

Paul's Prayer (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Well, last week we started looking at Paul's prayer in Colossians 1 verses 9-14.

! We actually only covered verse 9 last week and we'll do some review of that before we get into the new material tonight. Before we do any of that though, let's go ahead and read the verses. And in Colossians 1 verses 9-14 Paul wrote, we see that in the last part of Colossians 1 verse 10.

[15 : 09] So in other words, the server will benefit from serve us. So when we do serve, we benefit from that service, and we benefit by having an increased understanding of God.

So you can see it's really circular there. It's how the Christian life works. As we're filled with the knowledge of God's will, we'll live more and more in a way that pleases God.

We'll start bearing good fruit, and when we do that, we'll grow even more in the knowledge of God.

Back when we looked at verse 6, Paul said that the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing.

Here in verse 10, Paul says that Christians who walk worthy of the Lord are bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God. So his point seems to be that the way in which the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing is by producing Christ-like and holy lives through the Spirit in those who receive the gospel by faith.

So genuine transformation always includes growth in the understanding of God. So genuine transformation there always includes growth in the understanding of God.

[16 : 21] The saving presence of the Spirit in our souls yields the rich harvest of both good deeds and deep insights. We can't live a life that is pleasing to him if we fail to increase in the knowledge of what he is like, how he acts, and why he does what he does.

So let's move on to verse 11. Paul says, Walking worthy of the Lord is to live a life that is being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy. We'll actually summarize real quickly seven things about verse 11. Then we'll come back and look at some of those things in more detail. The first thing we see is that the strength to walk worthy of God comes from God himself.

And of course, this fits with what we talked about earlier. We can't walk worthy of God without God's help. And we see here that the strength to walk worthy of God comes from God. Paul actually used two different Greek words for God's energy.

The first one is *dunamis*, where we get our word dynamite, and that means inherent power. And then the word translated as might there means manifested power, or power that's put into action.

[17 : 38] The grace of our Christian lives is a result of God's power at work in our lives. Spiritual growth and maturity can come only as we yield to God's power and permit him to work in us.

We usually think of God's glorious power being revealed in great feats of daring, like the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, David leading a victorious army, or Paul raising the dead.

But the emphasis here is on Christian character, on patience, long-suffering, joyfulness, and thanksgiving. Remember that Paul does not say strengthen yourselves as if the power were inherently ours, resident within us.

It's not that we only need to flip a switch in our pursuit of holiness. And he said similar things in Ephesians 6, verse 10. That's where he said, Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

So the key words are, In the Lord and in the strength of his might. When Paul prays being strengthened, he obviously means being strengthened by God.

[18 : 45] He could have said it more directly by saying, Oh God, I ask that you strengthen these otherwise weak and impotent people to do your will. Second, there's something of a redundancy in Paul's saying, Being strengthened with all power.

It's as if he's saying, Be empowered with power. But we know he chose his words carefully. After all, these words were inspired. So he knew exactly what he was saying there.

His point is simply to reinforce the magnitude of what's available to us from God when we ask God. The third thing is, If that weren't enough, Paul prays that we be strengthened with all power.

This could mean power of every kind or the fullness of power, or perhaps even power in the highest degree. So there's nothing second rate here.

Paul prays, As we should too, for the best and most potent and most effective and wide-ranging power, because God is more than able to say yes. And of course we know that God will answer us when we pray according to his will.

[19 : 49] The fourth thing to notice is that when God empowers us with maximum power to do his will, he does it according to his glorious might. Or that also could be translated according to the might of his glory.

We talked about how the word might is effectively a synonym for power, so it could even be rendered according to his majestic power. In that case, we would have something like, May you be empowered with all power according to his majestic power.

So Paul is really wanting to emphasize the power of God there. And the point is that God doesn't do anything second class. The fifth thing to see is that the goal of all of this empowerment with power is endurance and patience.

So the goal of this empowerment is endurance and patience. When we talk about endurance, that's a reference to persevering in the face of difficult circumstances.

And when we talk about patience, it's a reference to steadfastness that doesn't retaliate against those who resist us. Events, trials, and hardship tempt us to quit, but God is the one who grants endurance.

[21 : 07] People in criticism and injustice tempt us to seek revenge, but God is the one who grants patience. Sixth, this kind of endurance doesn't derive from personal bravery or stoical fortitude.

