

Paul's Pattern For Prayer

Colossians 1:9-11

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I want to read our text, only three verses. It's half of the prison prayer; we'll get the rest next week. Beginning in verse 9, Paul says, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." That's the first petition that Paul prayed, ". . . that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,"—and here's the second petition, verse 10—"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

I read a story years ago about an African tribe. They had these little huts that they lived in, and each hut had a trail leading from the hut into the jungle to a spot where they'd go daily and spend time in prayer. They called that trail their "prayer trail." Whenever one of the Christians in the tribe would begin to slack off and not be praying the way he should, the only thing they would say to that person to get their attention was, "There's grass on your prayer trail."

When I think of Paul the Apostle, he had no grass on his "prayer trail." Do you have grass on your "prayer trail"? Have you ceased getting up and spending time alone with God and talking to God in prayer? If Paul was anything, he was a man of prayer. Yes, he was a great theologian, a great missionary, a great preacher, a great evangelist, a great mentor of men and discipler of others, but Paul did all the things he did for Christ because he was a man of prayer. His "prayer trail" was worn clean from going everyday to that place to spend time alone with God.

This prayer is what's called one of Paul's prison prayers. There's a couple of them in Colossians, a couple in Ephesians. Now, remember, Paul writing to the Colossians was writing one of his prison epistles. They involved Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. Paul was writing to them from jail in Rome under house arrest. Paul knew that even though he couldn't be traveling, he couldn't be preaching, he could be praying. You could actually travel the world on your knees in your prayer closet. You can go into your prayer closet and travel around the world by praying, and God's not limited by time or space. Amen? You can touch the world for God. You may not be able to go, but you can spend time in prayer praying for those who have gone in prayer. In Colossians 4:2 Paul mentions that we believers should, "Continue in prayer." There's a lot to say about prayer in the book of Colossians.

R. Kent Hughes says, "Paul's prison prayers are a beautifully constructed tapestry which make a perfect model for the fabric of our own prayers." Sometimes we need to kind of get that as a pattern. Jesus gave us what we call the Lord's prayer, which is actually a pattern for prayer, and Paul's prayers can be used as a pattern for prayers as well.

Let's look at Paul's prayer to the Colossians. It's found in verses 9-14. We're going to spend

two weeks on this prayer in verses 9-14. Tonight, we're going to look at verses 9-11. Just a little footnote for you Bible students out there, verses 9-20 is one long sentence in the Greek. This makes preaching in depth through a book like this difficult because you have to break it up week after week, that's why it's important always to set the context as to the text that you're studying. From verses 9-20, just make a note of that, read that section over and over and meditate on that, it's one long sentence. His prayer folds into what he wants to teach about Jesus Christ. Let's look at Paul's prayer.

Before we begin to unpack the actual prayer petitions, I want to kind of rapid fire look at six characteristics about Paul's prayer. Not all my points will be on the screen tonight, but there'll be more than normal. These six are not on the screen, so listen carefully and take notes. First, we see the cause of Paul's prayer in verse 9, "For this cause." What caused Paul to pray this prayer? Well, if you back up into verses 6-7, he mentions Epaphras who was a fellow servant. He was most likely their pastor, and he had actually brought to Paul the good news of their faith, their hope, their love, how they'd received the gospel, and how it had transformed their lives. In light of that, this little phrase, "For this cause," Paul's joy was overflowing, and he went to his knees and began to intercede for them.

Notice Paul's unity in this prayer. He prayed with others, "For this cause we," so Paul was including himself with Timothy and Epaphras, their pastor. There is power in united prayer. Find someone who can agree with you in prayer. Jesus said, "If two people agree on any one thing, it shall be done unto them." E.M. Bounds has written some great little books on prayer, by the way, if you want to look up some great little booklets on prayer. He said, "Corporate prayer like drops of water come together to create a mighty ocean which defies resistance." I love that. That's why it's important that we pray together. Will you pray with me? Will you agree together with me? Get a prayer partner, someone you can text on a daily basis, "Hey, let's pray for one another," and maybe list the prayer requests that you have for one another. Pray together for others, interceding for those who are in need.

