

Paul's Pattern For Prayer
Colossians 1:9-11
Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow with me. We're going to look at every phrase through these words, beginning in verse 9.

"For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

The story is told of an African tribe where each believing Christian there in the village had a secret place they walked to each morning to spend time alone with God in prayer. The path that led to his place of prayer was cleared by the native. They would actually wear out a path. Every morning in this village, a different believer would get up and walk out their path to their spot in the jungle where they would pray. Whenever someone was neglecting their prayer life, it was easy to be able to say to them, "I see that grass is growing on your prayer trail." I love that.

So my question to you is: Is there grass growing on your prayer trail? Have you forgotten to spend time in prayer?

There is no grass growing on Paul's prayer trail. Paul was a man who preached the Gospel, but also he was a man who prayed. What we have here in Colossians is what is called the "prison prayer" of Paul. Actually in Ephesians and Colossians, Paul prays. They are called the "prison prayers," and the walls of Paul's prison could not hinder the power of Paul's prayers. It could be that Paul did as much for the kingdom of God in his praying in prison as he did in his preaching outside of prison.

In Colossians 4:2, Paul tells us to "continue in prayer and watch in the same." Paul was a man who not only told us to pray, but he was a man who actually prayed.

I love what R. Kent Hughes said. He said, "Paul's prison prayers are a beautifully constructed tapestry, which make a perfect model for the fabric of our own prayers." I agree. So what we have is a tapestry of prayer that actually becomes a model or a pattern, whereby we can learn to intercede and pray for others.

Now the prayer runs from at least verse 9 down to verse 14. So we're not going to cover it all now. Actually verse 9 to verse 20 is one long sentence in the Greek. Verses 3 to 8 is one long sentence in the Greek, and verses 9 to 20 is one long sentence. So it's hard to stop or break it up. We'll finish up the prayer of thanksgiving next time.

I want to give you six facts about Paul's prison prayer as recorded here in Colossians 1:9.

Notice first of all, its cause, in verse 9: “For this cause.” What caused Paul to pray? We have to back up to verses 6-7 to answer that. Referring to the Gospel—the end of verse 5—and then into verse 6, he said, “Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and brings forth fruit, as it does also in you, since the day you heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth. As you also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is for you, a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.” And then he doesn’t skip a beat and says, “For this cause.” He is saying, “Because Epaphras brought to us the report of your love in the Spirit—because of your faith, because of your hope, because of your love—we cease not to pray for you.”

Not only for its cause, but also notice its unity: “We pray for you.” Who’s the “we” here in verse 9? The “we” is a reference to Paul, Timothy and Epaphras. In chapter 4, verse 12, Paul says concerning Epaphras, who was their pastor, they “labored fervently for them in prayers.”

Then thirdly, notice its urgency in verse 9: “since the day we heard it.”

Then notice, fourthly, its consistency in verse 9: “do not cease to pray.” Paul continually, ongoing, habitually prayed for the believers in Colosse.

Notice then, fifthly, that it was intercessory, verse 9: “for you.” He was actually praying for others he had never met. Paul didn’t start the church in Colosse. Paul had never been to the church in Colosse, but he was praying for them; he was interceding for them.

Then sixthly, and lastly, notice its intensity: “and to desire.” I believe that’s a God-given desire; that the Holy Spirit put that desire in Paul’s heart, and he was praying in the energy and in the power of the Spirit.

Here is the question we need to ask: What was it that Paul actually prayed for the Colossians? How many petitions are there? There are two. Even though it runs from verses 9-14—some feel all the way to verse 20—there are only two petitions. The first petition is for spiritual intelligence, and the second one is for practical obedience. Those are the two things Paul prayed for them: to be spiritually knowledgeable—spiritual intelligence—and then to put it into shoe leather—practical obedience.

Paul’s prayer develops around two purpose clauses. Both are introduced by the connective “that.” In verse 9 we read, “...that...”—that’s the first purpose clause—“...you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Then notice verse 10: “that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” So “that might be filled with the knowledge,” verse 9, and “that you might walk worthy,” verse 10.

I believe the second purpose is actually a result of the first purpose; that the knowledge of God’s will results in the obedience to God’s Word. Knowing God will lead to an obedient lifestyle or a worthy walk. When we know God’s will, then we can walk in God’s ways.

