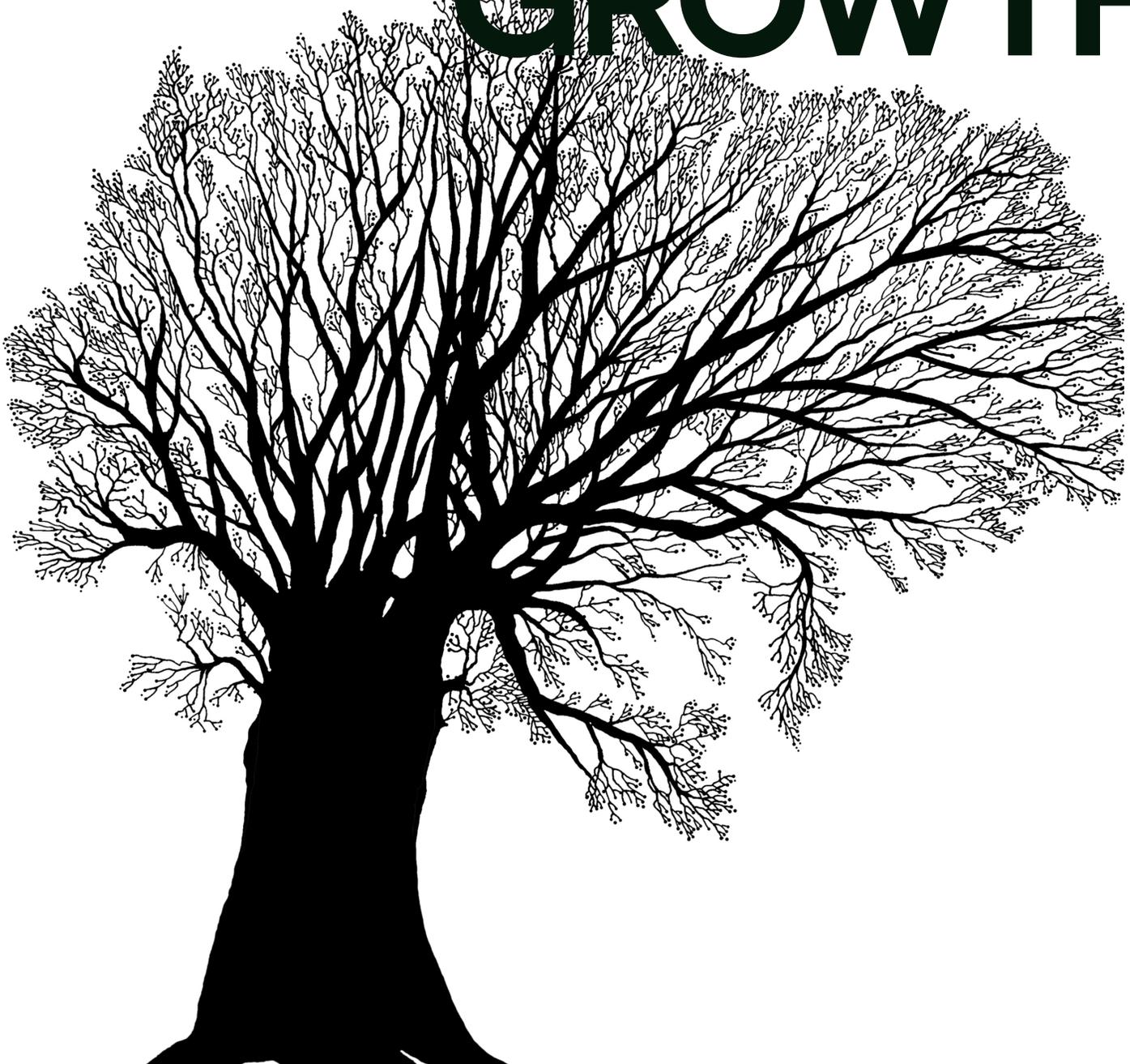


“We have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col. 1:9).

- Colossians 1:9-10

PROPER CHURCH GROWTH



Paul's prayers for the believers in Colossae reflect his true feelings about them and provide us with instruction. We saw in the last study how his gratitude for the Colossians' faith implies that they received a full revelation of Christ through the work of Epaphras and should not look for a "higher" religion (Col. 1:3–8). Verses 9–10 advance the point, encouraging them to continue in what they had learned and not to pursue the false "spiritual vitality" allegedly found among the heretics.

