

Embracing the Ministry of Christ

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Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0 : 00] Open up your Bibles, if you would please, to Colossians chapter 1. Colossians 1, if you're using the Pew Bible, it's on page 983.

The last song we sang closed with our boast is Jesus Christ. Our boast is Jesus Christ. I think we can all agree that the things we talk about are normally the things that we're thinking about. The things we boast about are the things that we feel a sense of accomplishment. If you have done a major project or if you have a favorite sports team and that team won or that project is finished and you're happy about how that project turned out, you want to talk about those things. And so if your boast is Christ, I think what that means is you've also been thinking about Christ. Christ is what's important to you.

It makes me think about what happens there in Acts chapter 2. Remember when the Pentecost happens and these individuals, these believers go out and the report that comes back is we keep hear them telling in our own language the mighty works of God.

[1 : 17] Their boast was Jesus Christ. And it's because that was what was in their heart. And so it just kind of spilled out of their conversation wherever they went in Jerusalem.

They couldn't help but talk about the mighty works of God. Well, we have a ministry like that too. We've been called to that kind of ministry.

And this morning, as we look at the Apostle Paul and as we kind of see him describe the ministry that he has and there's several dimensions of that ministry that we're going to look at this morning, my goal is that we'll see not just that this is the ministry of Christ but that the ministry that Paul has is the ministry that we've been called to as well.

So if you're there in your Bibles in Colossians chapter 1, my goal is that the points of our outline this morning will kind of spring out of the text and you should be able to help me and help us as we work through this to know exactly where we're going based upon the words in the passage.

Here's what it says, Colossians 1 beginning in verse 24. It says this, Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. And in my flesh I'm filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you to make the word of God fully known.

[2 : 46] The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. So speaking about the ministry of Christ there in verse 24, there's an S word and we're going to work through S words this morning.

There's an S word there in verse 24. I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. So the what of our ministry? The suffering or the struggle of our ministry.

That's where Paul begins. He wants this church to understand that there is a struggle in ministry.

There is suffering that happens in ministry. There is labor that takes place in ministry.

Ministry that we have been called to is not easy. That's why the Apostle Paul in writing this passage, in writing this letter, he wants to help this church know that yes, he is in prison, but there's a reason for that.

It's because the ministry we've been called to is a ministry of suffering. And throughout this section of scripture that runs from verse 24 and kind of overflows into the first couple of verses of chapter 2, that's where our spotlight is going to be, the suffering of the Apostle Paul.

[3 : 57] Notice this. The first part of verse 24, I rejoice in my suffering for you. In the second half of that verse, I'm filling up with this lacking in Christ afflictions for the sake of his body.

Drop down to verse 29 and you see, for this I toil, and that's another word for labor and for sweat and for the hard work of Paul's ministry. At the end of verse 29, he talks about he's struggling with all of his energy.

And then in verse 1 of chapter 2, for I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you. One of the predominant themes throughout this passage is, don't be mistaken.

The ministry that we've been called to is a ministry of suffering. Make no mistake. And we see some components of this suffering. And these are kind of sub points that are not on the slides, so just work with me as we work through this.

And I'm trying to do this quickly. We see that this suffering was a present ministry. Or a present suffering, excuse me. It was a present suffering. Throughout this passage, we're going to see all of these verses are in the context of what's happening at the current day.

[5 : 09] They're present. They're active. And some of these are even ongoing and continuous parts of his ministry. Struggle for this church. It was a present suffering.

It was as if the Apostle Paul was right there, side by side. We're doing this together. You're not alone. I'm struggling with you. Second, it was an intense suffering.

An intense suffering. The words that are used, there are four different Greek words that are used that are all meant to help describe the breadth and the dimension of the suffering that the Apostle Paul experienced for them.

The first word for suffering in verse 24 is the Greek word pathema. We can understand pathos is where this word derives from. It's simply to suffer or even to take an emotional toll.

There was an emotional component, a burden that was placed in the Apostle Paul as he's seeking to labor for this church. The second half of verse 24 is the word affliction.

