

LifeGroups

GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

Growth Sheet

God's Will, Our Walk

Colossians 1:9-12

The Theme of Colossians

Paul wrote to the Colossians to tell them that true spiritual maturity is found in Christ alone. But merely knowing this does not automatically make someone spiritually mature. This is why Paul goes on to urge the Colossians, “As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk in him*” (2:6-7, emphasis added). Walking in Christ, then, means guarding against anything that would draw us away from him (2:8-23). It means a radical rearranging of our priorities (3:1-4), virtues (3:5-11), and relationships (3:12-4:6) in light of who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

What Is a Worthy Walk?

Up to this point in our series through Colossians, we have looked at Paul's opening greeting (1:1-2), and the first part of his prayer report—a statement of gratitude that the Colossian believers are beginning to bud into maturity (1:3-8). Now Paul reports what he prays for them. At the heart of this prayer is his desire that they “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him” (1:10).

This prayer raises the following question: What is a worthy, beautiful pattern of living, and where does it come from? Paul's prayer reveals the source, aim, and a description of such a lifestyle.

1. The *source* is “being filled with the knowledge of [God's] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (1:9).
2. The *aim* is to “please him in every way” (1:10, *NIV*).
3. The *description* is fourfold. A worthy walk is characterized by:
 - a. Fruitfulness: “bearing fruit in every good work” (1:10)
 - b. Knowledge: “increasing in the knowledge of God” (1:10)
 - c. Strength: “strengthened with all power” (1:11)
 - d. Gratitude: “giving thanks to the Father” (1:12-23).

Briefly stated, a worthy walk is a pattern of living marked by spiritual fruitfulness, knowledge of God, divine strength, and abundant gratitude. Its aim is to please Christ, and it flows from a thorough knowledge of God's will.



What Is God's Will?

Since this worthy walk has as its *source* “being filled with the knowledge of his will,” it is essential that we understand what is meant by “his will.” We quickly assume that “God’s will” means simply “what God wants us to do.”

Although God’s will *includes* this moral aspect, it means much more. In this context, God’s will is first and foremost about what *he* has chosen, or willed, to do for us—specifically, to reveal Christ as our richest treasure, our surest hope, our deepest foundation. A key to understanding the meaning of God’s will here is found in 1:27: “To [us] God chose [“willed”] to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (see also Ephesians 1:9).

In other words, a worthy walk begins, not with understanding what we must do for God, but with what God has done for us in Christ. Only as we understand what *he* has done will we know what we should do.

Discussion and Application

1. What do people often think of when they hear the phrase “the will of God”? What are some pros and cons of being anxious to “discover God’s will for your life”?
2. In this passage, *God’s will* refers primarily to what God has chosen to do, specifically in bringing about our salvation. Read Ephesians 1:3-10 for a fuller explanation of this. Understood in this way, how should God’s will shape what we do?
3. Paul indicates that the aim of a worthy walk is to “please him in every way” (1:10). Suppose someone says that is aiming too high, that it sets us up for disappointment. How would you respond to such a statement?
4. One characteristic of a worthy walk is *strength*. From this passage, what else does Paul say about this strength (specifically, where it comes from and what it is for)? Why do you think such strength is necessary for a worthy walk? In which aspects of your life do you most need strength?
5. The final characteristic of a worthy walk is *gratitude*. Look up the other occurrences of gratitude: Colossians: 2:6-7; 3:15-17; and 4:2. What does a person’s gratitude say about that person? Why do you think gratitude is an important mark of maturity?