

# Colossians: Kingdom of Darkness

by Mariano Di Gangi

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*Paul prays for the Colossians to have a knowledge of God's will and experience of God's power, leading to patient endurance and joyful gratitude.*

**Duration:** 30:14

**Scripture:** Colossians 1:9

**Topics:** "Darkness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of growing in knowledge and understanding of God's will. He prays for the listeners to be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding. The speaker shares a story about a young man seeking the secret to success, which is making good decisions, which comes from experience. The sermon highlights the transformative power of God's grace and forgiveness, and the need for both direction and empowerment from the Holy Spirit to live according to God's will.

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## Transcript

Reading from God's written word as we find it recorded in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians or Colossians chapter 1 beginning to read at verse 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 and 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 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. What does a church really need to function well? It all depends on who you ask. If you ask someone has been ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments 99 times out of a hundred he'll answer.

Why it takes preaching you should know that. You want proof of it all you've got to do is turn to Romans chapter 10. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved but how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed and how are they going to believe unless they have heard and how shall they hear except one preach to them.

Faith is generated in response to the hearing of the word that is preached. You ask someone who is a member of the official boards of a congregation either a trustee or a manager or an elder and they would

say preaching has its place but what it really takes is planning. You've got to have committees.

Sometimes they keep minutes and waste hours but you've got to have committees and you've got to have budgets and you've got to have projects and you need to hear reports. Preaching okay but you need planning. Well then you move from the upper echelons down to the rank-and-file what does it really take to make the church go and the answer that the member will give you is preaching, planning.

What you need is participation. We've got to have cell groups to make a body healthy. We've got to have gatherings of smaller groups for fellowship and study so that in a large downtown church we don't get a feeling of impersonality but cultivate a sense of family.

Well then before we have completed our survey we turn to yet another person the writer of our text. Surely he recognizes the importance of preaching. Certainly he values the need of planning.

He was all for the participation of every member in the body of Christ but the Apostle Paul knew that in addition to preaching and in addition to planning and in addition to participation you needed prayer and that is why he has no sooner begun this epistle than by the time he comes to verse 9 he shares with them the prayer that he offers God on their behalf. And in this prayer he has two tremendous requests. First that the Colossians may come to a knowledge of God's will and second that they might come to an experience of God's power.

Notice how he phrases that first request where he prays that they might come to a knowledge of God's will. Now Paul is aware of the fact that these people are holy and faithful that these people have trust in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints and yet he hasn't stopped praying for them because he knows that at best their state of spirituality leaves something to be desired. They've made a tremendous start but they have not yet reached the goal of utter perfection.

They have trust in Jesus, they have love toward the Lord's people but they need to grow in a deeper clearer knowledge of the will of God. And so he says I haven't stopped praying for you, I haven't stopped asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Recently heard a story of a young man who was sent to work with his uncle and when he arrived at the office on his first day he asked his uncle could you please tell me the secret of your success in business.

His uncle said I'll give it to you in two words, good decisions. He thought about that and then he said well how do you get to make good decisions? Young man he says I'll give it to you in one word, experience. He thought about that for a while he says uncle how do you get experience? I'll give it to you in two words, bad decisions.

Here the Apostle Paul speaks of the kind of knowledge that is related to wisdom and to understanding in coping with the perplexities of life. To know something is good, to know how to apply it to our daily life is even better. Knowledge is one thing, wisdom can be another.

For it takes wisdom to know what the facts mean, it takes wisdom to see how the truth relates to our relationships. And so Paul prays that they might have a knowledge of the will of God, that they might have the kind of wisdom and understanding and insight that only comes from the work of the Holy Spirit in enlightening the human mind. He wants them to know and to apply the truth of God.

And what is the purpose that Paul has in mind when he offers this prayer? What is behind his petition? What's the reason for this request? He says I would like you to know the will of God in a deeper, clearer,

fuller way so that led by the Holy Spirit you might have real wisdom and you might understand and see how these things should be integrated into your daily life. And my purpose in all this is so that you might live a life worthy of God. So that you might live the kind of life that is congruous with trust in the living God.

So you might have the kind of behavior that is becoming to those who bear God's name. I pray that you might have knowledge, that you might have wisdom, that you might have understanding so that you can live the kind of life that is compatible with your professed relationship to the true and living God. I pray this prayer so that you may be pleasing to him in all that you do.

