

98-08-17b Colossians

We're back now in Colossians chapter 1, looking at the second major section. The first being the introduction and the second section being the prayer of Paul for the Colossian believers. Praying that they might be enabled with all ability and that has a purpose.

It is with a view toward all patience and long-suffering with joy. This, by the way, is paralleled in construction up above when it says fully pleasing him. This is the other occurrence of the preposition *ace*, with a view toward.

So you have that you may walk worthy of the Lord with a view toward fully pleasing Him or with a view toward every pleasing thing. There are amazing structural links in this little paragraph. Paul composes it.

It's almost poetic in form. Because each thing that he prays has substance and yet that request has a purpose. There is a goal in view for each of these things.

Gaining knowledge of God's will. Gaining spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding has the purpose of having a worthy walk. And what is in view when you have the worthy walk is being fully pleasing.

Obviously in God's sight is implied there. Then down below, being strengthened with all strength or being enabled with all ability according to the standard of His glorious power, or the power of His glory, also has a purpose. It is with a view toward all patience and all long-suffering with joy.

Now, what is the idea here of patience and long-suffering? Is this that we will just be able to endure distraction or endure persecution? What exactly is patience? What exactly is this long-suffering? With joy. This is the qualifier. It isn't enough just to be patient or just to suffer long, but to have joy.

If you turn back to Galatians chapter 5, this is a familiar passage that also mentions these qualities. Galatians 5 beginning in verse 19. The works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like, of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in times past.

Why does Paul say that, by the way? He says, I tell you now just as I have told you before. This is obviously something that Paul refers to a lot because it's important. This that he's about to review with them is something that he has said before many times.

And he says, I'm going to say it again. Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is something that Paul has repeated and reviewed and rehearsed and gone over time and time again with believers in the region of Galatia.

The ones to whom he's writing here in Galatians have heard this many times. And he says, I tell you again, as I told you before, if you practice these things, you don't inherit the kingdom of God. Nothing in here about salvation.

I think we've established through quite a bit of study the difference between salvation and inheritance. This is addressed to believers. Isn't it interesting, if you keep your finger in Galatians 5 and turn back to Colossians 1, that having the antithesis of all of those bad things that keep you from inheriting, having the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Obviously, the flip side of the coin is those who bear this kind of fruit do qualify for inheritance in the kingdom. And that thought is tied to that fruit in Colossians 1 just as it is in Galatians 5. There is a lot on the line. We tend to think, well, and we don't always think this, of course.

We wouldn't necessarily think this consciously. But it's a lot easier to see in other people than it is to see in ourselves. But there are some people who enjoy their problems, aren't there? There are some people that if they didn't have a problem, they'd invent one just so they'd have something to talk about.

And I think all of us have run across people like that in our periphery. It's like, well, if there's any shadow, if there's any glimmer of gray in the world, that's what they home in on. It could be a beautiful wedding, everything could have gone fine, but the groom is crooked on the cake.

And so that's what you're going to hear about for the next half an hour. And some people are not particularly anxious to have all of their problems solved. That's sort of the grist for their meal.

That's what gives them something to talk about and something to have repartee and conversation. If you called them up on the phone and everything was going fine, there would be nothing there. So we tend to think, well, if I could just have peace and patience and all this, it would make my life go fine.

That's not always a big motivating factor for people. Some people say, well, you know, my life's okay. I've got my complement of difficulties and so forth.

But sometimes we don't really think that's all that bad. And we don't have a sense of urgency about our level of patience, do we? We don't always think, I've really got to get this patience problem licked. I really have got to get a handle on this long suffering.

What's the matter with me that I don't have more joy? That doesn't tend to bring up our level of panic very often, does it? And what we fail to realize is what Paul is pointing out in these two passages. It's not just the present. It's not just our daily life now that is affected by these things.

You're risking your eternal future. And that kind of language always makes people think, oh, you

know, he's bordering on loss of salvation or something. Not at all.

