

Colossians 1:1-11
“An Example of Godly Prayer”

Introduction:

The epistle to the Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul to the Christians who lived in the city of Colossae. This city was situated on a rocky ridge overlooking the valley of the Lycus River that runs through a mountainous area in what was at the time the Roman Province of Asia. In the modern world, this city was located in the western portion of Turkey. Colossae was located approximately 100 miles east of Ephesus and about 11 miles slightly SE of Laodicea.

Though the evangelization of Colossae is not specifically mentioned in the Book of Acts, Luke does record that the entire province of Asia heard the gospel during the three years of Paul's ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Because of this, most scholars think that this church was founded during this time. There is no indication that Paul himself had ever gone to either Colossae or Laodicea (2:1), rather it is believed that these churches were established through the ministry of Epaphras, one of Paul's disciples and ministry associates. At the time when this letter was written, the population of Colossae was predominantly Gentile (2:13), but there was a sizeable Jewish population in the city as well. Antiochus the Great (223-187 B.C.) transported Jewish settlers into the region, while other Jews were drawn into the area by trade in wool and other business opportunities.

It is the consensus of conservative scholars that the epistles of Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were written at the same time. Given what we read in the letters, it would seem that the situation with Philemon was the first to motivate Paul to write. Having written that letter and intending to send it and Philemon back to Colossae, Paul then chose this occasion to write this letter to that church to address some matters he had heard about from Epaphras. Finally, he chose to also write a companion letter to the church at Ephesus, since the party travelling to Colossae would pass through the port of Ephesus on the way. These letters were written around A.D. 62 while Paul was imprisoned in Rome, awaiting a hearing before Caesar.

Paul wrote this letter in response to news from Epaphras that false teaching was beginning to take root in the fellowship. The challenge that is faced as we try to interpret this letter is attempting to precisely identify what that false teaching consisted of. Working backward from what Paul wrote we can discern that one aspect of the false teaching was that it embraced the Greek philosophical idea that ultimate truth was found in intellectual wisdom and enlightened understanding. It also reflected the pagan Greek beliefs about the existence of beings that dwelt in higher planes of spiritual existence that had secret knowledge about the physical reality in which human beings live. Pagan Greek beliefs centered on the ways that human beings could gain access to these beings and the information they possessed. However, Paul's response also reveals that the false teaching embraced some elements of Jewish thought as well, specifically the need to live a disciplined ascetic life, while observing various Jewish holy days. Interestingly, history records no

particular group that taught all these various things. But, in general, history also teaches us that people in cosmopolitan parts of the world tend to engage in syncretism (the practice of blending together teachings from various religious groups), selecting the things that appeal most to them while disregarding the rest. And this seems to be what happened in Colossae. One or more individuals with a Jewish past, who associated themselves with Christianity, and who were enamored with Grecian philosophy, had brought their own mixture of religious ideas into the Colossian fellowship, and those ideas, which were being advanced in the fellowship were in turn corrupting how the Christians understood both the Gospel and the person of Christ. Therefore, in this letter Paul was seeking to correct the Colossians' thinking about these central matters of Christian doctrine.

I. The Sender & Recipients of the Letter: (vs.1-2)

Paul opened the letter by writing, "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother*" (vs.1). Paul wrote this letter according to the conventions of the day, where one would begin by identifying the sender of the letter, and then, second, identify those to whom the correspondence was addressed. This was followed by a brief greeting. This basic pattern is found in all thirteen of Paul's letters. But Paul always expands on this greeting, adding various qualifying words and phrases. By doing so, he often furnished some clues about the main concern and emphasis of that particular letter. In this letter, however, the additions are so minor and conversational, they provide very little insight into what he was about to write.

By designating himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul was indicating the authority by which he was writing to this church. The literal meaning of the Greek term denotes an authorized spokesman who had been commissioned and empowered to act as a representative of the one for whom he was speaking. In the ancient world (as in the modern world) an authorized envoy (such as an ambassador) who was sent as an authorized representative was to be seen as equivalent to the sender himself. Therefore, to dishonor an emissary was to dishonor the one who sent him. Therefore, Paul was establishing that his instruction to them was in essence the instruction of Christ Himself. In the original Greek, the title "*Jesus Christ*" is in the form of a genitive that expressed the relational bond that existed between Paul and Christ, that Paul belonged to Christ.

