

Colossians 1:9-14

January 1, 2023



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are three dreams or goals that you have for your life?

How do those dreams compare to what your parents may want for you? How are they similar? How are they different?

Our dreams may vary some, but ultimately, we all want to live in such a way that pleases God. You may face some unique challenges in being all God wants you to be, but Paul gave us some clues as to how we can overcome those challenges and take advantage of the opportunity God has given us.

DISCUSSION

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ COLOSSIANS 1:9.

Paul had received an encouraging report about the Colossian church and expressed his thankfulness for them and their commitment to Christ. He offered a prayer in light of the report received.

How would you describe Paul's view of prayer based on this verse?

What is the difference between the knowledge of God's will, spiritual wisdom, and understanding? How are they related to each other? Can you have one and not the other?

Paul demonstrated love for the Colossians by his commitment to pray for them. His number one prayer concern was for their spiritual growth. God wants us to know His will, and He reveals this to us in His Word. We are to act on what He reveals to us, living under the influence of His truth.

 HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 1:10-12A.

What actions does Paul list that define what he means to live worthy of the Lord?

How do the actions listed serve as markers for what it means to live the Christian life?

How can we encourage others to do each of the actions described? What makes it hard to pray that others will have these traits?

Paul's desire was that the Colossians live lives that pleased God, fulfilling that which was expected and appropriate for God's children. Paul spelled out very clearly how to live a life that pleases God: by bearing fruit, growing in knowledge, being strengthened for adversity, and giving thanks for salvation. The first step in becoming this type of person is by coming to faith in Christ; we can do none of this apart from Him

 HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 1:12B-14.

What is the significance of Paul reminding his readers that God qualified them to share in the blessings of salvation? What does this teach us about our own salvation?

Of the reasons given by Paul for thanking God for our salvation, which one speaks the most to you? Explain.

How can we help others understand the significance of the reasons for being thankful?

Paul reminded his readers that God qualified us, rescued us, brought us in, redeemed us, and forgave us. All of these things should cause believers to be thankful for their salvation and remind us that our past does not disqualify us from a glorious future.

APPLICATION

What needs to happen in your life for you to begin to pray this prayer?

What actions do you need to take to more clearly demonstrate the qualities listed by Paul?

What can you do to encourage others to be the kind of person described in Paul's prayer?

Have you found this salvation described by Paul? If not, who can you talk to find out more about salvation through Christ? If so, how can you share the truth of the gospel with your family members or friends?

PRAYER

Lord, help us to be the kind of followers described by Paul so we can show others what it means to be pleasing to You. Help us discover the joy of living a life that honors You out of gratitude for salvation through Christ.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we begin a seven week study on the life of Elijah.

January 8, 2023 --- 1 Kings 17:1-16

COMMENTARY

1:9. Paul's letter to the Colossians began with a prayer of thanksgiving. That prayer, based on the good report of Epaphras, reminded the Colossian believers of the power of the gospel so they would not be seduced by the siren song of heresy. The theme of prayer continues in verses 9-14, but the focus shifts from thanksgiving to intercession. Paul prays that the believers will live lives that are pleasing to God. Does it take deep knowledge, strict living, or a rapturous experience to please God? That's what the false teachers were telling the Colossians. We, like the Colossians, need to know the truth about what pleases God so we won't be enchanted by error.

Paul tells us why he prays and what he prays for. When Paul says for this reason, he is looking back to the good report he received from Epaphras. Paul prays for believers who are doing well. He asks that they continue in the process of growth. The focus of much prayer is on those who are struggling and not doing well. While those are good prayers, Paul reminds us of the need to pray for those who are doing well since they are prime targets for enemy attacks. Many of our prayers ask for immediate relief from circumstantial or personal difficulties. While some of these prayers are good, Paul wants us to include prayers for spiritual growth and long-term development.

