

The Powerful Gospel

1. The Power of Biblical Truth

⁹ 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, (Col. 1:9)

Here Paul says that in prison WE have not ceased. Who is “we”?

It could most likely have been Paul, Onesimus, Epaphras and Timothy.

... Whether they were all prisoners together can be debated but whatever circumstances brought them all together, while together they prayed for the Colossae Christians.

... and they prayed that those Christians would be **“filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and with spiritual understanding.”**

[I’m not paraphrasing from the English translation, that is exactly what the Greek says.]

Let me unpack this phrase.

First of all, let me draw your attention to the word “knowledge.” – ἐπιγινώσκω

This word (or a form of it) is used at least 44 x’s in the NT

If you find this word without the prefix “epi”, just “ginosko” that word means **general knowledge.**

But when you find it with the prefix “epi” as it is here in verse 9 ‘epiginosko’ it means salvific knowledge – **salvific knowledge that is precise, accurate, and clear.**

I hate to go back to the sermons from the Hebrews sermon series but this is exactly what the reformers intended to communicate in the phrase “sola scriptura.”

There are **three ideas about what we can know**, and how we know it.

The first 2 are words you have probably heard but perhaps did not understand.

Modernity (modernism) and Post-Modernity (post-modernism)

Humanism and the Enlightenment Period ushered in the period of history we call **modernity ...** sometimes referred to as the modern era.

17th century up into the 20th century.

The idea is that we look at our world through a clear glass that allows us to see perfectly through and with the right tools, the right sources, the right methods one could know anything perfectly.

- Every school of education and branch of learning was trying to fully understand and explain everything.
- Even in Christianity Calvinism and Arminianism was trying to use logic to explain every facet of scripture and God.

In the 20th century modernism gave way to **post-modernism**.

... And whereas modernism believed we were looking through a glass into the world, post-modernism (in contrast) said we were looking into a mirror.

- The window is really a mirror and all we can see is a reflection of ourselves. Although you might get lucky and unconsciously peer through a crack in the mirror, or catch a glimpse of something behind the mirror ...
- ... everything you saw was really overshadowed by your own reflection.
- And whereas before in the modern era theologians sought to explain everything through the lens of theological systems...
- ... post modernism sought to know and understand through personal experience.

- We saw the rise of self-centered theologies such as Latino theology, black theology, feminist theology, Asian, Native American ...
- We saw the rise of defensive argument like “well you can’t really understand you aren’t a woman, or you can’t understand because you are not a minority ...
- In other words, “all you can see is your reflection” so don’t even start to comment or legislate on how I live my life
- You have your mirror and your truth; I have my mirror and my truth.

Modernism believed it could explain everything down to the last detail, **Post-Modernism** believed that everybody’s truth was different.

But there is a 3rd idea and that is exactly what Paul is speaking about.

The Word of God responds to both of these things telling us there is a window, and it does have a tint that keeps us from seeing everything ...

... yes, we do at times see our reflection, but the Word of God insists that we can see.

Paul explains it this way to the Corinthian church:

12 For now we see in a glass dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. (1 Cor. 13:12)

Modernism was arrogant in its claim to know everything.

Postmodernism exalted ambiguity, and not knowing, to the level of religion.

The Word of God says that although we are finite and fallible God’s Word is not and we can know what God is saying

... we can know God as he has been revealed in Jesus Christ.

We don't fully understand everything about the Word of God, and we can't fully understand every passage ...

... but we can read the text, interact with the scripture and as the Holy Spirit guides us into truth, we can know it with certainty.

... we don't have to understand everything in order to fully believe and trust everything we understand.

We can know that humanity is born in sin

- ... that the wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life
- ... Jesus died to pay our sin debt and reconcile us to the Father
- ... We know a good deal about salvation, the Trinity, Heaven ... **and a lot of other things.**

Not being able to fully understand what the Prophet Ezekiel is talking about when he sees “the wheel inside of the wheel, inside of the wheel” does not keep us from understanding and believing “For God so loved the World”

... yes, we do see through a glass dimly right now ... but **because of our faith in Jesus Christ** it won't always be that way.

... AND JUST BECAUSE our understanding is finite, that doesn't mean the power of the gospel IN US is finite.

Look what Paul is praying for and believing in.

...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (Col. 1:9)

Paul is praying that they will have this knowledge of God's will in “all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

Paul uses this phrase “spiritual wisdom and understanding” because he wants them to know that this is not JUST THE FACTS.

This is knowledge of God's will be coupled with the spiritual ability to understand and apply what is understood.