But we have a future in eternity and the nature of it is determined by decisions that we make now. And it's important to remember that. We tend to think that everything revolves around us and our perception and our relative degree of comfort.

And that's the mindset that the Word of God tries to change in us. The transformation and the renewing of our mind should bring us to a realization that it all revolves around how pleased God is. Is he fully pleased or is he not fully pleased? Not am I fully pleased.

Once I'm fully pleased, I tend to quit. I think, well, everything's okay now. Problem solved.

I'm pleased. Rather than stopping and thinking, is God pleased? What pleases me may not please God. They may not necessarily, depending on my relative level of growth and understanding of God's will, they may not match.

And the big task that God the Holy Spirit is engaged in in our souls is waking us up to think about God's view. God's degree of satisfaction with our life. Not necessarily our own.

Our own level of satisfaction is not that good. Not that good as a standard. Have you ever seen someone, perhaps in your family or in your periphery, someone you know well or a relative once removed or something, that is young and is making the typical young mistakes that young people make.

Now that we're getting so old, we can talk about the young folks and all the mistakes they make. You know, you hit the big 4-0 and now you just start looking down on half the human race. But it's a lot easier to see people in their late teens and early twenties, especially if you have some knowledge of God's will, you see people living together.

They say, well, we're just going to shack up and live together. We're just so madly in love and we can't stay apart. We're just going to live together.

And that's what they do. There is nothing you can say to persuade someone that is in that level of enamoration with another person. I don't even think that's a word.

That level of interest in another person and vice versa, they're satisfied. They think this is great. So their level of satisfaction, the fact that they're just consumed by the presence of this other person, can't bear to be apart, and they're living an immoral lifestyle together, seems great.

It's satisfying or they wouldn't be doing it. And this can go on for a period of time. And they can't say, well, you know, I have this deep troubling lack of peace in the center of my being, so I must need to stop this.

Our nature doesn't supply us with that. We can just be happy as larks in a state of utter sin.

Because sin is fun.

A lot of sin and evil is pleasant, and that's why men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. So I say all of that to illustrate, our level of satisfaction is not a good guide as to where we stand. We need the knowledge of God's will.

That's why it's so important to immerse ourselves in the Word of God, to see the demonstration and the application of God's thinking and God's interaction with people in the Bible, to come to know what pleases Him, what He's shooting for in terms of goals in our lives and in the human race at large. When we come to understand that, now we start to have a frame of reference for whether or not our function is pleasing in His sight or not. Remember in the last century or two, when the missionaries would go to some far off land, go to the deep bushland of Africa or go into the aboriginal areas of South America or Asia or whatever, and find these tribes that have been living in primitive conditions for thousands of years, and they would come in, a lot of times the Catholics would be the first ones to get there, and here's all these half-naked savages running around, and the first thing they would want to do is put clothes on them.

The savages were perfectly content to run around naked or half-naked. It was weird to them that these people hung cloth all over their bodies. It was hot and uncomfortable and you couldn't throw your spear right with these shirts on and so forth.

It got in the way when you were trying to feed your children. They couldn't understand it. What is this? It's a completely foreign concept as far as European standards of dress and decorum.

They had no knowledge of it, and it hadn't occurred to them. They didn't just instinctively wake up one morning and say, you know, I think I need a shirt. It just didn't happen.

Well, we can't expect that in our spiritual life either, that we're just going to wake up one morning, and because we're semi-interested in the things of God, we're going to develop a knowledge of God's will and what's pleasing and proper in His sight. It comes from somewhere. The knowledge of His will comes from looking at His Word, and that's why it is important not just to hear the teaching of the Word of God, but to think about it the rest of the week, the rest of the time.

You figure seven times 24 is, oh boy, I shouldn't give myself a math problem. Well, whatever it is. However many hours that is.

