

Paul's Struggle

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Good morning. It is a privilege to open the word and it is daunting to consider that our subject this morning will be Christ himself and when you consider all that he is and all that he's done, there is no way that I could adequately represent him and so we need the Lord to use his word to open all of our eyes and that we would see and value and treasure Christ and see what his word says. So let's pray and let's turn to him and beg him for that.

Father, we come to you. We come to you, Lord, because you are the one who wants to exalt the Savior and you want Christ lifted up and you want him revered and you want him worshiped and you want him obeyed. And Lord, we know that apart from you we don't even desire that, that without your working in our heart, we want our own glory, we want our own pleasure, and we give our attention to so many things and I just pray, Lord, that you would draw us to Jesus and that you would cause us to be loyal to him and to work for him and so Lord, use your word this morning to do that. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, life is a struggle, isn't it? It's a toil. It involves a lot of work. Amen? If you're going to live life with any level of success, it takes toil and striving. You know, work was part of the world before the fall, it was a good and a joyful thing, but then once the fall happened, once Adam sinned, God cursed the ground so that when you work and toil by the sweat of your brow, it produces thorns and thistles and it doesn't do what you want it to and our life is full of toil and struggle, pain, strain, and there are things that we struggle for, right? Things that we toil for. Think about this right now: what is it that you work so hard for? What is it that you long for? What is it that you are willing to strain for?

I remember as a young man, my idol was football and I'll tell you what, I don't think I've ever given more effort to anything in my life than football. 6:30 in the morning every single day during the summer to go lift weights, to run until you want to throw up, and to practice with the hope that you might actually get out on the field. Then you go home and eat a big lunch and then you come back at 3:30 in the afternoon when it's 95 degrees and practice for another 3 hours and that's 3 months before your first game. Toil and labor and sweat and struggle.

Then you have a family and it's toil just to keep your kids alive, isn't it? Labor, I mean literal, like labor pains and then labor for the rest of your life trying to take care of them.

You know, we struggle and we strain for our careers, for promotions, for all kinds of things and Scripture doesn't condemn that, it says that diligence is a virtue, that it's good to work hard, that you will reap what you sow in those things, but I want to draw our attention today to Paul's struggle, to Paul's toil. What was it that Paul struggled and toiled for and I want to ask you if you struggle and toil for the same purpose, for the same goal that Paul did.

Look at Colossians. We're going to spend our time in Colossians today. Colossians 1:29, Paul says,

29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Paul's struggles. The word is "agonizomai." It sounds like our word "agony," right? He strains. He struggles. He strives. It involves intense effort. He is toiling and struggling for something.

This is a very common concept in Paul's writings. Look down in chapter 2, "I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea." He repeatedly talks about his labor and his work. The word there for "toil" is "kapos." It literally means "a beating; weariness; an exertion." It's a word for physical tiredness induced by work. Physical tiredness induced by work.

Paul is laboring and struggling for something. Often we try to avoid that kind of labor and struggle and sometimes we almost think it's ungodly to strain and to strive, right? "Hey, just relax." Right? Well, you don't see Paul as a very relaxed man. Think about that: Paul is not sitting there, floating on a little raft with a cup of wine just kind of teaching people as he floats by, hoping that some people will hear him but, you know, whatever, just sitting there making his tents for fun. That's not what you see from Paul. You see intense effort and labor. 2 Corinthians 6:5, he says, "in beatings and imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger." This characterized his life and his ministry. 2 Corinthians 11:27, "I have been in labor and hardship." He says again, "sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure." And to think he didn't have to do any of that. He could have, you know, found himself a nice comfortable little ministry in a place where there wasn't any persecution and just stayed there. He was very prominent among the Jews. He could have had a very easy life and yet he labored and endured so much toil and suffering. 1 Corinthians 4:12, he says, "and we toil, working with our own hands." Galatians 4:11, "I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain." I labored. And it's over and over and over, labor and hardship in both books of Thessalonians and both books of Corinthians.

