

Knowledge of His Will

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Colossians 1, the first 14 verses of Colossians 1. And of the love you have for all the saints, the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven, and that you've already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you.

All over the world, this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

We pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

[1:54] For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Well, we are at the beginning of Colossians, and the Holy Spirit is teaching us how to pray. And we need all the help that we can get, don't we? The Spirit shows us through Paul's example what we should long for, what we should pray for, what we should set our hopes on.

And he says, you need to pray like this. You need to pray like this. Colossians 1.9, For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

So this is what we should be praying for. This is one thing that we can pray for, that God would fill us, that God would fill others, with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual understanding, through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And so tonight we're going to just look at the knowledge of God's will. What exactly is Paul asking for? What does he want to happen?

[3:15] And so we're going to be looking at this knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding under two points. Very simple. What this knowledge of his will is not, what it's not, and then what it is.

So what it's not and what it is. So first, what it's not. What aren't we asking for? Well, we aren't asking. Paul isn't praying for, and he isn't teaching us to pray for a number of things.

Paul's not praying that the Colossians, that God would show the Colossians who to marry, what job to take, what major to study, what college to go to, what house to buy, what kind of schooling to give your children, and 10,000 other questions like those.

The kinds of questions that we often sit and ponder and wonder, what is God's will? Is it God's will for me to buy this house? To marry this person?

What job should I take? And that's how too many Christians think about God's will. Well, just relating it to questions like this, where there's no direct evidence, no direct word from God to me about what person I should marry, what house I should buy.

[4:37] But that's how too many Christians think about God's will. And it's very understandable why they do so, because it's something very close. It's very something that I can relate to.

It's of an immediate importance. So here I am, single. And this is how too many Christians think about this. Here I am, single. And God has this one person in mind for me.

And it's my job to find that person, to not settle for anyone other than that person. If I can find that person, then if I can figure out what God wants for me, if I can figure out God's perfect will for me in this area, then that's where the blessing will be.

That's where God's best will be for me, if I can find that one person. But if I don't find that person, if I'm not spiritual enough, if I don't read the signs right, if I make these decisions poorly, then I won't be in God's perfect will.

I'll be somewhere else. I'll be outside of his will. I'll be outside of where God could really bless me and do me good. And that's how so many Christians think about God's perfect will.

[5 : 52] Life is a big puzzle. And they have to read the signs and follow the hunches. And if they don't do it just right, then God won't bless them. They'll be outside of his so-called perfect will.

Now, I want to say that Paul is not talking about that. He's not talking like that. He's not talking about this here. And he's not talking about that at all, simply for the very good reason that the Bible never talks about God's will in that way.

And never, in any place, talks about God's will as something that we need to figure out. That if we could look hard enough and think hard enough, that we could figure it out.

The person we are to marry, the car we are to buy, the house we are to buy, etc. As if there is some sweet spot. Some sweet spot in life where God would really bless us.

Where everything else would be second best. And you'll never, ever find the Bible talking about God's will like that. That whole idea, that whole notion is unbiblical.

[6 : 57] It's unscriptural. It's unchristian. And I would even go so far as to say it's un-gospel. It's anti-gospel. For this very simple reason, the sweet spot where God blesses is not a spouse, and it is not a house.

It is Jesus Christ. Christ is the sweet spot. Everything is ours in Christ. Every promise is yes and amen in Christ.

He's given us every spiritual blessing in Christ. So when God connects us and unites us to Jesus, He brings us into that sweet spot of His blessing.

And to say anything less, to say anything else, is to base our relationship and God's blessing on our lives, on our works, and not on grace.

So if God's blessing, so if I'm married to this person, and God just can't use this person to do me good, because I picked the wrong one. God really wished I would have picked this one, but I didn't.

[8 : 09] So now God's will is frustrated in my life. If that's the way it is, then somehow it's, my blessing is somehow based on me divining His will through feelings and leadings and hunches and hoping that I get it right, because like I said, those questions are not addressed in the Word of God, and so it's going to be left up to me to try to figure out.