In saying that his apostleship was "*by the will of God*", he was making it clear that he had neither taken this role upon himself, nor had it been given to him by a human organization, it was given to him directly by God through the Lord Jesus Christ (further reinforcing the authority of his role in their lives).

Then Paul added, "*and Timothy our brother*". The question then is, in what way was Paul associating Timothy with this letter? It could simply mean that Paul was saying that Timothy was present with Paul when the letter was written. However, we read elsewhere that others were with Paul during this time and their names weren't mentioned. It is likely that Timothy was the amanuensis who actually wrote out the letter as Paul dictated it (for we read in 4:18 that Paul indicated that

he had only physically written the brief salutation at the close of the letter). So, this could be why Timothy was included here. However, this doesn't really seem to explain it either, because Tertius, the amanuensis who assisted Paul in the actual writing of the epistle to the Romans was not mentioned in the initial greeting of that letter (Rom.16:22), so there is no reason to think that Paul would do differently in this situation than what he had done in the past. Therefore, the only answer left is that Timothy was included in this greeting because, to an extent, Timothy was the co-author of the letter. It was to an extent, because it seems he was co-author only of the initial greeting and expressions of prayer. After these initial verses, the plural subject of the verbs ceases, and from then on, the pronouns are singular. Later in the epistle Paul clarified that he was the primary writer. This is not only seen in the change in pronouns, but also in the obvious Pauline flavor of what is written in the letter.

In verse two we read, "*To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (vs.2). There is a single definite article that modifies the words "*the saints and faithful brethren*", which indicates that Paul was referring to the same group using these two descriptive titles. Due to how the term has been used by many in recent history, Paul's use of the word "*saint*" may give some modern readers a misunderstanding about what was being said here. The Hebrew and Greek words that are translated as "*saint*" or "*sacred*" are focused less on the idea of excellence of character and rather are more focused on the idea of someone or something being set aside for God's use. In fact, to define the idea of holiness in terms of being separated from something renders only half of the idea inherent in this term, and in fact it emphasizes the less important half of the idea. The more important idea is that one is separated to God. Therefore, the practice of using the word "*saint*" to refer to a particularly devout individual reflects a later development in the usage of this term, and it does not reflect Biblical usage. The conjunction "*and*" that connects the two substantives, should be understood as conveying an exegetical, meaning, "*the saints that are in Colossae, that is the faithful brothers in Christ*". The word "*brothers*" was apparently widely used in the ancient world within various associations to stress the intimacy of relationship within these associations. Members of these associations called one another "*brother*" as a way of indicating that the association was a second home. Since this language is so common in the New Testament, we can easily overlook its significance, but it reminds us that we are part of the same family and that we should adopt the attitudes and actions necessary to maintain our family unity. The qualifying expression "*in Christ*" speaks of the union that believers share with Christ, and it describes the tender and reciprocal relationship that exists between Christians. This expression is central to Pauline theology, and this is demonstrated by how Paul employed it 83 times in his letters.

Paul next expressed that it was his desire that these saints would enjoy grace and peace. Grace refers to God's spontaneous, unmerited favor, while peace refers to what results from it, the assurance of reconciliation. In modern thinking, peace

usually suggests (as it did for the early Greeks) the opposite of war, or the absence of conflict. However, the New Testament concept, which was built upon what was revealed under the Old Covenant, is a richer and broader idea. The word came to denote wholeness, or soundness, and included such ideas as prosperity, contentedness, and good relations with others. In this passage, spiritual prosperity is perhaps the leading thought of the peace that Paul desires for the Colossians.

It should be noted that the titles saints and faithful ones are applied to these believers despite the shortcomings that existed within their fellowship (things that are addressed later).

II. Prayer in Gratitude for the Saints: (vs.3-8)

In verse three we read, “*We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you*”. As already noted, the use of the plural pronoun indicates that it was both Paul and Timothy who were expressing this thanksgiving. And it was addressed to God, indicating that God was the one responsible for the virtues and graces that were manifesting themselves in these saints.