He says to honor those who labor among you. So Paul is laboring and striving for something. What is it? Well, let's look at the context here. Jump up to verse 24 of Colossians 1. Paul says, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ." Just a quick note there, what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ? What's lacking is the actual physically carrying of the

Gospel to you personally. That's what's lacking in the afflictions of Christ. Christ, his suffering didn't lack for its power and efficiency but someone had to carry the message and they had to endure suffering to do that faithfully.

So Paul is filling up what was lacking in the afflictions, "for the sake of his body, that is, the church." So we see that he's suffering and he's doing this work for the church, for his body, "of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God." Okay, God had entrusted this to him as a steward, and it "was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known." Verse 26, what does it mean to make the word of God fully known? "The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Paul is laboring and striving, enduring suffering, to make the word of God fully known and what does that mean? That the mystery, this thing that was not revealed in ages past, Christ in you the hope of glory. That is what he is wanting to make known and it is to this end, verse 28, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom," and this is his motive for all that he does, his goal is "that we may present everyone mature," or complete, or perfect, "in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me." He wants, his goal, his motivation is to present every man mature in Christ.

So today we're going to examine this under three headings. So "Paul's Struggle" is what I'm titling this message. His struggle. So the first heading is his motivation; the second is his method; and the last is his might, his strength.

So the first is his motivation here. Examine this in verse 28: to present everyone mature in Christ. What does that mean to present everyone mature? The word "to present" means "to place before someone; to put it in front like a presentation like I am now; to stand in front of someone." And we want to present them complete. So Paul is driving and toiling to make sure that everyone shows up before the Lord complete in Christ. You see the scope of it is everyone, okay? Every single person. That leaves no one out. There is not anyone that this does not apply to. There's no person that he comes across that he is not trying and working to present them complete in Christ.

This is referring to the last day when each person will stand before the Lord. In fact, look back at chapter 1, verse 22, "He has now reconciled in His body," so you, Gentiles alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, "He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, if indeed," verse 23, "you continue in the faith." Do you see that? Christ died and reconciled you to him for the purpose that you would be presented holy and blameless and above reproach. That's on the last day. That on that last day, you will be above reproach, without sin, without blemish. That is Christ's goal for you. That was Christ's goal in his death. That was his purpose in reconciling you to him and that is also Paul's goal. Paul is in line with Christ's goal for you. Paul sees that Christ wanted them blameless and now he is serving that purpose as well by preaching the Gospel faithfully and calling them to live in a manner worthy of it.

Now this is the concern, verse 23, "if indeed you continue in the faith." You see, Paul constantly concerned for the churches. He's constantly concerned that they are being deluded and deceived and led astray from the Gospel. The threats are always coming from deceivers and false teachers and from the devil to shake people off of the foundation of Christ so that they would, look at this, verse 23, "shift from the hope of the gospel." You see, the implication is if you don't continue in the faith and you shift from the hope of the Gospel, you were never saved to begin with and that is Paul's fear.

Now, it's really interesting to see in the book of Galatians 4, he says, "I fear for you." This is a similar problem with the Galatians is that they're being tempted away from their devotion to Christ to go into legalism, to go to the works of the law and the works of the flesh to earn salvation in righteousness and sanctification. Paul says in Galatians 4, "I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain." To labor and to toil. He worked so hard to present them complete in Christ, to teach them the truth. He strained and he struggled for this and they came to faith but now they were being tempted to be drawn astray, shifted from the hope of the Gospel, and he's afraid that maybe he labored in vain, that he worked so hard there, endured beatings and punishment and ostracism and that after all of that, they are giving up their hope in Christ for some other Gospel. He's concerned that they're shifting.

Now look at chapter 2, verse 1, again, "I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face." Isn't this amazing? He has not even met these people and he is struggling for them. He's struggling for them. The situation here is that a guy named Epaphrus taught the Gospel to the people in this region of Colossae, Colossae is a Roman city and in the surrounding regions there were a number of small churches, and he taught the Gospel to them and it had been reported to Paul that their faith was genuine but now Epaphrus, who was a good friend of Paul's and an associate, now he has come to Paul with this report that there is false teaching going on and so he's asking Paul's advice. "What do I do? How do I address this?"

