**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**The Fruit of Knowledge**
Scripture: Colossians 1:9-11
Code: 2133

We're continuing our study tonight in Colossians and I would invite you to turn to the book of Colossians in your Bible and look with me at the first chapter. We are running acontinuing study of this tremendous letter by the Apostle Paul, a letter that's very much like the book of Ephesians, different and yet very, very similar in many ways. And I don't know how you're responding to it but my heart is really thrilled as I'm preparing and studying and seeing what God is teaching me week by week as I spend hours in this wonderful letter.

Now, we're looking at chapter 1, verses 9 to 11, this week as we examine Colossians. And we've already begun to look at these verses but they're so rich that we're kind of stuck in there for awhile now, and just taking it as it comes, little by little, and seeing what God has for us. We've entitled this study of these three verses in particular, "Filled with the Know-Ledge of God," or "Filled with the Knowledge of His Will." Now this is a priority in the Christian life.

Let me introduce this passage to us again tonight by talking about something that's very, very important and very basic. Everything, and I want you to get that, everything, no exceptions, everything in the behavior of a Christian must be related to revealed truth. Everything in the behavior of a Christian must be related to revealed truth. Whenever you are exhorted, whenever you are asked to do something, whenever a certain kind of behavior is demanded out of you, whenever you are admonished to a certain thing, it must be based on revealed truth or there isn't really any authority behind that encouragement and that exhortation. Truth is the basis for all right action.

Now, that may sound to you very obvious, but I'm sure to most people it isn't. That we live in a society where there is really a rejection of absolutes and consequently behavior is extremely relative. But from the Christian viewpoint, all behavior is related to revealed truth that is all positive, good behavior is related to revealed truth. There must be absolutes before there can be anyrequirements for action. And you can illustrate this even from human experience.For example, if you drive 80 miles an hour and you get stopped by a policeman, you are fined for unacceptable behavior. Driving 80 miles an hour is not acceptable behavior. Why is it not acceptable? It is not acceptable because there is an absolute and the absolute says that the speed limit is 55. That is an absolute. And because of your mistreatment of an absolute, you have misbehaved and brought yourself under the condemnation of the law.

If you go to Sears and you decide that rather than use cash or a check or a credit card you will just steal what you want, you will start on your way out and perhaps be arrested, and then you will be charged with a crime because your behavior has been unacceptable. Why is it unacceptable? Because there is an absolute and that absolute is shoplifting is a crime and it says it right out there in every store.

You see, absolutes are always the basis for determining the moral quality of any action. All acceptable behavior in our society is based on absolutes. Now, if you want another term for absolutes-laws. That's all laws are is absolutes. If we removed all of the absolutes, if we had no laws, there would be no way to judge anybody's acts; from a moral standpoint we couldn't condemnanybody. There would be no way to enforce anything, good behavior wouldn't even be able to be defined, let alone enforced, because you would remove the standard. So, there has to be absolute bottom-line law and then behavior can be evaluated.

Now, precisely, does this apply in the spiritual area? All the behavior of a Christian is premise upon divine absolutes. God lays down principles and we behave in relation to those principles.

In Romans 7 verse 7: "What shall we say then, is the law sin? No." But Paul says, "Nay, I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known coveting except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." In other words, Paul says the only way that I can evaluate the morality of my deeds is to find an absolute, to find a law somewhere, to find a standard somewhere. And then when I say - There is a standard and I believe that is an authoritative standard, then I have a way in which to evaluate my behavior.

Now, then all spiritual behavior is to be evaluated on the basis of absolutes established in the Word of God. This is a book of absolutes. This is a book of principles. This is a book of laws, if you will. And the first thing that is the objective in the Christian life, and mark it, the first thing is to learn those absolutes. Right? Because it is only in response to the knowledge of those absolutes that you can behave in a proper manner. The only way to have right behavior then is to have right knowledge.

How do I know what to do in my marriage if I don't know what the standards are, right? How do I know what to do in my job if I don't know what the Bible teaches about it? How do I know what to do in worshiping God if I don't understand what God expects in worship? How do I know how to be born-again if I don't follow the absolutes of the Scripture? How do I know about anything if I don't understand God's patterns, God's standards, God's law?