We are ever tempted to pursue dazzling displays of "spiritual vitality" and quick growth that are supposedly available through that one insight or method heretofore overlooked. A great many books and teachers today promise speedy advancements in power and holiness, whether it be through the exact repetition of the same prayer every day, the "name it and claim it" of the health-and-wealth gospel, or the promise of immediate victory over the Devil through a post-conversion baptism of the Spirit. Far less is actually achieved in the lives of most who embrace such teachings, as any honest survey of such things reveals. Yet emphases on secret or obscure methodologies for spiritual growth have actually been a problem in the church for ages. Back in first-century Colossae, false teachers promised quick paths to spiritual maturity through diet plans, ascetic practices, holy days, and more (2:16–23).

The apostle's answer is not to deny spiritual growth and progress altogether, but to ground it in the faithful, simple pursuit of what has been presented clearly to all in the gospel. Paul's prayer in Colossians has many parallels with 1:3–6, indicating that growth comes through diligent continuance in what God has revealed to the whole church, not in chasing after the latest fad. He asks the Lord to help the Colossians walk in a fruitful manner (v. 10), just as the simple gospel of Paul and Epaphras bears fruit in the whole world (v. 6). Paul also prays for increasing knowledge of the Lord's will — a deeper understanding of the truth that is accessible to all in the gospel message and that strengthens the faith of those who believe it (vv. 4, 9). That Paul prays for such things — things people already had in the preaching of the truth — shows that believers are brought into the kingdom and made mature in the same way, namely, in studying and hearing the Word of God that has been revealed to all His people.

CORAM DEO

It is all too easy for us to think that once we know the basics of the gospel we must then move beyond them for true spiritual growth. Yet it is not extra biblical revelations and methods that mature us, nor is it the search for esoteric meanings and codes in Scripture. Instead, it is the continual attempt to plumb the depths of the gospel message and its application to all of life, which is, in fact, the story of the Bible.¹

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OPEN IT.

1. Describe your prayer life. What things do you pray for most?

What hindrances keep you from a deeper life of prayer?

What habits allow you to pray more effectively?

2. Describe a time when you received an inheritance. What was it and who gave it to you? What did you do with it?

READ IT.

Colossians 1:9-14

"...WE HAVE
NOT
CEASED
TO PRAY
FOR YOU..."

EXPLORE IT.

1. What three things in verse 9 was Paul praying that the Colossians would possess?
2. What would those three things allow them to do in verse 10?
3. According to verse 11, God's power enables the believer to display what three attributes?
4. List as many reasons why every Christian should be thankful according to verse 12-13?

KNOWLEDGE

GET IT.

“PAUL IS PRAYING IN ESSENCE FOR THESE SAINTS TO HAVE A CHRISTIAN MIND...”

Paul is praying in essence for these saints to have a Christian mind in the midst of a secular world that has a mindset radically and definitively in opposition to God and His will. Harry Blamires puts it this way in his book *The Christian Mind* explaining that, "The Christian mind has succumbed to the secular drift with a degree of weakness and nervelessness unmatched in Christian history....as a thinking being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization. He accepts religion - its morality, its worship, its spiritual culture; but he rejects the religious view of life, the view which sets all earthly issues within the context of the eternal...the view which sees all things here below in terms of God's supremacy and earth's transitoriness, in terms of Heaven and Hell. The Christian mind (is) a mind trained, informed, equipped to handle data of secular controversy within a framework of reference which is constructed of Christian presuppositions. The Christian mind is the prerequisite of Christian action."²

1. Why is it so important that Christians engage their mind when it comes to their faith? How can the knowledge Christians have about God and his Word enable greater effectiveness? (See Matthew 22:37)

How can knowledge become detrimental to the believer?

How do we glean the good of knowledge while steering clear of the entrapments that can come along the way?

**“THE
ETERNAL
PURPOSE
OF GOD.”**

BY THIS TERM, “THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL,” I DO NOT UNDERSTAND HIM TO BE REFERRING MERELY TO GOD’S WILL FOR THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER’S LIFE FROM DAY TO DAY BUT BY HIS WILL, I TAKE IT, HE MEANS THE WONDROUS PLAN OR PROGRAM OF THE FATHER KNOWN FROM ETERNITY AND NOW BEING CARRIED OUT IN TIME TO HAVE ITS CONSUMMATION IN THE AGES TO COME—“THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD.” HERE IS SUPER-KNOWLEDGE INDEED! HERE IS THAT WHICH THE CLEVEREST HUMAN INTELLECT COULD NEVER FATHOM, APART FROM DIVINE REVELATION. AND THIS REVELATION WE HAVE IN OUR BIBLES. IT RUNS THROUGHOUT THE SCRIPTURES FROM GENESIS TO THE APOCALYPSE, FURNISHING A THEME FOR DEVOUT CONTEMPLATION, AND DEMANDING ENTHUSIASTIC STUDY AND CAREFUL EXAMINATION BY MEN OF THE MOST ERUDITE MINDS AND BRILLIANT INTELLECTS, AND THE DEEPEST INVESTIGATION OF THE MOST SPIRITUAL BELIEVERS. BUT IN WHICH ALSO THE UNLEARNED AND THE IGNORANT CHRISTIANS WILL FIND CONSTANT ENJOYMENT IF THEY BUT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT IN SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES TO SEE WHETHER THESE THINGS ARE SO.³

