

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Walking Worthily Into Every Pleasing Thing

by Dan Trygg

“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ to walk worthily of the Lord, unto every pleasing-thing, in every good work bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ with all power being-empowered, according to the might of His glory, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; with joy ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Colossians 1:9-14

We have seen that Paul prayed that the Colossians would receive discernment and understanding of what God wanted them to do in given circumstances, including the practical “how to do it” kind of revelation. This instruction would be given by the Spirit of God so that they might move into action, being participants with God in bringing about “every pleasing thing”. There is another concept to grasp that is a key to unlocking the remainder of the passage. **It is not enough to know what God wants us to do, and to obey Him**, even by specifically following His instructions. There is another qualifier that the apostle uses to bring a whole additional dimension to this matter of doing God’s will. This qualifying word is an adverb, which gives more information about how the verbal action is to be carried out. In other words, **there is a way or manner in which God wants us to carry out His will**.

Adverbs modify verbs, much like adjectives modify nouns. **They specify, clarify, or further describe what they modify**. In a phrase like “the big green book”, the noun “book” is clarified and specified by the adjectives that accompany it. We are not just talking about *any* book, ...the word “the” specifies that a particular book is under consideration. Furthermore, the color narrows down the options farther, and the large size would rule out any books that may happen to be green, but are smaller in size. In a similar fashion, adverbs clarify or specify how the action of the verb is being described. For example, the sentence, “John ran to the store” is not very descriptive. It is open to a number of very different scenarios of interpretation, which becomes quite obvious when we start adding adverbial modifiers, such as “quickly”, “slowly”, “sadly”, “happily”, “energetically”, or “doggedly”. From these examples, you can see that **most words ending in “-ly” are adverbs**. **We also use comparatives, such as “as” or “like” to construct adverbial phrases**, e.g., “John ran like a madman...”, or “...as a cat...”. These adverbial phrases enable us to bring qualities from the comparative word picture to further define the manner in which the action is taking place. Finally, **we can also use prepositional phrases to describe and clarify actions even more**. Usually these identify *how* an action is being done (instrumental), *when* (temporal) or *where* it is being done (locative). For example, the phrase, “to the store”, tells us *where* the action was going (locative), while “at night” tells us *when* (temporal), whereas phrases like “in bare feet” or “with a halting gait” would tell us *how* John was doing his running.

Why is this important? Because the remainder of verses 10-12 are built around verbal modifiers, such as I have described. If we are to understand clearly what Paul is trying to get across, we need to grasp how these modifying words and phrases work together. **The main verb in these verses is the infinitive “to walk”**. **This is immediately followed by an adverbial phrase, “worthily of the Lord”**. It just so happens that Paul uses this same adverb in four other places (Rom. 16:2; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; I Thess. 2:12), and it is also used by the apostle John in III John 1:6. When I hear the word, “worthily”, I tend to tie it to the idea of “worth, value, and esteem”, which I then tend to measure by a performance standard based upon whether or not I succeeded in doing the action of the verb in a way that honors Jesus. Implicitly built into this understanding of “worthily” is a continual evaluation process, where I either did the act in a way that was “worthy of God” or not, ...either “measuring up” by my actions, or “missing the mark”. While that may accurately represent the common usage of “worthily” in English, it is *not* the primary thrust of the Greek word. **The Greek word is modifying the way the action is done, not whether the outcome is meritorious or not**. The *outcome* is not the focus, the *manner* or *approach* is what is being described. **Doing something “worthily of the Lord” is doing it in a manner that corresponds to Jesus, is suitable to Him, or that would be in accordance with His manner and character**. The emphasis is more on doing the action in the same attitude or approach than on measuring an outcome. **“Do it like Jesus would do it” is the message**.