Paul also speaks of the urgency in which he prayed, verse 9, " . . . since the day we heard it," so, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it,"—the minute he heard the testimony of them receiving the gospel and their growing in faith, hope, and love, he began to urgently pray for them. Notice its consistency, " . . . do not cease to pray for you," verse 9. He was continually, consistently praying. Sometimes we pray, and then we stop; we pray, and then we stop; we pray, and then we stop. If you're joining us on Sunday morning as we go through the gospel of Luke, most of Christ's teaching on prayer is found in the gospel of Luke. Luke emphasizes the humanity of Christ, so we're going to get a lot of parables and teaching and instruction on prayer in Luke's gospel, so I'm excited about that as we go through on Sunday morning.

In one of the parables in Luke 18, he said, " . . . men ought always to pray, and not to faint." I've often thought that we faint because we don't pray. We get weary, discouraged, and weak because we don't pray. In the book of James it says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." Sometimes we ask and we do not receive because we ask for our own lust or desires, but we cease praying and many times we get weak and discouraged in our walk with the Lord.

Notice also this prayer was an intercessory prayer. Notice the little phrase in verse 9, “. . . for you.” He’s writing to the Colossians, reminding them that he’s praying with Timothy and Epaphras, “. . . for you.” This is what we call intercessory prayer. When we pray, we should pray for others. We should go outside of our own needs. In the Lord’s Prayer, there are actually no personal pronouns, “Give me, give me, give me.” The Lord’s Prayer is, “Give us this day our daily bread. Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from evil.” We should be including others when we pray intercessory prayers for them.

Notice the prayer’s intensity, “. . . and to desire.” This desire that Paul had for prayer was given to him by the Holy Spirit. All these six points that I just said are from the first half of verse 9, so you see how loaded this prayer is. It was an intense prayer, “. . . to desire.” I believe that only God the Holy Spirit can put the desire in our hearts to pray, that my natural tendency of my sinful flesh is not to pray, to get discouraged and give up in prayer, so we need to invite the Holy Spirit to come fill our hearts and give us a yearning and a longing and to draw us from the world toward God. Amen? Ask the Lord. Say, “Lord, put a hunger in my heart for You to draw me into Your presence in prayer.”

What was it that Paul prayed for the Colossians? Basically, there are two petitions, and the two petitions have affects that flow out from them. Those two petitions are, “Spiritual Intelligence,” verse 9, that’s the title I’ve given to it; and secondly, “Practical Obedience,” verses 10-11. Just knowing those two points, what a great way to pray. Pray for spiritual knowledge of God’s will, wisdom, and spiritual understanding; and then pray that you might walk worthy of the Lord. Notice in verse 9 you find that phrase, “that.” Paul’s prayer develops around two purpose causes both introduced by the connective “that.” Look at verse 9, “. . . that,”—I’ve circled and highlighted it—“ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will,”—that’s petition number 1, spiritual knowledge.

Look at verse 10, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,”—that’s the second petition. That’s the giveaway as to what it is that Paul is praying for. He wants them to have the filling of knowledge knowing God’s will. He wants them to, “. . . walk worthy of the Lord.” The second purpose is actually the result of the first. I’m going to kind of hit on this all the way through my teaching tonight, so bear with me, but I think it’s so important. The only way to walk worthy, petition number 2, is to have a knowledge of God in His Word. It’s essential for a worthy walk. You’re not going to have a worthy walk by having some ecstatic experience with God, you’re going to have a worthy walk by educating your mind and your heart in a knowledge of God as He’s revealed in the Bible, the Word of God.

Sanctification and Scripture cannot be separated. A couple of weeks ago when I was in Texas, I was asked to speak on the subject of “Revive us,” and “Holiness.” I preached from Paul’s words in Philippians, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” Paul had been a Christian for thirty years, and he still said, “I want to know Him.”

We use that term, “know the Lord,” for salvation, but Paul was using that term, “That I may know him,” for sanctification. “I want to know Him better. I want to know Him more powerfully. I want to know Him more intimately.” No matter how long you walk with God, you should be growing in your knowledge of Him as He’s revealed in His Word by, again, the Holy Spirit who shows us the things of Christ; and then, and only then, can we surrender to the Spirit’s leading in our lives and walk in obedience. Spiritual intelligence, the knowledge of God’s will found in God’s Word, verse 9, results in practical obedience, the worthy walk, verses 10-11. When we know God’s will, we can walk in God’s way. That’s a very important thing to realize.