Now, that's so important. And yet it's a sad thing to realize, people, but do you know that most of Christianity, for many years, has tried to live on a high moral level without really knowing the Bible, without really understanding the absolutes, without understanding the principles revealed in Scripture? So, what Paul is saying in Colossians, look at verse 9 of chapter 1, "For this cause, we

also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you." Now, we pray for you and what is the objective of our prayers? "To desire that you might be filled with the...what? ... knowledge of His will." You see, you have to have the basis of knowledge before behavior can proceed from it. To know God and His will and then to conform to it.

Now, the Bible itself illustrates this throughout. This is such an obvious principle, it's incredible to me that so many people miss it, but they do. Now, let me give you an illustration of it. In all of the letters, and I ran through them just to refresh my mind, but in all of the letters to the churches in the New Testament, without an exception, this thing is illustrated. That first you have a bottom line of absolutes and then you have a call to behavior. That is all over the place. For example, you have in Romans 12:1 "1 beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a ... what?...a living sacrifice." Now he's saying -Here's how I want you to behave...first of all, present your body a living sacrifice, let your mind be transformed, verse 2; find your spiritual gift, verse 3 through 8, and use it. And then he goes on and on and on. That's in chapter 12.

Do you know what proceeds chapter 12? You say - Right, chapter 1 through 11, exactly. Do you know what's in chapter 1 through 11? Eleven chapters of absolutes. And when Paul has laid out eleven chapters of absolutes ... you know, you can read the first eleven chapters of Romans and do nothing? They don't ask you to do anything. Except understand the basics, understand the principles, then in 12: "Now therefore, brethren," here's what you do.

You go to the book of I Corinthians and you're going to find the very same thing. Let me give you an illustration of I Corinthians chapter 15: "So, when this corruptible," verse 54, "shall have put on incorruption, this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 0 death, where is thy sting, 0 grave, where is thy victory," and so forth and so forth. He says this tremendous reality, listen, we're going to conquer death, we're going to have an incorruptible body, we're going to have an immortal body. Verse 58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast." Don't get shook. Everything is all right. The absolute -God's going to give you an immortal body, an incorruptible body. You have no fear of death, the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law, that's all been removed, thanks be to God, therefore, brethren, don't get shook.

You see, the behavior again is predicated on the bottom line of absolutes. -This appears all over the place. In II Corinthians, I was just looking at...at chapter 6, verse 17: "Wherefore, come out from among them and be ye separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you andbe a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Now, here God says there's a bottom line principle, I want believers to be clean, I want them to be separated from anything that's unholy, separated unto Myself...that's a principle.

Verse 1 of chapter 7: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves." In other words, when you know what God wants, when you know what His standard is then you know how to behave, right? If God wants purity then you cleanse yourself.

In Galatians, you have four chapters of absolutes and chapter 5 verse 1 says: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free." Now, that's how you behave.

In Ephesians, three chapters of absolutes, and chapter 4 says: "Now therefore, brethren, walk worthy of the high calling."

Philippians, three chapters of absolutes, then chapter 4 begins: "Therefore..." behavior.

Colossians, three chapters of absolutes and in the middle of chapter 3 verse 5: "Therefore, brethren, mortify the deeds of the flesh."

First Thessalonians, five chapters of absolutes and then in chapter 5, verse 6 of I Thessalonians comes the response. He says: "Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober minded," and goes on through a whole list of things.

Second Thessalonians, two chapters of absolutes and then in 2:15, bang, "Therefore," here's the behavior.

Now, that covers the Bible from one end to the other, God always has a basis of revealed truth upon which behavior is predicated. And unless a believer understands that revealed truth, then he's going to have a difficult time trying to determine what moral behavior is really all about. And this is the basic thought that Paul has here in Colossians chapter 1. I'm praying that you might know God's truth because that is the basis of behavior. He doesn't even get into the behavior till chapter 3 verse 5, where he says: "Mortify therefore your members," and he gets into how to live, "Laying aside fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire," but it takes him three chapters to get to that...laying the foundation.

