

## Free to Live Colossians 1:9-14

Today with the internet available on home computers, laptops and mobile devices from the iPad and iPhone and the Smart phone, we have at our fingertips a vast array of information on any given subject. Type in a few words, press the enter key and sources of all kinds pop up for you to browse on that topic. What used to take hours of digging through periodicals, encyclopedias, and microfiche now takes minutes or even just nanoseconds. You can even limit your search for specific facts.

If you want to know the temperature in Duluth right now you can find that out.

If you want to know what it was like to live in the rain forests of Brazil the information is available with video streaming.

If you want to know how to make cheese, recipes for anything from Cheddar to Swiss to Gouda are all online.

If you're planning the annual fishing trip with buddies and you want to know the extended forecast, that information is available.

You can do it in the comfort of your home without having to go to the library. You can be enjoying dinner in a restaurant and have instant access to knowing just about anything that is on your mind.

The internet gives you access on diet and exercise and other health related topics including surgical procedures. Many govern their lives based on information on the World Wide Web.

The internet also has a wealth of information available if you're planning to move or the best places to vacation or even where you can retire for the best value on your money.

We have been investigating over the past several weeks what the New Testament has to say about the church in her role to those who are outside the church. We have a compelling mission to be a

witness to them about the gospel of Jesus Christ that He came to seek and save the lost.

Our passage today provides us with advice on how to live life and about the best retirement plan.

This morning I would like for us to take a look at Paul's letter to the Colossians and the words of encouragement to this local body of believers that are as much for us today as they were when the ink of Paul's pen was still wet. Paul wrote this letter as a way of refuting what came to be known as the Colossian heresy. At its core was a teaching that centered on the doctrine of Gnosticism – the belief that matter or the material is evil and that a person should seek to know God through such things as helping others, poverty and abstaining from sexual desires. They believed that this was the only way to know God. They assert that knowledge is superior.

Paul takes careful aim at their teachings and systematically dismantles their beliefs by presenting the supremacy of Christ.

Turn to Colossians 1:9-14

In our passage Paul provides three sound principles that will help us in combatting false teaching and mature in our faith at the same time.

**Know the will of the Lord – v. 9**

**Live a worthy life – v. 10-12a**

**Experience a wonderful love – v. 12b-14**

### **I. KNOW THE WILL OF THE LORD – v. 9**

With its billions of bits of information there is one matter that the internet cannot provide knowledge about. It's what Paul prays for this group of believers and something that each of us could and should be praying about for each other. Paul prays that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will, that they might know it. Oftentimes we skate through life with little fore thought to the will of God. We make decisions every day without

regard to knowing or asking if God has an opinion on the matter.

Now I'm not sure He cares whether the toothpaste you use is Crest or Colgate or if you use white or wheat bread when making a sandwich. If you're playing basketball it may not be an issue to Him whether you should shoot a jump shot or pass the ball or when you go to the grocery store if you should turn left or right out of the driveway. But when it comes to other decisions, He has a will that should determine the course of life. Paul is asking the Lord that they might know His will.

Asking as it is used here means to desire that something be given to another. He wants them to be filled with knowledge of God's will. We sometimes hear people talking about God's will on a matter. They are important life events like is this the person I should marry or where should I go to college or should I take this particular job or should we move. Those can be referred to as God's specific will and the details of those decisions don't appear anywhere in Scripture. The Bible won't tell you to marry Sally or Fred. It won't tell you to move to Vancouver or get a job with Ford. The Bible does, however, give general guidelines by which we might come to know the specific will of God. God's general will is always revealed in the Bible and His specific will is always going to agree with His Word. It will never contradict.

When it comes to marriage the Bible is very clear that we are to marry a Christian. The Bible is very clear that when morality or ethics are at stake we should not align with a company that will knowingly ask us to violate godly character.

What Paul is praying for here for the Colossians is this: to have a knowledge and wisdom about practical godly living. **How many know that godly living is the will of God for you?** When we have such knowledge about how God wants us to live it

will then affect the many choices we make on a daily basis.