Now, let’s look at each petition individually. First, Paul prayed for spiritual intelligence, verse 9. Go back there with me. “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that,”—here’s petition 1—“ye might be filled,”—look at that word ‘filled’ which means to be controlled by—“with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Remember why Paul was writing to the Colossians.

Now, whenever Paul prayed in his prison epistles, he prayed not general prayers, and that’s another one of our weaknesses when we pray. We’ll pray stuff like, “God, save everybody, bless the world, just make everybody happy,” and I think God is just kind of scratching His head like, “Okay, how do I do that?” instead of zeroing in on particular individuals and asking specific requests. I believe the devil loves general prayers, but we need to be specific in what we’re asking God to do.

I’ve been in public prayer meetings where people pray and sometimes I want to yell out, “Ask Him something! Ask Him something!” I’ve heard people take ten minutes telling God who He is, like God doesn’t know who He is, “God, You’re wonderful. God, You’re gracious.” That’s fine to enter into His presence with worship, but ask Him something. Be specific. Have a request. Jesus said, “Ask . . . seek . . . knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Be specific. Write down prayer requests. Put dates by them so that when God answers the prayer, you can go back and remember that specific prayer and how God answered it.

The false teachers were telling the Colossians that Christ was not enough, so what he’s going to do in his prayer is pray that they come to an understanding of the sufficiency of Christ. You can’t live the Christian life until you know what a Christian is, and you don’t know what a Christian is until you understand your position in Christ. The false teachers were known as Gnostics, and they taught that they had a superior knowledge that only they possessed and only they could dispense; you had to come to them for this knowledge and it would take you beyond Judaism, beyond Christianity, and even beyond Christ. They would say, “Christ is good so far as He goes, but He’s not good enough. You need more.” This is why Paul said in Colossians that in Christ we are complete.

That word “complete” is a nautical term. It means shipshape, fully rigged, and ready to sail. We have everything we need. He’s praying for them in light of the false teachers who were trying to deceive them into thinking Christ is not enough, Christ is not sufficient, so you’ll find key words repeated through the prayer of “filled” and “knowledge.” The false teachers used the word

“knowledge,” that’s where the word gnostic comes from, the word gin Ssk ÒÀ to know. He’s saying in Christ, “. . . are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Paul had three specific goals for his request for spiritual intelligence. Let’s break it down. First of all, that they would be filled by God. Look at verse 9, “. . . that ye might be filled,”—stop right there. This is in what’s called the passive voice, so God, the Holy Spirit, fills us. We can’t fill ourselves, but we can surrender or yield and let God fill us. It’s only the Holy Spirit that can give us an understanding of the things of God. Do you know the Holy Spirit was the author of Scripture, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,”—it’s God-breathed. They wrote, “. . . as they were moved,”—carried along, born along—“by the Holy Spirit,” Peter says.

Only the Holy Spirit can give you illumination, understanding; and only the Holy Spirit can give you transformation of your life. You also have to have regeneration for all that to happen. If you read the Bible in an unregenerated state, you’re not saved, it won’t make any sense to you. But when you’re born again, and you have new life, then the Holy Spirit indwells you, He opens your eyes, He’s your teacher. The same Spirit that inspired Scripture speaks through Scripture. God speaks through what He has spoken. Paul is praying that God would fill them.

This word “filled” actually carries the idea of to be controlled by. I think it’s helpful to understand that it means that you are controlled by God. God teaches you and then begins to control your life; but, as I said, the passive voice indicates that God is the One who fills us.

In Ephesians 5:18 you have the same passive voice when Paul says in a command, “. . . be filled with the Spirit.” You don’t fill yourself, you let the Spirit take control by surrendering your will to Him. Spiritual truth can only be imparted by the Spirit of God. Read 1 Corinthians 2:14. It says, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit . . . they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” It’s the Spirit that teaches us as well as, as I said, reveals Scripture to us. The word “filled” means to be controlled by, but you have to have regeneration for this to take place.

I was remembering years ago, I haven’t received it for many, many years, but I used to subscribe to TIME Magazine. I didn’t have television. I didn’t have any other way to get news at the time, so I would get TIME Magazine. I would look it over and know what’s going on in the world. As a subscriber, they would send a little gift every year to thank you for your subscription. One time they gave me this little radio. I thought, This is actually finally pretty cool! It was an AM/FM radio, and it had a little antenna. It didn’t plug in, but it had batteries. I got it all set up with the batteries, and I was going to take it camping since it had batteries and listen to it in my camper. I went to turn it on, and it had no power-on switch—I kid you not! I’m still upset about that. I got this cool little radio. I was so stoked to get this radio, and I spent hours and hours, “How do you turn this radio on? There’s no power-on switch.”