Seven times 24, you've got paper in front of you, you can work it out. That's how many hours there are in a week, right? Seven times 24. Well, out of that week, how many hours do we actually spend listening to the teaching of the Word of God? Some small fraction of that total amount.

And I'm not going to try fractions with you either. But it's a small amount. It's a tiny proportion.

That's the point. It would be much better for us if we took some of the rest of that time and made

use of and amplified the value of what we hear when we listen, what we see when we read. You should read your Bible.

You should memorize Scripture. I have been thinking that I may try to suggest a verse every so often for us to memorize as a group. Because Scripture memory is incredibly helpful.

It's helpful when you're a child. It's helpful when you're an adult. It is amazing what God the Holy Spirit will do.

And the odd times that He will pop fragments of a verse or an entire verse into our mind. It's the power of God for deliverance. Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

The gospel of Christ is the Word of God. I think every place you see the word gospel in the New Testament, you could put the word doctrine. Or whatever is meaningful to you as far as the truth of the Word of God.

I am not ashamed of the truth of the Word of God. It is the power of God for deliverance to everyone who puts their faith in it. To the Jew first and also to the Greek.

We've got to keep it fresh and alive and an issue in our thinking. We can't just listen to it once in a while and agree and say Amen. And not make it the object of thought and the object of faith the rest of the time.

It's the power of God for deliverance. The knowledge of His will is what gives us wisdom and understanding. So that we can sort things out in our daily life.

It's not so that we can get our life to be satisfying in our sight. It's not so that we can have a pleasant day. That's not the goal.

And if we think it's the goal or if that is our goal, we're outside the will of God. The goal in our life is to be fully pleasing to God. The worthy walk is fully pleasing.

There is no area where He's not happy. That's the goal. We have to know whether or not He is fully pleased.

Not whether or not we are relatively pleased. Our degree of comfort can be misleading. Jesus talks about the latter days as it was in the days of Noah.

They were eating and drinking. They were marrying. They were giving in marriage until the day that the flood came.

They didn't have some deep level of dissatisfaction saying, Gosh, I really think I need to go get in the ark because I'm just so unhappy. That wasn't the driving factor. I was thinking about this driving across Mississippi for some reason.

We tend to think that everyone who does not have Christ as Savior is miserable. We tend to think that every believer that is not actively learning and growing in the knowledge of God, isn't in a good teaching church, etc., is at the center of their being just deeply troubled and miserable. And then we turn around and try to use that as a lever.

We assume and we tell them, You're unhappy. You're disturbed. You're troubled.

You have problems that you can't solve, etc. And that's not always the case. It is often the case because generally we induce misery on ourselves when we're out of the will of God, whether we're an unbeliever or a believer lacking God's power.

But not always. There are people who are just happy as pigs in a wallow living the life they're living. There are unbelievers that just think everything is great.

They've got whatever they've got. They've picked the crutches and the props. They've surrounded themselves with things that please them.

And when those temporary things run out, they shovel something else in. And maybe they've got enough money or enough friends or enough stimulation in their environment, enough chemicals to abuse or whatever it might be, that they don't really have any desire to change. We tend to think that everyone has this sense of need because we have had that sense of need.

We have felt it and we have gone to God because we had it. Well, sadly, not everyone has that. And you can't make that assumption.

And you can't assume that if your personal sense of need is not bothering you, is not agitating, if we're not currently feeling agitated and in need of something, we can't just assume, well, everything must be okay because I no longer feel that urgent need for change. I no longer feel that urgent need to go to God. We can be anesthetized.

This is why the Bible talks about hardness of heart. Scleronomia, sclerosis of the heart is a deadening. It is a loss of the sense of need.

It's a loss of the sense of failure before God. Consciousness that has been seared with a hot iron. What is that? That means your conscience doesn't bother you when you deceive, when you are angry and bitter, when you dish dirt out at people.

You don't come back a half hour, 45 minutes later and say, oh, wow, that was terrible. That sense can go away. And if it's not there, that's not necessarily means that everything is well.

It can mean that everything is very bad. We may be getting numb. We may be like the Israelites in the Old Testament when God says the heart of this people has grown hard.

Their ears are dull. Their eyes see and don't perceive. Their ears hear and don't understand.

They're calloused over. All day long I hold out my hands to this disobedient and stiff-necked people and they don't feel that urgency and that need to change. So we have to be careful.

The measure is God's satisfaction, God's pleasure. And the only way we can know whether or not He is pleased is to have a full knowledge of His will. That's why this is the central part of Colossians.

It's not in the center, but it's central. It's at the beginning because after Paul greets and blesses them for their faith, hope, and love, he says, this is my prayer. This is what's important in your life.

As you're up there in the crumbling town of Colossae, this is the key. This is everything. This is it.

And he uses the word all and he uses the word wisdom a lot. Just look at the book of Colossians here. Just flip through and look how long it is in your Bible.

In my New King James here, it fits on one, two, three, four, five pages. Actually, about four and a half pages. The whole letter.

The word wisdom occurs 40 times in this letter. Forty times. Is it important to have the wisdom of God? Apparently it is.

This is what's going to tell us where we are. Not how we feel. Not are our circumstances putting pressure on us or not.

It's the wisdom, spiritual wisdom, spiritual understanding. That's what's important. That is what will enable us to have a worthy walk.

That's what will enable us to be fully pleasing to Him. That is what strengthens us. That's what gives us the dynamite in our soul to accomplish God's purpose.

We think, well, I could be Moses on the mountain. I could be Elijah on Mount Carmel. I could be Joseph ruling Egypt.

I could be David up there slaughtering the enemies of God. I could be Solomon building the temple. We can be greater than all of those put together.

We can be patient. We can be long-suffering. And we can have joy while we're doing it.

That's the full measure of the power of God at work in our souls. It's an amazing thing when you look at this and think about it. All of this equipping, all of this wisdom and knowledge and the power of God is to do one of the hardest things in life, and that's being patient when there's nothing to induce patience.

To be long-suffering when, under normal circumstances, all you would want to do is turn around and inflict pain on the source of your aggravation. We have all felt this, haven't we? Something

happens and your reason can't control the way you feel. Your mind says, I shouldn't feel this way.

This isn't pleasing in God's sight. I know this is a sin, but it's like chemicals are being released in your bloodstream and you just feel bitter. How dare they? How can that person do that? It's like you have no control, and we really don't.

We do not have control over that. That is something only God can control, and it takes power according to the standard of His krator power, His divine ruling power. It has to have that much power in our souls to give us patience and give us long-sufferings under circumstances like that.

It has to be there in advance. When you're going to go blow up a cliff with dynamite, you don't sit down and start pouring the nitroglycerin into the sawdust and trying to construct a little stick of dynamite. You have to have the dynamite.

It has to have already been manufactured. It has to already have its explosive power. We went to the Kennedy Space Center.

Kennedy Center is a theater where I saw Jesus Christ Superstar and nearly perished in the attempt. The Kennedy Space Center down in Florida where they've got the rockets. It's an amazing thing when they graphically demonstrate for you just what a tremendous feat it is to actually lift someone out of the pool of Earth's gravity and get them all the way to the moon and back.

When you see the proportions, you actually walk around the Saturn booster and you see the enormity of it. You could fit several houses. You could fit a neighborhood inside the rocket booster.

All of that is designed to get this little tiny cockpit with a couple of astronauts, this thing that would easily fit in this living room, this enormous thing that takes a large building to even house and show you one, to get this little tiny thing up there. Well, that reminds me of God's plan because you've got the Saturn rocket booster of His power behind us just to get little old bitty us up there to be patient and to be long-suffering and to have joy in the process. There's enormous power to just do this, what seems like such a small thing.

But it is incredible power. And you've got to have the thing gassed up. When you go through the tour there, they show you films of all these great launches, Apollo 11 going to the moon and 13 and all.

And they have a simulation where they recreate the Apollo 11 launch. And you're in a room and they've got this sense around the floors vibrating, the windows are rattling and the glow in the sky and everything. And it's as close as you can get to being at a real launch.

Well, before T-0 there, when they were still in the countdown, there was no explosion, there was no flames, there was no mighty plume of smoke and the earth shaking and people miles away

seeing this thing. All of the power was there in potential. It's the fuel and the oxygen and all this other stuff, the little sparklers they fire underneath to make sure it lights.

It's all there, but it's not active. It's potential. It isn't until they get down to T-5 and they ignite the boosters and the whole process starts.

Then this incredible power pushes these tons and tons of metal and fuel up through the sky and these little guys riding on top go all the way out into outer space. We have the full power of God at our disposal. It's all there.

The power that created us and everything around us. It's the power that he's going to talk about in the next section that Jesus Christ exerted in creating all things and the word of his power that holds everything together. It's available in our souls, but somebody has got to push the launch button.

Somebody has to be sure that the rocket is fueled up and pointed in the right direction and that the mission is accomplished. That it doesn't blow up on the pad or that it doesn't fail to ever go. They show you the early films where rocket after rocket, the Soviets had a man in space and Yuri Gagarin is up there and we're down here and rocket after rocket blows up on the pad or keels over and they tell you this tale of woe of how bad off the United States was in the late 50s and early 60s because our space program was just in shreds.

It's like Keystone Cops. Rocket after rocket does these crazy things. It turns up and crashes into the ground.

It just falls over instead of launching. The top blows up and it's very comical, but that's the case with a lot of our lives as believers. The power of God is available and we misuse it.

We don't understand it. We have no idea what the goal is. That's what this prayer is about.

That's what this book is about. So he goes on to say that you might walk worthy of the Lord, that you may walk a walk that is worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing, fruitful in every good work and increasing by means of the knowledge of God, fruitful and growing because of this knowledge. The knowledge of God is everything.

We have to know who we are and why we're here. Just like, bless his heart, Admiral Stockdale. You've got to know who you are.

You've got to know why you're here. Enabled with all ability according to the standard of his power for patience and long suffering with joy. Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

That patience and long suffering, when it exists, when it functions in our lives, that lays hold of eternal things. It looks forward and grabs hold of eternity. It takes a hold of life with Christ that is

our hope.

It's the motivation for what we do. But how can we be patient? How can we suffer long when things are not ideal? We can't just decide to because we don't have that control. Knowing the plan of God and the purposes of God and seeing the way this circumstance, seeing it from God's perspective.

God doesn't let anything into our lives that isn't beneficial. Just like what we do with our children. If we could follow our children around, even at school, and keep the bullies away and make sure their lunch is good and nobody harasses them.

They get the best teaching. We sit there and watch the teacher. We want everything to be beneficial for our children.

We want everything to build them up. Even the bad things. We tell them, if you keep running recklessly, you're going to trip and fall.

If you keep riding your bicycle recklessly, you're going to have an accident. If you keep strapping on your skates and going out there without your little protective gear, you're going to get hurt. And sometimes you have to let your children bump their head.

You have to let your children burn their fingers. You have to let your children learn by experience what they refuse to learn listening to you. And it's beneficial.

You let them because if that's the only way they're going to learn, better that they learn it now. Better that they learn it when the consequences are small and recoverable and you're there to pick them up and help them dust themselves off and move on than to insulate them and have nothing but good experiences and then they go out in the big bad world and get totally destroyed. So we allow bad things sometimes into our children's life.

We sometimes induce pain. We may spank a child. We may discipline a child.

We may deprive them of something because they have failed to meet a condition. No, you cannot watch Kratz Creatures tonight because you have not cleaned up your room. You may not have dessert because you did not finish your vegetables and that sort of thing.

And they think, well, this is terrible. I really wanted that dessert and now I can't have it. God does that with us.

God will let us arrive in circumstances where patience is required or longsuffering is required. You don't need patience and longsuffering when everything is great. It's when things are not great.

It's when things are bad. God allowed that. God put that in our path.

It's a part of God's plan. The only way we can have patience and long-suffering with joy is to see it the way He sees it. It's a wonderful thing as children get older when they start to understand the way things work and they realize that you have to qualify for certain privileges, that you have to be found trustworthy before you will be trusted with certain things, that you have to be faithful.

They start to understand. They can anticipate and you don't have to always tell them. They know you're not going to let them out of the house to go play with their friends until their room is clean.

They start just going in and cleaning up their room. Can I go out and play with my friends? Is your room clean? Yes, it is. You may go.

They figure out how it works and it's so gratifying because they've started to take responsibility. They're starting to think ahead and anticipate. It's no longer such a dredge to clean up the room because you understand its place in the greater scheme of things.

God is looking for that in us. When we have the knowledge of His will, when we start looking at everything in life, not is this satisfying to me, is this contributing to my security and pleasure, but how does this fit in God's plan? What is going on in God's economy here? We can be patient because we're not looking at it in an egocentric fashion. We get upset because something hurts us.

We get upset because something has a negative effect on us. It makes me feel bad. It hurts my feelings.

It interferes with my plans. It messes up my dope, as we say, on the rifle range. You get your dope all on your weapon there.

You've figured out your front sight and your rear sight. You've got your windage and everything cranked in. And then they put all the weapons in the armory and the next day you come out and they give you a different weapon.

Well, now your dope's all messed up. You've got to sight in and start all over. That's why they always try to give you the same weapon all week long when you're going to go qualify.

Well, if something messes us up and it isn't what we expected, we take it personally and we get offended and we have all of this stuff rising up within us to the extent that we look at everything in life as it relates to God, that reaction doesn't get a chance to take place because we're not saying, Oh, that hurt me. We're thinking God's not going to be pleased with that. This person is miserable.

Look, they're acting this way and living this way. They can't be plugged into God's power and God's grace. God is keeping track of what they're doing and I feel sorry for them because this is what Jesus was able to do from the cross.

Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. Jesus looked at the people hanging Him on the cross and He wasn't taking it personally.

He was thinking, What does the Father think of these people? The Father sees them crucifying His only begotten Son. He's going to come down on them with both feet, to put it mildly, and Jesus intercedes for the people crucifying Him. That is the ultimate in patience.

That is the ultimate in long suffering. And that is the ultimate in joy. Jesus Christ went through those things for the joy that was set before Him.

It doesn't mean that you have a sense of hilarity when you're suffering. I don't think Jesus found it amusing when He died for our sins on the cross, but He had the joy before Him. The joy was there.

It's a great old gospel song. There's joy in the morning. Things may be dark now, but you just think about that joy that's coming in the morning, and it's a comfort.

It's a comfort when you're bereaved, knowing that you'll be reunited. It doesn't mean we weep with those who weep, but there's still joy with joy. We have patience and long suffering with joy.

That joy is a possession. Even if we're not experiencing it at the moment, it's still our possession, and we know what lies ahead. The knowledge of God's will, the epinosis knowledge of God's will, and the knowledge of God Himself are paralleled in this passage.

And that's relationship with God. People tend to talk a lot about personal relationship with Jesus Christ and so forth, which is a wonderful thing, but the New Testament lays a lot of stress on relationship with God the Father. Know the Father.

If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. I am the way to the Father, Jesus says. Our relationship is with the Father.

We are His children. He is our Father. How many passages in the New Testament say Christ our brother? There's not a one, because it's not emphasizing our brother relationship to Christ.

It emphasizes our sonship to the Father. Jesus died to bring us to the Father. We are co-heirs with Him.

We share His relationship with His Father. So that's strengthened with all strength, enabled with all ability, according to the standard of His power, with a view toward. The goal of that is patience and long-suffering with joy.