These first few verses in the letter contain various synonyms for prayer and together they demonstrate the priority that Paul put on prayer. Each of these synonyms emphasize different aspects of prayer. The more general term “*prayer*” speaks of the activity itself, while “*giving thanks*” is a specific form of prayer. In like manner, the word “*asking*” (used in verse 9) is another synonym for prayer, but one that emphasizes the specific request being made. Thus, these words collectively stress the importance of prayer in its various aspects.

Contrary to the rendering of the NKJV, there is no conjunction connecting the titles “*God*” and “*Father*” in this verse. A more literal rendering of Paul’s words would be “*We are giving thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*”. Therefore, Paul was not referring to the Father as the God of Christ (unlike Eph.1:17), he was merely stressing God’s Fatherly relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. This language of God as the Father of the Messiah has its roots in the Old Testament (II Sam.7). It must be remembered that Christian Trinitarianism is a very precise doctrine that could easily be misunderstood. Therefore, in light of what Paul would soon write about the supremacy of Christ in the work of both creation and redemption, Paul wanted to make sure that Christ’s identity and His work were not understood apart from His relationship to God the Father. Particularly, since Paul will assert in a variety of ways in this letter that Christ Himself is God. In a polytheistic world, Paul would not want his Gentile readers to think there were three Christian Gods, nor would he want his Jewish readers to think that his strong Christological affirmations in any way undermined traditional Jewish monotheism.

The NKJV renders the last clause as “*praying always for you*”. But this is a disputed translation. This is because, according to Greek grammar, the way Paul constructed his sentence makes it unclear which part of the sentence is modified by the adverb. When we compare this to similar statements in other letters it seems that Paul intended the adverb “*always*” to modify the verb “*gives thanks*” rather than the participle “*praying*”. The idea here then is not that Paul was always

praying for them, rather than when he did pray for them, he always gave thanks for them. Later in the letter (3:17), Paul would go on to elaborate on the idea of giving thanks in all things.

In verse four we read, “*since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints*”. We read later that the source from which Paul and Timothy had heard this information was from Epaphras (vs.7), though one cannot rule out the possibility of additional previous reports that Paul had received from other sources. Also, what is written in the next few verses needs to be understood in a causal sense. These verses explain why Paul and Timothy were giving thanks for the Colossians. It was because the Colossian Christians were exhibiting the three cardinal Christian virtues: faith, love, and hope. Before Paul began to address his concerns over the problems that had surfaced in this fellowship, he first assured the Colossians that he was certain that the work of God’s grace was evident in their lives. This should be seen as a Divinely inspired example of how to address concerns honestly, but in a way that reflects tact. Doing this without sensitivity can lead others to respond defensively to corrective instruction.

First, they were thankful to have heard about the faith that these believers were exhibiting. Biblically speaking, having “*faith*” means that one has become persuaded both that something is true, and that it is something that one can place their trust in. It involves more than mere intellectual assent; it involves acting on the basis of that trust. The phrase “*faith in Christ Jesus*” indicates not so much that Christ Jesus was the object of their faith, as that He was the living environment within which their faith was being exercised.

Second, they were thankful to have heard about the love that the Colossians had for all the saints. The employment of the article with the noun “*love*” and the qualifying phrase “*for all the saints*”, reveals two truths about the nature of the church’s love. First it was not love by just anyone’s definition, it was genuine love, consistent with what God had revealed about it. Second, this love within the Christian community was indiscriminate, it was directed to all the saints without exception. In Scripture, love is defined by how God loves, and His love is characterized by sacrificial commitment to the one loved.

In verse five we read, “*because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel*”. According to the grammatical structure of these verses, Paul was indicating that the faith and love that Paul praised in verse four, are said here to rest on the foundation of the hope these Christians had. The use of the definite article with the word “*hope*” indicates that it was a hope for something specific, not a nebulous undefined hope. In general, the word “*hope*” can be used in either a subjective or an objective sense, depending on the context in which this word is found. When used in the former sense, it indicates the emotion, or the faculty of hope, and suggests a joyful expectancy, a sense of certainty and confidence. When used in an objective sense, which is its use in the present passage, hope denotes the thing(s) that are hoped for. The reference here then is to the glorious reward that is the future heavenly blessing of the people of God. The Greek term that is translated as “*laid up*” means