Let’s look at the first petition in verse 9. Paul prayed for their spiritual intelligence. “...that you

might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Now I want you to remember why Paul wrote to the Colossians; it was because false teachers or heretics had come into the church and were telling the Christians that Jesus wasn’t enough. Jesus wasn’t sufficient; they needed more.

“You need knowledge that only we can impart. We want to initiate you into our secret club. A ‘deeper life club’ we call it. If you join our group, we’ll give you information that Epaphras hasn’t told you or Paul hasn’t told you. All that simple Gospel of Jesus—we want to take you deeper. We want to give you a fuller understanding. We want you to have fullness and knowledge that no one else possesses.”

Their teaching would eventually grow into a heresy known as “Gnosticism,” which is with us to this very day. The word “Gnosticism” is from the Greek word “ginosko” or “to know.” It purports this idea that you grow spiritually through a superior knowledge.

“And only we have this knowledge, and we’re going to take you deeper with our knowledge and with our information.” And it led to all kinds of false ideas and a false lifestyle. So it was the early stage of Gnosticism.

A couple of buzz words these false teachers came on the scene with were “fullness” and “knowledge.”

“You don’t have everything. Jesus is not enough.”

We’ve titled this series in Colossians “Complete in Christ.” Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead. All the wisdom of God dwells in Christ. When you have Christ, you have everything you need. He is sufficient, and He is to have preeminence; that you’re really ship-shape, and you’re ready to sail if you have Jesus Christ. Don’t let anyone tell you that you need dietary laws added to your relationship with Jesus Christ. Or you need rules and regulations. Or you need a mystical experience of a deeper life. Or you need Greek philosophy to add to your Christianity. Or you need this or you need that. The false teachers had a mixture of Jewish legalism, eastern mysticism and Greek philosophy. It was basically saying that Jesus wasn’t enough.

Notice that even when Paul prays, Paul is actually coming against the false teaching. “That you might be filled” is one of the heretic’s expressions. Paul wants them to be filled with the knowledge of God found in His Word.

Paul had three specific goals in his quest for spiritual intelligence. Number one is that they might be filled with God, verse 9. When Paul says in verse 9 that “you might be filled,” in the Greek it’s called the passive voice. When the New Testament was written in Greek, there were all kinds of grammar involved. “You might be filled” actually means “let the Spirit of God fill you.” You can’t do it yourself. There is a lot of truth there. You can’t fill yourself with the Spirit of God. God fills you with His Holy Spirit. It’s important that you understand that means that you will be filled by God. The word “filled” there means to be “controlled by.” You’re not getting more

of God's Spirit; you're being controlled by the knowledge that you have of God, as the Spirit fills your life.

Spiritual truth can only be imparted by the Spirit of God and can only be received and understood by a believer in Jesus, by one who has the Holy Spirit. Paul mentions this in 1 Corinthians 12. He says, "the natural man." Back in the hippie days, that was a hippie, but in the Bible, it means an unsaved person. You remember "natural man" or "natural mama." They were hippies. You don't shave or take a bath. You eat grass and wild seeds, smoke marijuana and lay in the fields kind of thing. That's not what the Bible means by "natural man." It's talking about the unsaved person. Natural man because they're not spiritual; they don't have the Spirit of God. Paul says they can't understand the things of God. They really have no capacity or receptivity to receive or understand the things of God.

Years ago I had a subscription to Time magazine. I used to get it every week for many years. They would actually send a gift once a year. They would thank me for my subscription, and they would send me a gift. One year they sent me a radio. I thought, What a cool gift! It was cordless and you put batteries in it. I planned to take it camping. I bought batteries and put them in the radio. It had AM-FM, an antenna, volume, a dial to change stations, but it had no power-on switch. I thought, No wonder they're giving these away! I kid you not! I'm still upset about this. I almost lost my salvation over this radio. I got the batteries in it, I'm already to switch it on and there's no on switch! Who makes a radio with no on switch? Time magazine. I was freaking out for hours. "Why didn't they make an on switch? How can I turn it on? What good is a radio that you can't turn on?" It just didn't work.

The natural man doesn't have an on switch; the natural man can't receive the message of God, the things of God, the Spirit of God. There's no receptor, there's no antenna, there's no receptivity. That's why Jesus said, "You must be born again." The minute you're born again, the Spirit of God comes to live inside of you, and you have that capacity that Paul says now to be "filled by God." So knowledge that will control your life.