All right, the basis then of behavior, beloved, is simply knowledge of God's truth and that's why we emphasize the fact that you must know the principles of the Word of God. That's Paul's prayer here. His prayer here in Colossians 1 has two parts: the petition part is in verses 9 to 11, and the praise part is in verses 12 to 14. And that pretty much is a good pattern for prayer: petition and praise. We're looking just at the petition part. He is praying for the Colossians, this is still part of his introduction and he hasn't introduced any of the problems of the book, he hasn't really gotten very direct in terms of what he wants to say, He just generally is saying - I'm praying for you, here is my petition that you would know God's truth. That's the beginning.

People say sometimes to me - Why is it that all you ever do is teach the Bible? Why is it that your sermons are always so doctrinal? Because you can't live unless you know the principles, right? You have to know the absolutes. And if I believe that God is supreme and if I believe that God's Word is authoritative and if I believe that that authoritative Word is the basis of all behavior, then my job is to make sure you understand that Word.

Now, notice what he says. Let's go back and look at verse 9: "I'm praying for you and I desire that you might be filled," remember that word? It means total control; we went into it last time we studied, two weeks ago now. Total control. I want you to be totally controlled with the knowledge, epignosis, deep thorough knowledge. I want you to be totally dominated, not by a superficial understanding but by deep knowledge. Knowledge of what? "Of His will." And what did we say that was? His self-revelation right here of His absolutes, of His standards.

And then we talked about this, remember? Look at the next response in verse9: "That you be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Now that takes it two more steps. First is to know and then we said wisdom and understanding are added to that. Wisdom is to principlize and understanding is to apply. So, first you know, then you make a principle out of it and then you apply it, and then comes the action. Oh, that's a beautiful concept. Listen, to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom ... let's stop there.

Now, I say - All right, John, the objective for me as a Christian then is to get into this Bible and learn it. That's right. Get that deep knowledge. But, that deep knowledge should become wisdom. What is wisdom? That's turning all of that information into a principle that can be applied to life. Whenever I'm at a pastors' conference and people ask me what I attempt to do when I preach. I say - I have one thing in mind and that is to take a passage and draw a principle out of it. I call it principlizing the Bible, systematically drawing truth out of a section and making a principle out of it. This is so important.

Let me just pick some random Scriptures to show you how you do this because you can do it and you have to do it in your life. Turn to I Thessalonians 2:8, and I haven't particularly studied this, I just want to show you how I would approach ... I Thessalonians 2:8, and I'll show you how you would hear this information, you would get this knowledge and turn it into a principle, and this is really what you ought to do in your Bible study. When you come down and you're studying a chapter, take a verse and draw out of that verse a principle and write it down, and you've got a principle. This is the way to go. Now, look at verse 8, 1 Thessalonians 2:8 "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only," listen to this, "but also our own souls because you were dear unto us." You say - Isn't that nice knowledge? Oh, it's terrific. What kind of knowledge is it? Paul loved the people he ministered to, right? We were affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to impart unto you not the gospel of God only but our own souls because you were dear to us. What great information this is - Paul loved the people he ministered to.

What's the principle? Pretty obvious, isn't it? You ought to ... what?...not just give the gospel but...what? ...give yourself. What did Mary say when she gave her testimony? The first thing you have to do is make a ... what?...a friend. You have to give your soul before you can give your message.

Now, you see, there's a principle. You see, first came the knowledge, then came the principle. You say - What's the third step? That's spiritual understanding. You say - What's that? That's to say - All right, that verse tells me that Paul not only preached the gospel but he loved the people. Now, I'll make a principle out of that. I ought not only to preach the gospel but to love the people. Now, I'll make an application out of that. Instead of just leaning over the fence to my neighbor and giving him the gospel, I think I'll invite him to dinner. Now that's spiritual understanding. You've taken it from knowledge, you've principlized it and you've made it something that can apply. Then you carry out the action.