Then, I thought about the Christian, you gotta be born again. You gotta have a power switch—Amen?—to be able to get reception for God to be able to speak to you and teach you through His Word. This is why sometimes people try to study the Bible without being born again or

having the Spirit, and they give up and say, “Well, I tried that. I didn’t understand it. It made no sense to me.” So, Paul wants them to be filled with the Spirit, understanding.

Notice, secondly, that this prayer of spiritual intelligence is, “. . . be filled with the knowledge of his will,” specifically. The word “knowledge” in verse 9 is kind of a play off the cults that were trying to attack the Colossians. It’s the word ἐπίγνωσις. Remember the false teachers were Gnostics. That word “gnostic” comes from the word γινώσκω. This is the Greek word ἐπίγνωσις or overflowing experiential knowledge. They were claiming a superior knowledge that they only could give to you, not Christ, not the Scriptures.

Paul is saying, “No, you can read the Scriptures and rely upon the Holy Spirit to be your teacher, and He will give you an ἐπίγνωσις, an overflowing experiential knowledge. It speaks of a clear knowledge and a deeper knowledge and understanding. It’s the knowledge that is the foundation of all Christian character and conduct. The will of God is the whole counsel of God found in the Word of God, and it 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. Again, it comes back to the Bible, the B-I-B-L-E.

J. Vernon McGee used to say, “The Holy Spirit is like a train that runs on a track, and it can only work on that track; so if you want the Holy Spirit to work in your life, get the Word of God hidden in your heart.” You can’t throw your Bible away and just say, “I’m just one of those Spirit-filled Christians. Oooo! Give me the Holy Ghost. Give me a dose of the Ghost. That’s all I need.” That’s a wonderful desire, but He has to work on that track. It’s like fuel. You can’t have a fire in a wood-burning fireplace if you don’t put wood in it, right? It needs fuel for a fire to burn. So, the Word of God becomes that fuel for the Spirit of God.

Thirdly, notice that they are to be, “. . . filled with . . . all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” so the will of God giving them wisdom and spiritual understanding there in verse 9. The word “wisdom” is an interesting word. It’s the word σοφία. We get our word philosophy from it which means what we believe as Christians, so it speaks about our belief. The word “understanding” speaks of how we behave. Our behavior is based on our belief. I know I’ve said this, and you probably get tired of it, but what you believe determines how you behave. What you believe determines how you behave. It’s not enough just to have knowledge, you have to put it into obedience into your life. That’s all the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. You can’t neglect your knowledge and expect to be living a victorious, fruitful Christian life. Paul wanted them, verse 9, to have spiritual intelligence, all knowledge of God’s will found in God’s Word, “. . . in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Here’s the second petition, verses 10-11. Paul prayed for practical obedience. Again, this may sound like a very simple teaching, and it is, but it’s not simplistic. Sometimes Christians stumble over this. He says, verse 10, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord.” If you wanted to condense the two petitions: “. . . that ye might be filled with . . . knowledge of his will,” verse 9; and the second petition, verse 10, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.” He makes the statement of petition and then defines what it

means to have a worthy walk. It's not enough to know God's Word, we must also, " . . . walk worthy of the Lord."

Sometimes we make a mistake as believers, and we overemphasize the idea of being saved by grace apart from works to where we get an idea that the Christian is not to have good works. Good works cannot save you. There's nothing you can do to save your soul from sin. God can save you alone by His grace. But once you have been saved, you are saved unto good works. Remember Ephesians 2:8-9, add verse 10, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God,"—right?—"Not of works, lest any man should boast." Then, immediately Paul says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." That word "workmanship" is the Greek word *poiō* and it's where we get our word poem from. It literally means something made. It came to be known as something that is a work of art, a poem, *poiō*. We become His *poiō*. It starts the lifelong process of sanctification.

Paul is praying for them to grow in Christ, to be more sanctified by having a full knowledge of God in His Word and by having also a practical application of living in godliness. So, what does Paul mean by worthy walk? He's not teaching that we are saved by good works, he's saying that our salvation should manifest itself in a worthy walk.