What does that look like? Paul includes three phrases that are meant to expand on this “to walk worthily into every pleasing thing” motif. Interestingly, each phrase is characterized by a prepositional phrase that includes a participle(s). The preposition is used to indicate the connection to the verb, while the participle describes an ongoing action or condition that is meant to modify the verb. They are all present tense participles, which means that the action of the participle is happening contemporaneously to the action of the “to walk”. Remember that the action of the infinitive is a point-in-time action, an act happening in an episode, or in a specific moment in time, or as an event. To make the application to ourselves, we need revelation and discernment to walk (at a given moment of time) in a manner corresponding to Jesus’ own attitude and approach.

“...in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the true-knowledge of God.” This adverbial phrase has *two participles*, “bearing fruit” and “growing”. Note the connection between “every pleasing thing” and “every good work”. Now, there may be some “pleasing things” that are not “good works”, but of those “pleasing things” that are “good works”, it was Jesus’ manner to be “bearing fruit” and “increasing in the true-knowledge of God”. What does that mean? It means that **Jesus responded to the “good work” opportunities that came along** (i.e., the ones He discerned were opportunities from God that He [Jesus] was to “walk in”) **by getting involved and “bearing fruit”**. In other words, He was always ready to act and follow through when the Father showed Him something. The other piece contained in this phrase is that, not only did He get involved and follow through, but **He continued to expand His experiential knowledge of God at work in and through Him**. “True-knowledge” refers to intense, vivid, personal, experiential discovery. It was Jesus’ manner to always be responsive to God, and to always be on the lookout for God at work, both in His surroundings, and within His own human experience. He said it best, “...the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing...” (Jn. 5:19,20). Now, maybe you never put yourself in a similar spot as Jesus, but it would seem that is exactly the Father’s intent for us. Did not Paul write that we are “His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He prepared beforehand that we may walk in them” (Eph. 2:10)? It sounds similar to me. **We also need to be ready to respond to the opportunities God brings to us, and be watchful for how He operates in our lives.** As we increase the database of our own experiences of God, we will be more perceptive and confident about future leadings from Him. **Jesus’ manner was to have both a readiness to serve, and a heart to observe and learn from His experiences with the Father.** We will learn to “walk into every pleasing thing” as we have a similar approach to life.

“...in all power being empowered according to might of the glory of Him unto all perseverance and long-suffering...” The word “all” is singular, and can just as easily be rendered as “each” or “every”. The word for “power” also means “strength” or “ability”. The participle is based on the verbal form of this same word. Let me retranslate this phrase reflecting these changes, “...in every ability being enabled...”, or “with each strength being strengthened...”. Bottom line, **it was Jesus’ manner to get His strength and ability from His Father.** He did what He observed the Father doing *with the ability that the Father provided* (e.g., Lk. 5:17). Paul is saying that **we can walk into every pleasing thing, in given situations, if we are also empowered with ability from God.** It is interesting to note the focus of that strengthening here, “...unto each perseverance and patience...”. **It would seem that in order to “walk in every pleasing thing” we will need to stand strong under pressure** (“perseverance” literally means “remaining under difficulties without succumbing”) **and we will need to remain composed so that we do not explode in frustration or retaliation** (“patience” literally means “distant anger”, which means that we may *feel the irritation*, but *we keep explosiveness at a distance*). Whether Paul is thinking of remaining strong in prayer, when it seems nothing is happening, ...or if he is referring primarily to our relationships with one another, is not clear. In any case, **it was Jesus’ manner to get His strength from His Father to endure and be patient in whatever He faced.**

“...with joy giving thanks to the Father...” **We will be able to walk into every pleasing thing if we maintain a thankful, joyful heart.** “...giving thanks” is an activity, a choice and occupation of the will. “...with joy...” indicates that Jesus would work through His emotions enough to genuinely feel the peace, gladness and happiness of joy, so that the action of “giving thanks” was genuine and heartfelt (e.g., Heb. 12:2). **Joy is a by-product of our perception.** We either see the negatives, and feel the heaviness of them, or **we can focus on the positives, and feel the positive feelings of celebration that come with “counting our blessings”**. One blessing Paul gives us is that God has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints. **Jesus’ manner was to live with joy in His heart and giving of thanks upon His lips.** We can do the same, ...and if we do, this will enable us to effectively walk worthily into “every pleasing thing”.