Paul's prayer is that God fill believers with the knowledge of his will. Paul wants the Colossians to know God's will and then let that knowledge control them. God's will is not a spiritual Easter egg he hides from us. No, God wants us to know his will and so clearly reveals that will in his Word. A mere knowledge of God's Word is not what will please Him. We need to be controlled by that knowledge. The word fill means to control. To be filled with something (an emotion like fear or jealousy) means to be under its controlling influence that causes us to do things we might not do otherwise. Being controlled by God's will should cause us to do things we might not otherwise do—things like enduring rather than giving up, like being patient with others rather than getting angry with them. The knowledge and control of God's will comes through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. This is more than simple intelligence. Wisdom refers to the

comprehension of truth, while understanding refers to the application of truth. Being controlled by God's will means believers comprehend the principles of Scripture and then put them into practice.

1:10. Being controlled by God's will is not an end in itself; it is only a means to an end. The goal is to live a life worthy of the Lord and . . . please him in every way. The request of verse 9 was made so that the Colossians would live lives which please God. The word worthy refers to conduct that is expected and appropriate for God's children. If pleasing God is the goal, how do we achieve it? Paul spells that out very clearly in verses 10-12. By bearing fruit, growing in knowledge, being strengthened for adversity, and giving thanks for salvation, we please God.

First, believers please God when they are bearing fruit in every good work. Good works are not a means to achieve salvation, but a natural result of it. Good works in the life of the believer please God because good works are God's plan for the believer (see Eph. 2:8-10).

Second, God is pleased when believers are growing in the knowledge of God. The more we know of God's character, his ways, and his expectations, the more we are able to bring our lives into conformity with what pleases him.

1:11. Third, our lives please God when they are characterized by endurance and patience. Life is often difficult and challenging. At times, circumstances are less than friendly. At those times we need endurance—the ability to pass through any experience and trust God to see us through. At times, people are less than friendly. At those times we need patience—the capacity to be long-suffering with people and not retaliate when we are wronged or irritated.

We all know from experience, however, that staying steadfast through the circumstances and being patient with people is tough stuff. It's often beyond our ability. Right! The good news is that we aren't left alone with only our own resources to meet the challenge. Paul reminds us that God's power is available. Believers can please God with endurance and patience as they are strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. It is proper for a Christian to ask God to strengthen him to do God's will. God will do this. Sometimes it is immediate, and other times it is gradual, similar to the way a person is strengthened over time physically. As we yield ourselves to God in trust and obedience, we will be strengthened to do his will.

1:12. Finally, believers please God when they are joyfully giving thanks to the Father for the blessings of salvation. Just as Paul was clear to spell out specific means to please God, he is equally clear about the blessings of salvation for which we are to give thanks. This time we are given a list of three: God qualified us, rescued us, and brought us into a new kingdom.

God, the Father, has qualified believers for sharing in the blessings of salvation. We don't qualify ourselves by our moral achievements or personal worthiness. In grace,

God qualifies us when we trust Christ as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. That this salvation is ours by grace is seen in our participation in the inheritance. We don't earn an inheritance. We receive it.

1:13. Being qualified is only one reason to be thankful. He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness. God delivered us from the ruling power of darkness, and the good news doesn't end there. God has also taken a positive step: he has brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. God has transferred us; he has moved us from one place to another. He has taken us from Satan's dark realm and placed us into the bright light of Jesus' kingdom.

1:14. God's work of salvation, for which believers are joyfully to give thanks, is pictured further with redemption and forgiveness. To redeem someone means "to buy them back and set them free." Jesus' death was the price paid to buy us back and set us free from sin. Because of Christ's death on our behalf, we are set free from both the penalty and the power of sin.

Forgiveness parallels redemption. Forgive literally means "to send away, to cancel." Through the death of Jesus, God has canceled the debt of our sin. It was a debt we could never repay; but since Jesus paid the debt for us, God has forgiven the debt. Paul wants us to know the truth about pleasing God so that we won't be victims of the well-disguised lies of those who might lead us astray.

