

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Recognizing God's Will In Order To Walk It Out

by Dan Trygg

“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, unto every pleasing-thing, in every good work bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Colossians 1:9-14

The entire purpose for being filled with the recognition of God's will is so that we might walk it out in our lives. That may seem to be obvious, but too often we never actually get around to that part. We are interested in what God may have for us, ...maybe “curious” would be a more apt description for our “interest”..., but we are not necessarily devoted to doing it at all costs. **Some of us like to live in our heads, entertaining ourselves with dreams, visions, and talk concerning what we *could* do, but our actions do not indicate that we are particularly investing much toward the fulfillment of those noble ideas.** We fill our lives with day-to-day activities of job and home responsibilities, and entertainment, ...and maybe a number of religious activities..., but **are we really devoting ourselves with serious intent to discover and walk out the will of God for our lives?**

In God's mind, we are saints, “holy ones”, ones separated from common purposes and dedicated toward a special purpose. We are supposed to be dedicated to follow Him, and do His will.

He has dedicated Himself to us, and with Him this devotion meant action, ...drastic action. Coming Himself into human society, Jesus devoted Himself to our redemption, living and dying to make possible our escape from slavery to darkness. **He continues to devote Himself to us**, functioning as our High Priest and Mediator. We are always present in His thoughts, and He is working to prepare a place for us.

What about us? Are we devoting ourselves to Him with such determined intent? Are we sold out for this as our highest purpose?

Verses 9-12 in Colossians 1 are all one sentence in Greek. The main idea is that Paul had not ceased praying that the believers there “might be filled with the recognition of God's will ...to walk worthily of the Lord unto every pleasing-thing...”. The remainder of the phrases further describe or “flesh out” how that is to come about, or what it is to look like, in general terms. **The kernel of it, however, is that they would know God's will in order to do it.** Before we look into that more deeply, there is another clarification that needs to be made. **The focus of Paul's thought is that they might learn to recognize the Lord's desire and intent, and to obediently walk that out, on an episode-by-episode basis.** How do I know that? Because both the verb, “y'all might be filled with the recognition of His will”, and the infinitive, “to walk”, are in a form in Greek that indicates a point-in-time action, not ongoing action. Also, the focal point of the prepositional phrase that follows, “unto everything pleasing”, is singular, not plural. Paul is not saying “unto all pleasing things”, rather the force of the Greek is “unto each pleasing thing”. If we put these pieces together, it seems that **what Paul has on his heart is that they would learn to recognize what God wants them to do in the various scenarios that life presents, and that they would walk that out in each situation in a manner consistent with His will and character.** The point is, however, that **they did not need to know all of God's will, ...just what needs to be done in each circumstance as it comes up.** This is very freeing, because instead of trying to figure out the total picture regarding God's will, **all that Paul was asking for them was that they could learn to discern and respond to one piece at a time**, i.e., to discover and walk toward the pleasing thing in each circumstance in which God desires to direct them. To expect that we could recognize God's will for all circumstances would be unrealistic. Even if we thought it was a possibility, imagine how long it would take to know God well enough to begin to anticipate what He might want to do in every conceivable situation! Add to that the fact that our perspective is so limited, at times, and you can easily see that **it truly is impossible for us to know His mind perfectly at all times, apart from some ongoing communication from Him.** Thus, we find that Paul's language here reflects the reality of our need to know the mind of God, not from our mastery of Scripture itself (though that will be a useful resource), nor our experiences of Him in the past, but from a situational communication from Him. **We are left with the same kind of relationship of dependence that**

Jesus Himself had, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing from Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner” (Jn. 5:19).