[6 : 07] It's the Greek word philipsis. Trouble, distress, oppression, tribulation. This wasn't easy. This required obstacles and working through the persecution that was oppressing the Apostle Paul.

Verse 29, the word for toil is the Greek word tapas or kapas, excuse me. It's labor or work to be tired or to be weary and it even also involves an emotional component.

Emotionally fatigued and even discouraged at times. Paul invested himself. He labored to the point of exhaustion. He was willing to spend it all. He was willing to put it all out there.

Not to reserve or hold anything back. Also in verse 29, this word for struggle is the word agonizomai. Can you hear it? Kind of buried within that Greek word, the word agony, agonizomai. That's suffering. It's also used and applied several times throughout the New Testament, even in Greek culture, to describe the Olympic struggle, to compete, to fight, to strive with intensity.

[7 : 16] The Apostle Paul would say in other plays, he talks about his ministry to the church of Philippi, that he is spending it all on the offering and sacrifice of the service of the faith.

He's pouring himself out as a offering, drink offering on their service of their faith. He's expending it all to the very end, this struggle that he describes.

And then in chapter 2, verse 1, he repeats this word agony. It was a struggle. It was hard. It was intense. There was suffering involved.

So it was a present suffering. It was an intense suffering. But third, it was an expected suffering. Most of us are pretty familiar with Paul's sufferings. We can probably describe the dimension and the breadth of the suffering that he experienced.

2 Corinthians chapter 11 kind of gives us a preview when it says, five times I received at the hands of the Jews the 40 lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods.

[8 : 18] Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea. On frequent journeys. In dangers from rivers. Dangers from robbers. Dangers from my own people. Dangers from Gentiles.

Dangers in the city. Danger in the wilderness. Danger at sea. Danger from false teachers. In toil and hardship. Through many a sleepless night. In hunger and thirst.

Often without food. In cold and exposure. And apart from other things. There is the daily pressure on me. Of my anxiety for all the churches.

There was a spending. There was a suffering. There was a persecution. A hardship. A difficulty. That the apostle Paul experienced. And he helps to provide a summary of it here.

His life in ministry was hard. And while we can understand. The difficulty of the ministry. That he experienced. It was also a promise.

[9 : 14] That Christ gave to his disciples. A promise of persecution. And suffering. Because for the sake of his name. John chapter 15. Verse 20 and 21.

Says this. Remember the word that I said to you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me. They will also persecute you. If they kept my word.

They will keep your word. But all these things. They will do to you. On account of my name. Because they do not know him. Who sent me. Disciples. You can anticipate. If you are a follower of me. If you bear my name. If you call yourself a Christian. If you are one who represents my message. And my word to others. You can bet that the world. Who is hostile towards me. Will also be hostile towards you. Don't be disparate. Don't be surprised. And I think most of us are acquainted. With the promise that the apostle Paul gives to Timothy.

[10:10] About suffering. From 2nd Timothy chapter 3 verse 12. He says. Indeed. All who desire to live a godly life. In Christ Jesus. Will be persecuted.

But for whatever reason. And I include myself in this. For whatever reason. When suffering happens. When hard things take place. When I face some opposition.

Or people are not treating me the way. I think I deserve to be treated. For some reason. I'm surprised. But suffering has a purpose. And we can.

We can appreciate the fact. From the scripture. That suffering has a purpose. And I want to just briefly. Walk through a couple of purposes. Reasons for your suffering. First. It identifies us with Jesus.

We see that in Acts chapter 5 verse 41. It says. They were persecuted. And then. They left the presence of the council. Rejoicing.

[11:09] That they were counted worthy. To suffer dishonor for the name. So Christ had promised. If you bear my name. You're going to suffer. Like I suffered. If they persecuted me.

They're going to persecute you. And lo and behold. There they are. Speaking for Christ. Representing Christ. Showing Christ in culture. And then. As a result. Of that activity. Now they're persecuted. And what's their. What's their response? Their response is. Not. This is. This is so undeserved. This is so unjust.

