

Colossians Part 1

Colossians 1:1-18 select passages set 1

Tuesday Night Bible Study, December 27, 2011

PASSAGE / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ **by the will of God**, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints

THE WILL OF GOD

1. What is an example of a time when your will was not the same as God's will? Did you learn any spiritual lessons through that experience?
2. What are some of the major changes in your will that occurred when you first became a Christian?
3. What are examples of changes in your will that have taken longer to develop?
4. What are some biblical principles to help us better align our will with God's will?

and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: **Grace to you and peace** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5 because of **the hope which is laid up for you in heaven**, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew **the grace of God in truth**;

THE GRACE OF GOD

6. How easy is it for a self-righteous attitude to creep into our thinking and for us to lose touch with the grace of God? What are some of the subtle impacts of this? How does this cause us to drift from God's will?
7. What impact should the grace of God have on our relationships with others? What is an example?
8. What does Scripture mean when it says that we can "fall from grace"? (Galatians 5:4)

7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8 who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. 9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with **the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding**; 10 that you may walk

SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING IN THE WILL OF GOD

5. What is an example of a situation where you had "wisdom and spiritual understanding", a situation where you could see how something ordinary that you did resulted in God working out a greater purpose in the spiritual dimension?

worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

THE WILL OF GOD

"by the will of God..." (1:1)

1. What is an example of a time when your will was not the same as God's will? Did you learn any spiritual lessons through that experience?
2. What are some of the major changes in your will that occurred when you first became a Christian?
3. What are examples of changes in your will that have taken longer to develop?
4. What are some biblical principles to help us better align our will with God's will?

--the essence of God's will is Christ being at the center of everything we do:

--Colossians 3:17: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

--the greatest enjoyment and fulfillment in everything we do is found not in our circumstances but in the reality of Christ being at the center of what we are doing!

--Colossians speaks of Christ as the source of all the "treasures" in everything we do: "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge..." (2:3)

--when our flesh "feels" like going in one direction but it is clear that God's Word indicates that direction is not His will, then we can rest assured that the greatest blessings are in the direction where Christ is the central focus, even though that direction may not be the most appealing to our flesh

--"For we walk by faith not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7)

--Luke 9:23-25: "Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it...'"

--John 10:7-10: "Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. **I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**"

--the ultimate purpose of following Christ is to know Christ and enjoy intimate relationship with Him through His Spirit... In John 17:3-17 Jesus prayed to God the Father for all those who would believe in Him: "And **this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent...** I pray for them... And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them... Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are... But now I come to You, and **these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.** I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth...."**

--1 Thessalonians 4:3-4: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor..."

--when we follow Christ we enjoy the fruits of the Spirit to which nothing compares...

--Ephesians 5:8-10: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

--Galatians 5:22-25: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

--When struggling between our will and God's will it can be helpful to realize that God knows us better than we know ourselves! And what we think we need may not really be what we need!

--Psalm 139:14-16: "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them."

--Not only does God know us better than we know ourselves but He knows the future better than we do!

--one of the greatest insights into the future that we can gain through God's Word is the fact that our ultimate home and ultimate vocation is with Christ after He returns!

--in the words of Colossians, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into **the kingdom of the Son of His love...**" (1:13)

--the kingdom of God... we will "reign" with Christ... both on the new earth in eternity (Revelation 22:5) and on the present earth during the millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:6)!

--the more in touch we are with our future in Christ the more our frustrations about life in the present will be replaced by expectation and eagerness for Christ's return!

--as the second to last sentence of the Bible says, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)

--speaking of timing and God's will... there may be periods of waiting that make it seem like God is absent, but He can be working beneath the surface in preparation for when things will come together in a visible way!

--and in the ultimate big picture of history, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:8-9)

--Hebrews 9:28: "To those **who eagerly wait for Him** He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" – that is, salvation from our mortal bodies and deliverance into our glorified bodies through which we will experience our ultimate destiny!

SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING IN THE WILL OF GOD

“be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (1:9)

5. What is an example of a situation where you had "wisdom and spiritual understanding", a situation where you could see how something ordinary that you did resulted in God working out a greater purpose in the spiritual dimension?

--the kingdom of God is not only a future, physical reality; but it is also a present, invisible reality...

--sometimes on the surface God's will may seem to fall short of our expectations, but through "**wisdom and spiritual understanding**" we can see how the steps of walking in His will can have a major impact in the spiritual dimension!

