

Knowing, Thanking and Walking with God

Introduction

Similar context to that of Ephesus (Colosse just over 100 miles away). People (even Jews) caught up in polytheism and “magic.” Four aspects (Arnold, CS, 14)

1. Charms and spells using a rite, an invocation (of a god or spirit), and a command;
2. A guarantee of results;
3. Special conjuring words and phrases (“I conjure you...”);
4. Magical names or mysterious words and drawings.

New converts: fears carried over. Angels (both “good” and “bad”) highly regarded. Many gods and goddesses worshiped, including “local moon-god men,” the “goddess of witchcraft,” good and evil spirits.

Paul reassures the Colossian Christians that Christ is more powerful than any of the wicked powers and is intimately involved with the practical aspects of their lives.

How Did You Come to Know God?

You Heard

“you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel” (v. 5)

To hear the *gospel* is to hear the *truth*. A different way of learning than the pagans:

Col 2:8 *philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world*

Eph 4:17–21 *in the futility of their minds...darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God...ignorance...hardness of heart. ...callous... given... to sensuality, greedy to practice ... impurity. ²⁰ That is not the way you learned Christ!- you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus.*

You Understood

“you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth” (v. 6)

“We pray...asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through (spiritual) understanding.” (v 9)

“There were no secular humanists at [the time of the Colossian church]. [M]ost of the people living in this country area could aptly be described as animists.” (Arnold, ZIBBC, 372)

The system was syncretistic—build your own religion. Ecstatic Forms of worship included self-mutilation, flagellation; fasting & self denial needed to enter the “mystery” cults

You Learned

“*you learned it from Epaphras*” (v. 7) Praise God for those who take seriously evangelism and training! The Colossians would not have “learned” the gospel without faithful Epaphras (who no doubt was instructed by Paul in Ephesus).

They gain “*spiritual knowledge*,” not by using incantations, rites and angels. The gospel is true, connected to the real world and must be lived out.

*True knowledge is founded in practical religion; it is that knowledge which, as the OT wisdom writers affirmed, starts with a **proper attitude toward God**: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7)...It was because the pagan world...“did not see fit to retain God in their knowledge” that they were abandoned “to a base mind and to improper conduct” (Rom 1:28). (Bruce, 46)*

What Has God Given You?

A Foundation of Truth

In God's providence, the word came to them as a grace (v 6). Through Christ, then through Paul, then through Epaphras—whisper down the lanes of time, but without distortion, because it is the Holy Spirit that guards that truth as the church grows.

In-Dwelling Power (as a Church)

“*the might of his glory*” (v 11) see Rom 6:4 “*Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father*”

In Col 1:1, Paul indicates [in his prayer for them] that they have extraordinary means available for living in a Christ-pleasing manner. “With all power being strengthened according to the might of his glory for all endurance and patience.” (Arnold, ZIBBC, 333)

“four different power-denoting terms: *dunamis, dunamow, kratos* and *doxa*” (being empowered with power by power”)

The power is found in God's glory. Power/glory almost interchangeable in the OT. The Colossians don't need angels, rituals or asceticism to bring them into the glorious presence of God. “believers can *directly* receive God's divine power from his throne of glory at the present time.” (Arnold, CS, 304)

Not like “the philosophy” or the “rudimentary principles of the world”¹ The Gospel of Jesus Christ has

- more than adequate power *available* for the needs of the Christian life in a proper knowledge of God; [and is]
- mediated through a relationship – associated with increasing in the knowledge of God and prayer. (Arnold, CS, 303–4)

Growth

Among Christians

The gospel, brought to them by Epaphras, is growing. (There are at least two house churches)

Epaphras...had discharged his responsibility well as the evangelist of the Lycus valley, for there were flourishing churches in that area—in Hierapolis and Laodicea as well as in Colossae—to testify to the enduring quality of his work.(Bruce, 44)

Growth of the Gospel in the World

The message of the gospel, which was producing the vigorous and every multiplying fruit of Christian life and testimony at Colossae, was doing the same...throughout the world....blazed abroad by other heralds." (Bruce, 42)

The Status of Christ

You are Redeemed and Forgiven

Redemption through his blood (Eph 1:7)

Rom 3:24–5 “through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an agent of atonement by his blood, to be received by faith.”

Your sins are gone, washed away, nailed to the cross and made to be a spectacle.

2 Peter 1:5–9 *make every effort to supplement your **faith** with virtue...knowledge...self-control,...steadfastness, ...godliness... brotherly affection, and ... love. If these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, **having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.***

You are Qualified

Col 1:12 *“giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.”*

“Inheritance”—OT= living as chosen Jews with God in the Promised Land; now =living with God in the new creation, open to all nations

“Saints”— God’s people, set apart from the world for his service

“in light”—the glory of heaven vs. the promised land; also the kingdom of light in contrast to the kingdom of darkness. Not the light we see people seeking today, for example

- *Living in the Light: Follow Your Inner Guidance to Create a New Life and a New World*
- *Living in the Light: A Guide to Personal And Planetary Transformation*
- Website: Living in Light: A fashion and lifestyle brand bringing edgy, eclectic fashion for women, fashion workshops, image consultation, inspiring events, the blog and the Sacred Sexuality message.

