

Series: *Colossians – Christ Above All*

Title: "The Purpose of Spiritual Power"

Speaker: Rev. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/6/2009

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## Introduction

Today we're coming once more to Colossians chapter one, verse eleven. Let me remind you of where we are in our study by reading verse eleven in context, beginning at verse nine. Paul says that

**we [Paul and Timothy] do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**

Today we're going to focus in particular on the last part of verse eleven: "strengthened with all might, according to His [that is, God's] glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy." "Patience and longsuffering with joy."

When we began looking at verse eleven, I said that there are four things that every Christian needs to understand about spiritual power. You need to understand the nature of spiritual power. You need to understand the need for spiritual power. You need to understand the magnitude of spiritual power. And, every Christian needs to

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understand the purpose for spiritual power. Thus far in our study of this verse, we've looked at the first three aspects of spiritual power.

### **Review: The Nature of Spiritual Power**

First of all, we've seen the *nature* of spiritual strength and power. We've seen that it is supernatural power. It is God-centered power, not man-centered power. We've seen that spiritual power is inseparable from the glory of God. Literally, in verse eleven, it is "the power of His glory." And we also looked at genuine spiritual power in contrast with the counterfeits that we find in the church in our time.

### **Review: The Need for Spiritual Power**

Secondly we've seen the reason why Christians *need* spiritual power from God. The reason is that we have no power of our own. We must have the *righteousness* of God Himself through Jesus Christ, in order to be saved, because we have no righteousness of our own. And likewise, we must have the *power* of God the Holy Spirit in order to live the Christian life after we are saved, because we have no power of our own. We need the power of God through Jesus Christ.

### **Review: The Magnitude of Spiritual Power**

And in our last message, we saw, thirdly, the *magnitude* of genuine spiritual power. We saw that genuine spiritual power is not power on a human scale. Because it is God's power, it is limitless power. And it is sovereign power. In other words, it is power that God makes available to Christians according to your individual need as

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He alone in His perfect wisdom knows your need. It is power that operates not for sinful, selfish, fleshly interests. It is power that operates for the glory of God.

And we saw that the power of God is also demonstrated power. The same power that operates in the believer is the power that created and sustains the entire universe. The same power that operates in the believer is the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. The same power that operates in the believer is the power that brought you out of the kingdom of darkness, out of the realm of spiritual death. It is the power that brought you into spiritual life in Christ. And the same power that operates in the believer is the power that will raise believers from the dead to live with Christ forever, when He comes again.

And we've also seen that the principal way that genuine spiritual power is imparted to you as a believer is through the Word of God, illuminated by the indwelling Holy Spirit. You need to be reading and studying the Word of God every day.

So we've seen the nature of spiritual power, the need for spiritual power, and the magnitude of spiritual power.

### **The Purpose of Spiritual Power**

We come now to our fourth and final point regarding Colossians chapter one, verse eleven, and that is the *purpose* of spiritual power. The purpose of spiritual power. And as we consider this point, we need to keep something clearly in mind,

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something that we've already seen. And that is the fact that the granting of spiritual power, and the exercise of spiritual power, is for God-ordained purposes. It is not for sinful, fleshly, human interests. It is for His glory.

And with that in mind, as I've done many times before, I'd like to give you a more literal translation of the Greek text of the end of verse eleven. I believe this will help us get our minds around the meaning of this phrase, "for all patience and longsuffering with joy." Based on the original Greek of verse eleven, in context, we can put it this way: "Strengthened with all inherent power, in accordance with the demonstrated power of God's glory" – notice now – "for the purpose of, and resulting in, patient endurance and perseverance accompanied by an attitude of heart that does not seek vengeance, accompanied by a gladness that is rooted in self-control."

Let me repeat that: "Strengthened with all inherent power, in accordance with the demonstrated power of God's glory" – "for the purpose of, and resulting in, patient endurance and perseverance accompanied by an attitude of heart that does not seek vengeance, accompanied by a gladness that is rooted in self-control."

I've mentioned previously that the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is a highly organized, highly logical, very structured writer. We've seen that all the way along so far in Colossians chapter one. Each verse, each phrase, builds upon the previous verses and words and phrases. And for the last several verses, Paul has

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been building up to this phrase at the end of verse eleven – “for all patience and longsuffering with joy.”

Beginning in verse nine, Paul says that he prays for five things for the Colossian believers: First, he prays that they might know God’s will. Second, he prays that they might know God’s will by knowing His Word. Third, he prays on the basis of that knowledge that they would walk worthy of the Lord, in a way that would please God. Fourth, he prays that the result of that worthy walk will be spiritual fruit. And fifth, he prays that they would be “strengthened with all might, according to God’s glorious power.” And then, finally, after all of that, at the end of verse eleven Paul gets to the ultimate purpose for all of these things.

This, Paul says, is God’s agenda for you as believers. This is the result that God wants to build into your lives through this process: “Patience and longsuffering with joy.” That short but powerful phrase is a summary of the characteristics that God desires for every Christian to exhibit in this life. This is God’s program for you as an individual Christ. This is your sanctification – “patience and longsuffering with joy.”

