recovering from difficulties, and pray that You bless them, encourage them, strengthen them, and strengthen them physically. Bless their health. Give those of us

who are enjoying good health at this moment and are enjoying the positive blessings of life right now—give us gratitude for that and thankful hearts. And prepare us for the day when we will have setbacks; when we'll have difficulties—For they will come. And the way to prepare for that is to study the Word and grow in grace and knowledge. And so, we pray that you would give us that as well.

May this be a very profitable time for us, an enjoyable time, a time of worship and a time of learning. We look to You to bless and pray that all that we do will be done to Your glory. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Sir Francis Bacon was the English philosopher and scientist who is credited with making the often-quoted statement, "Knowledge is power." Most would agree with that. Knowledge has given us miracle drugs and opened up the vastness of the universe to us. But when it comes to the Christian life, knowledge is often undervalued and detached from practice. Theologians, after all, worry about angels dancing on pin heads, while real people just want to know how to have a happy life. The doctrine is up in the clouds, often confusing, and not much use for daily living. So you often hear catchy expressions like, "Doctrine divides, love unites", or "Deeds, not creeds." In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. Separating knowledge from practice is what we could call a false dichotomy, (which gives only two possibilities), when in fact there may be a third and a better possibility. For the Christian there is. And it includes knowledge, it includes doctrine and it is imminently practical.

We see that in the prayer of Colossians 1:9-14. It contains some very significant doctrine about God's grace, and our lost condition; about our rescue from darkness and redemption from sin. This is what the apostle wanted the Colossians to know in order to be grateful; in order to persevere and to walk in a way that is worthy of our Lord. This is what he and Timothy prayed for them.

They said they prayed for the Colossians "...always..." (vs3). And now, in verse 9, they repeat the assurance of their constant prayers by amplifying just what it is they prayed. Very simply, it's that the Colossians might gain the knowledge of God and of His

will that would help them live in a way that is fitting for His children. That's the prayer of verses 9 and 10: 'That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.'

'Knowing' and 'walking'—They go together. But before 'walking' is always 'knowing.' Francis Bacon was right. Knowledge is power. Doctrine is power. Creed and deeds go together. You can't do a task unless you know how to do it. You have to have knowledge. You can't walk well and in a worthy manner, if you don't know where you're going, or how or why you're going. Knowledge first. And the knowledge here is of a specific kind. That's indicated in the word that Paul uses for it. The typical Greek word for knowledge is the word '*gnosis*.' In fact, some feel that the background and the problem, the heresy, that was being dealt with was a movement that was based on that word *gnosis*. It's called **Gnosticism**.

The Gnostics were a group of people who believed they had knowledge that was their own possession. It was secret knowledge, and they possessed it, and they spoke of themselves in that way; as "Gnostics." Actually, that was more of a second century heresy, but many feel that the beginnings of it are seen at this time, and is what the Colossians were dealing with.

So *gnosis* is a very common word among the Greeks for knowledge. But this word's a little different; it is *epignosis*. It is a word that's prefixed with the Greek preposition *epi*, which means 'upon' and done so to give it an intensive form. So the idea is something like '*precise knowledge*.' It's not knowledge like these false teachers promised: Esoteric knowledge of the stars and the planets and magic formulas that only the spiritually elite know and would guide them to 'realms of light.' This knowledge is real. This is truth. This is divine revelation. It is joined to spiritual wisdom. It is the knowledge that is the basis of true religion; knowledge that starts with the right understanding and right attitude toward God. It's what Solomon spoke of when he wrote in Proverbs, chapter one verse seven, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." And later, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." That's what will lead to right behavior.

And the knowledge that Paul wants for them is the knowledge of Christ who is the main subject of this great epistle to the Colossians. The only path to real wisdom and a well lived life is Christ; believing in Him; trusting in Him. That is "The fear of the Lord..." —Trusting in Christ. And that trust in Him and knowledge of Him must grow. So Paul and Timothy both prayed that the Colossians would be filled with both knowledge and wisdom that comes from the knowledge they prayed for. They wanted them to have a Christian mind. They wanted them to think according to the revelation that God has given us in scripture. That's what they prayed for. Now ask yourselves: Is that what you pray for yourself and for others?

