

## COLOSSIANS 1:9-11 | THE PRAYER OF PAUL

## VERSE 9 - BLUE

For this verse, I have used both black and blue color coding. The initial segment of the verse is specific to the Colossians, hence the black coding. However, as we delve deeper into the content of the prayer, it becomes clear that the sentiments and requests expressed are applicable to members of the Body of Christ today. Consequently, this portion of the verse has been coded in blue to indicate its ongoing relevance and applicability.

Moving forward, we will interpret the 2nd person plural pronouns (subject = ye, object = you) as being applicable to the Body of Christ. This interpretation will be maintained unless there is strong evidence suggesting that Paul is addressing a matter specific only to the Colossian context.

Paul's wish for his followers is to have a comprehensive understanding or knowledge of God's will. The Greek term 'ἐπίγνωσις' (epignosis) intensifies the word "knowledge," implying a precise and thorough understanding. He further clarifies this with the phrase "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," which provides additional detail on how this filling will be accomplished. Thus "knowledge of his will" is the goal, and "wisdom and spiritual understanding" is the process.

In times past, knowing God's will was fairly straightforward. The people simply followed the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day (Exodus 13:21). They obeyed the "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" commands of the Mosaic Law, which acted as a form of checklist for obedience. However, "now that faith has come" (Galatians 3:25), the dynamic has changed.

Obedience is no longer about simply following a set of rules. Instead, it is about having a personal relationship with God and understanding His will on a deeper level. This is why there is a need for "wisdom and spiritual understanding" in full measure, in order to truly have the "knowledge of His will."

However, it should be noted that this does not imply a need for a mystical experience to gain knowledge of His will. Instead, it requires a comprehensive understanding of His revelation through His word and applying that knowledge in a wise and spiritually mature manner. This points towards a practical application of God's word in our daily lives, rather than a purely experiential or mystical apprehension.

## VERSES 10-11 - BLUE

Knowing God's will (v. 9) leads to a significant byproduct: the ability to "walk worthy of the Lord" (v. 10). This walk is then characterized in several manners. Firstly, it involves "being fruitful in every good work," which essentially means to produce good works or deeds that mirror God's values and principles. Secondly, it includes "increasing in the knowledge of God," signifying an ongoing process of understanding and knowing God at a deeper level. Lastly, it involves being "strengthened with all might," which culminates in patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. These characteristics portray an enduring and resilient faith that is accompanied by a sense of joy despite enduring hardships or trials.

We should note that though we are not saved by good works nor unto good works, growing in a knowledge of God's will certainly has a fruit of good works. Yet, even then, these good works should and can never be evidence for a faith in the Lord since the ability to perform good works is largely contextual, depending on opportunities of health, family, location, finances, and more.

## COLOSSIANS 1:12-14 CELEBRATING GOD'S WORK AMONG THE SAINTS

## VERSE 12 - BLACK

Verse 12 presents a significant interpretive challenge. First, who is giving thanks here? Is it the Colossians, who are mentioned as being strengthened in verse 11, or is it Paul and Timothy, noted for praying in verse 9? Although either interpretation is grammatically possible, I favor Paul and Timothy as the ones giving thanks.

With this interpretation, it is Paul and Timothy who are deemed fit to partake in the inheritance. Therefore, this phrase should not be associated with the Colossians, at least directly, if at all. This interpretation aligns with the use of the first-person plural 'us', which I believe refers to Paul and Timothy.

The majority, which interprets 'us' as referring to both the Colossian church and the broader Body of Christ, needs to explain why Paul used the second-person plural in verses 9-11, switched to the first-person plural in verses 12-14, and then, after a parenthetical statement in verses 15-20, returned to the second-person plural in verse 21. It seems to me to be a careless interpretation of grammar to assume "us" and "you" represent the same group.

"The inheritance of the saints in light" is defined in Matthew 25:34 as "the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world." If this inheritance applies to all believers, another passage of scripture without specific pronouns would need to be referenced as evidence.

This grammatical analysis leads to deeper theological questions. Why would Paul and Timothy, both Jews, need to be made fit to partake? The answer lies in the evidence of their actions that contradicted their faith. Paul persecuted the church, and Timothy, despite his familiarity with the Scriptures, was not circumcised. Such overt rejection of God's Messiah and covenant guidelines would exclude them from participation.