The Apostle was one who valued the approval of God. And we should seek to live the kind of life that is not only worthy of God, centered in God, devoted to the glory of God, but the kind of life that is pleasing in his sight. That's what made the Apostle Paul so uncompromising in taking his stand for the truth.

He said my main purpose in life is not to cater to the whims of people and to please them. I must do what I can while I can to please him. And Paul prays for the Colossian community of believers, that they might have an eye single to God's glory, that they may seek to conform their pattern of existence to God's plan, that they must seek in all things to walk worthy of him, that they might be in all things pleasing unto him.

God loves us and we must love him in return, and the way in which we show that we really love him is by living a life that is worthy of him and by pleasing him in all things. One of the greatest influences on young people today is peer pressure. They don't want to be out of step with others, they want to feel part of the group, they want to please others, and so they will be willing to compromise basic convictions in order to please people.

We must rather be willing to break with all else in order to be pleasing to him as the decisive factor in our thinking, in our speaking, in our working, in our choosing. And so there is this prayer for a knowledge of the will of God. Live worthy of him, live in a way that pleases him, bearing fruit, the kind of life that is productive.

We must not be dead branches but branches that are vitally united to Jesus Christ so that his life flows through us and we bear fruit to the glory of God. Something productive, something constructive, something wholesome about the way that we live. This is what Paul has in mind, that you might have a knowledge of the will of God.

But beyond that, he prays that they might have an experience of the power of God. And that is where he puts the major emphasis. Why is it necessary to experience the power of God? Why isn't it enough to come to a clear, deep, penetrating knowledge of the will of God? The necessity of experiencing the power of God in addition to a knowledge of his will becomes very obvious with the homeliest of illustrations.

You can plan your trip with the greatest care and you can have the maps that show you the best route to take and you can be aware of the detours and you can be aware of the most scenic road and you can be aware of the one on which you'll make the fastest time. You can have a marvelous set of directions in the most detailed Michelin map that you will ever get to drive and not be able to get the car out of the driveway if there's no fuel, if there's no dynamic, all the direction in the world will get you absolutely nowhere. So we come to a knowledge of the will of God, we know what God wants us to do, we know what he expects us of us, he has shown the old man what is good, we've got a clear, definite sense of direction, it is all mapped out in the book.

But we won't move a single step toward the goal and we won't realize the plan that he has in mind and we won't see God's will enacted and experienced in our life unless in addition to directions we have dynamic, we have the power that enables us to move and to do the will which we have come to know. Otherwise we will experience constant frustration, the kind of frustration that is detailed in the seventh chapter of the letter to the Romans. I know what I should do, I have a knowledge of God's will, I've read the map, I know where I'm supposed to go, I can see the way the path of progress lies but I can't do it.

Miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from this total frustration that is killing me. I thank God who gives me the victory and enables me to triumph through our Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul prays that in addition to a knowledge of the will of God, in addition to the direction that they must follow, they might have an experience of the power and the dynamic that will enable them to get there.

And this power is available to us, that we may be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. God's power, so necessary for the living of these days, is available to us. Mention was made earlier today of the fact that there's going to be a course on the letter to the Ephesians.

I've got the suspicion that the letter to the Colossians was a trial run for the letter to the Ephesians. That this under the guidance of the Holy Spirit was draft number one and then there was a fuller statement and restatement made in the letter to the Ephesians. Because in Ephesians, Paul brings the changes on the very same themes of knowing the will of God and of doing the will of God by the power that God gives.

And in Ephesians the Apostle spells it out with greater fullness and he says the kind of power that is going to work dynamically in your life to energize you for the doing of God's will is the exact same power that was active in Jesus Christ. Bringing him from the bonds of death, causing him to rise from the dead on the third day, enabling him to show himself alive to his followers with many uncontrovertible undeniable proofs, and then at the last lifting him from earth to heaven and enthroning him in sovereign majesty at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. The power that was active in the resurrection of Jesus, the power that was active in the ascension and coronation of Jesus, that very same power says the Apostle is available to you.

We need it, God offers it, we must receive and believe the power of the Spirit in our life. And so what we need, God is willing and able to provide and it's the very same power that wrought in Jesus the wonder of resurrection and the glory of his exaltation. If we experience the power of God as well as come to a knowledge of God's will, then certain things ought to be in evidence.

For example, there will be patient endurance. He says, I pray that you might be strengthened with all power according to God's glorious might with this purpose in mind, that you may have great endurance and patience. Not a stoical passive resignation, but rather an heroic sort of endurance that will hold on and hold out.