I read an article many years ago now. It was in a weekly magazine. I think it was *Newsweek*. And the title of the article was "Talking to God, an Intimate Look at the Way We Pray." According to the article, lots of Americans pray. They pray for a variety of things, and for a variety of reasons. One is: "Because it gives them inner peace." A cardiologist at Harvard Medical School recommended prayer for that reason. It is therapeutic. It wasn't that it is actually communication between the supplicant and the Lord: It's just good therapy.

Well, one man prayed for everything, and that's good. But he asked the Lord to repair his television, because he didn't have enough money to do it. According to a survey in that article, almost half the people prayed for material things—That was their great concern. Now that was decades ago when that article came out. Maybe things have changed, but Paul and Timothy prayed for 'knowledge and wisdom.'

I remember Dr. Johnson once saying that when he was a young man, just a young Christian shortly after he had trusted in the Lord, he prayed a simple prayer: "Lord, give me an uncommon knowledge of Your Word." And God honored that prayer. He honored it by giving Dr. Johnson the discipline and the drive to study the Bible. That's when he gave up golf. I remember talking to him about that. (I think Mark Newman had a similar conversation with him.) I asked him, "Why did you give up golf?" And he said, "There were other things I wanted to do more." Meaning he had a greater desire to study the Word of God than spend his Saturdays on the golf course. He was a young

businessman at the time and didn't have much time—And that's what he set aside (his golf) to have the time to study. Now it wasn't some legalistic prohibition he put on himself. It was a new desire that had replaced an old desire. But here's, I think, the point: And that is, God answers the pray for greater knowledge; for *epignosis* and spiritual wisdom in those who study (and study hard) and apply themselves to it. Just as we don't hold out our plate and ask, "Lord, give me food," we work for it and we apply ourselves to obtain the funds to be able to support ourselves.

And it's the same in gaining knowledge and wisdom. Paul prays that they may have it. He prays that God would teach them. He prays that they would have, in effect, the desire to study and apply themselves. And those who do that, those who gain this knowledge, are those who live well. That's the purpose of knowledge. Not knowledge for knowledge's sake—But knowledge for a fruitful life.

And we see that next in verse 10. "So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Now that phrase, "...in a manner worthy of the Lord..." is interesting. 'In a manner worthy of the Lord,' or 'worthy of God', is a phrase that has been found in the province of Asia, where Colossae was located in western Turkey—and it was used by the pagans. So it may be that Paul knew that this phrase was one of the pagan expressions; and he used it here, to say in effect, 'If pagans felt the importance of representing their god's well, how much more should Christians live to the glory of the true God?'

The Christian home ought to be an example to unbelievers. People ought to say, 'See how he loves his wife.' The church ought to be 'a shining city on a hill.' We ought to 'out-live' secular society. I mean by that, we ought to live lives distinct from the world, better than the world, and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit that's given to us in Galatians, chapter 5, verse 22. And Paul mentions some of those virtues ('fruits') in our next verse. But what is noticeable here is that he says, 'living obediently to the Lord results in more knowledge and increasing in the knowledge of God.' Or, 'knowledge and conduct go together.' It is a false dichotomy to separate them: As though 'doers' don't worry about

doctrine and being precise in doctrine or people who are concerned about the details of doctrine live apart— 'They live in ivory towers—they live an uninvolved, unconcerned life.' That's not true. No, knowledge and conduct go together! Knowledge leads to action and action, in turn, increases knowledge; for action gives reality to knowledge; it expands the scope of our knowledge. 'To him who has, more will be given' (Matthew 25: 29). The active, obedient life is where we see God at work in things and we see His hand in our lives. As we learn, and as we act upon it, we see the reality of the Lord actually working within our lives. And that increases our understanding of the very things that we learned.