Now, in case you don't understand it, let's look at Matthew 23 and maybe another illustration will help it even come more clear because this is so basic, people, that if you just learn this little handle on Bible study it will revolutionize your understanding of Scripture. Matthew 23:37, sometimes you're going to need a commentary and some other things and maybe you're going to need the help of somebody who's a Bible student to get you to that principle, but this is the approach. All right, Matthew 23:37, this is just another one I just picked at random, no reason at all. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how oft would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

Now, you read that andyou say - Oh, that's interesting. Let me look at that a little bit. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," this is Jesus lamenting over Jerusalem. "You that killed the prophets," and historically, you know, so many of the prophets had been killed by rejecters, even in the land of Israel. And they had stoned those sent to them. And how often God wanted to pull them all together under His wings and they wouldn't do it and He says - All right, your house is left desolate. You know that Israel paid a high price for the rejection of God? That's knowledge. Now you say - What's the principle there? Oh, listen, the principle is obvious. God judges those who reject Him, right? That's the principle. God judges those who reject Him. Now you've got a bottom line absolute.

You say - But what's the spiritual understanding or the application? I will not reject Him... that's the application. And I don't want my friends to reject Him. And do you see how you're simply assimilating knowledge, translating it into a principle and making an application of the principle. That's going from knowledge to wisdom to spiritual understanding.

Let me show you another one, Mark 6:52, you'll get this now probably, Mark 6:52. Jesus walks on the water and that isn't something that happens all the time, the disciples were a little shook about it. And

verse 52, I love this, it says: "They considered not the miracle of the loaves for their heart was hardened." Do you know how long it's been since the feeding of the 5,000? One column in my Bible. That's all. You say - Theyforgot already and that was yesterday? This is the night of that very.... Oh, He's walking on water, fantastic. What's such a big shock, did you forget He just fed 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish? They had forgotten for their heart was hardened. He's ... the knowledge tells us the story. Yeah, Jesus walked on the water and they were shocked. They shouldn't have been shocked, but they were because they had forgotten the miracle just the day before.

You say - What's the principle? Oh, what the principle is? Hard hearts come from forgetful minds, right? Hard hearts come from forgetful minds. What's the application? I will strive to remember what God has done. You see? It's a simple little thing that takes the thing from just words on a page to something in my life.

Now you say - Well, how do you make it work? It looks so easy for you. I'll tell you how; study to show yourself approved ... study. Now, let me give you a hint. Sometimes, and the passages I've given you now have been just kind of stories, and all you had there was just the knowledge, you didn't have the principle and you didn't have the application, but in some passages you get all three already done for you? That's right. And those are terrific. Some passages you get two of them. For example, there are some where you get knowledge and the principle. Look at Philippians 2...Philippians 2:2. Now, here comes ... here comes just this basic theological fact, verse 2: "Be like-minded." Okay? "Have the same love," that means to love everybody the same. "Be of one accord, be of one mind." Yeah, that's knowledge, that's a good theological truth. Yeah, you see, that's already a principle, isn't it? You don't need to say - What's the principle there? The principle there is unity, love. You say - Well, what's the application? Oh, that's given too. Look at verse 3; you know how to apply this principle? "Let nothing be done through strife or pride, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves."

Look, there you have everything. You don't even need to do anything but stand up and preach that. It's all there. See, in some passages you're going to have the truth and the principle and the application all laid out for you.

In I John, let me show you another one, I John chapter 3 verse 16: "By this perceive we the love of God because He laid down His life for us." Stop there. Now, there's knowledge. Oh, God laid His down His life for us - boy, that's terrific ... terrific. Now, look at verse 18, now here's the principle, you've just heard the knowledge, here's the principle, 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue but in ... what?... deed and truth." Now, God loved that way and you know, we didn't have to look for that principle, John gave it to us. You say - What's the application? Back to verse 16: "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Whosoever has this world's goods and sees his brothers have need and shuts up his compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?" There you have everything. The knowledge, God loved and gave. The principle, so should you. The application,

when you see your brother have a need, meet his need. All you have to do is go out and do it.

Now, in some places in the Bible you have to figure out the principle and the application. Some places you'll have the principle and not the application, and some places you'll have everything. But, beloved, that's what you're to do in your study of the Scripture. Find out what it means, what the principle is, how it applies, go do it. But it all begins, listen to me, it all begins with that bottom line of knowledge ... knowing the principles, knowing the absolutes. What is it that God is saying there?