What are we going to do about this? Rather it was. Thank the Lord. We get this confirmation. This validation. That we belong to Jesus. Because we're suffering.

Just like Jesus did. It identifies us with him. Second. It proves the quality. Of our faith. It proves the quality. Of our faith. And I just couldn't.

[12:07] I can't. I got to show you this. This picture here. You know. You guys have seen. Built Ford Tough. Right. And when you think about. This commercial. You don't want to just see.

The truck. Driving on a nice. Even road. On the freeway. You want to know. If it's built Ford Tough. Then it can do Ford things. It can pull that load.

Up steep inclines. It can do it out in the mountains. It can do out off road. Wherever you are. If it's built Ford Tough. I want to see. Where the rubber meets the road. I want to see. That it can do.

What it's said to do. Suffering does the same thing for us. Suffering has a validating component to it.

We see that in 1 Peter chapter 1. Verses 6 to 7. Where it says. In this you greatly rejoice. Though now. For a while. If necessary. You have been grieved by various trials.

[13:03] Why? So that the tested genuineness of your faith. More precious than gold that perishes. Though it is tested by fire. May be found to result in praise. In glory. In honor.

At the revelation of Jesus Christ. You see. Suffering. Not only helps others. But it helps us to know. That the faith that we have is real.

The faith that we have is authentic. The faith that we have. Can carry us through. Through the power of God. Working in our lives. And when that happens. We can say. There's something significant.

About our faith. It can stand the test of time. By God's grace. Working in our lives. Third. It enhances the picture. Of our message. When people see suffering.

And they see us enduring. Suffering. It provides validation. Not just to our faith. But also to the message. That we send. Paul will say. In Philippians chapter 3. Verse 10.

[14:01] He says. That I might know him. In the power of his resurrection. And may share. His sufferings. Becoming like him. In his death. Share his sufferings.

There is a. A fellowshiping. That happens. There is an intimacy. That takes place. When we share. In the sufferings. Of our savior. When we walk. In the steps. Of our savior.

I remember going back now. Several years now. And there was a. A mentor of mine. Who was helping me. When I was experiencing. Some trouble. I felt like it was undeserved.

And he. He approached me. And said. Andrew. Are you a. Are you a follower of Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Those. Who follow Jesus.

Have to walk where Jesus walked. You got to walk in the steps. Of your savior. If you want to enjoy. That power of resurrection. That work of God. In your life. Requires that you die.

[14:58] To yourself. And you die. To your dreams. And you embrace. By faith. Jesus Christ. And you enjoy. That intimacy with him. And the power that comes.

As a result. That strengthening work. Of God. Paul will say. Here in. Coming back to our passage. In Colossians. He says. He says. In his flesh.

He's filling up. What is lacking. In Christ afflictions. For the sake of his body. He's filling up. What is lacking. In Christ's afflictions. For his body. And you might say.

Wait a second. Filling up. What's lacking. Is there anything lacking. In what Christ did for us. On the cross. His death. His resurrection. Is there anything lacking.

In that ministry. And our response should be. Absolutely not. There is nothing lacking. In his suffering. So what in the world. Is Paul talking about.

[15:50] That. And I believe it's this. I believe that the apostle Paul. Understands. That the ministry goal. Of Christ. Is a message to the world.

And it's a ministry goal. That he set. Not only for Jerusalem. You remember. But also for Judea and Samaria. And the uttermost parts of the earth. And here we are. Now 2,000 years. After Christ was here.

And through the generations. That ministry. Message. Of the gospel. Demanded something. It demanded. Not only. That a message.

Would be sent. A message. Would be spoken. But that Christ's life. Would also. Be seen. There is a visual. Component. To the gospel.

That demonstrates. That we are actually. Walking in the steps of Christ. Representing Jesus. Not only in our words. But also through our life. We give them. As ambassadors.

