

# To Strive and To Serve

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 July 2023

Preacher: Evan George

[ 0 : 00 ] Two topics we mention frequently tonight, we'll discuss them in their suffering and striving.

! And so to begin, I wanted to ask you a few questions around these two topics.! First around suffering.! Is it possible to rejoice in suffering?

Is it possible to rejoice in suffering? And if yes, I heard some yeses, and I'm pleased that I heard some yeses. Why? Certainly we've all experienced suffering at some level, and by definition, suffering is not pleasurable.

Like, it's not something that we are eager for. And striving. What about striving? What is worth striving for? For what should we tirelessly and with great effort labor to accomplish or achieve? Each of us is striving for something. For what should we strive? Tonight we will continue our journey through Colossians.

[ 1 : 16 ] We'll be in Colossians chapter 1, starting in verse 24, and continuing on through chapter 2, verse 5, if you want to turn there now. If you don't have a Bible, there's Bibles in the pews, and I invite you to open up a copy of God's word as we begin to walk through it.

Colossians chapter 1, verse 24 is where I'll start. This is the word of the Lord. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am 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 your sake. 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. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

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 for those at Laodicea.

[ 2 : 37 ] And for all those, and for all who have not seen me face to face, 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 things, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

For though I'm absent in the body, yet I am with you in spirit. Rejoicing to see your good order in the firmness of your faith in Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we confess that we need you. We need your son. We need your spirit. Lord, help us tonight as we walk through your word to see you and your goodness.

Your grace. Father, protect me from air. And would you be high and lifted up. In your son's name we pray. Amen.

[ 3 : 43 ] Now Paul here is writing to the church at Colossae. And this is a church that he's never visited, he's never been to. It's located in modern day Turkey. And this church is comprised of Jews and Gentiles.

So Jews and then everyone else. People who are not ethnically Jewish, which would be Greeks and Romans. Paul did not plant this church, but he writes to them to tell them in short that Christ is all.

That Christ is the son of God. That he is God. That he has all authority. And is everything they could ever need or want. He refutes false teaching. All the false teachings that are present.

And in short says Christ is all. Christ is all that you need. Thus far in the letter, Paul has greeted them. He's told them that in Christ Christians have everything they need to grow and bear fruit.

He's also told them that Jesus is God. And Lord of all. Here now Paul turns to describe his own ministry. For the church at large, globally.

[ 4 : 44 ] And for the people, specifically the Colossians. And so our main idea for tonight is this. Christians serve and strive for the sake of Christ and his church.

Christians serve and strive for the sake of Christ and his church. We will see that two actions characterize Paul's ministry. And they should characterize our ministry as well.

We know that in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Paul urges us to be imitators of him as he imitates Christ. And so we'll see that tonight. So our two points will be this. First, Paul's suffering.

Or sorry, Paul's serving with suffering. Paul's serving with suffering. And number two, Paul's striving for maturity. So let's dive in.

So our first point, Paul's serving with suffering. This will be verses 24 through 27. Beginning in verse 24. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.

[ 5 : 42 ] And in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body. That is, the church. Now to what sufferings would Paul be referring to here?

Well, as Paul is writing this letter, he sits under house arrest in Rome for preaching Christ as the risen Lord. He cannot come and go freely as he pleases.

He cannot visit in-person churches and continue missionary journeys. And he, in fact, documents his sufferings a few years before Colossians was written when he writes to the Corinthians.

This is 2 Corinthians 6. He tells us that as a servant of God, he experienced afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, and hunger.

He continues in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 to say this. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.

[ 6 : 41 ] Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys in danger from rivers, robbers, his own people, the Gentiles.

Danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers. 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 and my anxiety for all the churches. So these are the sufferings that Paul is rejoicing in.

This list is neither short in length nor light in severity. And I just want to pause for a moment and say that we too are certainly suffering in different ways at some level.

And Christ knows your suffering, dear saint. Christ knows where you are as you sit here. Christ is not forgotten. You've not escaped the grasp of his hand.

[ 7 : 47 ] You're still perfectly within his fold exactly as he wills. So know that he's present in your suffering. But let's continue.

How can Paul rejoice in these circumstances? Rejoice in these sufferings? He said he's joyful, he's glad, he's not ashamed. Well, as we continue to read, I think it will become apparent in his logic.

But to set it clearly, Paul can rejoice in his circumstances, in his suffering, because God is using Paul's sufferings to get the gospel to others, to extend the gospel to others, to advance the gospel.

And so how can the Colossians, and by extension, how can we rejoice when we face sufferings like this for the sake of others? Because we know that Christ is using it to get his gospel to them.

And here's what Paul says in Philippians chapter 1, verses 12 through 15. I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest, that my imprisonment is for Christ.

[ 9 : 01 ] Now certainly there are many reasons we can rejoice in our sufferings. We know Matthew chapter 5, verse 12 tells us that there's a reward that awaits us as we suffer.

And in our sufferings, we also know that God uses them for our holiness to make us look more and more like Christ, the process of sanctification. Romans chapter 8, verse 29 tells us that.