Now all of this 'knowledge and walking' comes not just from human effort for it is Divinely enabled—It is the work of the Holy Spirit. And in verse 11, Paul prays for that in the lives of the Colossians. He prays that they would be 'endowed with power' to live the Christian life. And he prays for great 'power' which is according to the measure of God's glorious might. That's the standard of the 'power' that he wants them to have; and that by application we're to have—'Power that is according to God's glorious might.' Well, that's boundless power! That's the power that raised Christ from the dead! There's no greater power than that.

And we need it. The Christian life is beset with difficulties. We are not called into a placid life or a carefree life at all. We all have difficulties. We face challenges. And so we need knowledge to understand the nature of things: The nature of the Christian life; the nature of the world around us; the nature of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. And we need wisdom to know how to apply our knowledge and we need endurance to continue on, in and through the challenges that we face. That is specifically what Paul prayed for: Endurance that they would be able to stand firm in the face of trials and opposition—which they were facing. They were facing great trials there in Colossae with these false teachers that had come in with different doctrines.

He prayed that they would be strengthened for the attaining of all 'steadfastness and patience.' "Steadfastness and patience..." (vs11b)...that's difficult to have—in fact, that is not natural to us. Some people may have it more than others, but this is not a

natural thing. And I say it's not natural because this is among the fruit of the Spirit that's listed in Galatians 5:22. And if it's the fruit of the Spirit, then what Paul is saying is, 'This is supernaturally given. These strengths, these virtues, come from God. They're the fruit of the Spirit.'

Now there are people who have shown courage under fire and determination. There were people in Paul's day who did that. The Stoics would do that. Stoicism was the leading philosophy among the ancient Romans, and it was about endurance; it was about keeping a stiff upper lip; about fortitude and self-restraint and self-control. All those are good things. But FF Bruce asked, "A Stoic in the stocks would have borne the discomfort calmly and uncomplainingly—But would he, at the same time, have been heard singing hymns to God?" That's what Paul and Silas did in the Philippian town jail after being severely beaten. Acts 16, verse 25: 'At midnight, they were singing hymns to God. And everyone was listening to them.' And that's when the earthquake occurred. The jail was shaken, and the doors were open; and God did a great miracle.

The Stoic and the tough American can show self-resolve and self-sufficiency, which is admirable—But the Christian can not only endure hardship, he or she can do so joyfully. That's what God's power gives us. And it is joy producing power that works through our knowledge of God, and what He has done for us. There is a lot we need to know in order to endure joyfully. And I don't want to deal with that glibly, as though Christians have an easy time, joyfully going through the trials of life. We don't. We often fail. We often go through them miserably. And that's the case. We struggle with these things.

But knowledge is necessary in order to be able to joyfully endure these things. Because, again, 'knowledge is power.' That's Paul's prayer in verse 12. "Joy" ends verse 11 but it's better connected to verse 12: 'Joyfully giving thanks to God the Father', "...who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light." This is all about the response to God's goodness. Paul could have said, 'Endure and obey. It's your duty.' And there's some truth in that. But he didn't do that. Instead, he reminded them of who they were and why they were who they are. It's all God's grace. He had done wonderful

things for them. These old pagans were now new saints: Holy Ones called out of darkness into Light. These Gentiles who were in unbelief and without hope and without God in the world now had God and hope. And God Almighty, the God of the universe, was their "Father", that's the word that Paul uses; and he chooses his words carefully. The way he describes God in relationship to them is as their Father. Imagine that! God, who dwells in unapproachable Light, had brought them near and revealed Himself to them: To them, of all people! The God who created the universe out of nothing; before Whom the nations are like a drop from a bucket; and a speck of dust on His scales— Who is the judge of all the earth and will judge it in righteousness—He is now their Father! And as a Father, He cares for them. All of His power, His unlimited power and wisdom and love was directed to them for their good and their eternal benefit.

And so they had hope. The future for pagans was dark, but now these former pagans had "...the inheritance of the saints in Light." Why? Why did they possess that? Because they'd done some good thing? Because they'd pleased God in some way? **No.** They had all of this by His Sovereign Grace—A free gift. God did it. God, Paul said, 'qualified them to be saints and share in the inheritance.' And that should have given them confidence in life's struggles—given them a reason for endurance and steadfastness in the struggle. That's what I mean by the importance of having knowledge in order to endure. It's knowledge of who God is, and the kind of God we serve, and what He's done for us, and what He's going to do for us.