Secondly, that they "be filled with the knowledge of God's will." Notice it as it develops here; not only be filled, but "be filled with the knowledge of God's will," specifically. The word "knowledge" in the Greek is the word "epignosis." I just mentioned the false teachers as gnostics, ginosko. This is an interesting word; it's "epic gnosis" or "epic ginosko," which means "a clear knowledge" or a "deeper knowledge" or a "fuller, overflowing knowledge." This knowledge is foundational to all Christian character and conduct.

What is it a knowledge of? It is a knowledge of God's will; His will. The will of God is the whole counsel of God found in the Word of God and centers in the Son of God. You cannot grow spiritually without the Spirit of God showing you the will of God found in the Word of God. This is where Paul starts his prayer. What a great place to start. He prayed that they "be filled with the knowledge of God's will," and that will is found in God's Word.

Did you know that you can't grow as a Christian without the knowledge of the Bible? If you're

not reading your Bible, you're not growing as a Christian. You can't grow apart from the Word of God in an ever-increasing knowledge of who God is. An unknown god can neither be trusted nor served. When you acquaint yourself with God, then the Bible says you can be at peace. You can learn to trust Him. You can learn to serve Him. You can learn to love Him.

But we are ignorant of God, and we need to grow in the knowledge of God as it's revealed in His Word. So we need to pray. We need to read the Bible; we need to study God's Word. We need to get on our knees to talk to God and then open our Bibles to let God talk to us. When we pray, we're talking to God; when we read the Bible, God is talking to us.

I want you to notice also that they be filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. By the way, the wisdom and the understanding is spiritual; that's why you have to have the Spirit of God, and you find this wisdom in the Word of God. The word "wisdom" there is "sophia." It's what we believe. The word "understanding" means how we behave. Did you know that what you believe determines how you behave?

This is why it's so important for Christians to think Biblically. Think Biblically about life, about your marriage—moms, about your parenting, about your children. Think Biblically about your job. About all of life; everything should be filtered through the lens of Scripture. It's what we call a "Christian world view." Your political view. All that we see in the world today should be filtered through the lens of Scripture. We need to think Biblically. And we'll only do that if we pray and study and read and meditate on God's Word. He gives us wisdom—how we believe—and He gives us understanding—how we should behave. This is where we start; this is foundational. Before he puts it into shoe leather in the next petition, Paul starts with spiritual understanding.

Here's the second petition, in verses 10-11: Paul prayed for practical obedience. It's not enough to know God's Word; we have to "walk worthy." Paul prays for a worthy walk: "that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy." So Paul says that he wants you to increase in knowledge, and he wants you to walk worthy.

What does Paul mean by a "worthy walk"? Let me tell you what he does not mean. Paul's not talking about working for your salvation. Do you know that the Bible teaches very clearly that "By grace you have been saved, through faith. Yet it is not of yourself; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." No one is going to go to heaven because of anything they have done. No one goes to heaven because they're good. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There is no one righteous; no, not one." God is perfectly holy and righteous, and we are sinful.

You say, "Well, what if you pray a lot? What if you get baptized? What if you get confirmed? If you try to live a good life and be nice to people? Will God let you go to heaven?"

He's not going to let you go to heaven on that basis. The best you can do is still going to fall

short of God's standards. The Bible says that our best "is like filthy rags" in the sight of a holy God. You can do everything you think you can do to go to heaven, and it still falls short.

So what does God do? He sends His Son, Jesus Christ. He was born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life. He died on a cross voluntarily as a substitutionary death; He paid for our sins. He was buried and rose from the dead. He ascended back into heaven, and now whoever believes in Him and trusts in Him and puts their faith in Him will be given His righteousness. It's not just that "I believe in Jesus." Jesus gives me His righteousness and makes me fit for heaven. God has made us fit, and He has redeemed us by the blood of the Cross. And He's forgiven our sins. When Paul here says to "walk worthy," he's not saying to try to be good enough to get to heaven.

Then what is Paul saying here? Let me define it from the text itself. I want you to see what a worthy walk is. First of all, a worthy walk is that which is pleasing to God. Notice it in verse 10: "unto all pleasing." In other words, it's a life lived to please God.

Do you know that you can actually cause God to smile? You can live in such a way that causes God to smile. You mothers know that when your kids act up, it puts a frown on your face. Sometimes you can correct them with just a look. But as a child of God, you want to be pleasing to God. You want to honor God and please God. You want God to smile on you.