And so if I do a good job at that, and I take the right steps, then I'll have the blessing. If I'm attuned to God, then I'll be right where God wants me to be. You see, that works. It's not based on Christ. It's based on my efforts, my performance, my thinking.

And it's no wonder people who think like this, you'll see one of two things going on in their lives, and maybe both of them at different times. You'll see, one, they'll be wondering whether they've done a good job.

They'll be, they'll have no assurance, no confidence that what they're doing is the right thing. They'll always be scratching their head. They'll always have a shade of doubt in their heart.

Maybe there is someone else out there. Maybe I really shouldn't have done this. Maybe I didn't do this right. So they'll be there forever questioning. Or on the other side, they're forever cocky, forever arrogant, forever unquestionable, can't be corrected.

[9 : 35] So they either have no assurance or they can't be questioned. They're above correction.

And that's how works, a works relationship with God always ends up. You're either always forever doubting or you're always forever unteachable.

And so Paul isn't talking about that. He's not talking about that because the Bible does not talk about God's will in that way. Paul isn't talking about some sort of high, mysterious, super knowledge of God that only the most spiritual Christians can have.

So he's not praying that the Colossians would be taken to the next level of understanding that only the most spiritual Christians can understand or relate to.

So it's not for you, truck driver. It's not for you, stay-at-home mom. It's not for you, factory worker. It's not for you, accountant. Maybe it's for the really spiritual workers, but it's not for me.

Well, Paul's not talking about that. This whole letter is written against this idea that somehow or other there's something more than Christ.

[10 : 51] There's some higher way of living. There's some secret knowledge. There's some secret way of breaking in. There's something better that you can have than you've already experienced. You can see visions. He talks about that, talking with angels, seeing things.

This letter totally undercuts all of that and says, if you have Christ, then you have exactly what you need. And so I'll put it bluntly, this knowledge of God's will that Paul prays for is for you. It's something for you to pray for. It's something for you to long for in your own life, in your children's lives, in young Christians' lives.

It's for ordinary Christians. And if we're to take the example of the Colossians, it's for young Christians who are just starting out in their Christian life.

It's especially for them. Well, what else? It's not mere doctrinal knowledge. It's not mere doctrinal knowledge.

[11 : 56] It's not mere just knowing the facts and the propositions and the theology of the Word of God. It's not more than that, or it's not only that.

And we who love the doctrines of the Bible, we who love doctrinal truth, teaching, maybe we've come out of shallow churches.

Well, we have a tendency, and this is the danger that we would have, is to think that knowing doctrine is the same thing as being filled with the knowledge of God's will.

Now, Paul is praying for something more than that. He's not praying for something less than that. That is part of it. I mean, I could preach a sermon based on this text on how important it is for us to understand our Bibles, to understand the truth.

It's not something less than that, but it is something more than that. So, it comes from a different place than just reading and understanding the facts of the Scriptures, being filled with the knowledge of God's will is not mere scholarship.

[13 : 17] If it would be, then it would just be human. And Paul wouldn't be praying to God to do this for them. He would just say, here you go. Learn this.

We wouldn't need to pray about it. We could just read our Bibles, we could go to the right schools, we could think really hard for ourselves, and we could do all these things. Now, we do need to do those things, but there is something more that needs done.

Now, some Christians don't think doctrinal knowledge is important at all. Doctrine divides. Doctrine is the problem. They don't think it's important at all, and that's a danger, but that's not the ditch that we are going to fall into, I hope.

The ditch we're closer to falling into is thinking that doctrinal precision and doctrinal accuracy. Bible knowledge is the same thing as godliness, as being filled with the knowledge of God's will.

So, we aren't praying for finding God's perfect will. We're not praying for something that only a few super-Christians can have, and we're not praying for mere doctrinal knowledge.

[14 : 32] So, what are we praying for? That's what we're saying. That's the first point. What it's not, now let's talk about what it is. What are we praying for?

How does God, how does the Bible teach us to think about knowing God's will for our lives? Does God, does the Bible teach us to think about God's will as something secret and out there and something we have to find out for ourselves by reading the signs, getting those feelings in our hearts, having those butterflies, in our tummy?

How do we, how does the Bible teach us to think about knowing God's will, being filled with God's will, filled with the knowledge of God's will? Well, in the Bible, knowledge is for obedience.