And this knowledge should have given them, as it should give us, joy in the midst of difficulty; joy in our endurance. And with that joy, they should have been thankful. That's the right response to grace—Joy and Thanksgiving. God qualified them to be saints and inherit eternal life and glory. In other words, He saved them; the future is secure; the present is safe. God is for us—'And if God is for us, who is against us?' That's Paul's question in Romans 8:31. It's a rhetorical question. The meaning is, 'well, there are people who are against us; the world is against us. (Paul certainly knew that. He experienced the hostility of the world.) The Lord Jesus told us to expect that from the world. But who is against us with any lasting consequence?'

During the Reformation, people faced strong opposition and suffered. There were five students who had been trained in Geneva under John Calvin, citizens of Leon, who went back to France to evangelize. They were caught and put through an inquisition. But under great pressure and threat of death, not one of them denied their faith. They went bravely to their deaths. On the way they joyously sang the Ninth Psalm, then joyfully mounted the pile of wood. And as they were begin tied to the stake, each one said to the other, "May God keep you, my brother." As the flames went up, they were heard consoling each other saying, "Courage, brother. Courage."

Their biographer said, "Thus died Calvinists." I like that. I'm a Calvinist. And I hope I die like one. If I do, it will be for the same reason those five young men died so bravely and confidently: **Knowledge...Doctrine**. They had the knowledge of God's grace and faith in what God had gained for them and promised to them. They knew they had 'the inheritance of the saints in Light.' And so they knew that their trials were short, and their future was eternal. It was all God's gift to them. They knew that and it gave them endurance in trials; and joy and thanksgiving in endurance.

It has been said that in Christianity, "Theology is grace and ethics is gratitude." I've quoted that, oh I think, a number of times. It's from a Scot named Thomas Erskine. It's a very good statement, I think. In Christianity, "Theology is grace and ethics is gratitude": Good behavior is the product of gratitude, not obligation. And gratitude is the response to grace, to God's goodness to us. When we understand what He's done for us, it is our desire to know Him and to serve Him. And we have so much to be grateful for.

Even in the great trials of life, it may not seem like we have a great deal to be grateful for. Again, I don't want to be glib about Christians going through the trials of life. For they are trials; and they wear us down and they're difficult. But in the midst of that, we have much to rejoice in. That's why we need to draw upon the things that are revealed to us, to know them, to reflect deeply upon them: We are saints—And in the midst of trials, we have hope. And it is certain hope; it is glorious hope; a glorious future.

That word 'Light' is full of meaning, "...the inheritance of the saints in Light." (vs 12). Light is truth. Light is life. Nothing lives without Light. Light is purity. And Light is the glory of God. We now live in it. We live in all of that. In Truth, in Light, in Purity.

And to emphasize the great blessing we have now and will have to a far, far greater degree when we enter that "...inheritance in Light", Paul recalls their origin (and for that matter our origin) and the reason for the blessings. They were in "...the domain of darkness..." (vs 13). "Darkness" is the opposite of "Light". Darkness is about evil and error. When it's dark, so dark that we can't see our hand in front of our face, you can't get your bearings. You're unsteady. You fall. There is confusion in darkness.

And deadness. Genesis 1 gives us that picture of the world in the beginning, when it was covered in darkness, and was formless and void. It was cold and dead. Life on the surface of the earth cannot thrive in darkness. And that gives us a sense of what spiritual darkness is. It is deadening. That is the mental and the moral world these Colossians were in, just as you and I were originally. Paul speaks of it here, in verse 13, as "...the domain of darkness...". The New International Version calls it "...the dominion of darkness..." And the word used here has the meaning of 'authority.' It is power: And there is power and influence in this darkness. In fact, this is the word that Jesus used in the garden of Gethsemane in Luke's statement in Luke 22:53, when the arresting party came for Him. He said to the soldiers and the temple police who came for Him, '...this is your hour and the dominion of darkness.' They were under the direction of dark powers of sinister forces that were against Him, that were at war with Him.

