

A WORTHY WALK

Colossians 1:9-12

[The key to Paul's successful ministry?]

Have you ever wondered why Paul's ministry was so successful?

To what should we attribute such remarkable success?

Was he a genius? Perhaps

Was he a "gifted visionary leader?" Perhaps

Was he a dynamic, charismatic preacher? Not likely.

Paul's secret for successful ministry doesn't lie in any of these areas!

The answer is so simple and obvious we sometimes overlook it!

It appears God set the key right in front of our eyes, so that someday we might just happen to glance that way and notice it!

In the introduction to Colossians, God reveals one of the keys to Paul's successful ministry.

Paul invests incredible amounts of time praying for people he ministers to.

That custom was one of the trademarks of his ministry.

He refers to that practice in every letter except Galatians—one church he undoubtedly prayed more for than any other!

By studying his prayers, we learn a lot about the concerns on Paul's heart.

When WE pray for others, how do WE pray? What do we desire for them?

PAUL'S PRAYER 1:3-23

His thanksgiving 1:3-8

He expresses gratitude for things God has *already* done in their lives.

This isn't a spiritually retarded church. It's mature.

They demonstrate faith, love and hope.

The gospel is producing fruit among them.

Paul thanks God continuously for them.

His petition 1:9-23

His prayer isn't the general: God bless Sue or John. It's very specific.

Neither is it just: God meet this particular need they're facing this week.

[Nothing wrong with that!—but that's NOT his prayer for them!]

Colossians are threatened by legalists. Paul doesn't mention that.

Paul's in jail, but *that* isn't what he's praying about.

[What IS Paul's prayer for these people he loves?] 1:9

His prayer: ... that we understand what God wants to do in us
and walk accordingly

PAUL'S REQUEST: THAT WE MIGHT KNOW GOD'S WILL

He wants us to know what God wants to do

He wants the knowledge of God's will to control our life

His petition is positive; reflects his concern for every church where he ministered
Differs from idea we hear today.

It isn't Paul's intent to *change* God's will

—to manipulate God, to bring His will into conformity with our desires!

rather it's that *WE* might come into conformity with *HIS will*.

Barclay: "We're not trying so much to make God listen to us as to make US listen to HIM;
we're not trying to persuade God to do what WE want, but to find out what HE wants US to do.
It so often happens that in prayer we're really saying, 'Thy will be *changed*,'
when we ought to be saying, 'Thy will be *done*.'"

Word Paul uses doesn't just ask for a factual knowledge of God's will;

It emphasizes two additional focal points:

(1) It looks at *complete understanding* of the truth. He wants us to get a grasp on God's plan and our role in it—to *fully* understand what God is seeking to do in and through us.

(2) It looks at an *intimate relationship*. It refers to our *personal* understanding of truth, not just a body of knowledge "*out there*" for us to look at.

It's *ours*. We own it! Or better yet, *it owns us!*

Neither does Paul just ask that we *know* God's will

–not matter of academic learning!

We're not talking about more "head knowledge!"

It's not the kind of acquaintance with facts that inflates our heads!

He desired that the knowledge of what God wants to do might "fill us."

In N.T., verb "fill" means "controlled by." e.g., filled with anger, hate, or fear.

He wants that knowledge of God's will to *take over our life!*

It isn't God's ideal for His people to have a great Bible study so that our heads become inflated with wonderful *FACTS* we know *about* God.

We need to *know* truth about God and His Word, but that truth is intended to change the way we walk—to transform our lives.

Paul wants the knowledge of God's will to control us!

He longs for us to be controlled by an intimate knowledge of God's eternal purpose, and of our personal role within that purpose.

Such knowledge will have two companions that "keep it company:"
wisdom and spiritual understanding.

"Wisdom"=ability to apply that knowledge to daily living. "Knowledge rightly used."

“*Understanding*,”=insight–ability to discern between true and false, between right and wrong. It’s a trait which “flows from veins” of people God calls to leadership:

DISCERNMENT

insight to discern what God wants to do in His people

Paul desires that kind of knowledge of God’s will to control our lives:

Concept: *spiritual understanding produces appropriate conduct.*

He refers to a practical reality that *transforms* the life of the listener.