So, Paul prays that we would be totally dominated by knowledge because knowledge alone controls behavior. Do you know that I believe that the main message for life, the main message for life for the Christian is to know God's truth. I believe that. To know it. Do you know that the longest chapter in the Bible, now there must be a reason that it's the longest, what is it? What's the longest chapter? Psalm 119. The longest chapter in the Bible, I think it has a hundred and seventy-five verses, a hundred and what? Seventy-six? Okay. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible and you know what it's about? Knowing God's truth.That's what it's about. I think there's only two and maybe three, at the most, verses out of a hundred and seventy-six that don't talk about God's absolutes. It uses the words statutes, laws, ordinances, commands, or word; it's all talking about God's absolutes. The longest chapter in the Bible is dominated by that idea.

So, right behavior is based on right knowledge. To give you a negative illustration, look at Malachi and we're going to get back to Colossians in a minute. Malachi, chapter 2, verse 7, there was a lot of problems in Israel at this point; we won't go into all of the background, but back in Leviticus 10, the priests were told originally, when it all began, they had one purpose. And that was to impart God's knowledge. Leviticus 10:11 says that. But here it says in Malachi 2:7 "For the priest's lips," listen, "should keep ... what?...knowledge and they should seek the law at his mouth." In other words, the priest should be somebody who puts out God's truth and the rest of the people should seek God's truth out of his mouth for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts, but you are departed out of the way, you have caused many to stumble at the law, you have corrupted the covenant of Levi. You have prostituted the priesthood, is what he says.

You see, the priests had one function ... open his mouth and let God speak ... keeping law and knowledge at his mouth. Beloved, we have to know the principles. I'm telling you we have to know them. You know what it says in James 1:21? Really interesting, listen: "Wherefore put away all filthiness and all overflowing of wickedness, all sin and receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your lives." What in the world is he saying? Well, I believe one thing he's saying there is that a Christian who doesn't know the Word of God, who doesn't know the principles is going to find himself caught in all kinds of sin and could end up losing his life, right? Ananias and Sapphira, I Corinthians 11, 1 John 5, a sin unto death ... we've got to know the truth, people. We've got to know those absolutes.

Now, all of that leads us to verses 10 and 11, believe it or not. When you know God's truth and you know God's principles and you have turned them into applicable realities, there's going to be super results and here they come. The five, listen to this, the five benefits of applied knowledge, knowledge in action. Verse 10 is what they call in Greek a purpose clause, a hinaclause, in order that. When you are filled with knowledge, when that knowledge is turned into a principle, when that principle is turned into something applicable, in order that ... here are the results, these are purposes or results. Five benefits are going to happen in your life, five fantastic things are going to take place in your life when you've got a grip on God's absolutes.

Number one, you will walk worthy unto the Lord unto all pleasing. Stop right there. You'll walk worthy of the Lord. Boy, that is such an important biblical concept. Do you know what it means to walk in the Bible? What does that mean? It means daily conduct, doesn't it? It's a picture of daily conduct. It's a picture of living day to day**.** And what he means here is when you are dominated by knowledge, principles and spiritual applications, you will live a daily life worthy of the Lord. Now, I don't know about you but to me that really sounds impossible, doesn't it? When I think about what the Lord is, I think about His greatness and His grace and the wonder of His character and then the Bible tells me I can be worthy of Him, that really kind of ... that's kind of hard to believe. it sounds impossible. Man, how could I ever walk worthy of the Lord? How could I ever walk consistently with who I am in Him? But it says you can.First Thessalonians 2:12: "That you would walk worthy of God who has called you." It can be done. It's commanded. It's stated. In fact, in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 1, it says this: "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called."

Beloved, do you know that we are told in the Scripture to walk worthy? That's right. What does it mean, John, to walk worthy? It means to let your practice match your position.

Jerry talked about baseball tonight. And I use to, when I was a little kid... the Yankees always won the pennant when I was a real little kid, I mean, I was real, real little. And the Yankees always won the pennant. And all you ever heard about was the Yankees. And I remember one time, it was Bobby Richardson, I think, who's a Christian, was talking somewhere and I heard it or read it, he said: "You know," he said, "when you put on a Yankee uniform you probably play about 20 percent better than you really are because you're trying to live up to that uniform." Now, that's precisely what is in mind here. As a Christian you're clothed with Jesus Christ, as a Christian you're in union with Him, you're identified with Him and you ought to live worthy of that kind of calling. You ought to get your practice up there where it matches your position.

