

Introduction: Many students of Scripture have said that to know God through His Word, we must know and understand BOTH the first three chapters (of *Genesis*) AND the last three chapters (of *Revelation*). The first chapters tell God's intention and purpose for creation and what went wrong. The last three chapters describe how His new creation IN and through His Son will be better than His original creation. *** This week I have dwelt in the first three chapters to prepare for my June *Vestry Voices* article. Two truths about God revealed in the first two chapters are that He is the creator of the physical universe and He that cares for all His creation. His final creation is humanity. And, He delegated to people the tasks of cultivating and keeping His creation. (*Genesis 2:15*) *** While all people are to help each other to grow and mature into what God created then to be AND to guard each other from harm, on Mother's Day Sunday I am reminded of how my mother did both of these for me when I was fourteen years old. *** Every summer since I was ten years old, our family went to a Red Sox game as my birthday present. Dad preferred to take Route 9 instead of the Turnpike. As we drove past the Worcester Polytechnic Institute football field, with the WPI sign in front of it, Mom told me I could go to WPI after I graduated from high school. As we talked about this, I had two concerns. Could I qualify for WPI? And, how could we pay for me to go to a private college? She said I was smart enough to be accepted by WPI. My job was to apply myself to learning all I could while in high school. If I did that, I could get scholarships for tuition. She and Dad would work for the rest of the cost needed so I could graduate from WPI. She was planting a vision in me and promising me she would provide what was needed so I could attend and graduate from WPI – if I did my part. Eight years later, I graduated from WPI! All because she cultivated and cared for my future, just as God wanted her to do. *** Our Mother's Day Bible passage describes how people who receive The Good News about The Redeemer King by faith can then thank God by living worthy of His gift to them of His Son. It starts with them living their lives in a way that they cultivate and bear fruit. It ends with them always giving thanks to God for being kept safe in His Light. *** We will discover more as we examine this passage, but the heart of it is:

Bearing fruit and giving thanks for light is worthy of the Lord

I. Church planters pray that the church knows God's will. (Verse 9)

A. From the day they heard Colossian Christians received The Gospel of Christ, they prayed. (*Verses 9a-b*)

1. From the day Paul and his team heard of the faith of Christians in Colosse they acted. (*Verse 9a*)

Paul and Epaphras: People of Colosse heard and responded to The Gospel from Epaphras, a faithful minister of Christ, and Paul's fellow-servant. (*Verses 1-8*) There were many members on Paul's church-planting team from many cities. They informed Paul what was happening in many churches.

2. Paul and his team had not ceased praying for the Christians in the Colossian Church. (*Verse 9b*)

One another: Paul had commanded Christians in Ephesus to be praying for 'all the saints' (those being remade into the image of God, *Ephesians 6:18*). Here he is doing what he commanded of others. James also charged Christians to pray for one another for healing (*James 5:13-16*)

B. So they will all be filled with the knowledge of God's will. (*Verses 9c-d*)

1. Paul wanted them to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. (*Verse 9c*)

God's will and balance: In the beginning God commanded people to both care for and develop His creation. Many times these two commands seem to be in conflict. For example, in order to save lives from the Covid-19 virus many businesses have been shut down. This has resulted in unemployment approaching 15% of the workforce, putting many people on the verge of homelessness. But, if we open up all these businesses too soon there may be more than one hundred thousand additional deaths nationwide. In times like these, God's will is difficult to discern. What is the proper balance of keeping the economy growing AND guarding the lives of people, especially the most vulnerable?

2. God's will is known through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. (*Verse 9d*)

Holy Spirit: In other words, when faced with difficult life and death decisions, Christians need to ask that The Holy Spirit would guide them to properly apply the inspired Word in their specific situation.

II. Four ways of pleasing The Lord and giving thanks to The Father who has rescued us from darkness and brought forgiveness of sins. (Verses 10-14)

A. Four ways to walk worthy of The Lord. (*Verses 10-12*)

Worthy: When the prayers of Paul and his team for knowing God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding are answered they will live lives (walk) worthy of The Lord. (*Verse 10a*) Paul then describes four ways to walk worthy so as to please The Lord in all they do.