He says, "I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you," and this is his struggle, verse 2, this is what he wants, "that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Verse 4, "I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments." You see that, he is concerned that people are trying to deter them with things that sound reasonable.

You see down in verse 8, "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ." It's being described like a war, a war of philosophies, a spiritual war of thoughts and ideas, of reasoning. These false ideas threatened to take them captive. That word for "captive" is the spoils of war, it refers to the spoils of war. You will be carried off by philosophies and deceptions.

These deceptions involved things like, look at verse 16, "let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath." So legalistic requirements that have nothing to do with actual godliness. Verse 17, "These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." Verse 18, "Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism," that's extreme self-deprivation, you know, sleeping on stone floors and nails and stuff and eating only, probably eating vegan food or something. I don't know. But let no one insist on these things, "and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head," that's Jesus, "from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God."

So this is Paul's motivation. He knows that they've been taught the Gospel and yet they are being tempted by false doctrine. Now think about this: what is so tempting about these things? What is so tempting about these legalistic tendencies and these visions and all of these things? It goes after your pride. It puts the ball in your hand to edify and sanctify yourself, to save yourself. All of these guys are motivated, these false teachers are motivated by pride. Look, they're puffed up about, they're puffed up without reason. They want to take the attention off of Christ and they come in wanting to disqualify you. When all you have to do is to trust in Jesus Christ and it's very simple and straightforward, that in him is found everything that you need and yet these guys want to come in and say, "Oh, but you still lack something. You don't have everything you need in Christ."

Now think about this: when would you be tempted by this? I'll tell you some examples. When you struggle with sin and guilt and can't seem to overcome an issue, you're tempted to think that Christ is not enough. You're tempted to look for something outside of him, either to blame so that you're no longer to blame, or some power outside of Christ, some extra spiritual blessing to get you over the hump. You look outside of Christ. Christ was good enough to save me but he wasn't good enough to sanctify me, to bring me into holiness and righteousness, to change me.

Let no one disqualify you. You see, these things, look at verse 23, "These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh." People do all these things, they treat their body harshly, they obey these laws and these dietary restrictions and they believe that because they do these things and they observe the Sabbaths and the new moons and the festivals, that that makes them godly; it helps them to feel better about themselves, meanwhile they are still indulging the flesh behind the scenes.

This reminds me of Matthew 7 where Jesus says, "Many will come to me saying, 'Lord, Lord.' They will call me, 'Lord, Lord. Didn't we do all of these things in your name? Didn't we,'" let's turn there. Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?'"

And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.'" You see, they did everything except what he asked them to do. They did all the show and they did all of the external shows of godliness but they didn't actually do what he asked them to do and that is what these false teachers are teaching, these sorts of things, things that have a show of godliness without the substance. Paul is concerned about them, about this possibility.

So we move into his method. We see his motivation, his motivation is to present every man complete in Christ, to get them to that final day with their faith intact. That's what he wants and with them following him and actually dealing with the things that he taught, actually doing what he said. That is what he desires for them and this is the method that he goes about it. Back to Colossians 1:28, it says, "Him we proclaim." We proclaim Jesus Christ and it's not simply just saying his name out loud. That's not what's going on. It is fully teaching the truth of Christ. We proclaim Jesus, that in him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; teaching who he is and what he has done, what he has provided; the resources that are found in him.

Who is this Christ that he is proclaiming? We read it this morning, verse 15 of chapter 1, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through Him and for Him." You see, these false teachers in this area believed that angels had delivered the law and because they had delivered the law, that they had to be appeased. There are all these different levels of angels and they believed that you had to keep these angels happy by these dietary restrictions and keeping the Sabbaths and doing all these things so that they would bless you. That's essentially what's going on here.