He wants us to fully comprehend what God’s program for this world and His people is about, and be *transformed* by that understanding

UNDERSTANDING WHAT GOD WANTS TO DO

OUGHT TO DRIVE OUR LIVES –it ought to ***change*** us

[The practical focus of his petition is observed in the affirmation of . . .]

PAUL’S PURPOSE for us: **1:10a** [when we understand what God wants to do, =>]

THAT WE MIGHT WALK WORTHILY . . . in order to please Him 1:10-23

It’s our walk that concerns him; not our talk!

This kind of knowledge of God’s will should produce a new lifestyle, different than we used to live.

Understanding God’s plan should change the way we live!

It's a lifestyle that is worthy of Him

It's a lifestyle that is pleasing to Him

This kind of lifestyle isn't based on legalism.

This isn't secret code for obeying another list of rules!

He's talking about a life lived to please God!

We eat or drink so as to please Him.

We speak or think so as to please Him.

WHAT DOES A WORTHY LIFE THAT PLEASES GOD LOOK LIKE?

4 participles introduce **4 WAYS OF WALKING** that are worthy of Him and pleasing to Him (10b-12).

Being controlled by knowledge of God's produces **4 results**—cycle repeated throughout our lives.

They continue to feed one another.

*1st result of worthy life, controlled by knowledge of God's will: **1:10b**—it “bears fruit in every good work.”*

1. It bears fruit

Knowledge of God's will produces good works, not as a fulfillment of legalistic standards, but same way any live plant produces fruit.

When owner of vineyard sees vine that isn't bearing fruit, he works with it for a while, but eventually he will remove the vine if it doesn't produce fruit.

A vine that doesn't produce fruit is useless.

So we, as God's children, should be producing spiritual fruit.

H.S. living in us *will* produce His fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).

People controlled by knowledge of what God wants to do, please Him in everything, because our life manifests what Holy Spirit produces.

Servant girl: "I know I'm converted, and my mistress knows I'm converted, because I sweep *under* the mats now." She sought to please God by faithfully doing her job!

*2nd result of a life which is worthy of the Lord, that pleases Him in everything, **1:10c***

—our comprehension of God grows each day.

2. It grows in knowledge of Him

In spring, when you look at trees, you notice they put out new limbs.

Each year new limbs appear on older branches.

If a tree doesn't put out new limbs, it won't produce fruit!

Lack of new limbs indicates there's no life inside.

A tree that has life has growth.

That's the way it is with authentic Christians also.

We produce fruit. We keep growing.

Paul urges wants us to grow **in our knowledge of God**—to know Him better.

3rd result of life controlled by knowledge of God: 1:11

–we receive strength to live as He wants.

3. It keeps getting stronger . . . to live as He desires . . .

Paul uses various words related to power to underline truth that a worthy life which pleases God is fortified with all kinds of power.

We can count on His ability to live the kind of life He wants us to live.

This power conforms to the greatness of God's own glory.

It doesn't suffer from the human limitations our power does.

Power to live this kind of life comes from God.

His power enables us to endure whatever problem may come along.

It produces both kinds of patience:

“Bearing up” under pressure

“Slowness to anger” with people who are hard to get along with.

Result of being strengthened with all God's power: spiritual stick-to-it-iveness—

ability to “hang in there” when going gets tough, or people are tough to get along with.

That's when God's strength becomes apparent.
God doesn't always choose to remove the adversity.

Sometimes He provides strength to endure, so we're *stretched* through hard times.

Warren Wiersbe: "A pastor visited a badly burned young man.

In great pain the young man said, "I wish God would do a miracle and heal me."

The pastor responded, "God is doing a miracle, but not the kind you're looking for.

I've watched you *grow, in patience, in trusting Him*, during these weeks.

That's an even greater miracle than healing your body!"

Endurance under pressure revealed in Winston Churchill's address at alma mater near end of career.

As he stood, everyone anxiously awaited his discourse.

He arose to speak: "Young gentlemen, never give up.

Never give up. Never give up! Never! Never! Never!"

That's Paul's message.