that the objective content of the believer's hope is safe and secure, in the sense that nothing can threaten it or take it away. The term was often used to refer to something that was safe from thieves. The fact that this hope was stored up "*in heaven*" is important for a number of reasons. This spatial imagery added certainty that this hope would be revealed in the future. The reference to what is stored in Heaven does not imply that this is where the saint will go for the ultimate realization of their hope, rather it refers to the dwelling place of God, and thus to the One who keeps the believer's inheritance secure. Though Heaven is the intermediate destination of the saints, following the creation of the New Heavens and Earth, believers will dwell upon a glorified earth with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next phrase in the wording raises a question. When Paul wrote that the Gospel was something they "*heard before*", to what was he referring, before what? Some have suggested that Paul meant they had heard the true Gospel before they heard the heretical version of it that had recently been introduced into the fellowship. However, the easier and better conclusion is that the idea is simply that they had heard the Gospel prior to Paul's reference to it here. Specifically referring to when they first heard the Gospel when they originally came to faith.

Regarding to the phrase "*the word of the truth of the gospel*", the word "*truth*" is an adjectival modifier of the term "*word*", while the word "*gospel*" is in an appositional relationship to that which precedes it. Some have argued that Paul's words could be translated as "*the word of the true gospel*". Though this is possible according to Greek grammar, it is very unlikely that this is idea that Paul was expressing here. This is because there is no evidence that Paul would call any non-Christian message, a false gospel. Even in the place that one might suggest that he would use such language (the letter to the Galatians), Paul instead stressed that there was only the one true gospel, and that the message that was being preached there by the heretics was not a gospel at all, it was simply a counterfeit (1:7). Therefore, it is far more likely that the above translation is correct, and that the statement refers to the truth that is in the gospel.

It is possible that this expression of thanksgiving might have also been intended to stir these believers to greater faithfulness. The implication of this reminder may have been that they should reflect on the mighty work that had been accomplished in their lives by the Gospel. A message that needed no supplement, for its influence was being felt in ever-increasing measure. Therefore, subtly reinforcing the idea that they didn't need new information or new resources to successfully live the Christian life.

In verse six we read, "*which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth*". Of course, the relative pronoun "*which*" at the beginning of this verse refers back to the "*gospel*" in verse five. In regard to this, Paul was not saying that the gospel had gone into the entire population of the planet. And though it is possible that the expression "*the world*" is meant in the sense of Paul's own world, that of the Roman Empire, that is not the likely meaning either.

Instead, in light of verse twenty-three, it is best to take this as a rhetorical exaggeration about the broad spread of the Gospel even during those early years of Christianity. Paul was making the point that the gospel was exerting its power widely in many different places and by doing so it was attesting to its validity. This also conveyed that the Gospel transcended all ethnic, geographic, cultural, and political boundaries.

The phrase “*as it is also among you*” sets up the comparison between what the Gospel was achieving and producing in the world, with what it had achieved and produced in the lives of the Colossian saints. The two participles (*bearing fruit and growing*) expressed specifically what the Gospel was achieving and producing in both spheres. The participles refer to the reproductive power of the Gospel, and its ability to stimulate maturity, while the reference to truth stressed the reliability of the Gospel.

In verse seven we read, “*as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf*”. Epaphras is mentioned two other times in the NT (4:12; Phile.1:23). Even though the name “*Epaphras*” is a shortened version of the name “*Epaphroditus*”, this individual here is not to be identified with the Epaphroditus mentioned in the letter to the Philippians (2:25; 4:18). They were two different individuals. Epaphras was a resident of the Roman province of Asia, while Epaphroditus was a resident of the province of Macedonia. It is here in this verse that we are told that the Colossians first learned about the Gospel through the ministry of Epaphras. Paul’s strong endorsement of Epaphras and his commitment to the Colossians might have been included because the false teachers were questioning or challenging him specifically as they attempted to gain influence over the congregation. On the other hand, the peculiar circumstances of Paul’s letter to the Colossians may better explain this emphasis. He was writing to Christians he had never visited and so it demanded that Paul go out of his way to accredit his representative who had been working among them. Paul spoke to the Colossians of Epaphras because of his role as an emissary between himself and the Colossians. By referring to Epaphras in this way, Paul was doing three things:

1. Putting his stamp of approval on both Epaphras and the Gospel he had preached to the Colossians
2. By implication he was condemning any system of thought that was in conflict with what Epaphras had taught them
3. Expressing that those who rejected Epaphras’ teaching were rejecting apostolic teaching as well

In verse eight we read, “*who also declared to us your love in the Spirit*.” The Greek word translated as “*declared*”, was used in the Greek papyri to indicate official legal evidence. This means that Epaphras gave the apostle solid proof of the conversion of the Colossian believers, and of their subsequent spiritual growth, and their love for him. By writing that the Colossians manifested love “*in the Spirit*”, Paul probably intended to indicate that it was the Holy Spirit who stimulated that love. Support for this conclusion is found in the following verses (Rom.15:30; Gal.5:22; Eph.3:16-17). Also, the Greek preposition “*en*” has an instrumental sense,

rather than expressing a dative of sphere, indicating that the Spirit enabled them to love. This is the only explicit reference to the Spirit of God in this letter.

III. Prayer on Behalf of the Saints: (vs.9-11)

In verse nine we read, “*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, 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*”. The words “*for this reason*” refer back to the entire discussion recorded in verses 3-8. In those previous verses Paul had written about the condition of the church but now he was transitioning to tell them about their prayers for what they hoped God would continue to do in the future. Paul went on to share with them that since the time Epaphras had first reported about the founding of this church, Paul and Timothy had not ceased to pray for these saints. This statement reinforces the conclusion expressed earlier regarding verse three that there Paul was stressing their ongoing thankfulness for these saints rather than their ceaseless prayers for them. Because if that were not so, then the statement here would be needlessly redundant.

The first thing that Paul and Timothy prayed for on behalf of these saints was that they “*may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*”. The Greek word translated as “*knowledge*” is an augmented term, which refers to recognition and represents a more intensive form of knowledge, a full sense of knowledge. The knowledge that Paul was advocating here was a deep and thorough knowledge. The subject of the knowledge that Paul prayed these saints would be filled with, was the will of God. In the New Testament the will of God refers either to His providential will that expresses what He is doing as He fulfills His redemptive plan, or it refers to His moral will (revealed in God’s ethical instruction). In this case, Paul seems to be referring to the will of God in its broadest and most inclusive sense, the whole purpose of God as revealed in Christ. We are to understand that God’s will is always revealed by the proper interpretation of the Scriptures under the guidance and enabling of God’s Spirit. His will is never found in anything which is contrary to what has been revealed in Scripture. Paul and Timothy prayed that these saints would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will, because it is a basic need of every Christian. This was a prayer that the Colossians would focus on the Lord Jesus Christ as the focal point of God’s plan of redemption and to grow in a deeper understanding of what it meant to live in accordance with what God had revealed in His Word about Him and the salvation He provided. Paul added that the prayer was that this knowledge might be had “*in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*”. In this clause, the adjectives “*all*” and “*spiritual*” modify the words wisdom and understanding. The adjective “*spiritual*” is used here in a possessive sense, referring to what belongs in the sphere of the Spirit of God in contrast to what comes from the world. Spiritual understanding includes wisdom, the acquisition of knowledge, and the application of that knowledge to specific concerns. It therefore consists of the ability to act and think spiritually. Spiritual wisdom goes beyond natural wisdom specifically because it includes the spiritual dimension of reality, whereas natural wisdom does

not. This wisdom becomes not only a goal in the Christian life, but also the means to an end. Paul's point was not the difficulty of knowing God, he was addressing the attitude required by the seeker of knowledge. In Christ, God always makes Himself known to those who take a receptive and obedient posture toward Him. In addition, the knowledge that is spoken of here must be understood as that which relates to what is true, as opposed to the false knowledge that Paul will warn these believers about later in this letter. It is knowledge founded in practical religion. This is knowledge which the Old Testament wisdom writers affirmed as something that starts with a proper attitude toward God (Prov.1:7). In addition, true knowledge leads to godly behavior. The pattern of life Paul prayed would be true for the Colossian saints was the opposite of what he described elsewhere as the pattern of sinful humanity in general, who, because of their resistance to God, were abandoned to a base mind and to improper conduct (Rom.1:28).