Where will obedience to God’s will lead us? Into every “pleasing thing”. Most translations take this to mean the things that are pleasing to God, ...and certainly they *would be* if they are those things He Himself desires us to do. Without question, **the verbal form of this word is used most often of “pleasing” someone else, by doing something that they find helpful, positive or commendatory** (cf. Matt. 14:6; Acts 6:5; Rom. 8:8; 15:1-3; I Cor. 7:32-34; Gal. 1:10; I Thess. 2:15; 4:1). In this verse in Col 1, however, we have an adjectival form, not a verbal form. It is left open who might be the one who is pleasing the other. **The “thing” itself is pleasing**. This “thing” could be an activity or behavior that brings commendation, or it could be a gift from God that we praise Him for. The Greek is capable of being understood in either way. While our focus should be on living to please God, in response to His great mercy on our behalf (Rom. 12:1). I would suggest, however, that **the things that are “pleasing” to God will also be “pleasing” to us**.

The enemy’s greatest ploy is to convince us that following God will not be in our best interest. Going way back to the Garden of Eden, he has cast doubt upon God’s character and motives for leading us as He does. He tried to convince Eve that if they followed God, they would miss out on the best that life had to offer, and that they would be stuck in a boring, self-limiting existence in servitude to Him. The truth was, however, that Satan was the one who came to steal, kill and destroy (Jn. 10:10), and he succeeded in defrauding our first parents of their inheritance, and enslaving them in sin. **Throughout history, the enemy has promoted immediate gratification to the self-seeking nature of people to expand the bondage, oppression and violence produced by sin’s tendency to “love things and use people”**, all the while using these heavy consequences to portray God as being unfair, harsh, and unresponsive. As we read the Scriptures, however, we see that from the beginning God has been actively involved in humankind to not only provide a Deliverer, but also to teach those who would listen to Him practical ways to live that will produce health, peace and contentment.

In opposition to the enemy’s claims, God’s purpose has always been for our blessing and well-being. In opposition to the heavy weight and damage repeatedly caused by sin, we find in I Jn. 5:3 that God’s commandments “are not burdensome”. The word, “burdensome” can mean “too heavy, oppressive, difficult to bear” (e.g., Matt. 23:4), or “vicious, cruel, or savage” (e.g., Acts 20:29). In contrast to the enemy’s claims, Jesus came to liberate the heavy laden, ...to give them rest, and to assign them a load that is appropriate for their strength, and fits their abilities (Lk. 4:16-21; Matt. 11:28-30). He is gentle, a Shepherd who watches over and cares for His sheep in a way that invokes trust in those who understand what He is doing (Jn 10:10-15). Unfortunately, to sheep that have been abused in the past, His reaching out to stroke them may be misinterpreted as raising a hand to beat them, and they may cower away. The tricky thing about this is that the defense mechanism and fear are reinforced, even though there was no actual threat at all. **Somehow, the Shepherd must convince us of His trustworthiness, so that we abandon our defense mechanisms and sinful strategies (Eph. 4:17-24), so that we can come to experience the blessings of His skillful shepherding**. At times, He must lead us through dry places, places where we will need perseverance and patience (Col. 1:11), so that we may come into richer, more verdant pasture. Again, to the short-sighted, or the weary, this may seem harsh and unfair, but He will not push us beyond what we are capable of in Him, and eventually His wisdom will be vindicated. **Mark well each blessing and each victory, so that you may learn to trust the Master**.

The first step, then, is to **believe that God has some “pleasing thing” that He desires to help us discover** in specific circumstances. Next, we must **learn to seek Him for an understanding of His will**, and what it takes to implement it. Then, **we must see ourselves as partners with God in bringing about these blessings**, for they often will not come into our experience, or the experience of others, unless we take an active role in bringing them about. **Then we are to “walk out” whatever instructions God may give to us in that situation**, in order to see the “pleasing thing” come to pass. **This is the dividing line between intellectual belief and faith. Faith is belief grown into trust that produces action**. As Ephesians 2:10 says, God has prepared *us*, ...and He has prepared *the good works* He intends for us to do, and *He* will bring them into our lives, ...but then *we* are to walk in them. As we are obedient, we will see God at work through us, and we will discover that “pleasing thing” God intends for us to discover. **We will be bearing fruit, and through this experience, we will be adding to our experiential-knowledge of God, by experiencing His Spirit empowering us as we partner with Him**. This deepens our faith, and brings God glory. There is nothing more “pleasing” than that.