In some of my writing I was reflecting on a guy we had in football who had, in college, who had a hard time playing his position. And the guy had tremendous ability. Oh, man, did he have ability, physically, he just...brute, you know, just tremendous. And he wouldn't play his position. You know, and it's very

complexed in football because everybody has to go to the right place or it goofs everything up. If one guy just goes doing his own thing, we've got a big hole somewhere. Everybody has to go to the place they're assigned to go. This guy was everyplace. And he could get there in a big hurry and he hurt people on the way, you know. As soon as the offense found out what he was doing, they were gone. With all of the athletic ability the guy had... I'll never forget, the coach one day went to him and said - That's it for you, and dumped him to the third string. And we had a small squad, third string, you know, you carried the bucket. And that was it. Wha...wha ... why...why? You won't play your position.

Well, in a real sense, God has exalted us to the heavenlies in Christ Jesus and He says - Look, that's where you are, I expect you to act like it. Right? That's right. The worthy walk. And you can do that if you have the right knowledge because then you have the absolutes and you know what He wants.

You say - But yeah, John, even though I know, man, how am I going to do that? Well, I'll tell you, you need a model to follow, don't you? If you're like me, you need a model towalk worthy. I have one for you, I John 2:6, listen to what it says: "He that saith he abideth in Him, "he's talking about Christ, "he that saith he abideth in Him," I love this, "ought himself also so to walk even as ... what?...He walked." You say - I have a model. Who is it? Christ. Oh, thanks a lot, John. I...that's it, huh? I have to walk like Christ. Right...right. You mean, if I'm going to walk worthy, I've got to walk like Christ? Oh yeah, that's right. Can't do that. That's right too. So, you know what God did? One of my favorite verses, II Corinthians 6:16, this is super. Second Corinthians 6:16, umph, this is good. Right in the middle of the verse, 6:16: "For you are the temple of the living God." Is that right? Listen, "As God has said, I will dwell in them and ... what? Walk in them." You know what the Bible says? Walk worthy. You need a model ... look at Jesus, walk like Him. And by the way, because we know you can't do it, God says, I'll live in you and I'll walk in you. Isn't that great? In my own strength I could never walk worthy, but because He dwells within me and He walks worthy, I can walk as I conform myself by His power to His image.

Listen, Jesus Christ will walk the worthy walk in you and in me, but there's a preliminary. That I be filled with all the knowledge of His will. You see? And I know the principles. And look, it even goes further. This is great. "Unto all pleasing, walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." It simply means to please God in everything. When I am conformed to Christ, when I am totally yielded to the Spirit dwelling in me, and the Spirit is walking through me, then I'm walking worthy and everything I do pleases Him.

You know, there are a lot of people who want to walk worthy and they want to please the Lord, but unless they come by way of the knowledge of His will, that'll never happen. That will never be their experience.

Well, I don't want to get too long on that. Secondly, skipping a lot of good material, that's what the preacher always says when he's out of material, right? We could go on and on, Point two, another

one of the benefits, this is great, when you're filled with knowledge, not only do you experience a worthy walk and please the Lord in everything, but, I love this, being fruitful in every good work. Another thing that results from knowledge is fruitfulness. This is a beautiful concept. God's children are like trees. The Psalm says, Psalm 1, that we should be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters that brings forth its...what?...its fruit in its season. You see, God's people ... that isn't anything New Testament, that's as old as the Psalms, that God's people are like trees and they are to bear fruit ... the byproducts of righteousness.

Boy, you say, I'd like to have some fruit. What is fruit in the Bible? We've talked about it so many times. Fruit is good deeds, fruit is leading people to Christ, the firstfruits of Achaia. Paul says to the Romans, I want to come and have some fruit among you, lead some of you to Christ. Fruit is praise, Hebrews 13, "The fruit of my lips," which is praise. Fruit is giving money, Philippians chapter 4, 1 am glad you gave me some money, he says, cause I want to see some fruit among you. Fruit is a lot of different things. It's the products of a righteous life. And listen, beloved, the only way you're going to see that productivity and that fruitfulness and those righteous deeds is when knowledge is there. When you know God's truth and you have principlized it and you have actualized it in your life and then it becomes productive. In fact, you might even say this, the fruit that is lacking in your life may be due to the empty spaces in your knowledge.