[16:46] This. This. Representation. This. Image. As it were. Of Christ. To the world. As we are representing. His message. And his life. Paul would put on display.

This message of Christ. But also. The life of Christ. The way Christ responds. To others. Which included suffering. Because Christ's life. Demanded.

Suffering too. So Paul here is suffering. And we see this present suffering. We see this intense suffering. We see this expected suffering. And fourth. We see. It's a common suffering.

By the way. We're all still in. Point number one. Okay. So. Bear with me. And this is important. And I think this explains. Why the apostle Paul can say. I rejoice in my suffering for you.

And you might say. Wait a second. Rejoice in suffering. How is this possible? Paul. Are you a masochist? Do you just. Just delight. And hard things? What is your problem?

[17:44] Are you out of your mind? No. Rather. The apostle Paul understood. That. Suffering is inevitable. In this world. The apostle Paul understood.

That suffering is universal. In this world. It's a common suffering. It's a. It's a suffering. That is inevitable. Because of something. It's because of the fall. It's because of the effects of sin.

It's because of. The world that is. Broken. A world that is in disrepair. A world that is hostile.

Towards God. We live in this fallen world. Where people sin. Where violence happens.

Where moth and rust corrupt. Where thieves break through. And steal. And that's the world we live in. It's a world of suffering. We're subjected to forms of injustice.

And oppression. And hostility. And aggression. And danger. Where people take advantage of one another. It is a suffering. Kind of world. Everything in this world.

[18:42] Is subjected to the fall. Subjected to the effects of sin. And that suffering. Is common. It's universal. It's inevitable. It touches every person.

Every animal. Every plant. Everything in the earth. And in the heaven. Suffering will touch it. Because sin has touched it. Here's a graphic.

Of the most intense suffering. That's taking place around the world. And I know. It's as small. It's hard to see. But I think you can kind of. Get the effect. That those yellow dots. That are across the globe.

Represent significant suffering. That is happening in those places. There's too much to describe. But let me just take a couple of snapshots. First in Sudan. There's a civil war that's happening there.

Between the Sudanese armed forces. And the rapid support forces. It's caused massive displacement. A breakdown in infrastructure. Food insecurity. And widespread violence. [19 : 40] So that over 40,000 people have died. And approximately 12 million people have been displaced. In Gaza. We're familiar with the conflict happening there.

The Israel-Hamas war has led to devastating destruction. Buildings and villages. And people. At least 65,000 Palestinians have been killed. And a number of Jews as well. 167,000 who have been injured. Hundreds of thousands displaced. Severe shortages of food and water. And you know that the food supply. And the aid that's there. Is hard to come by. Those in Yemen. There's a prolonged civil war. That's taken place there. Tens of millions. Who are in need of aid. Over 880 civilian casualties. Reported just this year alone. And 4.5 million.

[20 : 35] Internally who are displaced. 19.5 million people require assistance. Including food and water and health care. And we could go on. And on. And on.

Place after place. Regardless of where you live on this planet. There's suffering. There's suffering. There's suffering. Approximately 300 million people worldwide. Are in need of help. Extreme poverty has touched. Over 808 million people. And extreme poverty is defined as those. Who live on less than \$3 a day. People can't afford. A healthy diet. There's 2.8 billion people. Who fit in that category. The question is not. Will you suffer?

The question is. Will you suffer for something. That means something. And that's what the apostle Paul is getting at. I rejoice in suffering. I rejoice in suffering.

[21 : 35] Because my suffering has a purpose. My suffering has a goal. My suffering has fruit. Just look at the fruit of the suffering.

He's looking back on the church. And he sees. He's recorded in the first. Several verses of this. Of this letter. In chapter 1. He talks about their faith in Christ Jesus. Their love for the saints. Their hope in heaven. He's talking about this word of God. That is increasing and bearing fruit. His suffering has been worth it. He's not celebrating the suffering.

As an end in itself. But celebrating the results of that suffering. As being meaningful. As being purposeful. So he talks about the suffering.