³Ironside, H. A. "Commentary on Colossians 1:1". Ironside's Notes on Selected Books.

2. In what ways are we to be filled with the knowledge of God's will?

Where are we to turn to receive direction regarding His will?

3. Discuss a time where you sought the will of God concerning an important decision and received his leading to make a wise one?

4. According to verse 10, what does it mean to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord"?

What do these attributes look like in our everyday life?

How does acquiring spiritual wisdom and understanding enable the believer to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord"?

PAUL PRAYS THAT THE SAINTS MAY BE "FORTIFIED AGAINST THE TEMPTATIONS OF SATAN AND FURNISHED FOR ALL THEIR DUTY. IT IS A GREAT COMFORT TO US THAT HE WHO UNDERTAKES TO GIVE STRENGTH TO HIS PEOPLE IS A GOD OF POWER AND OF GLORIOUS POWER. WHERE THERE IS SPIRITUAL LIFE THERE IS STILL NEED OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH, STRENGTH FOR ALL THE ACTIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. TO BE STRENGTHENED IS TO BE FURNISHED BY THE GRACE OF GOD FOR EVERY GOOD WORK, AND FORTIFIED BY THAT GRACE AGAINST EVERY EVIL ONE: IT IS TO BE ENABLED TO DO OUR DUTY, AND STILL TO HOLD FAST OUR INTEGRITY. THE BLESSED SPIRIT IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS STRENGTH; FOR WE ARE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INWARD MAN. THE WORD OF GOD IS THE MEANS OF IT, BY WHICH HE CONVEYS IT; AND IT MUST BE FETCHED IN BY PRAYER. IT WAS IN ANSWER TO EARNEST PRAYER THAT THE APOSTLE OBTAINED SUFFICIENT GRACE."⁴

5. Why do we need strength from God? What does this strength do when it comes to everyday life?

Why is strength needed to endure hardship with patience and joy?

6. Describe a time where God strengthened you to accomplish or endure something that alone would have been impossible?

7. Why must gratitude be evident in the heart of all believers?

What causes ingratitude to set in?

⁴Matthew Henry Bible Commentary-Colossians 1.

IN SOME MYSTERIOUS SENSE WE WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST FOR SALVATION HAVE BEEN LIFTED OUT OF THIS PRESENT MUNDANE EXISTENCE INTO A REALM OF UNSPEAKABLE BEAUTY, SPLENDOR, AND POWER. WE HAVE BEEN SEATED WITH CHRIST AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, WHERE WE MAY GATHER A GLIMPSE OF THE GLORY THAT IS AND THAT IS TO BE. IT IS A MYSTERY, TO BE SURE, BUT IT IS TRUE, AND PAUL INVITES US TO CONTEMPLATE ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR OUR PRESENT EXPERIENCE.

THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD: HERE IS THE LOCUS OF ALL POWER AND AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND EARTH (MATTHEW 28:18). HERE IS THE COMMAND CENTER WHENCE PROCEEDS CHRIST'S VICTORIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST ALL HIS FOES (PSALM 110). HERE IS A PLACE OF WONDROUS BEAUTY, A GLORIOUS GATHERING-PLACE FOR DEPARTED SAINTS AND ANGELIC HOSTS (PSALM 45; REVELATION 4,5). CHRIST IS EVEN NOW SEATED IN HIS GLORIFIED BODY ON THIS THRONE OF MAJESTY AND MIGHT, DIRECTING HIS SPIRIT, ACCORDING TO THE PROMISES OF HIS WORD, FOR THE ADVANCE OF HIS KINGDOM, THE VANQUISHING OF HIS FOES, AND THE GATHERING AND PERFECTING OF HIS ELECT. AND WE ARE SEATED THERE WITH HIM.⁵

8. In what ways have you been rescued from the dominion of darkness?

How has God brought light to the dark deeds of our life?

9. How should our present position in Christ and the inheritance that we have in Him cause us to fulfill the contents of this prayer that Paul gives to the Colossians?