There are four marks of a worthy walk in the text. Let's break it down. First, it's a pleasing walk. What does it mean to walk worthy? It means to be pleasing to God. Verse 10, " . . . unto all pleasing." Years ago, we've lost the song but we used to sing, To be pleasing You, to be pleasing You, This is all I really want to do. I love that song. To just sing from your heart, "Lord, I want to please You." Remember before you were saved? You wanted to please yourself, and you were living for yourself—me, myself, and I. I had a friend once after I got saved and just out of high school. I was trying to share with him. He said, "I worship me. I worship myself. Me, myself, and I, that's my trinity." Unholy trinity. Once you become a Christian, your drive, your passion, your desire is to live for God—Amen?—and to please God, and all you should seek to do, the priority of our lives as believers should be to please God, to bring a smile to the face of God and the heart of God bring joy. A worthy walk is a pleasing walk. That should be the believer's highest priority.

Ask yourself tonight, "Am I walking in a way that's pleasing to God? Are my thoughts and the meditations of my heart acceptable to God? Am I pleasing God?" That's what Paul is praying for.

Secondly, a worthy walk is a fruitful walk. Look at verse 10. " . . . being fruitful in every good work." Again, I just quoted Ephesians 2:8-10. God wants to save you to produce holiness in you. The Bible says we should be holy because God is holy, so it's a fruitful walk. Now, notice it's fruitful. Years ago I saw a bumper sticker that said, "God want's spiritual fruit, not religious nuts." There's a lot of religious nuts out there, right? God wants spiritual fruit. Jesus said in John 15, "Abide in me, and I in you," and then He said we pray. We ask Him that our lives would bear much fruit. That analogy of being branches and being attached to the vine bearing fruit has reference to God's Word and to prayer and keeping His commandments. God wants

our lives to be fruitful.

Remember Psalm 1, “Blessed is the man,”—or the woman—“that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,”—that’s the negative—“nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” It means he’s chewing on God’s Word day and night. And, what happens? He becomes, “. . . like a tree planted by the rivers of water . . . his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” If you want a fruitful life, then you need to be planted in God and His Word. Also, the fruit of the Spirit will then be produced in your life.

Also, a worthy walk is not just a pleasing walk and a fruitful walk, but it’s a growing walk. Look at verse 10. Paul uses the phrase, “. . . increasing in the knowledge of God.” Why does Paul mention knowledge, again? Because the Gnostics were claiming they had the secret knowledge, and you had to come to them (you probably had to pay \$39.99) to get this hidden knowledge. It’s kind of like Scientology, “You have to pay this money, and we’ll give you this information. Christianity is okay, but this is how to be much more spiritual. You need the deeper life. We’re the ‘deeper life’ club, and we’ll initiate you and let you have that knowledge,” and as I said, “It’s only \$39.99 for you to get started.” Paul is saying, “No, this fruitful knowledge and every good work leads to a growing walk, increasing in their knowledge of God.”

We know we can’t grow without growing in our knowledge of God in His Word, so Paul says in Philippians 3:10, “That I may know him,” not about Him, I want to know Him. It’s one thing to know about somebody, it’s another thing to really know somebody.

So, a worthy walk—pleasing, fruitful, growing—and here is the last characteristic, powerful. Look at verse 11. “Strengthened with all might,” so far we’re pretty stoked on this verse, right? Do you want to know God’s will? “Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah! I want to know God’s will! That’s great.” Do you want to please the Lord? “Yeah, yeah! I want to please the Lord. Yeah, I want to be fruitful. I want to have good works in my life. I want to increase in the knowledge of God. Yeah, I want to be, ‘Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.’” And, this is where we’re not too stoked, “. . . unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” “No, no, no, no, no. Longsuffering? I don’t like that word. The word ‘long’ is okay, but the word ‘suffering’ shouldn’t be joined to that.” Paul is praying for them to be, “. . . patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” Filled, in verse 9; fruitful, verse 10; fortified and strengthened, verse 11.