James 3:17 might help us. Listen to this, this is very important. "But the wisdom that is from above," now, that's talking about God's wisdom, principles again, God's truth, that comes first. "The wisdom that is from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, good fruits," ... oh, hmm, good fruits. Yes. God's wisdom produces good fruits. I can tell you from personal experience, out of my own life, that the thing that is most directly related, listen to me, the thing that is most directly related to the productivity of my life is the knowledge of God's truth. Can you understand that? Is that your testimony? When I learned God's truth I really became fruitful. Then my life changed. Then I started seeing righteous deeds. Then I started seeing true praise. Then I started seeing genuine prayer. Then I started being used of God. Yes. Being fruitful.

In II Peter 1:3, 1 love this, it says - He's given us all things, precious promises, verse 5, after all the precious promises, he says: "And besides this, give all diligence and add to your faith virtue; and to virtue," listen to this, "knowledge." And then he goes on through some other things, and says: "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in knowing our Lord Jesus Christ." One of those things that brings fruit here is knowledge ... to know God's truth is to fertilize the soil to produce fruit.

All right, there's a third thing in Colossians, and we're again skipping some things for time, but a third thing, and he says: "If you're filled with all the knowledge, you're going to walk worthy, you're going to

be fruitful," and third, "you're going to grow." Look at it: "And increasing..." notice, "by..." In the Greek we would say that's an instrumental case rather than a locative case, for you that are technicians. "And growing by the knowledge of God." What does growing mean? Maturing.

You say - John, what is maturing mean? Okay, I'll tell you very simply. Ephesians 4 says that the objective of a Christian is to come to the fullness of the stature of...whom?...Christ. Right? Ephesians 4:13. The goal of the Christian is to come to the full stature of Christ. The process of going from where I am to there is... what?...growth...growth. You say -What's going to make me grow, John? I'll tell you what. Growing by the ... what?...knowledge of God. The knowledge of God and His truth and His will and His principles is the key to maturity. Listen to this, as babes or babies desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow. What's going to make you grow? God's Word, God's truth, that's your milk, that's your sustenance.

Now, growth is a critical emphasis in the New Testament. And we are to grow to be like Jesus Christ. But the key to this whole thing is knowledge ... it's food that's nourishment. So, what are we seeing here? Walking worthy, living up to my position so that the Lord is pleased... I want to please Him...being fruitful so that others are blessed. Growing so that I am becoming more like Christ - are all results of ... what? ... knowledge.

There's more. Fourth, verse 11: "Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power." There's another thing that's going to happen. From the knowledge of God's principles, that ... and I mean by that, practical knowledge, applicable knowledge, from the knowledge of God's principles, you're going to find that you're strengthened. Wow! Listen, strengthened with a little bit of power. Is that what it says? All might according to His glorious power. And you say - That's...that's unbelievable. You mean, I can actually be strengthened by divine power? The word strengthen is a present participle which means it has continuous action. It doesn't mean that when you get saved God sort of gives you an initial blast-off and says - Good luck, you know. Well, when you're saved God just begins what for all of your life is a sustaining power, you will be continually being strengthened with all might according to ... what kind of power?...His glorious power. Glorious means the...the manifold manifestation of God's character. His power. This is the work of the Spirit, you know.

In Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 16, just to give you a comparative text, it says: "That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit." When you became a Christian the Spirit of God came in you and Jesus even said, "You shall receive power after ... what? ... Acts 1:8 ... the Holy Spirit comes upon you." So, the Spirit of God is there and we are strengthened, but the more we know about His Word, the more we yield to His Word, the more we principlize and apply His Word, the stronger we become. Boy, that's exciting.

In II Corinthians 4, Phillips' translation says this: "We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated. We are puzzled but never in despair.We are persecuted but we never have to stand it alone, we may be knocked down but we've never been knocked out. Every daywe experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus so that we also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. This is the reason we never collapse. The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inner man receives fresh strength." Second Corinthians 4.

Yes, as we study the Word of God, as we feed on the Word of God, God pumps into us strength, power and energy. Yes, that's His promise. And what a promise it is.