--**loving others...** in the simple but profound words of Jesus: "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:40)

--Jesus spoke these words about the spiritual dimension of the kingdom in the context of talking about our inheritance of the physical kingdom of God at the time of His return. (read Matthew 25:31-40)

--**prayer...** the book of Revelation seems to indicate that our prayers are an integral component of the final seventh seal judgment... (Revelation 8:1-5, see also John MacArthur's explanation in his sermon "The Seventh Seal" message 66-31)

--it appears that some aspect of our prayers materializes into the judgment described in Revelation that is poured out on the earth to liberate the world from Satan's illegitimate rule on the earth!

--when spiritual warfare tries to distract us from prayer, Satan may be indirectly trying to interfere with the final judgment on him that is connected to our prayers!

THE GRACE OF GOD

“grace to you and peace” (1:2) ... “since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth” (1:6)

--the contrast between the self-righteous culture of the religious leaders of Israel and Jesus choosing Matthew the tax collector to be a disciple helps put God's grace in perspective...

--Matthew 9:9-11: "As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow Me," He told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

--excerpt from John MacArthur sermon entitled "The Scandal of Grace":

[Choosing Matthew] is a scandalous, scandalous act on the part of Jesus that shows His total disregard for religious, societal sensibilities. What teacher who calls himself the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, who is holy and righteous would ever, ever, ever call into His company a tax collector. One historian says, "The Mishnah and the Talmud, though written later, register

scathing judgments on the tax collector, lumping the tax collector with thieves and murderers. The touch of a tax collector rendered a house unclean. Jewish contempt of tax collectors is epitomized in the ruling that Jews could lie to tax collectors with impunity. ... So, Levi Matthew, the traitor, Levi Matthew, the extortioner, the robber, the outcast, the greedy, abusive sinner became a disciple and an apostle and a writer of the history of Jesus. Lost a career, gained eternal glory. Lost material possessions, gained heaven. Lost earthly security, gained heavenly inheritance. He knew what the Jewish leaders didn't know. He knew that it was for men and women like him that Jesus had come to bring salvation. Well, the call of Matthew leads to the community of sinners. Let's carry the story forward in verse 15, "And it happened that he was reclining at the table in his house," that's in Matthew's house. "And many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples, for there were many of them and they were following them." Matthew now is filled with gratitude. He is thrilled about what the Lord has done in his life and he's going to have a banquet.

[picture the contrast... the long awaited Messiah of Israel is having dinner at the "unclean" house of a tax collector with all the people who the Jewish religious leaders viewed with utter contempt and scorn! The grace of God through Jesus absolutely turned the religious leader's world view upside down!]

This is a lavish, long, drawn-out, big-time feast to honor Jesus Christ. He has a big house so even as a little mokhes [the type of tax collector that Matthew was], you can make a lot of money. Luke 5:29 says it was his house, a large house. And they reclined. That's the posture for a long, relaxed meal. We don't know about that. We eat fast, standing up, moving. This was another world, another time. So they all reclined. Literally on an elbow eating with the other hand, feet away from the table. A lavish feast to honor Jesus and to hear Him and to hear the story of forgiveness and to have Matthew give his testimony to all his friends. And, of course, those were the only people who would come because those are the only people he could associate with because he was an outcast. He invited them all. So what you had here was all the dishonorable, despised rejects of Galilee, everybody in the tax world. ... people who would never get to heaven, never could get to heaven and through Jesus they did and the self-righteous did not.

--think about the expectation of the religious establishment and how far off base they were! They were looking for the Messiah in one direction but He came from a completely different direction!

6. How easy is it for a self-righteous attitude to creep into our thinking and for us to lose touch with the grace of God? What are some of the subtle impacts of this? How does this cause us to drift from God's will?
7. What impact should the grace of God have on our relationships with others? What is an example?
8. What does Scripture mean when it says that we can "fall from grace"? (Galatians 5:4)

--Jesus calls us to turn from sin and follow Him, but when we stumble into sin God's grace is always one step away...

--Hebrews 4:16: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

--2 Timothy 2:1: "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

--God doesn't expect perfection but rather humility and a sense of brokenness because of our sinful nature...

--Psalm 51:16-17: "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise."

--a clear view of the holiness of God leads to an acute awareness of our sinfulness...

--when Isaiah saw a vision of God he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5)

--the apostle John had a similar reaction when he saw a vision of Christ: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.'" (Revelation 1:17-18)

--losing sight of God's grace and drifting into a self-righteous attitude is to "fall from grace..."

--Galatians 5:4-6: "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have **fallen from grace**. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for **the hope of righteousness** by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."

--"the hope of righteousness" (Galatians 5:5) is one aspect of "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven" (Colossians 1:5)

--Matthew 5:6: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."