

98-07-10b Colossians

We're back now from our break. We are resuming in Colossians chapter 1. The paragraph that we are examining begins in verse 9 where Paul says, For this reason we also, since the day we heard of it, and it comprehends everything that he has said in verses 3 through 8, he has heard of their faith in Christ Jesus, their love for the saints, because of the hope that is laid up for them in heaven, that word of truth that they've heard taught by Epaphras has come to them and is bringing forth fruit. We talked a little bit about the fruit of the Spirit and the ministry of the Spirit in our last hour, and you will notice the close connection in verses 5 and 6 to the word of truth.

That is the thing that brings forth fruit. And yet we know that this is the very same fruit that is referred to in Galatians 5 when he talks about the fruit of the Spirit. And it is also a reminder to us because, again, because of our frame of reference and our traditions, the conditioning that we have had, the more time we've spent in the organized church, the more of this conditioning we're likely to have.

I'm probably just oppressed and flattened down to the ground with it from preschool, Sunday school, all the way on. But when you come to passages like this, you just automatically assume, if you have that background, that this is good works, that there's ministry involved here. He says you heard the word of truth and it's bringing forth fruit.

You're wonderful religious people. You're out there ministering. You're out there evangelizing.

You're out there elbows and knees flying, doing all of these things. You just assume that the fruit in the Christian life are these visible manifestations of good works, whatever good works are defined as being in your particular community. But you'll notice, again, that this fruit is a consistent theme.

It's a consistent figure of speech, especially for Paul in the New Testament. This fruit is something internal, not external. It's something that's produced by the word of truth.

You hear the word of truth. You hear it and you know it. Specifically, the content of it is the grace of God.

This is what is spoken of in verse 6. Ever since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth, that truth that is spreading through the world and bearing fruit even as it is among you. The word is bearing the fruit. Now, the works-based Christianity, works-based righteousness says, well, you hear the word and the word says, so send I you, the word says, preach the gospel to every creature, the word says, minister to the sick and afflicted round about us.

And so you heard that word and you went out and became missionaries and became evangelists and became healers and running soup kitchens and clothing giveaways and so forth. That's not what it's talking about. Not that there's anything wrong with any single one of those activities, but

that's not what the Bible is talking about.

And it's not fair and it's not accurate to make that assumption and to use these scriptures in support of those activities as a direct goal. You hear that God is love. You believe that love means go meet people's needs, so go meet needs.

That is not the Christian calling. That is not and does not reflect an understanding of the will of God. And that's why Paul says, you all have heard the word of truth, it has borne fruit.

Where is this fruit coming from in verse 6? It is bringing forth fruit. The word of truth is bringing forth fruit, not the people. It doesn't say you heard the word of truth and you began bringing forth fruit.

The word brings forth fruit. You can imagine, and I could go on at length and tie this in to what we just spoke about in terms of the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. The reason it's the fruit of the Spirit is because it is a product of the word and the Spirit in our souls.

And that's all it takes. You can be sitting in a chair with the word of God in your soul and with God the Holy Spirit active and welcome in your life and be bearing fruit. Just the fact that you're sitting there in your chair and you're not worried.

The fact that you're sitting there in your chair and you're not self-conscious. You're not insecure. You're not angry.

You're not bitter. You're not jealous. You're not resentful.

You're not meditating on some wrong someone did to you. You're not holding a grudge. You're not fearful about the future.

You're not wondering if your worldly goods are going to last. You're not wondering if your relationships are going to last. You're not sitting there fretting over whether you're going to be employed or happy or successful or liked or appreciated or approved of.

You're not sitting worrying about what some certain person thinks or what a group of people think or what your family thinks or what people in your social circle are thinking or saying. You're sitting in your chair, calm, with a lack of those sinful things in your mental attitude, in your thinking. That's a fruit.

That's something that doesn't come naturally to us, especially when you have prompting factors in your environment. You have situations that would lead a normal person to worry, that would lead an unregenerate person to fret and stew and gnaw on a bone. All of us have done this.

You know how it is. You get an old bone out. There's some nagging issue and you just chew and gnaw.

You say, you know, I shouldn't be doing this. I'm going to put it out of my mind. But think about something completely different.

So you turn around and face a different wall in the room and 15 seconds later you find yourself running over that same old tired track and rut in your soul. We don't have the ability to shake loose from these things. It is a divine enablement that comes through the word and through the spirit.