In Ephesians, chapter 6, in verse 10, Paul speaks of the world rulers of this darkness. He's speaking of the demonic forces there. They are at work in this world and influence it for evil. And it's subtle. And the world doesn't even realize what's happening. But these powers are there, and they are at work. It seems that in those places farthest removed from spiritual Light, farthest removed from God's revelation, is where the darkness is the greatest; where life is cruelest. They are places of oppression; where the powerless are under the heel of the powerful. There's moral confusion in those places, which is unhealthy, that takes a toll physically and mentally. Paul speaks of

immorality as a special sin against the body. And the body is corrupted. Religion is no help for it compounds the problem: In fact, it is the darkness. The world religions are a great lie: For they are hopeless; they are brutal; they are pitiless.

Does that seem harsh to say that priests would be cruel? Well in India, Amy Carmichael rescued young girls from the Hindu temple where they had been dedicated to the gods and to child prostitution. That's what that religion produced for their children. That's man's religion: It is dark and cruel. The farther a society departs from the Light, the farther a society departs from the Word of God, the deeper it goes into darkness, into error, into myth and lies, into depravity and perversion—And the more ruthless and sad life is.

That was 'the domain of darkness' that the Colossians were, at one time, a part of. It was Satan's domain—It is Satan's domain. And they were under Satan's dominion. They worshiped Jupiter—they served the Devil. That is John's witness at the end of First John (chapter 5). "...the whole world...", he says, "...lies in the power of the evil one." That statement by the apostle gives a very vivid picture of the world. It's like a sleeping child in the arms of a monster. It's more than creepy, it's terrifying. And the heathen world is that. That's a description of it. It's a description of the unbelieving world. But that's the world out of which these Colossians were saved, a world that is full of fear. Life in such a world is uncertain. It's not hopeful at all. And lived in ignorance and superstition it causes a dread of the future and of eternity; because life is darkness and all that the future has for such people is darkness.

But Paul reminds the Colossians that God rescued them, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." (vs 13). And Paul includes himself in that. So, he's saying as a Jew, 'Even with all of the Light that we had we were in unbelief and that we, too, were in that darkness'—Everyone is apart from Christ. But God changes that! He rescued us and brought us into a kingdom of His beloved Son. And what a wonderful and glorious place to be! Out of the arms of Satan and into the loving government of God and Christ, His Son. He is the beloved Son, loved by His Father for His purity, His holiness, His perfection, and His union with the Father.

He is altogether good—There's no darkness in Him. And He cares for us! We had been transferred from darkness to Light.

Now think about this image of the great kings of the ancient world who conquered nations and moved those conquered people from their homeland to new lands. You can see that in the Bible when the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom (the ten tribes of Israel), and moved them to the Assyria. And then a generation later, when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah, he took the people of Judah and transferred them from Judah and Benjamin in the southern region to Babylon. Now that was punishment. That was tragedy.

But now reverse this image: A terrible place; a realm of darkness—To our victorious King, Who has transferred us to His realm of Light! Whole populations of us! That's the greatness of God's grace. He has put us in the Kingdom of His victorious Son. There's nothing to fear there. The powers of darkness that kept the Colossians in error and ignorance; of fear and dread have been vanquished by Christ. They're free from all of that.

Now that is the present reality. We look forward to 'the inheritance with the saints in Light' to a world without end. That's our hope. But even now—Presently—we live in Christ's domain. We are now citizens of heaven. And the more we live in that citizenship, the more we know that we are citizens of it (and not citizens of this world; this world which is a fraud; this world which is passing away), the more we do that, the more we 'know' we don't fit here anymore. The course of our lives has changed. What was once natural for us is now unnatural. What was once humorous is now inappropriate. Our tastes have changed. Our goals are different. We have new hearts, new lives, a new allegiance.