Or the struggle of his ministry. And now he transitions in verse 25. See if you can pick this out. Verse 25. Of which I became a minister. According to the stewardship from God.

[22 : 31] That was given to me for you. To make the word of God fully known. The mystery hidden for ages and generations. But now revealed to his saints. What is the S word for our ministry there?

The what of our ministry? Stewardship. You are so smart. Good job. The stewardship of our ministry. Paul begins this letter with his introduction.

Paul. An apostle of Jesus Christ. An apostle of Jesus Christ. One who had been sent by God. One who had been set apart by God. One who had been commissioned by God. For a very specific task.

Now here we come to verse 25. Of this chapter. And we see now Paul describing himself. Not as one who is an authority. Who's kind of come to bring the message of the gospel.

In this authoritative kind of way. But now we see he's describing himself as a minister. A minister according to the stewardship from God.

[23 : 30] This word for minister or servant is the word diakonos. That should sound familiar. Here. He sees himself in this role of a servant. While he has the position of authority and leadership.

He is really a servant to the church. And a servant to the Lord. And as one who is a servant. This word here that's used stewardship.

Is the Greek word that describes household management. Household management. Somebody who has the distinct responsibility. Of overseeing the areas of management of the house.

And you can maybe imagine that. Especially in the Luke 15 kind of house. Where the prodigal son and the father who's there. And his vast wealth. And the stewardship or the house managers that he had.

Who were overseeing the buying and selling. And the maintenance of the grounds. And the various parts of the bounty and the harvest.

[24 : 32] That's what a household manager would be in charge of. And as a household manager of the church. The apostle Paul wants us to understand. That there's accountability here. There's also honor here.

And as a steward. It comes not only with privilege. But also with responsibility. Membership has its privileges. But it is an entrustment.

We are acting as representatives. And there are a number of things that we understand. As we are entrusted with. As those who are stewards of God. It's not a stewardship or a ministry.

That we carry out. Without help. First it's an entrustment of power. Colossians 1 verse 11. The apostle Paul is praying for this church.

May you be strengthened with power. According to his glorious might. He says something very similar. In to the church of Ephesus. He says in Ephesians 1 verse 19.

[25 : 30] That you might know. What is the exceeding greatness of his power. Towards us who believe. Ephesians chapter 6 verse 10. Be strong in the Lord. And in the power of his might.

Why is it that the apostle Paul. Draws so much attention to power. Why is it that the apostle Paul. Is praying. That this church would have their eyes. Opened up. And there's this growing awareness. Of the power of God. Why does he care so much. That the church is not oblivious. Or unaware. Of that power. However. Well. I think it's because.

We need the same thing. We. Struggle. Whether. Whatever dimension of ministry. That you're involved in. Whether it's a ministry at home.

Or a ministry in your community. Or whether it's a ministry here at church. Whatever that ministry is. How many times. Do we feel like that ministry. Belongs to us. Confession time.

[26 : 30] Just last night. As I was. Every Saturday. I try to just. Just come here to the church. And pray. And the struggle in my heart. Is often. Lord. I feel like I'm not doing.

What I should be doing. I feel so. Ineffective. In ministry. And as I'm praying. Through this. This prayer. I'm realizing.

That my problem. Is that I'm trying. To carry this. Burden myself. It's not. My ministry. It's his ministry. It's not done with my power.

It's done with his power. And that's our problem. We believe that ministry. Belongs to us. And we believe that ministry. Is up to us. That's not true.

It's not true. I love what Phillips Brooks says. This is one of my favorite quotes. Of all time. It says. Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks.

[27 : 26] Equal to your powers. Pray for powers. Equal to the task. The task. Sometimes seems. Insurmountable. But you have an insurmountable God.

Who provides you. Unstoppable. Unrelenting power. Plug into the supply. Draw from that power. We also know about an entrustment of spiritual gifts.

That God has not given us a ministry to do without entrusting us with gifts. The Holy Spirit gives to us. We could talk about the life mission that we've been called to. That great commission.