Paul notes that he has been praying for them regularly. The word **"prayer"** is the very general sense of the word referring to petitions on behalf of another. In this case it is for the Colossians. Now Paul prays not just that they would know the will of God, he prays that God might **"fill"** them with the knowledge of His will.

The word fill suggests a filling to completeness. The idea is that they be fully equipped to do God's will. The word fill was used in New Testament times to speak of a ship that was ready for a voyage. The sails were mended, the food supplies were stowed away, the cargo was fastened down, the crew was on deck. Everything was ready for wherever they were headed.

The word also meant to be controlled by. **Ephesians 5:18** illustrates this principle. **"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."**

The idea presented is that we should be controlled by the Holy Spirit in everyday life in such a way that His control guides and guards our conduct by living godly. Someone has rightly said that what fills you controls you. If your gas tank is filled with sand or gasoline determines which is in control.

Paul wants their lives to be controlled by the will of God, to live godly lives. He wants them to understand that knowledge of God's will always leads to right conduct. The less we know of God's will or the less we allow it to control us the more likely our actions will be inconsistent with Scripture. The more we discover God's will and allow it to control us the more our actions will align with Scripture. Knowing Scripture leads to knowing God's will. Conducting our lives according to Scripture leads to conducting our lives according to God's will. That will is revealed to us

in Scripture and His Spirit helps us know it and live as we yield to His control.

Here are some things we know to be the will of God

It is God's will that you be saved – **II Peter 3:9;**

**I Timothy 2:4.**

It is God's will that you be filled with the Spirit –

**Ephesians 5:17-19.**

It is God's will that your mind be renewed –

**Romans 12:2.**

It is God's will that you be sanctified –

**I Thessalonians 4:3.**

It is God's will to submit to government –

**I Peter 2:13-15.**

It is God's will when you experience suffering –

**I Peter 4:19.**

It is God's will to give thanks –

**I Thessalonians 5:17.**

As I said earlier, this letter is to refute the false teaching of Gnosticism and to show the supremacy of Christ. Laced throughout this passage are Gnostic terms. Paul uses their own vocabulary against them. They sought to know God through experience and the omission of the material. Paul used their word gnosis (to know) and added to it that the Christian can epignosis or super know the will of God.

He prayed that they would know and understand the will of God, that they would have practical know how from God on how to live a godly life.

James 1:5 instructs us that if we want to know His will, if we desire to have His wisdom we should ask. **"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."**

**Do you lack knowledge of God's will?** Ask, and then be willing to do.

Knowing Scripture leads to knowing God's will. Knowing God's will leads to living a worthy life.

## II. LIVING A WORTHY LIFE – v. 10-12a

Knowledge of God's will leads to a transformed life, not just lip service. We become as James puts it **"doers of the Word and not hearers only."**

To the Ephesians Paul wrote **"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."** (Ephesians 4:1)

To the Thessalonians he wrote **"encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory."** (I Thessalonians 2:12)

**That seems like a reasonable suggestion but how do we live a life that is worthy of the Lord and pleasing to Him?**

He told the Romans how to do this. **"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing, and perfect will."** (Romans 12:1-2)

**How many of you would agree with me that God's will is perfect?**

**How many of you would say the same thing about God's ways, that they're perfect as well?**

**If His will is perfect and something He wants for us here and now and His way is perfect because He Himself is perfect and holy in every respect, then why do we wrestle with obedience when we know they will guide our conduct?**

Obedience to God's will is where rubber and road meet. *A knowledge of Scripture not only guides you in God's will it governs your godly walk.* The word **"live"** in the NIV or **"walk"** in the KJV is the Greek word *parapateo* and it means to order one's behavior or conduct. The word worthy suggests that the copy must be like the pattern.

Would you agree with me that right conduct comes from right thinking? Isn't that what Romans speaks about on how to live a transformed life? If you don't think right, you don't act right. A transformed mind transforms behavior. When your kids were growing up and they did something wrong you may have said "what were you thinking?"