Knowing God's will is for obedience. It's about obeying God's revealed will. It's knowledge for holiness. And that's why we can't say that mere doctrinal precision and accuracy is the same thing as godliness.

Many people know a lot about the Bible. We know a lot about the Bible that we don't live up to. Merely knowing is not doing. Merely knowing is not loving God. So knowledge is for obedience.

[15 : 47] And that's how knowing the will of God is described in the Bible. And so I want to take you to a few passages to show you that it's not some complicated thing. And I think that's one of the problems.

We want it to be complicated. We want it to be secret. We want it to somehow be romantic and we can't know it. But we're not satisfied with just here it is. And the Bible says here it is.

This is God's will for you. So first turn over to Ephesians chapter 5. A couple pages back.

Ephesians chapter 5 in verse 15. Ephesians 5 15.

Be very careful then how you live. Not as unwise but as wise. Making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is. There it is. It's right there on the surface. Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery.

[16 : 50] Instead be filled with the Spirit. 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!

All of those things this is God's will for you. So you're asking what does God want from me? This is what God wants from you.

Well you say I just want to know what God's will is for my life. So the answer is don't get drunk. Be filled with the Spirit. Give thanks. Sing. Make music. Wives love your husbands.

Husbands! Love your wives. Wives submit to your husbands. And you say well that's not what I'm talking about. I want to know what God wants from me.

This is what God wants from you. And he'll take care of the rest. Deuteronomy 29 29 the secret things belong to the Lord our God but the things revealed belong to us and to our children that we may follow all the words of this law.

[18 : 20] what's God's will? Turn over to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 3 1 Thessalonians 4 3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified that you should avoid sexual immorality that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable not in passionate lust like the heathen who do not know God.

What is God's will for you? He wants you to be holy. God did not verse 7 for God did not call us to be impure but to live a holy life.

What does God want from you? To live a holy life not in passionate lust like the heathen who do not know God. Or look down at chapter 5 verse 16 5 16 1 Thessalonians Be joyful always pray continually give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

What is God's will for sad complaining Christians? He wants them to give thanks. To stop complaining give thanks to be joyful to pray you see in the Bible God's will is not something that we have to figure out God's will is for us to do knowing is for doing knowing is for doing so what Paul is praying for is that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in order that they might obey him sometimes the Bible says sometimes the Bible does talk about well I don't know if it is God's will I don't know if it's God's will for me to go here or there Paul could say if it's God's will I will visit you so it's something he doesn't know but nor is it something that he is going to try to figure out if it happens it happens there is a will of

God that directs all of our paths all of our life's turnings our decisions who we marry where we study what jobs we take but the Bible never talks about us finding that out until after it's happened figuring it out so we're not figuring out or doing it or not doing it it will happen because God brings!

[21 : 08] Paul's prayer is knowledge for obedience how important is obedience to your life how important is obeying God's law to your life Paul thinks it's very important that's why he's praying for these Colossians I want them to know your will I want them to know your will because he wants them to obey well what else can we say back in Colossians Colossians 1 9 it's he's asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding it comes through the spirit it's spiritual wisdom and understanding now Paul doesn't use the word spiritual like we often do he does not degenerate that word spiritual to what we so often bring it down to he doesn't take it to mean some quasi spiritual world where anyone interested in some sort of religion or other is called spiritual the idea is not that we got spiritual people over here and secular people over here he's not talking about just a vague!

generic spirituality no this is spiritual wisdom and I would put the spiritual with a capital S it has to do with the realm of the spirit the ministry of the spirit it comes from the spirit's work in our lives now in first Corinthians 2 I'm just trying to show you that when Paul is talking about spiritual things most of the time he is talking about things that have to do with the Holy Spirit so the spiritual wisdom and understanding it's it's not an impersonal thing it comes directly from the Holy Spirit it comes through his ministry 1 Corinthians 2 Paul says the man without the spirit does not accept the things that come from the spirit of God so here we have this man he's without the spirit he does not accept the things that come from the spirit for their foolishness to him and he can't understand them he has no wisdom he has no understanding because they are spiritually discerned the spiritual man makes

judgment about all things what is it to be spiritually discerning it's to have the spirit the man without the spirit has no spiritual discernment the man with the spirit has spiritual discernment and understanding and so when he hears things from

God they're not foolishness to him he doesn't say I don't understand that that doesn't make sense he receives them and he makes judgment about all things he orders things up and he puts them in line and he clarifies and he understands what the world is about he understands himself he understands what Jesus Christ has to do with it why because he has the spirit he's spiritually discerning so this knowledge that Paul is praying for this to be filled with the!

of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding it's spirit given insight it's spirit given understanding it's worked in our hearts and our minds at the deepest levels of who we are we talked about how God in the new covenant says I will write my law in their hearts how does he do that he does it by the spirit he gets down to the very tablet of our heart and he engraves that law he shapes our hearts so that now we want to obey and so now the law is not something that merely comes from the outside the law is written it's engraved it's formed it's in our hearts and so we want to obey it and that's why this is not just mere doctrinal knowledge it's experiential it's not superficial it's experiential it's worked in us by the!

it's something more than an idea that's knowing it's something more than just an idea and ideas of God rattling around in our minds and you know how it is how many times have you read something and where you read over it and read over it and read over it and it didn't do anything the truth fell flat it lacked power it lacked hands and feet it didn't lead to any ways it didn't lead to weeping but then something happened usually you were put into a set of circumstances that now made that word very pertinent and relevant to you you're put in these circumstances through some sin through some trial and the spirit came and he brought that truth to you in a whole new way and you're changed so you burn bridges you build other bridges life is different and there's no going back and life snaps into focus in a way that it never did before and so now you know you understand what [26:29] God's will is it's not only there in your head it's there in your heart and you want to obey it there's a weight to it that's what it means to be filled with the knowledge of God's will it's to be deeply altered by the spirit of God so that you obey and you live differently this is not superficial religion this is heart rending this is heart raising heart lifting this is God the spirit teaching us who God is and what that means for us who Jesus Christ is and what difference that makes in my life one of the most one of my favorite quotes is from Martin Luther and I think it's so telling and so true and so it makes so much sense of my life he said this I did not learn my theology all at once but I had to search deeper for it where my temptations took me not understanding reading or speculation but living nay dying and being damned make a theologian what a strange thing to say dying and being damned well what does he mean by that he means knowing

God and knowing what God wants and understanding that at the deepest levels where it changes us and works in us that only comes through trials and temptations and pain and finding ourselves inadequate and finding God's law beautiful and finding ourselves guilty and finding Jesus perfect for us and then it's going through those things but the spirit is there teaching us and the spirit is there instructing us that's the power of trials and that's why so when you pray for someone you pray for yourself you pray for someone else God make them holy that God speculating and me thinking and understanding it came from me dying and finding myself damned finding myself guilty and condemned well comes from living and from dying and struggling with the

Holy Spirit right there teaching us that's what Paul is praying for not some superficial knowledge some but a deep knowledge of God's will produced by the spirit and finally this knowledge of God's will centers on Jesus Christ centers on Jesus Christ and isn't that what Paul says later he's the mystery of God in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge we can't disconnect these two ideas in Paul's thinking when he's talking about the knowledge of God's will knowledge and wisdom and understanding later on he talks about how Jesus is the way that we come to understand all of that knowing God's will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding is knowing and understanding how Jesus Christ and the gospel intersect and speak into my life how the weight of the gospel bears me down and lifts me up how the weight of the gospel pushes me and changes me and how it teaches me what

God wants from me that's why so often in Paul so so often in Paul he gives an indicative he says this is what Jesus has done this is who he is therefore do this he's bringing who Jesus is into to bear its weight on our lives and then to move us to obey so the spiritual wisdom and knowledge and

understanding and knowledge of God's will that Paul is talking about it has to do with Jesus Christ it's understanding what the incarnation the death the resurrection the ongoing ascension and reign of Jesus Christ have to do with my present circumstances it's seeing me it's seeing my family seeing my church seeing my neighbors seeing my friends through the lens of the gospel and understanding what then should I do it's seeing

Christ in everything so it's moms it's seeing your children in light of the gospel seeing your children through the gospel so what does the gospel say about them what is the gospel of Jesus Christ how does that meet me in my parenting well being able to answer those questions being able to answer what does the incarnation have to do with who my children are what does the death of Jesus Christ say about my children what does the resurrection ascension how does that change my parenting that's what it means to have spiritual wisdom and understanding so when I'm filled with the knowledge of God's will I'm seeing my children as so sinful so lost that their only hope is the life and death of

[32 : 35] Jesus Christ the Son of God I'm seeing that their great hope is the grace of God not me and not my plans my children don't need a neat smart nice program they don't just need me to give them all the right input and I think that's how many too many Christians think that if I just put the right input I will get something out of it but the gospel says they need something more than what we can provide them they need something more they need something more than me being the best parent I can be me doing everything right they need Jesus and they need grace that is as thick and as red as blood so children you have many wonderful privileges but the gospel says you are so sinful that no matter how good your parents are no matter how much you go to church and you know the right things your sin is so bad that your only hope is that

God would become man and then the God man would die would be tortured would be nailed to the cross that's what your sins deserve and that is your only hope well your sin is so bad but God is so good because that's exactly what he gave you he gave you the savior that you needed Jesus came and he lived and he died on the cross not because you needed a little help the gospel is not just cough syrup it's radical death and resurrection kind of treatment but Jesus loves sinners so Jesus is your only chance and God raised him from the dead so that every little child their parents could point their children to a risen savior who can help them who could save them who could rescue them who could help them live a life of godliness so what is God's will for you if you're a child if you're lost what is

God's will for you it's this it's believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved the gospel is good news but it is also a command it is a command it is the will of God for sinners it's the will of God for sinners and so God commands sinners everywhere God commands all sinners everywhere to repent he commands you to repent and to turn away from your sin and hatred and disgust and saying I don't want to go back that is my enemy it's taking God's side against your sin even when it means I'm the guilty one even when it means I'm going to heap condemnation on myself then so be it because that's what I am that's repentance command you to repent and to turn from your sin and flee into the open arms of Jesus Christ God just doesn't plead with you he doesn't just plead with you he just doesn't ask you he doesn't urgently ask you he does those things but he does something more he commands you to come and if you don't obey him right this minute you are disobeying him the gospel isn't just a nice possibility it is the will of

God for sinners so Mrs. Barr's class you memorized it now God commands all sinners everywhere to repent what is God's will for you it is to believe on Jesus Christ it's to embrace him and it's my prayer that you would be filled with the knowledge of God's will for you that the spirit would come and work powerfully in your life so that you would do that exact thing so as we end what have we learned we've learned what we need to pray for what we've learned to pray for ourselves to be filled with the knowledge of God's will we've learned what we should pray for others that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding and we've seen what it is it's spirit given insight it's spirit given understanding into how the gospel of Jesus Christ how the person of Jesus Christ relates to my life in order that I can obey it so I can live it out and this is something

God must do and so this is something that we must pray for so brothers and sisters we saw last week that we should keep praying for others that we should keep praying for them and here is what you can keep praying for others that God would fill them with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding if we pray for that God will answer that prayer and we'll be

blessed and everyone that we pray it for will be blessed as well let's pray heavenly father we know what you want from us you've clearly told us what your will is you want us to pray and you've taught us how to pray but we have a busy week coming up and prayer is hard for us and we get easily distracted and we get swept away with all the wrong sorts of things and we have the devil whispering in our ears that prayer makes no difference so

[38 : 28] I pray that you would lead us not into temptation this week but deliver us from the evil one and I pray that you would help us to pray that you give us understanding of your will and then a heart that wants to run to it and obey it and I pray for our young people especially but I pray for all who heard the gospel here tonight I pray that the gospel would come as a command to their own hearts and God you said to nothing let there be light and there was light and so you can speak into the death of their lives and the death of their souls and so I pray that you would bring your gospel to them as a command and make them stand up and stand alive and let light come where darkness is pray this for Jesus sake for his glory and it's in his name amen well let's sing 319 as we close 319