The power of Biblical truth is that it gives us the power of a Godly life.

2. The Power of a Godly Life.

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 (Col. 1:10)

Pay close attention to the underlined phrase.

The wording looks similar to verse 6 where Paul said that in the Colossian the gospel was bearing fruit and increasing ...

However, here Paul's subject is not the gospel but rather THOSE HOW BELIEVE THE GOSPEL!

Paul says that he wants these believers to be filled with the knowledge of God so that they will **walk worthy of the Lord and please the Lord in all respects.**

... and what does this "worthy pleasing walking" look like?

Paul gives us two clear identifiers.

- Bearing fruit in every good work
- Increasing in the knowledge of God

What does Paul mean when he says that we are to **bear fruit** in every good work?

He is saying that our life for God, all of our good works, must bear fruit. **What is fruit?**

Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatian church.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (Gal. 5:22-26)

If what you are doing for God, if the life you are living is filled with fleshly passions and desires ...

... if you are boastful or argumentative or jealous ...

Then no matter how much good you do ... it isn't really good at all.

In order to walk, live and work in way that is worthy and pleasing to the Lord, then you must do it with a good attitude.

Listen to those words: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ...

Why wouldn't you want to live that way?

Some people are so addicted to stress, they have got to argue, fuss and debate about everything ... no wonder they are miserable!

But worse than that—IT IS NOT PLEASING TO GOD!

The real test of our life is not what we are doing, but the spirit with which we are doing it.

When we first come to the Lord in faith, we all start our Christian lives as spiritual babies.

... but as we grow in Christ this fruit also begins to grow in us and increase...

... and the way we insure that happens is by the 2nd thing Paul mentions:

... by Increasing in the knowledge of God.

“But Nathan, I’m a baby Christian, I hardly have no fruit, how can I walk worthy and be pleasing the Lord, like Brother “So-in-so” who has been saved 20 years?”

Good question, and I believe this makes the point of Paul’s prayer and hope for the Colossae Christians.

A baby Christian, who lacks the capacity yet to bear much fruit, but is increasing in the knowledge of God, is just as worthy and pleasing as the mature Christian who is bearing fruit in every good work.

The power of the gospel is that it gives us even the youngest Christian, the power to live a Godly life at any stage of spiritual development.

In fact, that is exactly what Paul writes next.

“I strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; (Col. 1:11)

Paul is not just praying that they will bearing fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God ...

He is also praying that God’s glorious might will strengthen them to the point they will have steadfastness and patience.

People who have patience are steadfast ... people who are impatient tend to be as unstable.

Impatient people will determine to start praying faithfully over an issue, but if God doesn’t resolve that issue soon, the plan to pray faithfully quickly goes out the window.

... Those that wait upon the Lord will RENEW their strength.

... Those who DO NOT wait upon the Lord will LOSE their strength.

The power of a godly life is not in you it is in HIM

You don’t have the power ... God does!

When you fail the Lord or feel weak in your Christian life, ... or become impatient you need to remember that the strength you need doesn't come from within you ...

... We need to be strengthened with all power ACCORDING to HIS glorious might.

The power of Biblical truth gives us the power of a Godly life and this is the glory of being HIS.

3. The Glory of Being HIS

¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:12-14)

Notice the two words, **rescued** and **transferred**.

The first word tells us we have been **delivered out of something** and the second word tells us we have been **brought into something else**.

Every child of God has been **rescued** from the tyrannical power and oppression of sin and Satan.

... before I came to Christ, I rejected God, I opposed God, I refused His authority over my life.

Oh, I thought I was free but the more I lived in that "domain of darkness" the more I became aware that I was nothing more than an expendable slave.

But God brought me out! ... and then God took me in!

In a moment I was transferred into God's glorious kingdom of light.

I love that word "transferred." It's the same word James uses that word when he says to let your

Secondly, we have been **transferred**. This word means a DRAMATIC change.

It is a change of status, nature, life, loyalty, identity and citizenship!

- We have been redeemed

- We are forgiven, not just of our sin, but of our individual sins

... and look at what Paul says is the ultimate outcome of God rescuing us out of darkness and bringing us into His kingdom.

it qualifies us to share in the inheritance of the saints

How is this possible?

- How does God make the spiritually dead spiritually alive?
- How can God make someone as unholy as you and I, as holy as Himself?
- How is it that a beggar such as I now share in the inheritance of the saints?

I don't fully **understand** it and I can't fully explain it ...

BUT BECAUSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN ME, I FULLY BELIEVE IT!

THAT IS THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL!