

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Being Filled with the Knowledge of God's Will

Scripture: Colossians 1:9

Code: 2132

I think you'll notice that Paul is talking about prayer in this passage. Look at verse 9: "For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you."

Each of us has a wonderful ability to minister to each other without ever seeing to each other or speaking to each other. We can secure for others the blessing of God without any contact physically ... through prayer. Prayer is one of the most important ministries that we have toward one another.

In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul writes at the close of chapter 6 and verse 18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching there unto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Paul says pray for all saints.

In I Timothy chapter 2, verse 1: "I exhort therefore that first of all, supplications and prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men."

At the end of Hebrews, the writer says in chapter 13, verse 18: "Pray for us for we trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly, but I beseech you rather to do this." And the writer says pray for us.

A high priority for the Christian to pray for one another. God's faithful leaders particularly have always fulfilled this ministry. And we are priests interceding for each other and I was just running in my mind, back into the Old Testament, and trying to list for my own self the ministry of prayer as you see it existing in the Old Testament and there is just a dominance of this particular theme of praying for one another.

In Genesis chapter 20, for example, and I could show you dozens of illustrations, but I'll only point out a couple, Genesis chapter 20, verse 17: "So, Abraham prayed unto God and God healed Abimelech." Here you have Abraham praying for somebody and God responding. He healed Abimelech, his wife, his maidservants and they bore children, for the Lord had completely closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech. And so, God heard and answered Abraham's prayer.

Over in II Samuel chapter 24, verse 17: "And David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who smote the people and said, Lo, I have sinned and I have done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand, I pray Thee, be against me and against my father's house." And he prays for the deliverance of the people of Jerusalem. And the end over verse 25 says: "So the Lord was

entreated for the land and the plague was averted from Israel." David prayed and God heard and God answered his prayer.

In I Chronicles chapter 29, verse 18: "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination and thoughts of the hearts of Thy people and prepare their heart unto Thee, and give unto Solomon, my son, a perfect heart to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, Thy statutes to do all these things and to build a palace for the which I have made provision." David prayed for his son and as you know, his son was in one part of his life the fulfillment of that prayer and in the other because of his own choice, failed. But David prayed for Solomon.

Boaz prayed for Ruth. Daniel prayed for Israel. Ezekiel prayed for Israel. Isaiah prayed for the people of God. David prayed for Israel and the righteous in the land and for his son as we saw. Eli prayed for Hannah. Ezekiel, Ezra, so many praying for the people of God. Hezekiah praying for Judah. Job prayed for his friends. Moses prayed for Aaron and Miriam. Nehemiah prayed for Judah. Samuel prayed for Israel. Jesus prayed for Peter and the other disciples and those who killed Him even. Paul prayed for Christians. Philemon prayed for Paul. Epaphras prayed for the Colossians. The Christians in Jerusalem prayed for Peter when he was in jail.

And so it goes. So it's always been and so it always will be in the people of God. They will pray for one another.

And particularly, I think, we see in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the pattern of godly leaders praying for one another. The Apostle Paul in Galatians chapter 4 verse 19 said: "My little children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." Paul, in his life, agonized over the maturity of the Galatian Christians. He was saying I know you've been redeemed, but I'm agonizing, I have birth pangs until you be Christlike. Prayer is vital in the perfecting of the saints, to bring the Christians to maturity demands prayer.

In Acts chapter 6, for example, and verse 4, we find the same indication. You remember that the early church Apostles were being encumbered by certain physical duties that were taking away time from the study of the Word of God so in Acts 6:4, it says, in verse 3, it says: "You choose out men to handle this," verse 4, "and we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word." And here you have really a look at the two salient aspects of apostolic ministry: prayer and the ministry of the Word. Very important, praying and preaching.

If you go to Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 11 you'll find that the Apostles and prophets and evangelists and teaching pastors are given to the church for the perfecting of the saints...for the perfecting of the saints. I am given to this church for the perfecting, or the maturing of the saints, the growing up of the saints. Now, how is that going to be accomplished? What are the means by which the saints indeed will be perfected? First of all, the Bible is very clear about the first means, it simply

says: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, for reproof that the man of God may be perfect," II Timothy 3:16 and 17. So, the Word of God is given for perfection.

But, there is a second and that's in Colossians, right where you are, chapter 4 verse 12: "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." And there you see the same two items that you saw in Acts 6. The Apostle said we will give ourselves to the Word and prayer on your behalf. And in perfecting the saints it is prayer and the Word.

And so, you find that as the letter to the Colossians begins, before Paul begins to teach he prays for them and reminds them of that very prayer. And, you know, this is a prayer of Paul. He prays for them and desires that they might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that they might walk worthy of the Lord ... unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing by the knowledge of God that they might be strengthened with all might according to His glorious power to patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. Now, that's the content of his prayer. That's the first part of it. That's the petition part.

The second part of his prayer is in verses 12 to 14, we'll look at that at a later time, and that's the ... that's the response, that's the praise part of his prayer. First he petitions and then he praises, giving thanks, verse 12 says, unto the Father. And off he goes into the praise. But for tonight we'll look just at the petition part of and see what Paul is asking for. He has heard from Epaphras, who was the minister at Colossae, Epaphras has come to Rome where Paul is a prisoner. He has given him a wonderful report of the Colossian Christians. And even though he has told about an imminent danger from heresy, still the believers are progressing well. And you remember in verses 4 through 8, Paul thanks God because he's heard of their faith and the love they have and the hope, and all of the wonderful things about those believers, Paul mentions.

Now, I want you to notice something very interesting. Verse 9 begins: "For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you." You know what's interesting to me about that? Paul says Since I heard that you're doing so well I have not ceased to pray for you.

You say Well, isn't that a little bit unnecessary? Wouldn't you think Paul would have said - Since I've heard you're doing so well, I'm spending my time praying for someone else. You've already arrived. Knowledge that believers are growing, knowledge that believers are being blessed, knowledge that believers are progressing in the faith should never lead us to cease praying for them, but always encourage greater prayer for their progress. And yet, I think, even as I look at my own prayer life and at the prayer life of so many people around me, we spend so much of our time trying to figure out who is in trouble so we can know who to pray for. We come together for a prayer meeting and somebody says Well, what are the prayer requests? Well, I know Mr. soandso's got cancer and I know Mrs.

soandso's got this and her husband left her and I know soandso needs a job and there's a disaster over here and blah, blah, blah, and you know who gets prayed for all the time? All the people in trouble. There are a couple of problems with that, in my mind, number one is maybe God wants them there and our prayers are really sort of out of His will, in a sense. But worse than that, maybe God, certainly He wants us to pray for them, but worse than that, we tend to neglect the people who are doing well and growing in Christ and we really don't cover them with our prayers and they're the ones in the midst of the greatest struggles because probably they're getting the greatest resistance. We tend to pray only for troubled people. We look for our prayer requests in the desperate category. And yet the greatest battles and the strongest resistance of the enemy is going to come against the people who are most successful for God's sake and those are the ones we ought to uphold in prayer. Paul says - Since I heard you're doing so well, I haven't stopped praying for you. I think we need to understand that. He says I pray unceasingly for a group of saints doing well. That's a very important ministry, beloved.

Now, he says I do not cease to pray for you since Epaphras told me about you. You say Well, how could you possibly pray for somebody unceasingly? What does it mean? What he means there is not that he's praying 24 hours a day, but that when he prays he prays for them and that this thing is on his mind all the time. Prayer isn't necessarily finding a spot and sitting down in it and praying. I had somebody who came to me one time and said they...they were so thrilled at their Christian growth, the husband had just gone out in the garage and constructed the family altar. They thought it was a place where you went to pray as if you had to be localized, or in some posture. What does it mean to pray without ceasing? I do not cease to pray for you.

First Thessalonians says, "Pray without ceasing." What does that mean? Let me give you a simple definition. Basically what it means is simply to be Godconscious and see everything in reference to Him. Unceasing prayer is communion with God ... unceasing communion with God. It isn't necessarily to stop and formally go into an act or a posture of prayer but it's to always be conscious of everything in relation to God. It's to see something happen and relate it to God. It's to hear about something and relate it to God. It's to watch something and relate it to God. It's to meet a person and immediately consider how he's related to God. It's to consider everything with Godconsciousness. It's a lifedominating God consciousness. And we've talked about this in the past, you drive down the street, an unregenerate person sees an accident and says Too bad, the guy's probably dead; I bet it was very painful, too bad for his family. And the Christian says I wonder if he knew Christ. Because that's thinking God's thoughts, that's thinking with a Godconsciousness and the more your mind is dominated by the presence of God and an understanding of God, the more likely you are to see people in light of God. And so, when Paul looks around his world, everything he sees turns instantly into a prayer because he sees it in relationship to God. He can't see anything that is separated from God. And it isn't a case of just wandering through the world mumbling your beads or going through a prayer book, it's simply being Godconscious.

Sometimes people will say to me John, what's your prayerlife like? How do you handle your prayer life? And I always say Well, I don't have a specific time, necessarily, I...I spend time in prayer every day on my own. I spend time in prayer every day with the staff. I spend time in prayer every day with my children at home. But basically, my prayer life is just like breathing to me, I mean, I... I go through my whole day that way. Somebody calls up on the telephone and says Can I talk to John? And I pick the phone up Hello. And they say it's such and such and I immediately think - Well, you know, all right, Lord, you see this problem, I just want to ask You to take care of it. It just comes into my mind immediately or a decision comes along What are we going to do? Immediately I think Lord, what is Your will? It's that constant openness to a Godconscious attitude that is praying without ceasing so that all your thoughts kind of go out the top of your head toward heaven. That's praying without ceasing.

But it also, I think, has a second aspect. Praying without ceasing is being Godconscious but it is also being peopleconscious, it is seeing them in relation to Him. It is praying for all saints. And Paul would look at the Colossians and his heart would go out to them and he would... his heart would gather them up and carry them to heaven and place them in the presence of God. I think about many of you in this congregation, some of you that wouldn't even imagine or wouldn't even know, but the Lord puts you on my heart. And the way I think about you is simply this Soandso has this problem and immediately it just goes right straight up Lord, this is Yours to deal with.

And so, praying without ceasing means you're peopleconscious and Godconscious and the two come together. And here's the Apostle Paul, God dominates his thoughts and the love of the people dominates his thoughts and the two come together in his prayer life. And so, the Apostle Paul most naturally prays for everybody. He prays unceasingly for everybody because his thoughts are so dominated by the consciousness of God andthe consciousness of the people that he serves and loves.

Now, he's praying. Well, what is he asking for? This is really interesting. Verse 9: "For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you." And what do we ask? "And to desire," now here comes his desire, here's his prayer request, "that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will." We'll stop right there.

Paul says There's one thing that I pray for you and that is that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will, not just that you might know it, but that it might fill you, that it might take you in its control. The great object of his prayer to be filled with the knowledge of God's will...now, let's clarify the terms there so we understand what we're saying. Look at the word filled. I want you to be filled. You know, you can know something and not be filled with the knowledge of it. There are plenty of people in the world who know the facts of the Scripture, who know the facts about God, but it doesn't dominate their life. The word pleroo, in the Greek, is simply the Greek word for filling something up to

completeness. It is a word that signifies the absence of anything else. If I say here's a glass of milk and I fill it up that means I fill it up and there couldn't be anything else added to the glass of milk without spilling it. It is totally dominated by that milk. That's the word filled. It is a word that signifies something totally complete. And what Paul is praying here is that the imperfections and the inadequacies of our knowledge of God's will will be more and more eliminated until we are filled with His will.

Now, the word filled is used in the New Testament, for some interesting illustrations, particularly in the gospels, to give you a couple of illustrations and help you understand what it means. In John 16 and verse 6, this is what it says: "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart." Now, I've taught you this before, and I want you to listen to the meaning of it, sorrow hath filled your heart, what it means there is sorrow has taken over total control and dominated the life of the individual disciples there, and this is in the upper room, so that they no longer can offset their sorrow with happiness. Most of us have a scale and there's happiness and sadness and we balance the two. To be filled with sadness means the scale is tipped, we no longer can maintain equilibrium at that point. We are totally engulfed in sorrow. That's precisely what the word means. To be filled with sorrow means that you're unable to adjust yourself to the situation, you've lost it all and you're totally sad.

In Luke chapter 5 you see the same term again, and there are many uses of it, but in 5:26: "They were all amazed," and this was the healing of a lame man, "They were all amazed and glorified God and were filled with fear," or awe. In other words, it absolutely overwhelmed them. They were filled with it. There wasn't any room for any moderating influence. They were dominated by it.

Chapter 6 of Luke and verse 11, "And they were filled with fury.", And, of course, this is the leaders getting mad at Jesus for His activity on the Sabbath and they could no longer balance themselves off, they went completely to the end of the scale on anger. They were filled with fury. And again, it is something that is totally dominating and sets aside any compensating thing.

In Acts 4:31 it says: "They were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word with boldness." Most of us have the Holy Spirit here and ourselves here and we give a little to the Holy Spirit and then we balance it off, we don't want to go overboard, but they became filled with the Spirit of God, they forgot their personalities, they forgot their egos, they forgot everything and went firing out into the world and proclaiming the gospel. They were dominated by it.

Now, this is precisely the meaning of the word ... to be saturated, dominated, totally under the control of. In Acts 6:5 "And the saying pleased the whole multitude and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." Here was a man filled with faith. There was no doubt in his mind, he was totally given over and dominated by faith.

The idea of the word, then, is total control. A man is under the dominating control of whatever fills him ... madness, sorrow, fear, faith or the Holy Spirit. Now, Paul wants the Colossians to be totally dominated by something, what is it? That you might be filled with the knowledge...now, his desire here is not that you just know a few things but that the knowledge that you have might fill your life to control it. There are people who know things who aren't under the control of what they know. And we say to them You know...what?... better than that. I would say when people ask me What is the biggest grief, or the saddest fact, you ever face in your ministry? You know what it is? It's people behaving a certain way in their spiritual life when they know better. And what are they? They are not filled with the knowledge of His will. They have it; they're not controlled by it. If you wanted to change the word filled to controlled, you would have the same significance.

Now, what is it that he says we're to be filled with? We're to be controlled by ... what?... look at it ... knowledge...knowledge. A man, I was reading in a book this week, said that when I go to church I feel like unscrewing my head and setting it on the seat beside me because nothing happens that's significant in any way to anything above the button on my neck, it's all emotion. Is that true? What does God want? Does God want emotionalism? Does God want knowledge?

In 1 Corinthians 1:5, "In everything you are enriched by Him in all utterance and in all knowledge." God wants knowledge. God wants to fill us with knowledge. In Colossians 2:3, "In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." In Philippians chapter 1 verse 9, "And this I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge." In Philemon verse 6: "That the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus." In other words, I want you to learn who you are in Christ, get that knowledge.

In our own letter that we're studying, Colossians chapter 3 verse 9, "Lie not one to another, seeing you've put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man that is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." And again, knowledge.

Romans 12:2 "Be transformed by the renewing of your ... what?... your mind." Now believers like the Colossians need help and they need that help in the area of spiritual perception. Without it we can easily be victimized by a system of thought that is false and devitalizing to Christian experience. In fact, in Ephesians chapter 4 Paul warns, very strongly, and says: "That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

The believer must gain knowledge. This is Paul's prayer and the word in the Greek is epignosis it is a word gnosis which means knowledge, again, it has a preposition added to the front which intensifies the meaning. It is a deep knowledge. It is a strong knowledge. It is a thorough knowledge, a full knowledge, that he has in mind, a controlling kind of knowledge. Christians must know. They must know.

You say John, what are we to know? Look at it, look at his prayer, "That you be filled with the knowledge," here it comes, "of His will." That's the keynote for the Christian life, beloved. Not just to know it but to be filled with it, to know His will. You know that the Lord Jesus made this the center of His life? He said, "I come to do the Father's will." He prayed in the garden, "Not My...what?... will, but Thine be done." He told His disciples, "His food was to do the will of Him that sent Him." He prayed and taught the disciples to pray: "Thy will be done." John said, "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." God's divine will is to dominate everything. It is absolutely crucial that a Christian know the will of God. And the knowledge I'm talking about is directly concerned with obedience. That's why he used the term filled. In the Old Testament, knowledge is never theoretical, nor in the New. Knowledge is never speculative, but it is always descriptive of information that changes behavior. The knowledge of His will is to proceed immediately living a life that pleases Him. And you can see that in verse 10, "In order that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Knowledge precedes the proper behavior. You see, I've said this so many times in conferences, you can never, people, you can never operate on what you don't know. Ignorance is not bliss. As a Christian you will never function on the basis of what you don't know, that's so obvious and yet some people put a premium on ignorance.

I remember having an interview one time and a fellow said to me We'd like you to do a certain book. And I said - Well, let's talk about that. He said It will be a book on the book of Romans. And I said Oh, great! He said We just have one question, we want it to be a very popular book, do you think you have to get into any doctrine? I said I think you have the wrong guy. What's wrong with doctrine? I mean, what's wrong with truth? I understand what he meant, he didn't want me to take issues and take sides, but the point is you have to deal with truth. Listen to II Chronicles 15:3 "Now for a long season, Israel hath been without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law." Boy, that sounds like the current liberal church, doesn't it? "But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel and sought Him, He was found by them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were on all the inhabitants of the country and nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God did vex them with all adversity." A. terrible situation to be in, to have no teaching priest, nobody to impart God's law and all they had was vexation and no peace and war and death, terrible situation, not to know God's truth, not to have it.

In Proverbs 19, it says in verse 1: "Better is the poor that walks in his integrity than he that is perverse in his lips and is a fool, also that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." No, it is not good. We can't live without knowledge because we have to have the knowledge of what God wants in order that we might obey it, and be blessed in return.

In Isaiah 27:11, "When its boughs are withered, they shall be broken off," talking here about taking Israel and bringing Israel to the judgment. "The women come and set them on fire, for it is a people of no understanding." Israel's problem was they didn't know.

Hosea said in chapter 4 verse 6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." People are ignorant. Of course we know that the unbelieving world, the people without Jesus Christ are ignorant. Ephesians 4:18: "Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts." You have, basically, in the world ignorant people, people who don't know God's will and the prayer of the Apostle Paul here is that the believer might not only know it but be filled with the knowledge of it so that it dominates his life.

You say Well, how do you get from being ignorant to getting to know? How do you get from being an unregenerate alienated ignorant person to coming to the knowledge of God's will? Even backing up from where the Colossians are, to take it, as an unbeliever, look with me for a minute at John 7:17, and we're not going to get any further than just this introduction here, so let's look at this in a little detail for the next couple of minutes. John 7:17, Jesus is talking here with the leaders in Israel, some of them, and He says a very important thing, He is giving them some tests as to how they can know who He is, and here comes one of them, verse 17: "If any man wills to do His will," is literally what it says, "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." Now, here's Jesus introducing the basics. How does a person get from ignorance to knowledge? Number one, he has to want it. He has to will to know. If any man wills to do God's will, I desire God's will, he shall know of the doctrine. What do you have here? You have an honest seeker. Hosea 6 says: "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." I think that's 6:3. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." There has to be there that deep desire.

The wisest man that ever lived, Solomon, the wisest of all men, an interesting man. You know why he was so wise? I'll tell you this is what he said to God, II Chronicles 1:10: "Give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can judge this Thy people who are so great?" And God said to Solomon: "Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, honor, the life of thine enemies neither hast thou asked long life, but has asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself that thou mayest judge My people over whom I have made thee king, wisdom and knowledge are granted unto thee and in addition, I'll give you riches and wealth and honor such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like." He asked for the right thing, didn't he? Wisdom, knowledge.

How does a person get from ignorance to knowledge? There has to be a desire, a true desire. And when a person desires the truth, and desires the knowledge of the truth, I believe God will reveal Christ to that person. You say Well, then when you receive Jesus Christ what happens? Then God gives you the Holy Spirit, right? And where does the Holy Spirit dwell? In us. And listen to this, John 16:13, Jesus said: "The Holy Spirit would guide you into all...what?... truth." First is the desire, Christ is revealed, receive Christ, God gives you the Spirit, and He leads you into all truth. And then it's up to you to be filled with it, to yield to it, to let it dominate your life. Oh, beloved, this is the priority, this is it.

You say But, John, I've sought to have knowledge, I've passed from ignorance into knowing Christ, God's given me His Spirit to guide me into all truth, take it a step further, where does the Holy Spirit take me to reveal that truth? What does the Holy Spirit use to teach me? And what's the answer? Right here, the Word of God. Three simple steps: a desire, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the study of the Word of God. This is the revelation of God's will.

People say Well, John, how do you know the will of God? That isn't any mystery to me ... it never has been in my life...the will of God is revealed in His book. People say they think God has hidden His will, in the little book I wrote, *God's Will Is Not Lost*, I do a little introduction on that, they think God likes to hide His will. It's amazing how many people think God is just sort of like an Easter bunny who stashes it in the bushes somewhere and says You're getting warmer - And wants us to chase all our life to try to find His will. No. If God has a will, beloved, listen to me, if God has a will for my life and your life, it seems to me fairly obvious that He would want me to know that will, right? And if He wanted me to know that will then it seems also obvious that He would put it in the most obvious place and that is in His Word. And in the book I've written on the will of God, you find the list of the things right there, God's will is that you be saved. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should...what? ...come to repentance. God's will is that you be Spiritfilled. This is the will of God, "Be not drunk with wine in excess but filled with the Spirit," Ephesians 5:17 and 18. God's will is that you be sanctified, I Thessalonians 4:3, "This is the will of God concerning you even your sanctification." Peter says in I Peter 2:13, "This is the will of God that you be submissive," in the government that you're in, the society that you're in. First Peter 4, "You suffer for the will of God." God's will is that you hit the world with the truth and you'll suffer some abuse. First Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything, give thanks for this is the will of God." God wants you to be saved; He wants you to be Spiritfilled, sanctified, submissive, suffering and saying thanks. That's all revealed as His will and if you take care of that you won't have any trouble with the part that isn't revealed.

You say John, where do you get all those? Right here in the Word of God, that's all, that's where I always look. If I don't have an answer, I get right in here. And you know what will happen? When you get filled with the knowledge of His will in this book, and there's no substitute for that, that's why the Bible says study to show yourself approved unto God, right? It demands that. When you get to the place where that knowledge fills you, watch what happens, that immediately then will control your behavior. It's like a computer, all that stuff goes in and, boy, that's exactly what is going to come out.

Now, look at it in verse 9: "When you are filled with the knowledge of His will it will issue in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." This is fantastic. Let me show you what it means here. The result of being filled with this knowledge, saturated with this knowledge, dominated with this knowledge will be that this thing will control your life. And I can, believe me, people, I can give you personal testimony to that fact. If people who know me think I'm any different now than I've ever been, it is one thing that has made the difference and that is the fact that God's Spirit has taught me God's truth and God's truth dominates my thinking pattern. And whatever I'm thinking is going to issue in behavior, isn't that

right?

Now, listen to this, obedience...obedience is a result of self-control, right? Obedience is a result of selfcontrol. Now listen, selfcontrol is a result of mind control. Mind control is determined by knowledge. What I know controls my thoughts. My thoughts control myself. And myself under control issues in obedience.

Now, Paul expresses this mind control at the end of verse 9: "Having all of this knowledge filling me, it will issue in wisdom and spiritual understanding and then in behavior," verse 10, "and I'll walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." So, the knowledge goes in, creates within me wisdom and understanding and issues in proper behavior. Now the two words, wisdom and understanding, sophia and sunesis, are just a little different. Wisdom is a broad term and I like to think of it as apprehension, I like to think of it as the ability to collect and concisely organize principles. I study the Bible, all the knowledge comes in and out of that knowledge comes wisdom. That's the ability to principlize the Scripture, to make principles out of it, to make principles that are God's revealed truths, the apprehension of truth so that it isn't just a whole conglomeration of fact, but all of a sudden it begins to form principles in my mind and I apprehend them.

And then, you'll notice the next term, "All wisdom and spiritual understanding," that implies the ability to take those apprehended principles and apply them. And notice wisdom and spiritual understanding, this comes from the Holy Spirit. So, my mind is under control because it's saturated in the Scripture. Then all of that truth that's in there is synthesized and principlized in my mind and becomes the wisdom of God in my mind and then it is applied as I am understanding the things that are going on around me and making the proper application of God's truth.

So, knowledge leads to principlizing which leads to implementing truth. Paul prays for the Colossians that they would have mind control from knowledge which then, as we'll see next time in practice, verse 10, leads to selfcontrol and obedience. But the Word, beloved, is the source. This is it. Oh, it's so important that we know the truth.