And in our time remaining, I want to focus your attention on each of those three key words.

### **Patience: Endurance, Perseverance**

First, the word patience. The word in the original language means endurance, and perseverance. Staying the course. Not deviating from loyalty to Christ and to His

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Word. Waiting upon God, to accomplish His purposes in His time and in His way. And doing all of that, having that attitude of mind and spirit, even when the going gets rough. Even when problems come. Even when trials come. Even when persecutions come. Even if it costs you a raise or a promotion to take a stand for Christ. Even if it costs you the ridicule of others to persevere. Even if it means that you are forsaken by friends who weren't really your friends. Even if it means that you look like a fool in the eyes of the sinful world.

Don't give up the truth that is found only in Christ and in His Word, even if everyone seems to turn against you. Jesus said in Matthew 24:12 that because of lawlessness – because of a disregard for God's Word – the love of many professing believers will turn cold. Don't be one of them. Walk with the Lord in patience, in perseverance, with endurance.

Paul says in Romans 5:3 that we glory in tribulations – literally, we glory when pressure is brought upon us because of our stand for Christ – knowing that tribulation, that kind of pressure, produces perseverance.

And in Romans chapter 15, verses 3 and 4, Paul writes this: "For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.' For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." And that word "patience" in verse four is the same word we have here in Colossians 1:11 – endurance, perseverance. Paul is saying that the Scriptures are the foundation of

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our perseverance. It is because of the truth of God's Word, it is because of the unfailing promises of God, that we can persevere in the Christian life. And it is in this that we as believers are to take comfort. "The patience and comfort of the Scriptures."

### **Longsuffering: Remembering That Vengeance is the Lord's**

And then we come to the word "longsuffering." Patience, or endurance, or perseverance is the growing ability to resist temptation. Longsuffering is a key manifestation of that patient endurance. It is an attitude of calm perseverance that does not seek the avenging of wrongs. Longsuffering remembers God's declaration that "vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." That is a difficult test for us as Christians. This is where the rubber meets the road. This is where our willingness to walk worthy of the Lord is really put to the test. And Paul elaborates on this in Romans chapter twelve, beginning at verse 14. He says:

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If

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your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

And Paul knew about this from experience. He is not talking mere theory. He is speaking from experience. This was a man who had suffered great persecution. Earlier in the book of Romans, in chapter two, verse four, Paul reminds us that God is longsuffering with us. And the God who says, "Be holy, because I am holy," calls upon us to have a longsuffering attitude toward others. Paul expresses the same thought in Ephesians chapter four, verse 32: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

And Paul writes this later on in the book of Colossians, chapter three beginning at verse eight:

"But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, *longsuffering*; bearing with one another, and

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forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."

### **Joy: Real vs. Counterfeit**

Patience and longsuffering. And then, lastly, we come to the word "joy" – "patience and longsuffering with joy" – or as the Authorized Version has it, "with joyfulness."

The Greek word for joy here is *kara*. And once again, as he has done so often before, Paul uses a word that was used in a particular way by the pagan Greek philosophers and by the false religions of that day. The Colossian believers were in the midst of the adherents of mystery religions that made much of the idea *kara*, or joy, as a matter of a *lack* of self-control, of throwing off moral restraint. And they said that this counterfeit kind of "joy" was something to be sought after.

And then on the other hand, there were the Stoic philosophers of the time. These pagan philosophers viewed *kara*, or "joy" as a negative thing. And they were right to this extent – they said that the kind of "joy" that the mystery religions sought after was something that indicated a lack of self-control.

But Paul is saying that both the mystery religions and the philosophy of the Stoics had it wrong. Genuine joy is to be found in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. And genuine joy is not a matter of lack of self-control. In fact, Paul is saying just the opposite. He is saying that true joy, true gladness, is intimately connected with

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the five things he says he is praying for, for the Colossian believers: True knowledge of God's will. True knowledge of God's Word. A walk worthy of the Lord. Spiritual fruit. Spiritual strength. The end goal of all of all of these things is "patience and longsuffering with joy."

Genuine Christian joy and gladness are not an indication of a lack of self-control. They are not the product of throwing off or abandoning self-control, as some in the church would have people do today. No. Genuine Christian joy and gladness are the hallmarks of a life that is lived *in* control for the glory of God – in the control of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the control of God the Holy Spirit, by the knowledge of His will through the knowledge of His Word.

### **"If You Do These Things You Will Never Stumble"**

Dear friends, I want to end this study of Colossians chapter one, verse eleven by pointing you to a parallel passage at the beginning of the Apostle Peter's second epistle. Please turn there with me if you are able as you listen today – Second Peter chapter one, beginning at verse one:

"Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain

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to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control *perseverance*, to *perseverance* godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

And dear Christian friend, this is my hope and prayer for you today, that you will be “strengthened with all might according to God’s glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.”

And if you are listening to this message and you don’t know what this is all about, if you have never received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, if you have

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never come out of the realm of death and darkness and into the glorious light of Christ, then my prayer for you is that you will turn to Christ today. And we would count it a privilege to help you understand more. So please stay tuned for our contact information in a few moments. It would be our joy to speak with you.

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