Well, he corrects that by saying, "Jesus is over all of these things. He is above every dominion and ruler and authority." That's talking about spiritual dominions, spiritual authorities. He is above all of them and all things were created through him and for him. Okay, these angels were not the ones that created as these false teachers taught. Jesus created. He created everything. "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the church. He is the one that is to be preeminent. The fullness of God dwells in Him and it's through Him that everything is reconciled, making peace by the blood of His cross." You don't need to go to anybody else to be reconciled. You don't need to go to a counselor to be reconciled to God. You don't need to go to a priest. You don't need to go to these special gurus to be reconciled to God, to have your sins forgiven, to be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his Beloved Son. You don't need a special exorcism. You don't need a second awakening. You don't need a second blessing. You need Jesus as he has been preached to you already. You need him. Everything is in his power. Why go anywhere else? Why trust in anything else? Why look to anything else? Nothing else has the power. Everything else you go to will just serve to exalt your pride and lead you astray and possibly condemn you to hell if you follow it.

He is a head of everything and in him everything is reconciled. He controls it all. He holds it all together and he has brought you, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled by the body of his flesh, by his death, so that he would present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. You see, if you want to be holy and blameless and above reproach before God, all you need to do is be in Christ. Continue in that faith stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the Gospel that you heard. If you find yourself struggling with sin, you don't need some special guru. You don't need a camp. You don't need a book. You need Christ. Go to him. Look to him. Humble yourself before him because everything we need is found in him.

Look at this, again in verse 3 of chapter 2, in him "are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge." You don't need science to be pleasing to Christ. You don't need science to overcome your sin. You don't need psychology and the traditions of men and special revelations from people. Don't be deluded by their extremely complex and sophisticated arguments that make a lot of sense to the fleshly mind. You don't need to go and solve your childhood trauma. You don't need anything else but Christ. Hold fast to the head. And look at verse 10, "you have been filled in Him." You have been made complete.

So Paul's desire, then, is to proclaim Christ and then to call them, look at verse 6 of chapter 2, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith," strengthened in your faith, "just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." Your problem is that you're not walking in Christ the way that you were taught, the way that the Scriptures have taught you. That is your problem. If you're not walking faithfully with Christ, it's not your parents' problem, it's not your wife's problem, it's not your friends', it's not some disability. You have what you need. Walk in him as you have received him. Have you taken hold fully of the resources offered to you in Christ? We so quickly run to other things, easier answers, trusting in men and not in Christ.

As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk in him. So what would that look like? What has he called us to do? It's a trust in him for salvation alone. Our sins have been completely forgiven. And now to seek as "you have been raised in Christ, seek that the things that are above where Christ is," chapter 3, verse 1. Chapter 3, verse 5, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Notice this: Paul doesn't say, "Alright, you can trust in Christ for most things, you know, to make you happy if you have food and self-esteem and affirmation, but if you want to deal with the really hard stuff, sexual immorality and impurity, boy, that's just too hard. You need an expert for that." You see, Paul wasn't dealing with unique...we don't have unique problems today. You know, the modern world, yeah, there are different methods, different avenues, but it's all the same stuff. The cities that Paul wrote to, you know, there are temple prostitutes, male prostitutes and children routinely used for sexual stuff and it wasn't even seen as a bad thing. I mean, it was corrupt. We don't live in some uniquely sinful society. And Paul doesn't say, "Boy, you need a therapist to get over those things." He says you need Christ.

"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away," including, "anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator." Christ answers all of these problems if you were to walk faithfully in him. You can overcome your anger problem, your outbursts of wrath, your malice and your slander. These aren't addictions that can't be broken. Christ, in him is everything you need.

Look at this, then, verse 12, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." Do you see any problems in here that we have that are not taken care of by Christ, by walking in him as you have been taught? Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you.

"Wives, submit to your husbands." That's all you need. You need Christ to be able to submit to your husband. You don't need a special therapist. You don't need him to be Jesus. You just need Christ to be able to do this.