1. They are bearing fruit in every good work. (*Verse 10b*)

Cultivate fruit: Just as the first people God created were to cultivate the fruit in the Garden of Eden, Christians are to cultivate fruit in the lives of other people through their good works done IN The Savior King. The fruit Christians are to cultivate is for other people to turn from their own ways to God's ways. In other words, by their witness in deeds and words, Christians are to help others to know God's will for them in every way: from humbling themselves to confess their need of God to forgive them, to discovering what God wants them to do to maximize their service to Him. My mother did this for me, not only to educate me in mathematics at WPI; but, as a Sunday School teacher and lover of God and His Word, that I would come to know, love and serve God.

2. They are to be growing in the knowledge of God. (*Verse 10c*)

Know in order to be like: Jesus said that true life comes only from knowing God (*John 17:1-3*). This knowledge of God flows from Him to people, so people need to be receptive of God's teaching. Knowing God is essential to being re-made in His image to do good works of His compassion and concern while developing His creation according to His will.

3. They are to be strengthened in all His power and strength into all endurance and patience with joy. (*Verse 11*)
God gives the strength to do: God will give strong endurance with joy to all who desire to promote His Kingdom by witnessing to The Savior King, even when they are struggling and suffering.
4. They are giving thanks to The Father who has made them adequate to their portion (assignment) in the inheritance of those being made holy in the light. (*Verse 12*)
Portion of inheritance: God gave His Son so people could be made adequate by humble, surrendered, obedient faith IN Him to receive life, light, salvation and holiness to know and do His will for them. (Trust and Obey)
Gratitude: All people who have received grace from God to walk worthy of The Lord in these four ways should always be thanking Him. They are now able to bear fruit to God's glory by BOTH cultivating and developing AND caring for others as God cares. This fulfills God's original intention for people when He created them: IN their lives in the time and place, and with the people with whom they are living. God will make them fruitful and grateful in His Light.

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B. The Father has rescued from darkness into His Son's Kingdom, IN Whom there is redemption – the forgiveness of sins. (*Verses 13-14*)

1. The Father has delivered us out of the power of darkness. (*Verse 13a*)
Spiritual rescue: Spiritual darkness is our tendency to want to have our own way, as well as rebellious and evil spiritual beings – either working directly on us, or in human institutions to corrupt them to corrupt us.
Fighting darkness: God sent His Son to deliver from darkness. All who have received deliverance from darkness have an obligation to fight darkness with The Father and His Son.
2. And has brought us into The Kingdom of His Son. (*Verse 13b*)

The Father rescued from darkness into His Son's Kingdom

3. IN God's Son we are having redemption: the forgiveness of sins. (*Verse 14*)
Redemption: Redemption means to release someone from distress by the payment of a ransom. When it comes to death as a consequence of choosing my way over God's way, I am released from death through faith in the price The Father paid for my release in the death of His Son.
Pay it forward: We can all pay this price forward by loving others sacrificially as God has loved us in His Son. During the Black Plague, which began in 1347, some thirty percent of the population of Europe died. But in the midst of all these deaths, priests ministered to the people without regard for their own personal safety. As a result the mortality rate for priests was between forty and forty-five percent. Because of their calling from God, they were willing to go from home to home at any time of the day or night to pray for the sick and comfort the dying. In the May-June *Christianity Today* the President and CEO writes, 'We worship a Savior who bids us to die to ourselves, take up our crosses and follow Him. ... Perhaps this is why Christians, for 2,000 years, have been so noteworthy for their sacrificial response to suffering and disease' (p.11).
Cultivating and caring: So, on this Mother's Day, let us emulate good mothers who have followed The Savior to cultivate and bear good fruit in others. And may we care for people enough to share in the price He paid so others could be redeemed, forgiven of their sins. Then they will do God's good, well pleasing and perfect will for them (*Romans 12:1-2*). In this way we will fulfill God's creation mandate for us. The result will be giving thanks to God for being made worthy of The Light of His Son.

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Conclusion: Paul prays with his fellow church planters that Christians in Colosse may know God's will in order to please Him by walking worthy of His gift of salvation from darkness into light and forgiveness. Worthiness is bearing fruit for Him in all they do AND caring for others, always giving thanks for being made adequate for the inheritance of light.

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