You are Transferred to a New Kingdom

"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (v 13)

Citizenship has been changed by God himself—from living under the prince of darkness to living under the beloved Son; In the OT, God rescued his people and put them in a chosen land. Now we are rescued not just from a human Pharaoh, but from the "prince of this world," by the death and resurrection of Christ. "Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Matt 2:15). In the resurrection, the head of the serpent is crushed.

"dominion of darkness" (see Luke 22:53) "sinister forces marshaled against [Jesus] for a decisive combat in the spiritual realm." (Bruce, 51)

1 Cor 15:23–28 Jesus will gather all things under his authority and then will lay them at the feet of his Father. One way to see a kind of two-step process to the coming of the kingdom. The already and the not yet. We needn't fear the kingdom of darkness, but we do battle it fiercely!

You are Filled

With Love

Col 1:4 the love that you have for all the saints,

Col 1:8 has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

With Wisdom

Col 1:9 asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

How Can You Walk Worthy of Christ?

Our joyful service to God shows hope to the world. To that effect, we

Pray!

Pray with Thanks

God's grace inevitably stirs us to gratitude. Paul says, "We always *thank God*, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you."

"We have not stopped praying for you" or "Whenever we pray for you" (v. 9)

"We pray...in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way." (v 10)

Pray with Requests

Paul's requests? (Get me out of jail? Can't I retire after all these stoning and beatings?) No, he asks God for spiritual health in the Colossian church

- To know God's will

- To live a life worthy of your calling
- To grow in your knowledge of God
- To bear fruit in good works
- To be strengthened for endurance
- To be joyful and give thanks

Pray with Praise

Paul is filled with joy and gratitude for the faith of the Colossians, for their love for one another; for the fact that the gospel is growing.

The gospel has literally spread into almost every reach of the Roman empire...places like Egypt, North Africa, and Persia. (Arnold, ZIBBC, 377)

Love!

“The love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that springs from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven” (v 5) (When faith and hope are no longer needed, love will remain forever!)

Christian hope...in Christianity would be quite new, and very attractive, for a pagan of the first century...The solid facts about the future hope of Christians are a powerful motivation for constant faith and costly love in the present. (Wright, 52)

Offer Hope to the World

This hope is wonderful for anyone caught up in fear, whether of evil spirits, mockery from the culture, or even of “failing” the Lord. Our inheritance is sure and already purchased for us.

All over the world = Paul is so optimistic! We need to maintain that optimism, even in the face of discouragement.

the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing-

Gen 1 – Adam and Eve are to bear fruit to fill the world. Now Christ and his bride the church bear spiritual fruit and gather many children into the family of Christ.

Promise to Abraham that the blessing would be for the whole world.

The salvation promised in the OT had now been unleashed upon the world irrespective of geographical or racial barriers.... Paul gives us an advance glimpse of the theological position soon to be stated in full (Col 1:15–20). God is doing through the gospel what he always intended to do. He is sowing good seed in the world and preparing to reap a harvest of human lives recreated to reflect his glory. (Wright, 53–4)

Endure with Patience and Joy

Patient endurance – the Stoics used this, but without the sense of JOY that Christians experience in that endurance. Contentment, “attended by a joyful exuberance which overflowed to others.” (Bruce, 48–9)

Patient endurance, for Arnold – enduring to the end, yes, but also the endurance to resist pagan philosophies and perceived pressure from the realm of evil powers.

In Christ

Which of the above benefits can we get anywhere else but IN CHRIST? None! And we do it all “because of the hope we have in Christ”

Faith in Christ

The Colossians have never seen Jesus and never met Paul – so they do not have firsthand witnesses of Christ's resurrection. OT believers had to look forward in belief; NT believers had to trust eyewitnesses, and we must look backward (as well as forward) in belief. We are privileged with so much more knowledge! All the bolder in “bearing fruit!”

Ministers of Christ

“All over the world, this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard and understood it” (v 6)

Do you, dear sisters, believe that the gospel can bear fruit in and through you?

Do you believe that you have the resurrection power of God's Holy Spirit living in you and present in our church?

Why are we afraid? Not right here and right now because of incantations and evil angels, though as our culture seeks communication with evil powers, we may one day need to confront them more openly. What are OUR fears!?! Frankly, they seem petty. Someone will make fun of us. If we say we're Christians, they might think we voted for Trump! Seriously. We have no business holding back the gospel from those whose fears are valid, if they are still living in the dominion of darkness! And we can also ask God's spirit to quell the fears we nurse – inadequacy, lack of acceptance and so forth.

Let's ask God to *empower* us with *powerful power* to take the gospel to a “new town” in our life. It is hope that beckons us into the adventure.

Sources

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Logos

¹ (b) in a negative sense, humanistic teachings common to Jewish and pagan religions, involving binding traditions, taboos, prohibitions, ordinances, ceremonies, etc., teachings involving either supernatural elemental or animating spirits (probably CO 2.8, 20), or basic material elements (probably GA 4.3, 9) *elements, elemental things*; (c) in relation to the natural world (*basic elements, natural substances* (2P 3.10, 12)