If we want to measure where we are in God's estimation, we've already established that our level of satisfaction is not a reliable guide. Where do we look? How can we tell? Well, look at your level of patience. Look at your level of long-suffering.

How easily do things get under our skin? How easily are we irritated? Of course, you know, we can all be under conviction now. I can get irritated just driving down the road. You may recall I drove from Austin to Dallas today, so I could tell you many stories.

But that's a measure. Where do we stand? If we're easily irritated, if we're easily upset, if we find ourselves with sins of attitude toward others, that is not patience, and that's not long-suffering, and that is not fully pleasing in God's sight. To be able to absorb a wrong is one of the hardest tests.

Jesus Christ absorbed the ultimate wrong on the cross at our hands, and He's our example. If you go over to Peter, He has left us an example. I think it's 1 Peter 2, that we should walk in His steps.

And that's a tall order. That's a high standard. Do we really have the ambition of having the patience and long-suffering of Christ on the cross? We think it's laughable.

I could never do that. Yes, we can, because it doesn't depend on us. It depends on the power of God.

And we can equal out in the scale, the axios scale, the worthy walk. We can do that. Jesus said, the things that you've seen me do, you will do those and more.

He told the disciples that. Why? Because it doesn't depend on us. It depends on the power of God.

The key is knowing how to access the power of God. How do you get your Saturn rocket booster lighted and pointed in the right direction? That's what Paul starts his prayer with. The full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom, all spiritual understanding.

We have to give the Holy Spirit something to work with in our souls. That's why it is important to meditate on the Word of God. We can set a goal for ourselves in the coming week to try to remember the things that we've seen tonight and the things that we've learned all along the way, to stop a couple of times a day and just go through an exercise.

Let me think of something. Can I remember something from all of the hours of Bible study that I have had? Can I stop? Wouldn't it be great to follow Daniel's example or David's example three times a day to stop and have a short time of meditation and prayer? David and Daniel both prayed three times a day. Daniel, of course, is famous for it.

But you remember the psalm where David says, Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud and He will hear my voice. Psalm 55, 17. The only reason I remember that is that a wonderful lady said it to music when I was a little boy.

Put a little tune to it and put the reference at the end because I am terrible at references. Psalm

55, 17. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud and He will hear my voice.

It's a reminder to us that our prayer, our dialogue with God should be just that, a dialogue. He speaks to us. We speak to Him.

He speaks to us through His Word. God the Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ. The mind of Christ communicates to us.

But we've got to stop and listen. We don't want to be dull of hearing. We don't want to be hard of heart.

We don't want to be insensitive to God's level of satisfaction in our lives. Well, if you want to hear God, you've got to stop and listen. And we... I mean, if it's important, it shouldn't be a big deal to make the time.

But in some cases, with the pace of our lives, we have to stop. If you've got a companion, whether you're married or you have family or whatever, it's great to do with someone else. It's great to do as believers when we gather and not only listen to the teaching of the Word of God, but converse and spend time in fellowship about it because that is what God is looking for.

That's what puts the power of God in our lives. A lot of times, we have wonderful pictures painted of how our lives should be, but the how question doesn't always get answered. Well, Paul is answering it for us right here.

This is how. It's the full knowledge of God's will, all spiritual wisdom, all spiritual understanding. That's how we can be fully pleasing.

That's how we can walk a walk that's worthy of Christ. Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you that you have not left us as orphans with the departure of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have your Spirit indwelling us. They're ready to implement your power in our lives through His presence, through your Word. We pray that these things will accomplish that purpose in our lives.

We pray that as a result of learning these things and all of the things that we have come to understand in your Word, that we will come to that place of wisdom and understanding that enables us to be patient, to suffer long, and to maintain a real and lasting joy as we do. We pray that our lives, as we move toward that goal, will to a greater and greater degree reflect the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We ask these things in His name.

Amen.