The sort of patient endurance that enables you to persevere despite affliction. Fortitude, the kind of patient endurance that enables you to persevere regardless of provocation. My wife's going to be speaking on Sicily then and now.

Sicilians have a notorious reputation before the grace of God changes them. It may be summed up in one simple phrase, I never get mad, I only get even. Now that is the very opposite of the kind of attitude that Paul says will be manifest in those who experience the power of God.

Patient in the face of affliction so that we still persevere. Patient in the face of provocation so that we are willing to be forbearing and forgiving. This is the patient endurance that was shown by our Lord when hanging on his cross.

He looked at those who were murdering him and said, Father forgive them, they know not what they do. That kind of attitude doesn't come by doing what comes naturally, that comes only because of the presence of the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. To cope with affliction, to cope successfully with provocation, we need to experience God's power because it produces patient endurance.

And the power of God not only produces a patient endurance but enables us to express a joyful gratitude. Joyfully given thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the Saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness, brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

When the power of God is experienced in our lives, we will not only show patient endurance but express a joyful gratitude to God for blessings already bestowed, for blessings in prospect yet to be received. Paul details here two great blessings for which we ought to give joyful thanks. The first of these is with reference to the past and it has to do with God's deliverance or liberation.

We have been brought from darkness to light. In the kingdom of darkness people stumble, in the kingdom of darkness people do not have the certainty of their faith but wander around in the midst of doubt and of disbelief. In darkness people have fear but we have been brought from darkness to light, to clarity, to certainty, to know the ground on which we stand, to see the direction that we must take.

From darkness to light and from judgment or condemnation to forgiveness. For the speaks about the forgiveness of sins, being set free from the wrath of God deserved by our transgressions. Recently I came across a testimony, testimony from a rather unique source.

A man who at that time was the Bishop of Coventry in one of the historic bishoprics of England and he was addressing a gathering of 800 ministers and doctors at the conference of the British Medical Association. He was speaking to them at Oxford and this is what he said, when I was an undergraduate at the University of Oxford I saw the lives of some of my fellow students becoming radically different. I discovered the reason for this, they were being brought face to face with a lively Christian faith, a vigorous living experimental religion, one that began to work in my own life.

I discovered that Christ could bring me forgiveness and it was in him that I found peace of mind and moral power. We are brought from darkness to light, from judgment to forgiveness and we are brought from slavery to freedom. We are rescued, we are redeemed, we are ransomed and the one who paid the price of our ransom was Jesus Christ and the ransom that he's paid is not to be reckoned in terms of the clinking currencies of this world but it's the precious blood of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

So great a price, so immense a ransom has he paid for the liberation and the rescue of our souls that it would be the height of ingratitude and the basest way to repay him for us willingly to put our neck under the yoke of sin and become slaves again to the power of unrighteousness. Joyful gratitude because he brings you from darkness to light, from judgment to forgiveness, from slavery to freedom, and from Satan to God. From the grip of the evil one to the embrace of Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son.

It was Charles Wesley who in the memorable words that have been set to a singable hymn expressed what this text is all about in a way that surpasses any other poetic rendition of the text and he put it this way. Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray.

I woke the dungeon flame with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

When we think of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, we are moved to joyful gratitude by the power of the Spirit that stirs within us. And we not only thank God for the blessing he has already bestowed, but we thank him for that which is yet to be. For he offers to us a sure and certain inheritance.

He qualifies us to inherit among the saints in light. He is our Father. He welcomes us as members of his family.

And because we belong to his family, we are not only subject to his discipline, but the recipients of his affection. And he promises to all his children without favoritism or discrimination, a share in that glorious inheritance of a land far surpassing any Canaan here on earth. The fulfillment of what he has begun in grace when we behold him in everlasting glory.

And so we have the prayer of Paul for the people of Colossae, that they might have a knowledge of the will of God. And that having this knowledge, they might live a life that pleases God. And that having not only knowledge, but the infilling of the power of God's Spirit, they might be able to endure with patience.

They might be able to give joyful thanks in the midst of affliction and in the midst of provocation for all that God has done and still promises to do for those who through faith in Jesus have become his people. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we ask this day that we might be filled with a knowledge of your will.

Help us to study the Scriptures, to gain spiritual wisdom and understanding, to see how your truth should impact our daily living. And then fill us with the power of your Spirit, that we may be able to do what you demand and fulfill all that you ask to live a life that is pleasing in your sight. This we ask in the name of your beloved Son, our Savior and our King.

Amen.

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