I was reading again, this week, for the second time, John Stott's book, YOUR MIND MATTERS, and it's a helpful book. He has some practical illustrations of the importance of knowledge. You know, Israel, Israel in Romans 10:2, it said of Israel: "They have a zeal but not according to ... what? ...knowledge." They have a zeal but no knowledge. I mean, they're very religious, they just don't know what they're doing. They get all worked up about religion but they have no content. John Stott in his book, it's very interesting, he talks about enthusiasm without enlightenment. And he uses three illustrations.

Number one is traditional, historic, oldline/ Roman Catholicism. And that isn't the only category, you could probably find it in a lot of other places, but he says in that area you have the setting aside of

knowledge and a substitution for it. And what it is is this, ritual. What happens in a church like the historic church that I'm mentioning, is that ritual degenerates into ritualism which is a mere performance of a ceremony that is mindless substitute for intelligent worship.

He says, second illustration, comes in radical Protestantism and this is the ecumenical, liberal faction. They concentrate on social things, social activism, political issues, all those peripheral things and the reason is they are in despair over ever reaching any kind of truth because they don't believe in the inspiration of the Scripture. So without any knowledge they wind up sort of waltzing around, ignoring doctrine and it becomes mindless activity.

And the third group he uses to illustrate is Pentecostal Christianity. He says in Pentecostal Christianity, and he's exactly right, experience becomes the criterion of truth. What is true is what I experience and subjective experience is exalted above revealed truth. In fact, it has been said, and it was in Stott's book, but I've heard it said myself, that God deliberately gives people unintelligible tongues in order to bypass their proud intellects. Listen, God may want to get to our pride, but He certainly isn't going to bypass the mind that He made. There must be zeal with knowledge.

You know what the Corinthians were doing? They were way out, they were spaced out and they were having all kinds of wild deals going on. But I love what...what Paul said to the Corinthians and he says many things to them, but one particular thing we're going to get to in a little while, I Corinthians 10:15, 1 just love this, he's given them all this information and he says: "I speak as to wise men, judge you what I say." You know what he says? Hey, you Corinthians, use your heads ... I'm talking to intelligent people with brains, will you use them? Use your heads.

Earlier we saw in our study of I Corinthians chapter 1, verse 30: "But of Him are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom..." Christ becomes to us wisdom. In II Peter chapter 1, verse 5: "And beside this, give all diligence, add to your faith virtue and to virtue, knowledge." Chapter 3, verse 18: "Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." Ephesians chapter 1, verse 17: "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened," knowledge. Chapter 3, he prays that they may know the love of Christ.

Listen, we must have zeal according to knowledge. We must use our minds. We must use our intelligence. The Bible says: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and...what?...mind." God doesn't want mindless worship, God wants worship, listen to me, in response to understanding His revelation. God doesn't want mindless living, He doesn't want mindless living zeal, he says: "If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, do ... what? ...think on these things," Philippians 4. "Be renewed," he says, "in the spirit of your mind." God doesn't want mindless preaching. God doesn't want just gyrations and gymnastics in the pulpit and whipping people into a spiritual lather. God doesn't want that. He wants truth. When I think about the Apostle Paul in the school of Tyrannus in

Ephesus for two years, every day for five hours, it adds up to 3,120 hours of teaching. Paul prays simply that you may know and be filled with the knowledge of His will and that that knowledge may allow you to create principles that can be applied to behavior. Now the effects of this we're going to see next time. Let's pray.

Father, tonight we just reflect on how important it is for us to really know You, know Your Word. God, we know it's more than academic. We know it's more than just reading and mentally comprehending. It's to be filled with that knowledge, to love it, to cherish it, to find ourselves saturated by it and in our minds, to be able to draw principles that can be applied in acts of spiritual understanding and issue in a worthy walk. I thank You, Father, for so many years ago when You taught me this, that what You wanted me to do in the ministry was teach the Word and pray for the people and then out of that You'd do great and mighty things, and I've seen it. And I pray that all of us would see it. What You want of us is to learn Your truth, study Your book so that those things which are Your will may find rest in our minds and expression in our behavior. May we truly know You and may we be absolutely filled and dominated with that knowledge. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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