We could talk about the presence of God that's with us. Lo. I am with you always. Even to the end of the age. All of that entrustment. All of that stewardship has been invested and permitted to us.

And helping us to do what God has called us to do. But the way we access God's power is through prayer. We access God's power through prayer.

[28 : 27] And so that's why for the month of October we're going to invite you to participate with us in prayer. Participate with us in prayer. I want to encourage each of you.

There's a study guide out there. And we've worked hard to make this useful for your families.

There's something called a family corner. And it has really age appropriate questions that moms and dads can use for their children.

Young children and even older children. To begin conversations with your kids about the text for that day. And I found it already. It's helpful.

Been helpful for me. And I'm sure it will be a great resource for you. There are a lot of times where I'm like, what am I going to do? How do I help lead my family in the word of God? And even as a pastor I struggle with that at times.

And this may be a benefit to you. But also in the very back of your study guides. You'll see this section that has this banner as a header.

[29 : 30] And there are several things I want to encourage you to do. First is find your watch care. Find your watch care. And so we have, I've got a table in the back. The back couple of pages. And I

put every family there.

Not every name of every family member. But the husband and wife of that family unit. Okay? Find your watch care. And then once you find them, then do number two.

And that is pray for your watch care every week. I think it's going to be overwhelming to try to pray for everybody in the church through the next three months. But I know you can pray for your watch care.

Pray for them. Get to know them. Interact with them. Ask them questions about what's going on.

Pray for specific things. Pray for them. Love them in that way. Third, use the prayer prompts.

We put some prayer prompts in here as well. And here's an example. So in next week, I think it is, we're going to be covering chapter 2, verses 4 and 8. Verse 4 says, I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

[30 : 35] Verse 8 says, see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty the seat according to the human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ. And so the prayer prompt is this.

Pray for discernment against deception. What do those verses say? How can I apply those verses to my own heart and to my watch care in prayer? And then a sample prayer, Lord, help me recognize and resist persuasive words and empty philosophies that are not rooted in Christ.

Guard my heart and mind from being taken captive by lies. Just some help, some prompts. And of course, you can pray however you decide. But using the word of God to pray God's word for God's people, there's nothing more powerful than that.

Next, consider fasting. And I would encourage you to pick a day of the week, whatever that day is. Choose not to eat breakfast or lunch and instead pray during those segments of time for your family, for this church, and for your watch care and whatever else God lays on your heart.

Next is, we want to provide you some prayer card ideas. So I'm trusting and hoping that by next Sunday, I'm going to have kind of a credit card that's going to have a list of 14 different things that you can pray.

[31 : 52] And they'll just provide a help to you. You can put it in your pocket. You can put it in your wallet. You can pull it out. And that you'll be able to have some reminders. Next is, remember the acts, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication.

Next is to pray as a group. And I want to encourage, we used to have before the service, a group of individuals that would pray for the service. And I want to try to reinstitute that for the month of October.

Those of you who are interested, who get here early, you have a place to go. We'll put some prayer prompts on the table. You can either pray by yourself, those prayer prompts. You can pray with others who come.

But do this as a group. And the McEverkins on Wednesday nights have a prayer meeting at their house. I imagine you're invited as space allows. And they would love to have you there.

And finally, to join a telegram channel called the Powerhouse for Prayer. And Pastor David puts this resource out. It's an incredible resource. Also works through passages of scripture to know how to pray.

[32 : 58] And also how to pray for the body effectively. Why is that important? And I just want to bring us back to the text for a moment. Colossians chapter 1 verse 29.

Look at this. He says, For I toil. Excuse me. For this I toil. Struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and those in Laodicea.

And for all who have not seen me face to face. This is a present active struggling. A continuous struggling.

How is the Apostle Paul struggling for this church? He's not even with the church. He's in Rome. He's thousands of miles away. How is he struggling for them? I'll tell you how. He's praying for them.

He's praying for them. We kind of get our clue from Colossians chapter 4 verse 12. And Colossians 4 verse 12 says this. He says, Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you always struggling.