Paul wants the Colossians to live a life that is acceptable to the Lord in every respect. That's what he means in **1:10** when he suggests that we should live in such a way that our conduct pleases the Lord. The word implies that there is a preference in doing what the Lord wants verses what I want. It goes back to what we said earlier about control.

Now there are four things that will result when our conduct pleases the Lord and it follows along with God's will.

### A. We Will Bear Fruit John 15:1-8

The ability of the branch to bear fruit is directly related to how well it abides to the vine. The Lord's desire is that we bear much fruit and we can only do that when we are closely connected to Him by doing His will and living to please Him in our conduct. If we ignore God's will and go our own way we will bear little or no fruit. If our conduct is such that it doesn't please the Lord, then we will bear little or no fruit. The vine doesn't bear the fruit, the branch does. However, the branch cannot bear fruit unless it is attached to the vine which is the life source to the branch where the fruit of the vine is produced. **As one author stated "fruitfulness is the result of the Son's life being reproduced in a disciple."** Our part is to remain, abide, or live in Christ. Abiding in Him is the only way to have a worthy walk. Here is what we see in evidence to a worthy walk.

1. There is purity – **Roman 13:13**
2. There is humility – **Ephesians 4:13**

3. There is contentedness – **I Corinthians 5:7**
4. There is faith – **II Corinthians 5:7**
5. There is good works – **Ephesians 5:2**
6. There is light – **Ephesians 5:8**
7. There is wisdom – **Ephesians 5:15**
8. There is truth – **III John 3-4**

Your pleasing walk will be seen because  
In Christ I am a new creation.  
In Christ I will bear much fruit.

### What kind of fruit can I produce in Christ?

1. Converts – **I Corinthians 16:15; Romans 1:13**
2. Praise – **Hebrews 13:14**
3. Giving tithes and offerings – **Romans 15:26-28**
4. Godly living – **Hebrews 12:11**
5. Holy attributes – **Galatians 2:22-23**

**What produces fruit in the believer?** Having a union with Christ produces fruit. Wisdom also produces fruit.

**James 3:17-18 "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."**

### II Peter 1:5-8

When we walk worthy and please the Lord in our conduct we will bear fruit.

When we walk worthy and please the Lord in our conduct we will grow in the knowledge of God.

### B. We Will Grow in the Knowledge of God

Knowledge of God's Word is crucial for growth. We cannot grow adequately in the Lord without immersing ourselves in the precious Word of God.

Last fall we were privileged to have Jason Woolford, the director of Christian Resources International, share in our mission's conference. He brought with him some packets to mail out to

pastors and other church leaders around the world. In each packet are materials to help them lead their congregations in spiritual growth. Several weeks ago I had lunch with Jason and I discussed with him my desire that we would share in that ministry by mailing out some those packets. They just sit on the warehouse shelf waiting for someone to mail them or for the funds to come in to mail them. So I asked them to drop off some packets. We have 10 packets and when those are all gone and mailed out I'll call and get more. Maybe as a family you will take on mailing some out periodically. Maybe as a Sunday school class or even the youth group you can take on mailing some out.

In the DVD that is available about CRI you may recall that there was one pastor who didn't even have a Bible and each week he would preach from a lesson out of the Daily Bread. If you have extra Bibles lying around, maybe you would consider donating them to CRI to send to pastors or believers who have never had a copy of God's Word. (If you would like, I have several copies of the CRI DVD.)

The teens have for over a year been actively involved in sending funds to Voice of Martyrs so that Bibles can be sent through our Bottles for Bibles drive. VOM reports that they have requests from around the world for 150,000 Bibles that they cannot fill. The need is overwhelming, but they are doing their part to get God's Word into the hands of people who want to know God and grow in God.

I recently read of a man living in another country and has been saved since 1952 but just recently got his very first Bible.

We need to help other people get in the Word of God, to know the will of God and we can have a part in that. We also need to make sure that we take time to grow in God's Word around.

How precious is the Word of God to you? Is it important whether or not you grow spiritually?