So if we see that we're doing these things, if we see that we lack the fruit of the spirit, you get the list in Galatians 5. If you don't have love, if you don't have joy, if you don't have peace, if you don't have patience, and it doesn't matter what your circumstances are. It doesn't matter where you are. It doesn't matter what your environment is.

The divinely inspired fruit, the divinely cultivated fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, endurance, gentleness, faith, humility, self-control, these things are not environment dependent and they are not extinguished by things in your environment. People, things, sins or anything else. They are a divine product of God's word and God's spirit.

So if we lack them, we say, oh, I know I should have that. We're not going to be able to generate them in our own strength. We're not going to be able to just decide to have them.

We have to know where they come from. Paul is telling the Colossians, if you're looking for the fullness, if you're looking for the richness of relationship with God, don't look around at things in your environment. Don't look at angels.

Don't look at tempting things lust-wise or sensual-wise. Don't be looking at religious exercise. Don't be looking at asceticism.

Don't look at any of these little trays of treats that people are trying to offer you in the world of ideas. Concentrate on God and the things of God, the things that you have heard from the beginning. That's where life is.

That's where the peace of God that passes understanding. You can't understand how somebody can be peaceful in these circumstances with these pushes and pulls. It's not understandable.

It passes clear out of the realm and reach of understanding. But it's there because God creates it. It's something that comes from Him.

It belongs to Him. He grants it to those who seek it by faith in His Word and by a desire to have the Holy Spirit do this work. It's a desire that we can express to God.

We've kind of shied away. We see excesses and abuses in the realm of the Holy Spirit in some of the areas of Christianity. We don't want to say much about the Spirit.

We say, well, confess your sins and He fills you. Amen. Let's go talk about something else.

He's an extremely important part of our Christian life. We can't live without Him. He is our link to Christ, and Christ is our link to the Father.

He is the means by which we are able to do anything with the Word of God. There has never been a human being on the planet Earth, including Jesus Christ Himself, that understood and made use of the Word of God apart from the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Every human being, the Lord included, He's our example.

He's standing at the top of the mountain of what you can do as a human being. It was done in the power of the Spirit. He's a very important part of what we do and how we live and how we fulfill our calling.

He is essential. It's vital. We have to understand His role.

Here, Paul is concentrating on what he does with the Word. The fruit of the Spirit is born, if you want to call it so, the fruit of the Word. That's what Paul calls it here.

You've heard the Word of Truth, and it is bringing forth fruit. This fruit is in your soul. What's the definition of fruit in the Christian life? It has nothing to do with works.

It has everything to do with thought. Your works can be an expression and a manifestation of fruit that is in your soul, but fruit is not a work. Fruit takes place in the invisible realms of the Spirit, in the invisible realm of the soul.

You measure fruit and you look for fruit by looking at the soul, not at accomplishment. It does not matter if it has been weeks or months or years since you last shared the Gospel with someone. It doesn't matter if it has been days or weeks or years since you performed what you consider to be or what somebody else considers to be some form of active ministry.

That's not the measure. If you want to evaluate where you stand, if we want to know where we stand before God in terms of fruitfulness, we look at what's going on in our soul. The old saying is true, you are what you think.

I guess they also say you are what you eat, but in the spiritual realm that's also true. When you partake of the manna of the Word, that is incorporated into our thinking. So we are what we think, and that's where fruit is.

This fruit that he's talking about here, the Word is bringing forth fruit, it's their changed attitudes. They don't have a desire to fall back into their old cultural ways. They don't have a desire to go off and work off guilt.

They don't have a desire to fall into some of these things if they have an understanding of the will

of God. If they recognize, if they take by faith the fact that they are complete in Christ, that everything they need is present with God the Holy Spirit and the truth of the Word of God. This is what Paul is communicating.

This is why he communicates to them the prayer that he prays. Why does he tell them what he prays? Why doesn't he just pray to God and hope that it comes to pass in the sense of confident expectation that God will answer his prayer? Why does he tell the Colossians what he's praying? Some of the things that we pray for people, we would never tell them to their face, would we? There's lots of people that we think have a problem or we know have a problem and we pray to God, but we don't go up and say, Oh, by the way, I prayed for you the other day and this is what I prayed. I prayed that God would give you insight into the terrible insensitivity that you had toward me.