Since we're being strengthened with the immense power of God Himself, never give up!

Never! Never! Never!

Not before impossible *circumstances*!

Not when faced with impossible *people*! **Never!**

4th characteristic of a worthy life: **1:12-23** –joyful thanksgiving for all God has done for us.

4. It expresses thanks to the Father . . . for all He has done for us . . .

Wiersbe: “Thankfulness is the opposite of selfishness.

The selfish person says, ‘I *deserve* what comes to me! Other people *ought* to make me happy!’

–complains when I don’t get all that I deserve!

Mature child of God realizes that even life itself is a gift from God.”

We become appropriately *grateful* when we realize that we *deserve nothing*, yet God has given us *everything* in Christ.

When we stop to thank God,

we have to *think* about the benefits He has given to us.

In sum, HE HAS QUALIFIED US—made us qualified to receive a new inheritance, the inheritance of the people of God.

We become aware that God is the source of *everything* we receive.

We receive it, not because we deserve it, but because He has chosen to make us His heirs.

Problem: WE FAIL TO APPRECIATE WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US.

As we thank Him, our awareness of what is involved in God's provision begins to increase,

We realize He has provided everything we need.

NOTHING IS LACKING!

A restaurant advertised its Thanksgiving Day meal: "Thanksgiving made easy!"

That's what God has done for us!

Often, like children, we have to be reminded how important it is to be grateful.

It's easy when we remember how much God has done for us.

This ought to produce a new attitude: JOY and GRATITUDE!

Are we more prone to anger, complaining and criticism?

Or, are we more prone to be grateful, thanking God with joy?

In dealing with legalism, Paul identifies the central issue:

we don't appreciate *how much God has done for us.*

**AS WE EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE
FOR ALL GOD HAS DONE FOR US,
WE REALIZE HOW GREAT HIS PLAN IS!**

These *FOUR WAYS OF WALKING* that are worthy of Him and pleasing to Him are cyclical — *they feed one another*.

As we begin to **UNDERSTAND GOD'S WILL**,

—knowledge of God's will produces **FRUIT** (good works) . . .

—as God produces His fruit in our lives we **LEARN MORE ABOUT HIM**

—increasing understanding of God **INCREASES STRENGTH** to endure . . .

—as we experience God's power we learn to **THANK GOD** (gratitude) for what He has done

—which increases our **KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL!**

Paul is praying that we might have productive lives and become mature.

He isn't satisfied to let us stay like we were when we first trusted Christ.

Neither is he willing to throw in the towel and give up on us.

When we pray for others in the church, how do WE pray?

Maybe instead of complaining about a less-than-perfect spouse, we should pray this prayer for them!

Maybe instead of complaining about imperfect church leadership, we should pray this prayer for us!

Wouldn't it be great if our whole church family would begin to pray this way for one another?

St. Catherine's Monastery near Sinai 12 centuries ago 2 monks took vows of lifelong unceasing prayer.

In adjoining cells one prayed while the other slept.

A metal chain fastened to the wrist connected them through wall between their cells.

Skeletons of the two monks lie in caskets today, still connected by the metal chain.

Wouldn't it be great if we'd make commitment like that to pray for one another; that those commitments would still be evident 12 centuries after we're gone —because of the fruit produced in the lives of others?

I've made a commitment to pray for you that way.

Paul's prayers make a great model.

I'm praying this one for each of our lives.

I long to see a **full understanding of God's will control** our lives.

I long to see us **live in a way that is worthy of Him and pleasing to Him:**

—**bearing fruit** in every good work

—**growing in knowledge of God**

—**getting stronger** with God's power so we might endure affliction

and put up with difficult people

—**giving thanks** joyfully to God for all that He has done for us.

Will you make a commitment to join me in praying this way for one another?

That was the secret of Paul's success in ministry.

—Not his many gifts and abilities.

—Not talented teaching and dynamic ministry among them.

—It was his *prayer* on their behalf.

—If *WE* long to see the Spirit of God produce fruit in our midst, it must come as result of praying for one another, that God will accomplish these purposes in us!

Will YOU join ME in a commitment to pray this way for one another?