We are under heaven's authority, and heaven's protection. And the Lord, the King, lets nothing touch us that is not according to His will and for our good. We need to know that! By the Holy Spirit, He guides us through life's dangers and pitfalls. He gives us wisdom. He makes His Word 'a lamp to our feet and light to our path.' He empowers us spiritually to persevere.

Now why is that? How could this victory over the forces of darkness and the transfer from darkness into the Kingdom of Christ occur? The false teachers had 'secret formulas for all of that', they said. They had secret formulas for salvation—Just as today priests offer sacraments and ceremonies as the means of salvation. But none of that is Paul's explanation. He gives the explanation in verse 14. It's found in that word 'Redemption'. 'In Christ' Paul says, "...we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Redemption is deliverance, or 'release', from captivity by means of a payment; by means of a ransom. It is being bought out of a situation of slavery or captivity.

I think I've given this illustration many times, but this is a word and an idea that's found all through the ancient world. *'The Iliad'*, for example: Odysseus and one of his companions are out one night looking for Trojans. And they catch this young Trojan prince. And the Trojan prince pleads for his life. He says, "My father will give you a rich ransom." In other words, 'He'll buy my freedom.' And that's the idea here.

But what was the price that was paid for our redemption—for our ransom? Paul doesn't say here. He speaks of redemption, but he doesn't give the price. But he does give it other places. He gives it in Ephesians, chapter 1, in verse 7. He says, it is "...through His blood..." God sent forth His Son to be the agent of salvation by being our substitute in judgment, in the judgment that we deserved, that He took in our place. And that sacrifice for us; that substitutionary death for us satisfied God's justice which obtained the forgiveness that we receive through faith. Now we are free. You believed—you're now free. Free from the penalty of sin; free from the power of sin.

But not free from the challenges and hardships of life; not free from the struggle with sin. We still deal with sin for we have the principle of sin within our members and we will as long as we are in the flesh; as long as we are in this life. Nevertheless, fundamentally, we are truly an emancipated people: And as we walk by faith; as we live with the knowledge of God's grace and gift and promise of the future, we appropriate our liberty and we appropriate the power of God—And we live the happiest of lives. We live the fullest of lives.

Again, I'm not saying it's a carefree life that we live. We don't. But in the midst of the trials and the difficulties, we're truly grounded in the understanding of the great things that Paul says that God has done for us, is doing for us, will yet do for us. And we will live full lives, regardless of the circumstances.

There's a lot of theology in this prayer that Paul wanted the Colossians (and by implication, us) to know and believe. We can't walk well if we don't know it: Knowledge—Truth—God's Revelation—is 'a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path.' We need to know it. We need to have that knowledge. That's how we walk. But to even begin that walk, you must first believe that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became a man and died for us. Now, there you have knowledge right there.

First of all, you have to know the gospel; know what it is. And the gospel, the good news, is that God has sent His Son into this world. It is His eternal Son. And He sent Him into this world by becoming a man, a man who lived a full and perfect life. A genuine body and a reasonable soul, and He offered it up as a sacrifice. He is the Savior—And all who trust in Him are saved. He's the only way to life. All other paths are wrong. All other ways are dead ends. And that is not a false dichotomy—It is either grace or merit—faith or works. The apostles and prophets are clear: We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Believe that, if you've not. And the moment you do, you're saved, and you're saved forever. That's the greatness of the gospel.

And having believed it, well then, walk in the knowledge of the great fundamental truths that Paul puts forth here and live a life that is of benefit and service to the Lord and to one another. We can do that by God's grace. May God help us to do that, to serve Him, to live for Him in the knowledge of God's will, and in walking in a way that's worthy of Him. May God help us to do that.

Let's pray.

Father, we give You thanks for this great text of scripture; this prayer that Paul and Timothy prayed for these Colossians. It applies to us as well. And we pray this for ourselves: That you will fill us with the knowledge of Your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that we'll know You better; we'll know Your character; Your work for us; the promises we have that are certain; and that You are a reliable, trustworthy God; and You bless obedience.

Lord teach us; build us up in the faith; may we live lives that truly are honoring to You; worthy of You. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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