I prayed that God would wake you up and show you the error of your ways and illuminate all of the grievous wrongs that you've been doing to me. We don't typically go up and tell them that. But Paul does tell the Colossians what he prays for them.

He says, I pray that you will be filled with reference to or with respect to the knowledge of God's will, what life is about, what counts in life, what's important, that that will color everything you do. In a way, it's the same use of *pleroma* as the filling of the spirit. It doesn't mean that the spirit somehow is poured into you and fills up some outline.

It means that, just like the previous illustration, he says, do not be drunk with wine wherein is excess. When you're drunk with wine, how much wine does it take to make you drunk? It doesn't fill you from head to toe. You drink however many glassfuls it takes to get any particular person drunk, and you're drunk.

The idea of comparing it to being drunk with wine is there's a certain quantity of wine, but it's not the quantity that's important, it's the effect it has on the individual. Some of us that have a low tolerance or have developed over time a low tolerance for alcohol, a taste can peg the meter in terms of drunkenness. It's the effect that it has on you that counts.

It's the unsteadiness, it's the loss of concentration, it's the unawareness of the way you're affecting other people and the way you're coming across. It's the lowering of your proper inhibitions and your proper safeguards in your soul and in your mind that make you who you are. Most of us, if we get inebriated, we turn into a different kind of person.

It wreaks a personality change because you're shutting off parts of the brain. They're dead and they can't raise their hand and say, you're doing something really stupid. You're hurting people around you.

You're wrecking your life if you get into the realm of alcoholism and so forth. It colors everything you do. It changes you.

It metamorphosizes you. It makes you, in a negative sense, a completely different person. Well, that's why Paul uses that analogy.

He says, don't be drunk with wine. That's just excess. It doesn't produce anything.

Be filled with the spirit. And it's not a matter of being filled up in terms of quantity. He's always there.

But if you could be influenced in everything that you do, if everything that you undertake, if your thoughts and your actions are colored by the presence of the spirit and what he's able to do with the word, that's being filled. It's not a matter of him coming and going or flipping a light switch off and on. Here's the power of God.

Oop, you sin. Now it's gone. You confess.

Now it's on. He's saying your lifestyle ought to be... When somebody's drunk, usually the person who's drunk is the last to realize that they're really looking like a drunk. Everybody else is aware of it earlier on.

You can tell it may be on their breath. Their eyes look changed. Their demeanor, their speech.

Everything that they do gives off signals, here's somebody that's been drinking. But Paul says, just make something positive out of that illustration. Wouldn't it be great if when people looked at you, they said, wow, the Holy Spirit's at work in that person.

Look at how peaceful they are in the midst of this terrible circumstance. Look at the confidence and the calm assurance that they have in their circumstances. Everything that person does just exudes the ministry of the Spirit.

That has got to be somebody that God is proud of. There's somebody that has found the key to the Christian life and is just enjoying the heck out of everything they're doing. Circumstances, good, bad, or indifferent, they just light up a room just by being there.

They just give off in the same way that, in a negative sense, an inebriated person gives off, hey, I'm drunk. That's what Paul is saying when he says, be filled with the Spirit. You're an evident Spirit-filled person.

The influence of God's power is evident in everything that you do, in the person that you are, in the way you operate. How does that happen? You say, boy, I would love that description to fit me. Well, Paul would love for this description to fit the Colossians, and so he's telling them, this is how it happens, and this is what I pray for you.

I pray that you'll be filled with respect to the knowledge of His will, that you'll know what it is He's looking for. You can't achieve the goal if you don't even know what it is. If you think it works, if you

think you've got to... If you start feeling guilty every time they give a call for missions, if you start feeling guilty every time they start talking about evangelism, if you start getting a spiritual inferiority complex every time you get around people who are engaged in ministry, or who talk about ministry, or who are asking for helpers in ministry, if you start feeling guilty and sort of browbeaten, you're not filled with the knowledge of His will, because that indicates that you don't understand what God is looking for.

God doesn't need you to do physical ministry. It's a wonderful privilege when He uses us in that regard, but He doesn't need us. He doesn't need me teaching the Word of God.

He doesn't need anybody evangelizing. He doesn't need... God can turn the rocks into spokesmen. If people aren't available, the rocks themselves will cry out.

Jesus said that. Remember when He was going down the road on the tragic entry day there, last week of His life? Pharisees were hollering at Him when people were saying, Hosanna, and they said, Make your followers be quiet. Don't let them say this Son of David stuff.

And He said, If I made them be quiet, the rocks would cry out, because there will be testimony to who Jesus is, one way or the other. It does not require us, and if we don't go, it doesn't get done, kind of a thing that's not true. So we've got to get away.

We've got to shake off the barnacles of our tradition that says, Our life is defined by and measured by what we do. The fruit is in the soul. And once we know that, once we come to a knowledge of His will, in all Sophia wisdom, to know the practical nature of living life before God, and understanding, using that knowledge to set our priorities, and to do things in the right order, to know when to speak and when to be quiet, to know when to act and when to refrain.

Anybody can go blundering into a room and minister at anything that moves. Oh, you're sick? Hey, let me bring you food. Let me visit you.

Let me sit and sing you songs. Let me get a group of my friends, and we'll all sing. And then we'll all pray.

And then we'll all sit with your family in the waiting room. And then we'll just generally hover about because it's an opportunity for ministry. Well, that may make an awful lot of people feel like they've been ministered to, and it may make a lot of people feel like they have ministered, but there are many cases where God isn't in the picture.

A bunch of people from the local Elks Lodge could have come and done the same thing. A bunch of people from the Moose Lodge or any other fraternity or any other secular group could have come down and comforted in time of affliction and sat with and been with and tried to cheer up and brought food and taken babysitting for the kids and so forth. Anybody can do that.

It only counts when it is an expression of something unique in the soul, something that God the

Holy Spirit and the Word of God have created in there called divine viewpoint, recognizing that this is something that is a part of God's plan for the person in need, and that this is a case where you have the means, the motive and the opportunity as a believer to reflect and to express the things in your soul. And you can do it quietly. Sometimes you can do it and nobody even knows it's been done.

You can attend to things. You can minister to somebody a lot of times without even being there. Sometimes by staying away, giving them time and privacy to grieve or time and privacy to mend when they're busted up inside over something.

Sometimes the greatest gift you can give someone is solitude, to let them work through. We all know from our own experience there are times when you have to be alone with God. You have to work through something.

You've got to chew through it. You've got to digest it. You've got to work it out just between you and God.

And other people hovering around just slows the process down because you can't think. You feel obligated to say things to them and to not hurt their feelings. You know that they have good intentions and so on, but it just draws everything out because you need time to let God work directly and personally without any intermediaries.

Sometimes we need that. Well, how do you know when to step forward and when to step back? How do you know when your effort and your ministry in the physical realm is going to be a blessing and when it's going to be appreciated for the thought but it's not really a good thing at the time? That's sunesis. Do you think God the Holy Spirit knows the answer to that question? Of course He does.

He knows us from the inside out. He knows when you can speak a fit word, and it's like an apple of gold and a picture of silver. He knows when and where we can communicate the gospel, when and where we can perform an act of charity or an act of service or an act of love, a word of encouragement or sitting quietly with someone.

How do you know what to do that's best because you have the desire? Well, let God the Holy Spirit make those calls. Let Him do His job. We often elbow Him out of the way and we say, Hey, I've got the desire and I'm going to get in there.

I'll make the decisions. I'll create the opportunities. I'll go in the bowl in the china shop fashion.

Where does that come from? To have not only the knowledge of how to meet a need, and you've had experience, you've done it before, you have the practical wisdom on what it takes to operate in this environment, but also to know when and where to have the insight and the discrimination to be effective and to be a genuine blessing and to be a reflection of the love of Jesus Christ in a

particular situation. That's what Paul is praying for. He says, I pray that you will be filled with respect to the knowledge of His will in all wisdom, all understanding in the spiritual realm, so that, look at verse 10, there's a purpose in this.

And we think, well, this is going to make me a wonderful blessing to others. This will give me a happy, fulfilled life. I will enjoy love, joy, peace in my soul.

And a lot of times in our Christian life, especially in the younger phase of our life as believers, we are kind of either consciously or unconsciously measuring everything by what's in it for us. I don't want to make mistakes. I don't want to make myself miserable.

I don't want to be a curse to myself and others. I would like to live a good life that goes in a smooth way and everything. We're thinking of it all in terms of how I feel and whether it makes other people happy or not.

And eventually we grow. It's just like children. When you're young, you don't think about the impact of your deeds or your misdeeds on your parents.