Knowing God's Word is a sign of living a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing Him. It's a sign of a healthy Christian life. Some time ago, I went through some of the cards we received from many of you when my Mom passed away. I still have them and they are reminders of your love and prayers. God's Word is a reminder of His love for us. Make time to read it to help you grow in Christ.

When we walk worthy and please the Lord in our conduct we will grow in the knowledge of God. When we walk worthy and please the Lord in our conduct we will be strengthened.

### C. We Will Be Strengthened

The word **“strengthened”** is a present participle and signifies a continuous action so that it implies that when you walk in a way pleasing to the Lord, you are **“strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.”**

What it suggests is that without knowing and doing God's will, without knowing God's Word you will become increasingly overwhelmed by the difficulties of life to the point of exhaustion, discouragement and despair. Instead of enduring you will want to give up. The strength we receive to battle the forces of evil and overcome the life events that would otherwise wear us down spiritually comes from the Lord for the Christian who is abiding in Christ. This word “strengthened” in the Greek comes from the word *kratos* and means perfect strength. It's not our strength, it's God's.

Notice that it is **“according to His glorious might.”** Now that's important. It doesn't say out of His glorious might which means He only gives us a portion from what is available, but rather it says according to His glorious might meaning that all of it is available.



I don't have the power to handle that stuff in my own ability or strength, but I can with His strength so that **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."** (Philippians 4:13)

The word glorious is the manifestation of His attributes. The word **"might"** means strength in action and the word **"power"** refers to something that has limitless availability. That means the strength He gives us will never run out. Even the energizer battery will eventually run out of juice, but not strength from the Lord.

#### **Isaiah 40:28-31**

When faced with temptations, His strength won't run out.

When faced with trials, His strength won't run out.  
When faced with medical concerns, His strength won't run out.

There isn't anything that you will face where His strength isn't available or that you will lack enough to get you through.

**Acts 1:8** says that when we are saved and the Holy Spirit comes upon us at that moment we have power to be His witnesses. The same power is there in us to live a godly life, to be strengthened. Such strength produces endurance and patience. Endurance is the ability to not easily succumb under sufferings and trials.

Patience is self-restraint which does not retaliate hastily.

Has endurance has to do with our reaction related to circumstances while patience has to do with our reaction related to how people treat us.

Fear limits our ability to appropriate the strength that is available from the Lord. **Isaiah 41:10 "Fear not for I am with you, don't be discouraged because I am your God, I will strengthen you..."**

When we walk worthy and please the Lord in our conduct we will be strengthened.

When we walk worthy and please the Lord in our conduct we will joyfully give thanks.

#### **D. We Will Joyfully Give Thanks**

Joy is the flag flown high on the castle of my heart,  
On the castle of my heart,  
On the castle of my heart.  
Joy is the flag flown high on the castle of my heart,  
when the Lord is in residence there.

When the events of life overwhelm us there is not jaw gritting endurance but rather joyful endurance. Scripture is replete with examples of individuals who encounter difficulties in life and yet met them with joy that can come only from the Lord. It is after all, a product of the Spirit living within us.

**Psalms 92:1 "It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High."**

**Ephesians 5:19-20 "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

**Colossians 3:17 "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."**

**Hebrews 13:15 "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess His name."**

**I Thessalonians 5:16, 18 "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."**

A Word filled life will respond to all circumstances with joyful thanks.

Know the will of the Lord – v. 9

Live a worthy life – v. 10-12a

Experience a wonderful love – v. 12b-14

### III. EXPERIENCE A WONDERFUL LOVE – v. 12b-14

These verses give us some pause to help reflect on the celebration of communion. It is a shared experience for all believers in Christ.

There is a shared reward.

There is a shared rescue.

There is a shared redemption.

All of this is possible because of God's great love.

#### A. There Is A Shared Reward – v. 12b

The passage says that the Father has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

My twin brother ran the high hurdles in track. When competing in Invitational, District, Regional or even the State meet he had to qualify in order to move up to the next round. The participant had to meet a certain standard to compete.