In verse ten we read, *“that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”*. The metaphor of walking is one that comes from Jewish wisdom literature. Walking is an image that relates to the way one acts and lives out their lives. In this verse, Paul expressed what is intended to result from knowing God's will, and this indicates that this knowledge is not imparted as merely an end in itself but is given with a practical intent. The intent being that one should live a life that is worthy of the Lord. In this context, the Lord that Paul refers to here is Christ. But what sort of worthiness was Paul referring to? He was not referring to making oneself worthy of salvation or blessing. Rather, since *“worthy”* is a translation of an adverb, he was writing about living in a worthy manner. The idea is that believers should live in conformity with the ethical teachings of Christ and God, because that is fitting for those who possess the privilege of being God's children. It is a suitable way to demonstrate one's new identity in Christ. Finally, the idea in the phrase *“fully pleasing Him”* is that the goal of the Christian life is to please God in every aspect of one's life.

The present tense that is used for the following participles (*being fruitful, increasing*) indicates habitual action, something that is continually ongoing. The Greek preposition translated here as *“in”*, would be better translated as *“by”*, because it indicates that knowledge is the means by which the fruit-bearing and growth take place. And again, as before (vs.9), the word Paul used for *“knowledge”* implies an intense personal experiential awareness to which more can be added. The idea in the verse as a whole is that the knowledge of God and obedience to the knowledge which has already been received is a necessary and certain condition for the reception of still further knowledge. The concluding phrase of the verse, *“increasing in the knowledge of God”* circles back to the immediate prayer request indicting that knowing God is both part of the process and its goal.

In verse eleven we read, *“strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy”*. The terminology in this verse focuses on the power of God, rather than that of the individual, and here the focus shifts from the manifestation of a life that is pleasing to God, to the source of that

sort of life. Therefore, we are reminded here that God never asks His children to do anything without first supplying them with the power to do it. And this also informs us that the secular maxim “*knowledge is power*” is true in one’s spiritual life as well. Because the proper knowledge of spiritual truth enables one to live a successful life by God’s measure.

But how are we to understand precisely what is meant by the reference to His “*glorious power*”? The word “*glory*” occurs frequently in Scripture as a very basic characterization of God, signifying His majestic greatness. Therefore, it seems best to take the form of the adjective as a possessive genitive, meaning that the strength that God supplies to His people is in accordance with His own intrinsic majesty. The particular Greek word that Paul used here and that is translated as “*power*” refers to the power to rule or control. This strong word emphasized the idea that believers are empowered with all they need to be successful in what God has called them to be and do. But Paul also adds that this power is intended to accomplish something very specific, “*for all patience and longsuffering with joy*”. Paul was teaching these saints that the endowment with Divine power which they had received would enable them to stand firm in the face of trials and opposition and everything else that might come to test the quality of their faith. The terms “*patience*” and “*longsuffering*” form a hendiadys (a figure of speech in which a single idea is expressed with two nouns connected by the conjunction *and*), rather than expressing two distinguishable ideas. Thus, it should be translated as “*patient longsuffering*”, rather than “*patience and longsuffering*”. The Stoic philosophers of that day also emphasized this same virtue (*patient endurance*). However, the difference was that the Stoics taught that this was accomplished by pursuing an attitude of complete detachment from what was happening in one’s life, while the Christian hope gives comfort that the suffering is only temporary and that the reward is vastly superior to the suffering (Rom.8:18). The distinction Paul was making was that believers patiently endure with a joyful spirit rather than simple resignation. Though some interpreters argue that the words “*with joy*” are connected to the following verse, it makes better exegetical sense to take them as the latter part of this verse, as it is consistent with Paul’s teaching elsewhere (Phil.4:4).

Conclusion:

This passage gives us insight into how we as believers can pray for each other. Though it is natural and appropriate for us to pray for each other in regard to our physical needs, Paul provides us here with an example of other things we can pray about as well; the spiritual needs and spiritual well-being of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul recognized that praying for the spiritual growth of one’s fellow saints makes a difference in their lives. All Christians live in a world of spiritual threats, surrounded by an environment that is hostile to living a godly life. Therefore, like Paul we should pray for the enlightening and empowering of our siblings in Christ with the same passion as we pray for the meeting of their physical needs.