If you color a picture and hand it to them, they're going to smile and pat you on the head. But you know how it is. You have a very egocentric universe when you're a child.

And as you get a little older, you start doing your chores not just out of a sense of duty, but out of recognizing that you can be a genuine help to your parents if you take out the trash or if you clean up the little piles in the yard or if you mow or if you empty the... whatever it is you're doing, helping with the dishes or whatever. And you begin to think outside yourself. And you begin to recognize that your parents need help and that you can be a help.

And you do things to make their lives easier because you appreciate them and you realize what they've done for you and so forth. And you start looking outside yourself. The same process takes place in the spiritual realm.

And Paul says all of these things, if you can be filled with the knowledge of His will, if you can get the spiritual wisdom and understanding which gives you the ability to function in life, there's a so that, there's a purpose for this. And that's what's in verse 10. So that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him.

You'll notice in your Bible that Him is in italics. It just says fully pleasing in the Greek. And the word there is the word aresko, A-R-E-S-K-O.

And it was used sometimes of people who were obsequious, who just did anything and everything to try to please someone. A flattering type of pleasing or I guess obsequious, I can't really think of a synonym for that. But that's what aresko was occasionally used for in Greek.

But in the earlier Greek, it also had a good sense. It means, you know what, an obsequious

person just knocks themselves, every little thing they can think of to try to please you, they do. And that has become, you know, it's a negative thing.

We think, well, that's beyond the pale, that's over the line. You're, you know, there are other less, I can't think of some synonyms, I'm just not going to say them. But we look at that as a negative thing, that you're just doing everything you can to please this person.

But the original idea of it is that anywhere this person turns, they're pleased. They're looking for their footstool. My, there it is.

They wish they had something cool to drink. Well, goodness, there it is. It's already by my chair.

They say, well, I wonder what happened in the world today. My goodness, there's my paper right beside the chair. It seems a little warm in here.

Bink, the fan comes on. I mean, before they can even hardly think of it, it's already pleasing. Every area is pleasing.

Because this obsequious little person is running around trying to do all these things for their own personal gain, perhaps. But in the original sense of a race go, it just meant that anywhere you look, you're pleased. You find no fault.

It's just a pleasure any way you slice it. And Paul puts the word fully with that. And he says, if you want to walk a worthy walk, so that when God looks at you, he just says, this is great.

This is what I was after. This is why I sent my son to die. This is the kind of life in a human being that reflects my glory.

This is it. I am so pleased that this person caught on. Paul says, we think, well, that's just impossible.

That's never going to apply to me. But it can, because it doesn't depend on us. It depends on the word and the spirit.

Paul says, if you seek out and get a grip on that epinosis, grasp and look into the knowledge of his will, that wisdom and understanding in the spiritual realm, the purpose of that is to walk that worthy walk. It's worthy of the Lord. What is worthy of Christ? You've got these praise songs now.

Worthy is the Lamb. Worthy, worthy. Well, the question you can ask when you hear one of those songs is, well, is my life worthy of the Lamb? He is worthy to be praised.

He is the worthy one. How can I possibly be worthy of Him? Well, you can. That's what this passage says.

We're not stuck in depravity. We're not stuck in hopeless imperfection. We can live a life that is

worthy of the Lord.

He says, you know, I came and died on the cross to deliver you out of this present evil age, and here you are. You're appreciating it and exploiting it. And then we find that word fruitful once again in verse 10.

You may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing, just pleasing any way you slice it, being fruitful in every good work. You say, well, now, Sam, you just said that this was all in the soul, and now here right in my Bible it says fruitful in every good work. Well, once again, this is one of those phrases that we've just snapped to a decision about what it means and blown right on.

Being fruitful in every good work. We know what fruitful means from looking at Galatians, from looking at the earlier part of this chapter. What are we talking about here? When you do a good work, when you're out there actually delivering a meal or babysitting a child or tending to someone's needs or being there for them in a big way or a small way.

We have a lot of daily things. Wives do laundry and make meals and do a hundred things in the house every day. Believers, believing ladies do those things.

Unbelieving women do those things as well. And it's a good work. There are lots of splendid unbelievers, lots of Buddhists, lots of cult members.

I heard about a Wicca lady that wants some community to take a fish off of their flag. She says, we're just like everybody else. She's got children.

She makes their meals and washes their clothes and gets them off to school and takes them to activities. She does all the things a good mother would do, except she wants to stamp out Christianity. But she does these things.

Are those good works? Taking care of your child, nurturing them, meeting their needs? Of course they are. But is she being fruitful in that good work? Well, when you understand what fruit is, you can be doing a good work and you're not fruitful. That was the Pharisees' problem.

They did lots of good works, but they weren't fruitful. Paul says, if you get a grip on this will of God, if you understand what God is looking for in your life, when you do your good works, they'll be fruitful. You will be fruitful in every good work.

Every good work you do will count. Every good work you do will reflect God's glory because it's coming out of a heart that's been transformed by the presence of the power of God. Being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, because this is going to be a cycle and it's going to be a momentum that increases our hunger and our recognition of the value of the word of God because it's the key to everything.

That's how the fruit is born. And so you come full circle back to that truth. Strengthened with all

might according to His glorious power.

We start getting into this language that just kind of rolls off the tongue and doesn't really dent our head much. But look at that verse 11. Strengthened with all might.

There's another use of that word *pas* in Greek. Not just enough might or a pretty good amount of might. All might.

You can measure this might by the standard of His glorious power. How powerful is God? That's how much strength you have in your life. Strength against temptation.

Strength to endure. Strength to love. Strength to have peace.

Strength to have patience. Strength to persevere. Strength to discern.

Strength to operate in a way that pleases God. How much strength do you have for that? You have enough strength. That strength is so big you can only measure it by the standard of the power of God Himself because it is the power of God.

Strengthened with all might according to. That according to *katha* is measured according to the standard of. If you're going to measure the power you have in your life, you've got to get out the ruler of God's glorious power.

That's how big it is. For what? How much patience? A pretty good amount of patience. All patience.

That use of the word *pos* again. People who are saying, you know, you don't quite have all of the Christian life here. You need something else.

Paul is just destroying them with his vocabulary here. You have all wisdom, all spiritual understanding, fully pleasing Him, filled up with regard to the knowledge of God. Strengthened with all might for all patience, all long-suffering with joy.

If you have the word of God and the spirit of God, you have it all. That's all. There is no more.

There's nothing else that will please God. Anything else you do is going to be less than the all. So Paul is making a very powerful case here as he addresses these tugs and pulls and pressures.

And we see it while we sit here and we look at the page here. We look at this. It's page 1449 in my New King James Bible here.

And it looks great on paper. The question for you and the question for me is, when we close our Bibles tonight and we pray and we chat a bit and we're dismissed and we go back into whatever our current circumstances are, is our life going to reflect these words? Are we going to sense that God the Holy Spirit is active? Is there going to be truth circulating in our soul that inebriates us in

the positive sense, that affects everything that we do, that colors our attitude, colors our conversation? When we go back and we get to talking with people or we get engaged in the tasks that face us or whatever, are we doing it as a spirit-filled, knowledge-filled believer who recognizes that this task and this person and this conversation and this situation is a part of the plan of God and that the will of God needs to be fulfilled in it? Is God pleased? Am I walking the worthy walk? Am I fully pleasing as I converse, as I work, as I relax, as I think and meditate? That has to be our consuming ambition. Our consuming goal is that God be pleased.

We know how because we've seen it right here. Paul has laid it out. It's setting as a priority the truth of God in our soul.

We know. It's not just an abstract. Truth is not a black box.

There are truths that apply. When we converse, what kind of conversation should we have? Conversations often turn in directions that we didn't necessarily initiate, but here we are. Now suddenly it's a gossip conversation or it's a negative conversation or it's a conversation that doesn't reflect the things that are good and right and noble and lovely and of good report.

It's an unfortunate conversation. The relation that we have with somebody as we engage in a task or the attitudes in our soul as we go about a task, we start feeling this old bitterness seeping in. We've got anger or frustration or boredom or bitterness of some sort that builds up in our soul as we're doing something.

Do we care? Do we stop and say, this isn't it? This isn't worthy of the Lord. This isn't fully pleasing. How do I stop this? That's usually as far as we get.

We say, oh gosh, this is wrong. I know I shouldn't be doing this way. Then we stall out.

Paul has given us the key to take that next step. We know now how to get past that obstacle. When we sense that something's not worthy, that it's not a part of what God intends for us, now we know what to do.