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." This is what it means to walk in him as you were taught. Husbands, it is not okay to be harsh with your wife. It's not okay to be impatient and you don't have to be if you walk in Christ. And you don't need her respect, you don't need her to do everything that you want her to do, to love her and to be gentle with her. You don't need her to hold up her end of the bargain to fulfill that. You need to walk in Christ. You need to put on the new man. To forgive as he forgave you regardless.

Do you doubt the resources of Christ that you cannot do that? Do you really believe that he is not strong enough and not powerful enough and that he has not provided you what you need to do what he has called you to do? You don't need, this doesn't fall somewhere at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, right? You know, food and I don't even remember all of it. Self-actualization and self-esteem and all this garbage. No, you don't need any of that to walk as you have been taught in Christ. You need Christ. You need to believe in him and trust in his way and do it. I'm speaking to you as a sinful man who needs to be reminded of this. I need this. I cannot tolerate this in my life, to think I need something else so that I can fulfill my end of the deal. You have died in Christ.

"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." Children, in Christ you can do that no matter what kind of parents you have.

"Fathers, don't provoke your children." I mean, sometimes as a father, I feel like my children provoke me. Look at this, "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." In Ephesians it says to bring them up in the nurture and the

admonition of the Lord. I can't blame my upbringing for my failures as a parent because I have Christ and I can fulfill this.

"Bondservants, obey your masters with sincerity of heart." Verse 23, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord knowing that you will receive the inheritance. Masters, treat your servants justly and fairly. Continue steadfastly in prayer." This is what it means to be complete in Christ, to trust fully in him and to walk in the way that you have been taught and that is what Paul toiled and struggled for, to present them complete in Christ.

Now, continuing on with his method, that is the content of the proclamation. What is his method? Back to chapter 1, verse 28. So we proclaim Christ and this is how we do it, "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom." That word for "warning" is "noutheteo." It's where we get nouthetic counseling. It's the idea of admonishing, instructing or warning. It has to do with setting the mind of someone in proper order; correcting him; or putting him right. You see, it's not this simplistic, just kind of shouting the Gospel over people's heads and it all just kind of falls in line. It's actually person by person admonishing and straightening out their thinking. Putting them in order.

Paul did this in Acts 20, he says, "Be on alert remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears." How often are we together and we don't admonish one another? We don't correct one another. We don't minister truly to one another. We sit there next to each other caring only about our own life. People saying stuff, crazy stuff, and we just kind of let it go. Is that love? Is that how we were taught in Christ? No. Admonish one another, he says. This is what he does, admonishing every single one.

As I mentioned, fathers are to do this with their children, Ephesians 6:4, "bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord." That's admonition of the Lord. Those who are divisive in Titus 3, we are to reject a factious man after a first and second admonition. So when someone is divisive, you don't just say, "Hey, stop it." You seek to set him straight, admonishing and teaching him the correct way and if he fails to do that and continues in his divisiveness, you are to reject him. It says this person is warped and sinful. 1 Thessalonians 5:14, "we urge you, brothers, to admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone." But those who are out of line, undisciplined is the word, idle, we are to admonish them and we are to do this with one another.

Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell richly within you with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Is that what we do when we gather? Is his word dwelling within us so that with all wisdom we teach and admonish one another? Why not? What holds us back from that? Is it knowledge? We don't know what to say? Is it we don't know if it's appropriate in the timing? Is it just that we don't care? What is it for you? And seek to address what that hurdle is. You don't know what to say? You need to grow in the knowledge of Christ. So don't let that pass you by without taking that up and saying, "I really need to learn what to say in that situation. I really need to learn how

to discern the truth in that situation. I need to think about this. I need to get advice. I need to study the Scriptures. How does Christ and what he has taught apply to this situation?"