That phrase, “Strengthened with all might,” in the Greek literally is being strengthened. Again, it’s in the passive voice, so letting God strengthen you and give you strength. It’s the power of God’s Spirit in your life. In Ephesians 3:16, Paul says, “. . . strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” Then, remember Philippians 4:13, Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” “Oh, we love that verse!” right? But what does “all things” mean? Does it mean I can run faster than a speeding bullet? Does it mean I’m more powerful than a locomotive? Does it mean I can jump off a building in a single bound? What does “all things” mean? I’ve heard Word Faith teachers, by the way, teach that “all things” means God’s

Spirit shows us how to make money. It actually said that. "I can do all things! I can make money! I can make lots of money!" That's not what the verse means. "All things" means all things God commands me to be and to do in His Word, all things God reveals in His Word. That's what "all things" means.

In other words, whatever God calls you to do, God gives you the strength to do it. If He says, "Husbands, love your wives," guess what God will do? Give you the strength to love your wife. You say, "Well, that was written before my wife was born." Wives, I know this is hard, submit to your husbands. "Oh, not my husband! He's a dodo bird." Whatever God commands us to do, God gives us the strength and the ability to do it. God doesn't just tell us to do something and not give us the strength and the ability and the power to do it, so "all things" that God requires us, He gives us power.

The word is *dýnamis*. We get our word dynamic or dynamite from that. Notice it's not to perform miracles or healings or to do signs and wonders, which so many people are enamored by, but it's to be, " . . . patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." Paul's prayer was very practical. When he talked about the *dýnamis* power of God, he talked about it being something that would produce patience and longsuffering.

Let's break down those words. The word "patient" (I get impatient when I read that word patience) literally means to remain under. The etymology of that word literally means to remain under, so what it means is patient with pressures and circumstances. Don't you hate circumstances sometimes? Have you ever had one of those days, Murphy's law, everything that could go wrong, goes wrong? I love that Murphy's law that if you make a piece of bread with peanut butter and you drop it, it always falls peanut butter down. Why? Did you ever have those days where nothing seems to go right? If it could go wrong, it goes wrong and all you can do is say, "Lord, give me patience. Help me to abide under pressure." Someone said, "Patience," and I love this, "is enduring without complaint." It's being able to abide under pressure, and, if you're taking notes, it has to do with circumstances. In 1 Corinthians 13, it says, "Love," which is the fruit of the Spirit, "is patient." So, when the Spirit of God is working in your life, it gives you power to abide under pressure of difficult circumstances.

What is longsuffering? Longsuffering moves from circumstances to people. Patience is enduring without complaint; longsuffering is enduring without retaliation. It's enduring without retaliation. Patience is living under the pressure of circumstances; longsuffering is living under mistreatment by people. Have you ever thought that you would be happy if there were just no people in the world? No one to be mean, no one to say mean things, no one to cut you off, no one to get in front of you in line? One time, in the little cartoon Peanuts said, "I love humanity, it's people I can't stand." It's easy in theory to say, "I love humanity, but I just don't like people. They bug me!" This is what this longsuffering is.

It actually has the idea, too, of being long-fused. You know, if you're going to light a stick of dynamite, you want a long fuse because you don't want it to blow up on you, right? You light it and run. Some people have short fuses. You light them, SHHHHHHH! BOOM! They blow up

real quick. They have no patience. They have no longsuffering. They just explode with people. It literally means wrath put far away. Patience means remaining under; longsuffering means wrath put far away. Are you having trouble with some person in your life? (Don't raise your hand right now. Don't look at anyone else either.) God wants to give you longsuffering.

Then, Paul tops it all off with joyfulness. Isn't this amazing he's talking about power in verse 11 to be patient, longsuffering, and then when we're patient with circumstances and longsuffering with people, it ought to be done with joyfulness. The goal of spiritual intelligence is practical obedience and it results in joy. Someone said, "Patience and longsuffering without joy leads to depression. Joy gives optimism." Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God . . . are the called according to his purpose."

We'll get it next week when we pick up right where we leave off. In verse 12, Paul says, "Giving thanks unto the Father," so the joyfulness leads to thankfulness. It doesn't do any good to be, (teeth clenched) "I'm patient, I'm patient, I'm patient! I'm patient! I'm longsuffering! But I can't take it anymore!" (exploding sound) But if we have the joy of the Lord, it's our strength. Amen? What a blessing that is.

These three things we need to remember: We need to pray that we know God through His Word; secondly, we need to obey God through His Spirit's power; and thirdly, we need to have a worthy walk which is pleasing, fruitful, growing, powerful, and joyful. What a great petition is this prayer. Amen? Let's pray.