[34 : 04] That's our word. Struggling on behalf in his prayers that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. So if you've been frustrated about not having something to do from

our messages, no application, then guess what?

Here's some application. And I want to encourage everybody who is a member of Maranatha, everyone who is a regular attendee at Maranatha, every one of you students, you can do this. It's great to begin to build these habits of prayer. And I trust that those prayer prompts will be a benefit to you. Okay. We've talked about the struggle of prayer.

We've talked about the stewardship of prayer. And now we have to wrap up these last few quickly. Next is the scope of our ministry. The scope of our ministry. Notice this. Beginning in verse 27, it says, And he works through this and describes what that ministry looks like.

[35 : 33] What are the components of those ministries? Do you see them? That ministry of proclamation first includes warning, then includes teaching, and then includes presenting.

Each of these things that the Apostle Paul draws attention to. This word for warning is the word for admonition. It's the word to instruct. It's also used throughout the scripture to describe this teaching kind of ministry.

Proper behavior and belief. Admonition and rebuke. And you get the sense that the Apostle Paul, he's starting at ground zero. These are kind of the infant stage, as it were. He wants to warn those who are in the church.

He wants to help them at the very beginning of their infancy in Christ to know what God has called them to do. Those basic principles. And then this teaching part, which is the normal word for teaching in the New Testament, which describes this element of instruction that is taking place. So as they kind of move out of the beginning stages, the infancy stages of their salvation, they're kind of moving into adolescence. And so the Apostle Paul is teaching them and helping them in the adolescent stage of their spiritual walk.

[36 : 52] And then he wants to take it all the way to the end. He wants to take it to the point of maturity. The point of presenting them to Christ. He wants to take them from start to finish in the Christian life and help them to have everything that they need.

So he can finally present them to Christ in a way that they are complete. They are mature. They're ready. He's doing this to present them before Christ.

And notice the comprehensiveness of his audience. And I love how the NIV will translate this. It says, warning every man, teaching every man, and presenting every man perfect in Christ.

Kind of reinforces the significance of Paul has everybody in the church in mind. The Apostle Paul wants to take it from start to finish. His interest is to get them going in their spiritual walk and take them to the finish line.

And you might think, Paul, that is so unrealistic. You've got to have a better strategy, Paul. How in the world are you going to be able to pull this off? There is no way you can do this.

[38 : 04] And Paul will say, well, guess what? I'm not doing it in my strength. And that's our next point. The strength of our ministry. How does he do this?

In verse 29, he describes it. For this I toil. Struggling with all whose energy? His energy. Christ's energy. That he powerfully works within me.

Maybe you're familiar or have said this. You've seen it or said it. That you have a child. You see running around. He has all this energy.

And you say, I just want to be able to tap into a little bit of that energy. Ever thought that? Said that? And you younger people, I understand. It probably doesn't apply.

But for us older people, we kind of, that's how we feel. We just wish. Just a little bit. Just tap into a little bit of that energy. And we can maybe last the day. But guess what?

[39 : 05] We have something better than that. We have something greater than that. We have the energy of untappable power from God. I'm reminded of what Paul says in Ephesians chapter 3.

He says, Now to him who is able to do far more exceedingly than we could ever think. How? According to the power at work within us.

That kind of power. His power. Spirit power. Working in the heart and life of every true believer. So we can tap into the source of power. We can draw strength from that eternal, infinite well.

And we can draw it down and apply it to the work that God has called us to do. And we can enjoy that strengthening power. It doesn't mean we don't ever get tired, by the way.

But it does mean that by God's grace, as we tap into the power, we'll never give up. That's what the apostle Paul says. I think it's in Galatians chapter 6. It says, Don't grow weary in doing good.

[40 : 05] Because we are going to reap if we do not lose heart. Don't grow weary. Tap into power. Use his energy. And I think it's easy for us to think.

That the kind of power that is available to us here in this passage is going to be power that makes us do really amazing, big kind of things. That's kind of what we think about when we think about that kind of power.