The previous exclusion of Paul and Timothy from the inheritance is further exemplified in Acts 8:21, where Simon Peter tells Simon the Sorcerer, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." The terms 'part' and 'lot' are related to 'inheritance', underscoring the concept of a stake in God's spiritual blessings and promises. This emphasizes the principle of a rightful claim to these blessings and promises. For Paul and Timothy, the need to be made 'fit to be partakers of the inheritance' implies that their past actions were at odds with the requirements of inheritance. However, they have now been made fit to claim the spiritual blessings promised in the 'inheritance' through God's work.

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#### VERSE 13 - BLACK

This verse has often been a "take it and run with it" passage for many preachers. The typical approach is to apply it to "me," presuming oneself to be included in the "us" pronoun without grammatical evidence. Upon this presumption, pastors often declare kingdom powers upon the believer, almost in a haphazard fashion. The "name it and claim it" style of interpretation is almost a given in this verse, despite lacking a solid grammatical basis. This approach can lead to misinterpretations and misapplications of the verse's actual meaning.

In fact, the idea of believers being transferred into the kingdom, thus receiving kingdom powers and protection, has become a significant part of modern Christianity. This has introduced the concept of being kingdom citizens and builders, with all the rights and privileges that come with it.

But what does the verse actually mean? Firstly, the term "delivered" refers to a specific point in time, as indicated by the aorist tense in Greek. This suggests that God didn't continuously "deliver" people like Paul and Timothy, but did so at a specific moment. Additionally, the word "translated" is derived from the Greek μεθίστημι [metahistami], which merges meta (a change) and histami (to stand), implying a change in status, which is consistent with verse 12. This change (translation) doesn't suggest they are currently in the Kingdom, but are on their way there. The term 'into' is derived from 'eis', signifying movement towards an object with the intention of reaching or touching it (The Companion Bible, Appendix 104. vi.). Therefore, Paul and Timothy's status has been altered, and they are now directed towards the kingdom.

Paul and Timothy, in their celebration of the Son, acknowledge the gift of "redemption through His blood." The Greek word for redemption is 'απολυτρωσις' (apolutrosis), which means a release secured by the payment of a ransom. It refers to a liberation or deliverance from a form of bondage or captivity through the payment of a price. In this case, the price that was paid is the blood of the Son, which signifies His sacrificial death on the cross.

The blood of Jesus paid the price to redeem Israel, a concept familiar to the Israelites as redemption was deeply rooted in their law and culture. A clear example is the redemption of the first-born son with five shekels each, detailed in Numbers 3:47-48: "Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs:) And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons."

Moreover, the tribe of Levi was designated as a tribe of priests for God, serving as a form of redemption price for Israel's first-born sons, as described in Numbers 3:12: "And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine."

This practice of redeeming the firstborn is also seen in Exodus 13:13-15, where every firstborn of man and beast is to be consecrated to God. If the firstborn is an unclean animal, it should be redeemed with a lamb, or else its neck is broken.

Ultimately, God paid the ransom for Israel through the sacrificial blood of His Son, a concept deeply rooted in Old Testament scripture. As described in Isaiah 53:5, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Verse 10 says that the Suffering Servant would someday "make his soul an offering for sin." This act of redemption brought forth "the forgiveness of sins," thus opening the way for the Israelites to be in right relationship with God once again.

It's important to note that modern versions of the Bible, which are based on the critical text, remove the words "through his blood" from this passage, usually without even a footnote. This omission is based on the argument that these words were an addition made by later writers and not part of the original text. This is yet another example of the scholarly attempt to discover "the real Bible," while simultaneously demonstrating the fact that they are actually rejecting the Bible received by believers for centuries before they came along to "doctor" the word.

The question at hand is whether redemption through Christ's blood, originally intended for Israel, can be claimed by the Body of Christ, which includes non-Israelites or Gentiles. In this text, I have used black color coding to indicate that this redemption was for Paul and Timothy, both Jews. Ephesians 1:7 broadens this redemption through His blood to the nation of Israel, that is, the saints. Acts 20:28 does the same. Nonetheless, the question remains: What about non-Israelites?

Romans 3:24 might appear to be a suitable passage to argue for redemption for the Gentiles. However, a closer examination reveals that while Gentiles are "justified," they are not explicitly "redeemed." This justification is "by his grace," and it is "through the redemption" that this grace became available.

In essence, it seems that redemption is something God specifically executed for Israel. However, this act of redemption has had a secondary benefit that extends to the entire world. This benefit is the grace that justifies, a blessing that, although not redemption itself, stems from it and is now accessible to all, including the Gentiles.

Therefore, if we want to be precise with our words, it would be better to celebrate our reconciliation and justification rather than our redemption.