Instead, as in the Old Testament and later Judaism, God is its source. Paul was even more explicit on this point in Romans 15, where he describes God as the God of endurance.

That comes from Romans 15.5, and that's the God from whom endurance ultimately comes. By the way, in this text in Romans, Paul makes it clear that God typically employs the scriptures to impart that endurance to us.

So for proof of that, listen to Romans 15, 4, and 5 together. Paul wrote, For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus. So you can see how everything ties back to knowing God and his word.

[22 : 20] When we know God and his word, we realize the endurance and patience that is available to us. The seventh thing to notice is the present tense in Paul's prayer.

Being strengthened there is a present participle, and that signifies continuous action. So God's not like a booster rocket giving us an initial boost of power and then leaving us to fly on our own.

Instead, believers are continually strengthened with all power through their Christian lives. So the point here is that the strength and power we need is available as the many and varied circumstances and challenges of life are confronted.

And of course, that happens one after another, day after day. And God's power is manifested in us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told the disciples that they would receive power after the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Of course, that's Acts 1.8. Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they would be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being. We looked at that earlier. That's Ephesians 3.16.

[23 : 27] And to the Romans, he wrote, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. So that power is available to the believer who's filled with the knowledge of God's Word.

Let's look a little deeper at the last phrase of verse 11. That's where Paul says, Walking worthy is being strengthened with all power for endurance and patience with joy.

Earlier we said that the term translated endurance is a reference to persevering in the face of difficult circumstances. Patience is a reference to steadfastness that does not retaliate against those who resist us.

Said another way, the word translated as endurance refers to being patient in circumstances. And the second word translated as patience refers to being patient with people.

But both refer to the patient enduring of trials. Paul doesn't have in mind here a teeth-gritting endurance. The strength provided by the knowledge of God's Word allows the believer to endure trials with joy.

[24 : 39] Knowledge of God's truth gives us the ability to endure trials joyously, as did Paul himself. Paul could urge the Colossians to endure trials with joy because Paul endured trials with joy.

Here's just one example of how Paul, along with Silas, endured a trial with joy. These verses come from Acts 16, and they're verses 20 through 25.

They say, And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.

The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely.

Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

That doesn't sound like a circumstance where you'd be very joyful, does it?

[25 : 43] But listen to verse 25. Verse 25 says, About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Of course, we know what an important witness that was at that time.

You can just imagine what the other prisoners had to have been thinking when they had seen Paul and Silas go through these circumstances and still be able to sing and pray to God.

Paul's constant prayer for the Colossians was that they be filled with the knowledge of God's will.

And he knew that only when believers are controlled by that knowledge can they walk worthy of the Lord and please him.

He knew even more that such knowledge was required for a fruitful life. It was required for spiritual growth, for strength, and like we just talked about, the joyful endurance of trials.

So verse 12 then has one more example of what it means to walk worthy of the Lord. Walking worthy of the Lord means giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

[26 : 48] Have you noticed how we've come full circle here? Paul's thankfulness in verses 3 through 8 led to his prayer in verses 9 through 12, and that prayer there in verse 12 culminates in Paul's asking that the Colossians will share in his thankfulness to God.

Of course, here the thanksgiving is directed to God himself rather than Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the believers to realize that the plan of salvation was initiated by God the Father, and it was accomplished by God the Son.

Often Christians direct their thanks to Christ, and that's a proper form of praise. But in this context, Paul pointed out the Father's role first. The role of the Son is going to be described later when we get to verses 15 through 20.

Paul's point here, though, is that God is to be thanked because he qualified believers for an inheritance. And each portion of that statement is significant. The statement expresses the fact that God takes the initiative in bringing Christians into the realm of his presence.

The Greek term translated qualified there occurs only here and in 2 Corinthians 3.6. In 2 Corinthians 3.6, Paul used the term for God's work in making him and others able ministers.

[28 : 06] But here it refers to bringing people into salvation. So using this rare term suggests that both salvation and ministry require special character qualities that no one possesses unless God qualifies the people to have those character qualities.

So that is a supernatural working. Here in Colossians 1.12, the term relates to salvation like we said, and God gives people what they need to be part of his kingdom.

The basic need is righteousness. Because Paul used Old Testament language throughout this context, he might have been thinking about Leviticus 11.44, where it says, Be holy because I am holy.