I actually believe that as a Christian, your primary goal in life is to please God. That should be your driving motivation. If you're a husband, you're going to please God when you love your wife. If you're a wife, you're going to please God when you submit to your husband. If you're a child, you're going to please God and cause Him to smile when you're obedient to your parents. Think about that: kids obedient to their parents! Wow! It's in the Bible. "Honor your father and your mother..."—which is the first commandment with a promise—"...that it may be well with you; that you may live long upon the earth." If you don't want God to take you out, you'd better obey your parents. When we do that, it pleases God.

I got saved right out of high school. I was still a teenager, but I gave my heart to Jesus. Before I was saved, I just wanted to be cool. Remember that when you were in high school? Just as long as I'm cool. I don't care if I get good grades. I don't care if I graduate. I don't care if my parents like me. I just want to be cool. I want to sit in the cool spot with the cool people on the quad. I want to go to the cool parties. I want everybody to think I'm cool.

But when I became a Christian, I realized how vain that was, how empty that was, how foolish that was. Then the motivation took over my life and I just wanted to please God. And I found out that pleasing God made me uncool. My friends didn't like me, and I didn't get invited to the parties anymore. I couldn't hang out with the cool people, because now I'm a Christian geek. But the new motivation that took over my life was I don't care. God's smiling, and that's all that matters to me. God's pleased with me, and if I please the Lord, I'm not that concerned about pleasing others. As a pastor, my motivation isn't to please you. If my pleasing the Lord pleases you, that's great. I don't live daily thinking, What can I do to make the people at the church

happy? I've had people ask me that.

I've had people ask, "Oh, Pastor Miller, how do you keep all those people in your church happy?"

"I don't." There's only one person I need to make happy, and that's God. If I'm making the Lord happy, that's all that matters. That's what should motivate us, and that's what Paul's praying for here. He's praying for a "worthy walk" that brings pleasure to God.

Then the second aspect of a worthy walk is that it's fruitful. It's a fruitful walk. Notice verse 10: "being fruitful in every good work." Are you a fruitful Christian? Not a fruity Christian but a fruitful Christian. I saw a bumper sticker once that said God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts. I like that. There are a lot of religious nuts out there, but what God wants is spiritual fruit. That's what Paul is praying for.

In John 15, Jesus tells us how to have spiritual fruit. He says, "I am the vine and you are the branches. If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. Whoever keeps My commandments abides in Me."

So how do we bear fruit? By abiding in Jesus. How do we abide in Jesus? By reading God's Word, through prayer and by obedience. This is what Paul is praying for; that we pray, we read the Word and we are obedient to His Word and our lives bear fruit. The imagery there—the metaphor of fruit—speaks of a fruit tree; trees bearing fruit.

One thing about a tree is that it has the potential to bear fruit year after year after year after year. Sometimes over a period of years the fruit will become bigger and the trees stronger and will bear more fruit. This is in opposition to wheat or corn or grains. You plant them, they grow and you harvest them, and they're done; you have to replant them so they can grow again. You plant a field of corn, the corn grows, you pull the corn off the stalks, and what do you have? A bunch of dead stalks. You have to plant the corn all over again. But we're not wheat or corn or grain. We're trees.

Psalms 1 tells us that we're "planted by the rivers" and our "leaf will not wither." Everything we do will prosper. I believe that even in old age you can continue to bear fruit for the glory of God. That's my word of encouragement for old folks today, of whom I am one. To think that in my lifetime I can bear more fruit and more fruit and more fruit for the kingdom of God and for the glory of God—it amazes me. You're a tree planted in God's Word. You're spending time in prayer. Your leaves flourish, and you're bearing fruit. And in that fruit are seeds for more fruit and for more trees. They're boxing it up and shipping it out, and it's going all around the world—the fruit that you're bearing as you walk with the Lord and grow. So it's a fruitful walk as well as a pleasing walk.

Then thirdly, it is a growing walk. Notice verse 10. Walking pleasing to the Lord means that you are growing. It says, "increasing in the knowledge of God." Why does Paul mention knowledge again? Because he knew we can't grow without growing in our knowledge of God. You cannot

grow as a Christian without a knowledge of God's Word.