So, walking worthy, being fruitful, growing, being strengthened, all result from true spiritual knowledge. There's one more...enduring, enduring, verse 11: "Unto all patience, or endurance, and long-suffering with joyfulness." Knowledge gives endurance.

Remember what we talked about this morning? What is the thing that helps you endure the trial? It's the knowledge of God's ... what?...promises. You know, when I get into a trial, I say - Hey, I know what You're doing, God, because I know You're Word well enough, You said this was going to come. And You're trying to do a perfect work in me, according to James 1, and that's neat. And I know Your promise that You're faithful and You'll never let me be tempted above that which I am able but will always make the way out. Thank You, God.

You see, it is the knowledge of His Word, listen to me, the knowledge of His character, the knowledge of His promises and the knowledge of His purposes that makes me endure anything because God is perfecting me. Look at Paul, he says - I know in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to abound. I know how to be abased. I don't worry about it. If somebody beats me up or punishes me or throws me in jail, that's terrific. Because God is working.

You say - Paul, where did you ever ... how can you handle things like that? Why, I know God. Yeah, and I know His purposes and I know His promises.

You remember Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego on the edge of the fiery furnace? Remember, we discussed that? And the king says You're going in there. And they said - Our God will deliver us. That's fine. And if He doesn't, that's okay too.

You say - That's incredible. No, you see, the reason they could say that was because they knew God, they knew His promises and they knew His purposes. That's what it takes and that's endurance.

So, the result - you're going to have all patience, all...and patience means deliberate endurance, and you're going to have longsuffering, and that's kind of the attitude that goes with it. Kind of an attitude of acceptance. Those words are really synonyms and just maybe there's a shade of difference in their

meaning, maybe one has more to do with the actual endurance and one more to do with the attitude, I don't know, but ... but whatever it means, look at the end of it, whether you're enduring with patience or long-suffering, the key to the thing is joyfulness. You see, without that the other two would be very cold, it isn't the stoical endurance - God is testing me and I will endure ... Ahhhh.... pain. It's not that. It's...isn't this great, what God'sdoing? You know what it's doing? It's being in the Philippian jail and...what?...singing. You say - What were they singing? I don't know what they were singing, some kind of praise. They weren't singing, "Oh, Lord, we'll soon be done with troubles of the world," see, no. They were just praising and having a terrific time. You say - How do you know that? Because that jailer wouldn't have come running in there and want them to tell him what they knew if they hadn't been happy. Wouldn't you like to experience in every trial a joyful endurance, wouldn't that be terrific? You know how you can? If you know God and you know His purposes and you know His promises, you can because you know what He's doing. Joyfulness...Oh, it's exciting.  I

Listen, beloved, Paul prays - I just want you to know God's truth, that's the bottom line of absolutes. And once you know all that, the behavior is just going to come right out of it. You're going to walk worthy, exciting, unto all pleasing. You're going to be fruitful in every good work. You're going to grow. You're going to be strengthened and you're going to endure anything with joy. I don't know about you but that sounds like really living, doesn't it? Man, that sounds like living.

You say - How do you get there, John? How do you get that kind of life? Hmmph. Be filled with the knowledge of His will; make principles and apply them and live them. Let's pray.

It's been good, Lord, to be together tonight. Boy, our hearts are just so full. We just ... we thank You for just everything tonight. Everyone sharing and just being together and touching somebody next to us and just the way Your Holy Spirit has made us rejoice, it's been good. We thank You, Father, for how You give us just what we need and how You make it accessible to us. Teach us how to study the Scripture. Teach us how to study it so that we can really get the most out of it, so that we can dig into it and learn Your absolutes so that we know how You want us to behave for maximum blessing. That we might just be the kind of people who could experience that walking worthy unto all pleasing, that being filled with every ... every good work, being fruitful and all those other things that You want to do in us, bringing growth and strength and endurance. Oh, Lord, we really want to experience those things and so send us to Your book. Help us to make it our very breath. May we feed on it that we may know the fullness of all that You've ever intended for us. Lord, we'll just thank You for bringing us together tonight and ask that all that's been done tonight might never know an end cause it's going to effect our lives as we go out of here and we're going to effect lives and that's going to go on like eternal ripples. And may this night be a catalyst for the rest of history. Thank You for this sweet fellowship in Jesus I name. Amen.

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