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...who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. Colossians 1:8

This is referring to Epaphras of the previous verse. He had come to Paul with word concerning those at Colossae. When he came, he had “declared to us your love.” The word “declared” gives the sense of “made manifest.” He had brought the love of the body to light for Paul and Timothy to understand the wonderful fellowship which had developed there. This love is, as Paul notes, “in the Spirit.”

The love among them was more than a sense of general, natural affection, but rather it was a love deeply rooted in what Christ had done for them, bringing them into the family of God and the body of believers. The Spirit had confirmed this to them, and this is the good news that was brought to the ears of Paul and Timothy. Certainly it was a point of great rejoicing to them.

Life application: It is not unusual for us to get a bit jaded in the church as we show up and are just one of many faces in the congregation. However, each person there who has called on Christ is a child of God through adoption. If we can remember this as we interact with our brothers and sisters, it would be a great help in putting aside petty differences and thus working together for the common good within the church.

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; Colossians 1:9

This takes us right back to verses 3-8. Paul had said in verse 3, “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.” After that, he gave his reasons for this thanks. Now, using that same list, he says, “For this reason we also...” The same thing that brought thanks to the hearts of Paul and Timothy is the thing which now brings something else along with it.

Before he tells what it is that he is referring to, he says, “since the day we heard it.” As soon as the news came to their ears, and even until the present moment, this has held

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true. And that thing is that they “do not cease to pray for you.” They weren’t just thankful for the good news that they heard, but they began to pray for those who they were thankful for. Although this isn’t necessary in all situations, Paul next explains what the prayers are for. He says it is “to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

These words set up the train of thought for the rest of his epistle. The question must be, “How can someone be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding without being properly instructed in it?” Paul’s words ahead will help lead them on this path. They may have had a copy of the Old Testament writings available to them if there were Jews among them who had converted to Christ, but they probably had no instruction on the doctrines of Christ outside of their instruction from Epaphras.

Now they would need that instruction, lest they fall into the heresies which were already coming into being at the time. To have “the knowledge of His will” means that of His will for us in Christ. This is certain, because Christ is God’s will for all humanity. To have a faulty view of Christ would then lead to a faulty view of God’s will.

This knowledge is to be “in all wisdom.” The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. To have that, and then to grow in that fear of the Lord is the proper path. The book of Ecclesiastes shows the contrast between earthly wisdom and that which is heavenly. The prayers of Paul and Timothy were for those in Colossae to have this heavenly wisdom.

But their prayers were not only for wisdom, but also “spiritual understanding.” This is the ability to “put things together.” Not only should the Christian have wisdom, but also the ability to take that wisdom and to be discerning in it. Though the word “Trinity” is not in the Bible, Christians should be able to discern that is is a truth which is clearly presented there, and which can be logically deduced from various passages. The same is true with other major doctrines as well. Spiritual understanding is also speaking of that which is not correct. That Jesus Christ is God is plainly evident from even a cursory reading of the Bible. Therefore, to say that He is a created being is false. Spiritual understanding will reveal this.

Life application: It is good to give thanks for the salvation of others, but it should also be our heart’s desire that they grow in wisdom and knowledge concerning God and His word. Therefore, in addition to the thanks we give for the salvation of others, let us remember to pray for their development into mature followers of the Lord.

that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; Colossians 1:10

This is a continuation of the previous verse in which Paul explains why he and Timothy were giving thanks to God and praying for those at Colossae. He says that their prayers were also “that you may walk worthy of the Lord.” He had just mentioned the desire that they “be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” This then logically follows that. With knowledge, one needs to then apply what they know, living out the life that their knowledge has told them is appropriate. In this, their walk will be worthy of the Lord.

In this state, their conduct will be “fully pleasing” to Him. The word Paul uses here is found only this once in the New Testament. It is *areskia*, and it indicates making an effort to fully and satisfactorily please. He is making a logical sequence of events in the believers’ lives that demonstrates the process of growing unto maturity. In such a state, the believer will be “fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

This thought goes backward now in order to reexplain what is “fully pleasing” to the Lord. Being fruitful indicates the positive results of a walk worthy of the Lord which is seen in every good work. Increasing in the knowledge of God is what leads to that state of fruitfulness. His thoughts form a mini chiasm as they first move forward to “fully pleasing *Him*,” and then moving backwards after that thought.

Paul’s desire for this to occur in the Colossians was so strong that he purposefully repeats the thought in order to solidify it in their (and thus our!) minds. Albert Barnes’ commentary on this verse is well worth citing –

“God is pleased with those who desire to understand what he is; what he does; what he purposes; what he commands. Hence he not only commands us to study his works..., but he has made a world so beautiful as to invite us to contemplate his perfections as reflected in that world. All good beings desire that others should understand their character, and God delights in those who are sincerely desirous of knowing what he is, and who inquire with humility and reverence into his counsels and his will. People are often displeased when others attempt to look into their plans, for they are sensible they will not bear the light of investigation. God has no plans which would not be seen to be, in the highest degree, glorious to him.”

Life application: If you are not growing in the knowledge of God through Bible studies, you cannot be pleasing to Him. Only when one takes the knowledge of God and His

expectations, and then unites it with a walk in accord with that knowledge, can he be truly pleasing to Him. As always, it comes down to knowing the word. Study your Bible.

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