Why do I preach the Bible? Why do I have you open your Bible? Why do we read the verse and go back over it, each phrase, and explain what the Bible means by what it says? Because the Bible is God's Word. It's alive and powerful. It's not my sermon that's going to cause you to grow; it's God's Word. It's the Spirit of God using the Word of God transforming the child of God into the image of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. I believe in God's Word, and I believe God's Word will change your life; that it will produce fruit in your life.

Paul mentions the fruit of the Spirit as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control." Those are the fruits that will be manifest in your life, including the fruit of others coming to Christ. Others will be blessed by your life in Christ. It has to be an ever-increasing knowledge.

Paul, in Philippians 3:10, after 30 years of walking with the Lord and being a Christian said, "that I may know Him."

I think, Paul, you've been a Christian for 30 years! And you make a statement like that? "...that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection...being made conformable unto His death." After 30 years he still wants to know God? Yes.

"I want to know Him deeper. I want to know Him fuller. I want to know Him with more power in my life." This is what Paul's praying for: a knowledge and a walk that is pleasing and fruitful.

Fourthly, and lastly, a "worthy walk" is a powerful walk. I love this in verse 11: "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power." Don't you love those words? "Strengthened," "might" and "power." These are real manly words. But then notice what Paul goes on to say: "unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." It almost seems anticlimactic.

"Like, dude, couldn't you throw a little more razzmatazz in there? How about some healing? How about some miracles? How about some visions and some prophecies? Supernatural manifestations? What's this patience stuff?" I don't like that word. Longsuffering—no thank you. I'm into power.

You see how Paul starts way up here with the knowledge and the information, and he ends up way down here with the practical Christian living? You know, if your theology and your doctrine are so high and heady that your feet don't touch the ground, it's false doctrine. If your doctrine gives you a big head rather than a burning heart, it's false doctrine.

Warren Wiersbe said, "In my pastoral ministry, I have met people who have become intoxicated with studying the 'deeper truths' of the Bible. Usually they have been given a book or introduced to some man's teaching, and before long, they get so smart they become dumb. The deeper truths they discover only deter them from practical Christian living. Instead of getting a burning heart and devotion to Christ, they get a big head, and they start creating problems in their homes and churches. All Bible truth is practical; it's not theoretical. If you are

growing in your knowledge, we would also be growing in the grace of God.” How important that is.

If you’re just getting a big head with information, but it’s not transforming lives, it’s not transforming how you live—if you know theology, but you’re not becoming a better husband and loving your wife, it’s not Bible doctrine. If you’re getting a knowledge of God’s Word, but you’re not becoming a better wife or a mother or a woman of God, it’s not sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is health doctrine.

In the New Testament when Paul writes to Titus, the pastor, Paul says, “Speak the things which become sound doctrine.” That word “sound” in the Greek is a medical term. It actually means “healthy,” “health giving,” “life giving.” It brings health and life; “sound doctrine.” Right teaching brings health to your life, to your home, to your marriage. Being strengthened by God’s power.

Now, again, look at verse 11. This word “strengthened” is in the passive voice. It could be rendered “being strengthened.” In other words, letting God’s Spirit strengthen you. This is what he said in Ephesians 3:16: “...strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.” And then in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me.”

“I can do all things”? I’ve heard people abuse that statement. I’ve heard preachers say “all things” includes money; how to get rich. Is that what Paul had in mind? Does “all things” mean that I could swim across the Atlantic Ocean? Does “all things” mean that I can “run faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive”? No. I believe that statement means that I can do everything that God calls me to do in His Word and tells me to do in His Word.

Do you know that God doesn’t tell you to do something without also giving you the strength to do it? Again, if you are a husband, the Bible says, “Husbands, love your wives.”

You go, “Well, that was written before my wife was born. I’m convinced that if my wife was around when Paul wrote that, he would have said, ‘We’d better not put that in the Bible.’”

I don’t think so. If the Bible says, “Wives, submit to your husbands,” God can give you the strength to do that. I know it’s hard; I know he can be a dufus.

You say, “I don’t think Paul knew my husband; he wouldn’t have written that.” No.

If the Bible says that we are to be pure and holy and that we should live lives that please God and resist temptation, then God gives us the strength to do that. If God tells us to “train up our children in the way they should go,” then we can do that with His help. God actually tells children to be obedient to their parents. Children can do that. So “I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me.”