So he admonishes every man and he teaches every man. Colossians 2:7, "having been firmly rooted and being built up in Him and established in your faith just as you were instructed to do." That's teach what you were taught. 1 Thessalonians 2:11, "just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father did his own son." Paul did this on a continual basis, the exhorting and teaching them. Acts 20:20, Paul says, "I did not shrink back from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you publicly and from house to house." Teaching publicly. He didn't shrink back from it. With all wisdom. That's skill. That's where growing in knowledge and training and practice come in, that as you practice this you grow in skillfully admonishing and teaching one another to where you apply the Scriptures to the right situation, the right Scripture to the right person, discerning is this person unruly? Is this person just weak and fainthearted? Who needs encouragement? Paul was skilled in this, skilled in admonishment and in teaching and he did this to everyone. This is what he toiled and struggled for.

So that sounds like a tall order, doesn't it? I mean, that's a massive daunting task. Paul himself said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Well, not you and not me but Christ is sufficient. Look at what he says, this is the third heading, the might, his power. This is where Paul got his power, verse 29, "For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me." He labors and strives. It's his power that mightily works. His energy, that powerfully works. It's this word for "power" is where we get our word "energy" and it means "working power and effective action." It occurs 8 times in the New Testament all in Paul's writings but this is a key concept. And he almost always uses this word along with other expressions for strength and power. He uses this word a lot.

Philippians 3:21, Christ "who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." Christ's power will be employed to glorify our physical body. That is the power that is working in us. Ephesians 1:19, Paul wants us to know "what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might." The power comes from God. You see, Christ is not just sufficient, he hasn't just given us good instructions, he hasn't just left us an owner's manual, he has actually also supplied the power and he is actually the one working in us. If he doesn't, if he doesn't drive the car, we're like a car out there broken down without fuel and without a driver. But Christ is the manufacturer. He provides the instructions. He provides the power to move and he drives and he moves us. When Christ is at work in us, it produces work by us and it's not the sense of relaxation, it's this sense of motivation that moves you to work and to toil for his sake in accordance with the energy that he has given us.

The power, the effective power of the truth that is preached is provided by him and I could get up here and preach this all day long but if his energy and power does not work to make it effective, nothing will happen. If anything benefits, if anyone benefits from the

preaching of his word, it will be because of his power at work in you and he is the one that is causing this to happen. He is the one that is working along with Paul. Paul is working along with God to present everyone mature or complete and it is his power that is doing it.

So why does it take this kind of power? It's because this is hard and we can't produce it by ourselves. You see, the answer is Christ. It's not me and it's not Pastor Ty and it's not John MacArthur, as a wonderful blessing as all of those men are. But the power and the energy comes from Christ so what should that cause us to do? What should it cause us to do knowing that he is at work in us? Knowing that he is powerfully at work? That the effectiveness comes from him? Well, first it should cause us to pray, right? And look at what Paul does in Colossians 1:3, "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven." And look at how he prays, verse 9, "we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened," there is that word again, "with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."

This is his prayer that you would grasp what you have, that you would be filled with his knowledge and that you would walk in a manner worthy of the calling. He prays this because he knows it is God's power and energy that will produce this in you. So he prays and then he gets to work. He writes a letter. He goes to the next town and preaches the Gospel. He shows up to set things in order. He goes because God's power is with him and behind him and he knows he can go with confidence if he is proclaiming Christ, that God will do the work that needs to be done. So this motivates action. How much more motivating is it when you know that you cannot fail? When you know that you will succeed? All of your toil and labor will not be in vain? Paul says this in Galatians 6, "Don't grow weary because your labor is not in vain." If you labor for Christ and toil for him and lay up treasures in heaven, they will not be in vain and we can work hard knowing that we cannot fail because the power of God is mightily working in us to accomplish his will.

So what do you toil for and by whose strength do you do it? Chief on that list should be that we are toiling and struggling to present every person we come across complete in Christ, that they would be saved, that they would be strengthened in their faith, that they would know how to follow him. So let's turn to him in prayer and then let's go to work.

Let's pray.

Father, you are mighty and you are wise and you have ordained your work to be done through weak men and, Lord, I pray that you would show us the greatness of your power

*by changing our hearts, by giving us confidence in Christ. I pray all this in Jesus' name.
Amen.*