The word “**qualify**” means to make fit. Without Christ we are not fit to be in God's presence because of our sin, we are not fit to live in heaven.

Without Christ we are helpless and hopeless and homeless and godless, living in despair and darkness, destitute, ignorant and immoral, greedy and the object of God's wrath. Through faith in Christ God the Father has made us fit for heaven with a reward that is out of this world. We are given an inheritance that will not fade and cannot be taken away. Matthew 19:29 speaks of eternal life as our inheritance. John MacArthur adds that “**Eternal life is more than endless existence. It is a quality of life; Christ's life lived in the believer.**” (Gal. 2:20)

According to **Matthew 5:5** and **Revelation 20:6** eternal life includes the earth where believers will have a future rule with Christ.

**Hebrews 6:12** tells us that we will inherit all the precious promises of God.

There is a shared reward that comes from God.

There is a shared rescue.

#### B. There Is A Shared Rescue – v. 13

This is spiritual liberation. The word “**rescue**” means to draw to oneself. We were bond servants of Satan, bound as captives in his dominion of darkness. God drew us from Satan's kingdom to Himself. The event that took place transferring our citizenship from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light was called the new birth. We don't need to be continually delivered, we have been delivered.

**II Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away, behold all things have become new.”**

Praise the Lord we have been delivered from the power, authority and jurisdiction of Satan to a new power, authority and jurisdiction where God rules. There has been a transfer of kingdoms. This is not just a future kingdom but a spiritual reality now.

What makes us fit for this kingdom? The answer is found in verse 14 and the shared redemption.

#### C. There Is A Shared Redemption – v. 14

Redemption is the work of Christ alone on our behalf and means to deliver by payment of a ransom and was used to speak of freeing a slave from bondage. Now understand that the payment for our rescue was not made to Satan in whose kingdom we have been enslaved, but the ransom was paid to God the Father. The payment Christ paid, according to **Ephesians 1:7** was His blood.

Scripture is very clear to tell us that there is only one way and through one person that we can be ransomed. There are not many ways, there is only

one – it is through the shed blood of Christ. We must all go through Christ if we are to be redeemed, if we are to be rescued, if we are to receive the reward. Because of His redemption we have forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness literally means a sending away.

**Psalm 103:12** “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

**Micah 7:19** says that God hurls our sins into the depths of the sea, never to be seen again. God sent our sins away because Christ redeemed us. Forgiveness is the result of redemption. It is God’s love in action.

Kenneth Wuest writes “It speaks of the act of God at Calvary, paying the penalty of human sin, there satisfying the just demands of His holy law, putting away sin, bidding it go away.”

The Old Testament beautifully pictures this is the sacrifice. The person would bring two goats to the priest. The priest would place his hands on the goats; one goat would be slain as a picture of the sacrifice the Messiah would make for sin, the other goat would be released into the wilderness. That goat pictured the sending away of sin.

### Communion

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery around the year 1820. She was repeatedly beaten as a child and at one point was hit in the head with a two pound weight that was thrown at another slave running away, but instead hit her. She would suffer ongoing seizures until her death in 1913.

At one point in her life her father was freed by a provision written into the will of his owner that when he reached 45 he would be freed. It was more like 55. For \$5 Tubman hired a lawyer to discover the legal status of her mother. They discovered that the same provision had been granted to her as well

including any children born to her would be granted freedom at the same time. Although there was a legal case for her freedom, the owners who had acquired her and her brothers ignored the provision.

She resolved that there were only two things she had a right to - liberty or death. In 1949 she escaped to Pennsylvania and thereafter made a number of other trips to free her family. Their escape was always under the cover of night where she was often exposed to the bitter cold of winter often going without food. Her love for them compelled her to act.

She would become a prominent leader in the Underground Railroad that escorted slaves seeking freedom. She repeatedly risked her life to ensure that others reach freedom.

Christ voluntarily suffered merciless beatings, the cross and death itself when He took on Himself our sin so that by following His path we could experience eternal freedom. He paid the ultimate price that we might have eternal life. It is in Him that **“we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”**

**Romans 3:22-25**