And of course those words came from God. No one can claim that standard of holiness apart from God's declaration. When God qualifies people for his kingdom, he supplies righteousness, which is a necessary prerequisite for salvation.

Because God declares believers to be righteous by his grace, he alone qualifies a person for entrance into the kingdom. The descriptions of the inheritance of the kingdom also come from the Old Testament.

[29 : 23] The words share and inheritance are the same words used for ancient Israel's portion of the promised land. Paul consciously compared God's working in Israel then with his working in Christians in Colossae and his working in Christians now.

For Old Testament Israel, share specifically referred to the dividing of the land so that each tribe would get its allotment of the inheritance. Here Paul applied the situation in Israel to the allotment of the believers.

God gives believers a spiritual inheritance and that is the redemption that is in Christ. The Christian's inheritance is described here as of the saints in light.

The word saints was used by Paul only for Christians, never for supernatural beings. It points to the fact that what God has done in Christ, he did primarily for people.

The location of the inheritance is the kingdom of light. The Jewish idiom sons of light indicates people who love truth and morality. Appropriately, those who walk in the knowledge of the will of God are reminded of their position in God's kingdom.

[30 : 37] The inheritance refers to the blessings reserved for Christians. And this particular statement speaks of God the Father's activity of calling his people to their promised inheritance.

And that same idea is found back in Colossians 1.5 that there is a hope reserved for them in heaven. God's initiative guarantees that his people will be able to inherit what is promised to them. And that's something that we need to keep in mind. God's initiative guarantees that his people will be able to inherit what is promised to them. But that also raises a question.

When do we receive our inheritance? Well, this is also a present participle that's translated has qualified, and that indicates that we already have our inheritance now.

And that's because we've already been translated from the domain of darkness into Christ's kingdom. We'll get into that a little more next week. We're already fellow heirs with Christ, even though the full possession of that inheritance is still in the future.

[31 : 42] God, though, has graciously given us a guarantee for our future full inheritance, and that guarantee is the indwelling Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1, 13 and 14, Paul wrote that we are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.

Guarantee translates a word which is similar to the modern Greek word for engagement ring. It also could be translated as down payment. So God has given us the Holy Spirit as the first installment on our future inheritance.

We need to remember that's an objective fact, and that's not dependent on our feelings. Studying God's word helps us understand that our inheritance is that objective fact.

Listen to Acts 20, verse 32. In Acts 20, 32, Luke is quoting Paul, and Paul said there, And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those things who are sanctified.

So we see again that everything is tied back to the knowledge of God's word. So when we're filled with the knowledge of God's will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding, we're able to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

[32 : 59] We're able to bear fruit and to learn more about God. We're able to be strengthened with all power. We can have patience and joy during trials, and we can give thanks for what God has done for us and for what God will do for us in the future.

So that's why everything ties back to knowledge of God and his will, and we learn about that through knowing God's word. The verses we've studied tonight show us how to live lives that result in fruit pleasing to God.

The following statement from Warren Wiersbe summarizes how to put what we've learned into practice. He said, Certainly we get to know God better as we pray in our private rooms and as we meditate on his word, but we also get to know him as we walk in our daily lives and work to win others and help his people.

Worship and service are not competitive. They always go together. When he was ministering on earth, our Lord retired to pray. Then he went out to serve. We need to avoid the extremes of impractical mysticism and fleshly enthusiasm.

Then he says, As we spend time with God, we get to understand him and his will for our lives. And as we go out to obey him, we learn more. Practical obedience means pleasing God, serving him, and getting to know him better.

[34 : 23] Any doctrine that isolates the believer from the needs of the world around him is not spiritual doctrine. Evangelist D.L. Moody often said every Bible should be bound in shoe leather.

So you can see that ties to our engage efforts as well. We'll be living this out as we go out and engage the community. And as we put our faith into practice, God gives the glory because God is the one who enables our good works.

Our passage tonight provides a New Testament echo of Jeremiah 9, 23, and 24. And those verses say, Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom.

Let not the mighty man boast in his might. Let not the rich man boast in his riches. But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, declares the Lord. On that note, let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you for the reminder of the tall order that you've given to Christians that we walk in a manner worthy of you and that we consistently do that.

[35 : 40] But we also thank you for the reminders that you've given us that you yourself give us the means that we need to be able to do that. Let us continually rely on those means and let us have your Holy Spirit help us continue to walk more and more with you and walk more and more worthy of you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.