But I want to kind of draw it down for us for a moment. Maybe the power that God has given to us is for the moment. The kind of power that's required for a mom or a dad just to keep being faithful in their ministry to their family.

Maybe it's the kind of power that's required in the workplace. And you're gritting it out because things are really hard. And there's a lot of opposition. There's a lot of conflict. There's a lot of people who are making life really hard for you.

And it's really easy to want to cut corners. And it's going to be really easy for you to want to run away. But you decide that by God's power you're going to press in. And you're going to keep representing him.

[41 : 11] And you're not going to run from trouble. You're going to keep your nose down and represent Christ faithfully. And that's the kind of power I'm talking about. The kind of power that's required moment by moment.

The everyday one step in front of the other kind of power. To do God's work. The things that he's called you to in the here and now. Moment by moment.

God gives us power for that. So when you've ever felt like you just want to throw up your hands and give up. If you've ever been there. Understand that as you obey God.

You can draw strength from God's help. From God's power. To continue to carry out the work that he's called you to do. Finally. We've talked about the struggle of our ministry. The stewardship of our ministry.

The scope of our ministry. The strength of our ministry. And finally. The center of our ministry. I was going to put that in S. But I knew that you guys would have a problem with that.

[42 : 08] The center of our ministry. And Paul says that a couple of times here in our passage. And I'm just going to want to touch on it briefly. Because we're going to be able to come back to this over and over again.

It is like the theme that runs its way through the entire letter of Colossians. Notice this. Going back to verse 27. He says, 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. Christ in you. The hope of glory. That's the center. And maybe there's someone here today.

Right now. That does not have Jesus Christ. You've never come to a place where you've recognized that you're a sinner. You recognize that because of your sin you're separated from God. But God has made a way for us. Even though we deserve to be punished. Even though we deserve the consequences of our sin. Which leads to death. Not just physical death.

[43 : 11] But separation from God forever. God sent his son Jesus to take the price on the cross. To die in our place. So that we could ask for forgiveness. We could believe in salvation.

We can enjoy the benefits of that forgiveness. And restored peace with God. Through faith in him. That's how he becomes the center. And then also.

Notice in verse 29. Actually. Chapter 2. Verse 2. It says. 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. They wanted all this knowledge. They wanted all this understanding. They wanted to fill up their own minds.

[44 : 05] With this inventory. Of mental stuff. And the apostle Paul saying. You can have all the wisdom. That you would ever want. But it's not.

In a system. It's not. In a philosophy. It's not. In a set of doctrines. It's. In. Jesus. He's the end point. He's the center.

He's everything. And because. Of being in Christ. Then. This church could begin to enjoy. The benefits of that. That we find. At the beginning of verse 2. They could have hearts.

That are encouraged. They could have. A unified. A body. That was knit together. In love. And they could enjoy. The benefits of this. Assurance. Of faith.

And understanding. They could. They could enjoy. That. That assurance. Of salvation. Because of Christ. All these benefits. By putting Christ. At the center. I'm looking forward.

[45 : 02] This. This month. To how Christ. Will. Will continue. To do that work for us. As we commit ourselves. To prayer. As we consider. As we commit ourselves.

To. Understanding. His word. And as we seek. To apply. That word. To our lives. Would you join me. In that. Venture. Let me pray.

God. Thank you for the example. Of the apostle Paul. Thank you for the reminders. This morning. Of the ministry. That we've been called to. That it's not an easy ministry. But it's a ministry.

That has purpose. And it's a ministry. That's empowered by God. To accomplish that purpose. So that we can be. Steadfast. In a movable. Always abounding. In the work of the Lord.

Knowing that our labor. In the Lord. Is never in vain. Lord help us. Help us. To have those kinds of lives. That are applying ourselves. To the labors.

[46 : 00] And ministries. You put in front of us. So we can look back. On our life. Without regret. In Jesus name. Amen. God bless you. Have a great week. God bless you.

Thank you.