In verse 11 when he says, “strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power,” the word “power” there means “dunamis.” We get our word “dynamic” from that. Power for what? Power to be patient, power to be longsuffering and power to do it all with joy. And you might

add, verse 12, power to be thankful, to have a thankful heart.

Notice in verse 11 that the power comes into our lives for “patience” and for “longsuffering.” What do these words mean? Patience doesn’t mean passive. It doesn’t mean you’re mellow. It doesn’t mean that you just kind of kick back and let everything kind of flow. The word “patience” means to “remain under.” It conveys the idea of endurance. Some translations render that “endurance.” It means a “steadfast endurance” in circumstances.

Don’t you hate circumstances? Don’t you hate it when you have one of those days in which nothing goes right? Murphy’s Law is enacted; everything that can go wrong is going wrong. It’s one of those days in which nothing goes right. The circumstances start to irritate you. Or maybe you’re going through a sickness, or maybe you just experienced a loss of a job or maybe a broken relationship. Or maybe a bereavement; you’ve lost somebody you love. You’re in circumstances that are difficult, hard or dark.

You know what patience is? It’s the ability to persevere. It’s the ability to get up every day and put one foot in front of the other. It’s the ability to just trust God with the circumstances of your life. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13 that “love is patient and kind.”

Love is also longsuffering. The Spirit of God wants to empower you. And this is how we should pray for our loved ones, pray for our children, pray for other people. Pray that they would have a powerful walk and a fruitful walk and a pleasing walk. That they would walk worthy by being longsuffering. “Longsuffering” means “wrath put far away.” Patience has to do with circumstances—endurance; longsuffering has to do with people.

Wouldn’t it be nice if there were no people? I once saw a Charlie Brown cartoon in which he said, “I love humanity; it’s people I can’t stand.”

Some people say, “They cut me off. They get in line in front of me. They’re mean to me. They’re not nice to me. They don’t invite me to their parties. People bum me out.”

And there have been times when I thought, If I could live on an island by myself, I would be happy. No one to bum me out. No one to get in my way. But we have to learn how to live with people, and that’s what patience is all about. That’s why the Spirit of God has come to give us longsuffering. Longsuffering can also have the idea, in a metaphorical sense, of “long fused.” Do you know people who blow up quickly? They’re “short fused.” You light them and, boom, they go off. They have this little, tiny fuse. You know if you’re lighting dynamite, you want this long fuse. You want to light it and get away. A Christian is to have a long fuse, and we’re not to blow up at these circumstances.

Then I want you to note the last statement that Paul makes: “with joyfulness.” The goal of spiritual intelligence and practical obedience is joy; it’s a fruit of the Spirit. Patience and longsuffering without joy will lead to depression. Joy gives optimism and hope. If you just kind of grit your teeth and resolve to be patient and be longsuffering, you’ll freak out. Paul says that after you have suffered and been patient, you have joy. That’s what sweetens the whole deal!

If you just stoically say, “Okay, I’m going to be patient. I’m going to endure. I’ll be a Christian, but not one of those ‘loving’ kind. I’m a Christian, but I’m not one of those ‘happy’ Christians. They really make me sick; smiling and happy and ‘Praise the Lord’ and all that stuff. It’s disgusting.”

Without joy, you’re a contradiction. Joy is the strength the Lord brings to you. “The joy of the Lord is our strength.” Joy is the flag flown high from the castle of our hearts when the king is in residence. It’s an indication that we have the Lord living in us.

When I get grumpy—believe it or not, sometimes I get grumpy. My wife calls me “Mr. Grumpy.” Then I know that what’s happening is that I’m not filled with the Spirit, under His control. I’m not letting the Word of God control me. I’m not letting the Spirit of God control me. I haven’t prayed. I haven’t taken time to wait on God and let Him fill me with His joy. I’ve lost my patience. I’ve lost my endurance. I want to give up.

Have you ever wanted to give up? Sure you have. Have you ever wanted to quit? Sure you have. Do you know it’s always too soon to quit? Always. You want to keep going? Just tell yourself, “It’s always too soon to quit” over and over. God will give you strength to be patient and longsuffering and to do it with joyfulness.

In conclusion, this part of the prayer shows us there are three things we need to pray for: first, that we would know God through His Word; secondly, that we would obey God by the power of His Spirit; and thirdly, that we would walk worthy of the Lord—pleasingly, fruitfully, growing and powerful.