We can pray the same prayer for ourselves that Paul prays on our behalf here. God, fill me with your wisdom. Help me to remember I've spent a lot of time listening to the teaching of your word.

Help me latch on to what I need right now. Let God the Holy Spirit make those things real to me. Help me remember.

Our memories are very bad. You think about all the lessons you've ever heard, all the verses you've ever studied, and how much of it can you really remember. It's very frustrating to me.

But it's there in our soul, and God the Holy Spirit, and I'm sure you've had this happen to you as it's happened to me, that at the oddest time, a verse that you didn't make any attempt to memorize will just pop into your head. You may have just heard it in the course of a lesson, and

suddenly that phrase, it can be words to a hymn. Some wonderful people have ministered to the body of Christ with their musical gift, and they've set doctrines to music.

And it may not even be a scripture per se. It'll be a line or a title from a hymn. And it just strikes you at an odd point.

Well, that's God the Holy Spirit using the word, using the principles of the word of God like a sharp sword, and waking us up, cutting through the clouds and the confusion and the distractions of life, and saying, you're a called person. There's a call on your life. There's a purpose for your life.

And it isn't to sit here and stew in your own juice. It's to be worthy of the Lord. It's to be fully pleasing to Him.

Here's your chance. Don't mess it up in your soul, because that's the garden. That's where the fruit is supposed to grow.

Don't think, well, it doesn't really matter what's going on in my soul. It's what I do. If I speak and say something bad, then I've blown it.

We've already blown it if we blow it in our soul. That's where the battle is. That's the invisible struggle.

That's the principalities and powers and rulers. And that's why the armor in Ephesians is all internal. You gird yourself with truth.

Your breastplate is faith. The sword is the word of God and so forth. The helmet of deliverance.

The helmet of our salvation. It keeps our thinking straight. I'm a saved person.

I can't let my mind wander off in these directions. I'm saved. I'm bought with a price.

I'm supposed to glorify God in my life. We have to wake ourselves up and be conscious of these things during the little moments of life. The common, ordinary moments.

Little conversations. Little tasks. Idle time.

Routine things. That's where the battle is. And we so often miss it.

We wait for something big to come up. And then we get all excited. We say, oh, it's a test.

Every minute is a test. And that's what Paul prays. To walk worthy of the Lord.

Strengthened with all might. According to His glorious power. That according to means that's the measure of it.

That's how much there is available. For all patience. All longsuffering.

With joy. That's the key. Some people are very patient and very longsuffering, but it's not necessarily accompanied by joy.

It's accompanied by a grimace and a groan and a clenching of teeth. Lots of people can endure. And some of them can be stoic and just keep their mouth shut and just have that slow burn going.

But to be able to have patience, to be able to have longsuffering with joy, you can only do that with divine power. There's no human being that can be patient, that can endure wrongs, that can endure slights, that can endure that sharp sword stuck into the back two or three times and twisted for good measure with joy. God has to do that in us through the mechanism that we are now studying.

And to even be thankful that God has brought that circumstance, that we are at that place, that we're alive, we're in the struggle, even when we fail, at least we're alive. We haven't failed so badly that God just gave up and yanked us home, put us on the bench and let somebody else fight the fight. We're still here.

We can pick up, we can put on our armor, get our helmet back on, pick up the sword and take another swing. Giving thanks to the Father because whatever happens, He's qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints and the light. That is such a terrific motivation.

It's such a bright hope ahead of us. That's where we're going to begin next week. I'll give you just a little tantalizer for verse 12.

When He says qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance, that inheritance, the word there, is the same word used in Revelation when it says that the ones who are outside have their part in the lake of fire. Very same word here as there. It means the same thing.

It's not your fate, it's what you inherit. There will be people who miss this calling, who don't latch on to it as believers, and their portion is going to be the lake of fire, their inheritance. God says, you want to know what your inheritance is? See that smoke rising over there? That's the fruit of your life.

That's all the dead vines and withered branches of your life because you didn't bother, you didn't care enough to read Colossians chapter 1 and understand its meaning. But we are not on such an unhappy, dismal road, and we'll resume our study here next week. Let's close in prayer.

We thank you, Father, for not leaving us here as orphans when the Lord departed. He has given us the gift of the Spirit. We have the treasure of your Word before us.

We pray that it will do its work in us, that our lives will be pleasing in your sight and worthy of the Lord. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