For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so conformed to be like his Son, to be holy like his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And there are other reasons we can rejoice in suffering, but specifically here, what I think Paul is telling us is, Paul is rejoicing in his sufferings because God is using these sufferings to get the gospel to others, and for what that will eventually produce.

And so likewise, we can rejoice in our sufferings, as God uses them to spread the gospel message. For we know that we suffer. Paul tells us this in 2 Timothy chapter 3, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted.

[10:09] All who desire to live a godly life will suffer. Now, we do not seek suffering. Suffering is not our goal. Our goal is to know and love and enjoy and reflect something of God.

To know and love God. And as we do that, sufferings come. Therefore, when sufferings come, when hardships come, for Christ's sake and for the sake of his church, we do not avoid them. We endure them and we rejoice. We have reason to rejoice. We should rejoice. We must rejoice. If you're joining in God's mission, you will experience some measure of suffering or pain. This is what it means to join him in his mission. This is what it means to join him in the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth. This may be as simple as some relational awkwardness as you share the gospel with someone.

But it could mean, like Paul, that you give up your life. We know from church history that Paul would be martyred outside the walls of Rome. And so that suffering has a wide scale.

[11:24] But when that suffering comes, we can endure and we can rejoice. So therefore, as we are proclaiming Christ Jesus as the risen Lord in our families, in our communities, in our workplaces, in our schools, and to the ends of the earth, we will experience similar persecutions and sufferings like Paul, and we can rejoice like Paul.

And so a question for us to reflect on is this. As I serve Christ and his church, am I rejoicing in my sufferings?

Why or why not? As I serve Christ and his church, am I rejoicing in my sufferings? Why or why not? Here, if we look back at verse 24, I'll read it again.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. For the sake of his body, that is, the church. Now Paul says, I'm filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

What are you saying here, Paul? Are you saying that there's something insufficient about Christ's sufferings? Is there something left? Did he not accomplish it all? Was his sacrificial life and death not sufficient to ransom us?

[12:41] Absolutely not. The Bible is clear, and Paul is clear, that Jesus' sacrificial life and death are completely sufficient. For Paul, for the Colossians, for you, for me.

It's not Jesus' sacrifice plus something else. It's him and him alone. Not any amount of works that I can do, not any amount of suffering I can experience. It's Christ.

Consider Romans 3, verses 23 through 25. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

Now, God put forth as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. Propitiation. Full, satisfying payment is what that means. Absolutely nothing left. Debt completely paid.

And even earlier in Colossians 1, verses 21 through 22, Paul says this, And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

[13:57] So he is now reconciled. There in verse 22, he is now reconciled. So we've been reconciled. It's not partially reconciled or will be reconciled with this plus something else.

So what I think Paul is getting at here is this, this lacking, him filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the church. Jesus said that there would be suffering, that his people would suffer for his name and for the gospel.

And I think Paul is experiencing this necessary suffering as the gospel is spread to these people. Acts chapter 9, verses 15 and 16 say this, The Lord said to him, Go for he, speaking of Paul, go for Paul, he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. Now picking up in verse 25 there, or the end of verse 24, the church, end of verse 25, 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, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints.

Paul is a minister and that word minister is diakonos, which means servant, literally means servant. And this is the same word that we would get, the word deacon. So to deacon means to serve.

[ 15 : 26 ] And so deacons in the church, that's a church office of people who get to serve the body. Now this isn't saying that Paul is fulfilling that church office, but it is saying that he is a servant of Christ.

Paul is a servant of God and of the church. And with a servant comes this posture of lowliness, of humility, of service. And we too, likewise, are servants.

First Peter chapter two, verse 16 tells us this, live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover up for evil, but living as servants of God.

So each of us, like Paul, are also servants of God. And as servants, we are not bench warmers. Everybody who's a servant gets to play.

There's no such thing as an inactive or a non-playing servant. Now how did Paul become this servant? Well, he received this duty, this responsibility from God, as we see there.

[ 16 : 32 ] Verse 25, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God. So it was from God, given to Paul. Why? For them, for you. And why was this?

Continuing on. To make the word of God fully known. The mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints. See, in the Old Testament, the Lord spoke of one who would come, who would be a conquering king, who would save and redeem and ransom his people. And not only the Jewish people, but we see scriptures that let us know that God's plan is not just for this one people, but for the entire earth, for all nations. But the scripture also speaks of a suffering servant who would come.

And so, what this would look like, how this king would come, and how all this would fit together, these pieces were a mystery. They were unknown. Not a mystery like eerie or spooky or scary, but a mystery in terms of being secret and unknown.

But here we see that this mystery, this secret, has now been made known. It has been revealed to the saints, to all Christians, to Paul, to them, to us. We know that God is delivering his people, saving them, and making them both Jews and Gentiles into one redeemed people, co-heirs with Christ through his son Jesus.

[ 17 : 58 ] That's why earlier we see Jesus speak of his body, one body, that we're brought into unity, into fellowship with him. And so, if you're not a Christian and you're here, we're so thankful that you're here.

You've heard me mention a few different things about Jesus and about a gospel, about some, gospel means good news and we're speaking of a good news, but in terms of who this Jesus is and what does it matter and how does this gospel, how do all these things fit together in the Christian faith?

But, so you may be asking, how do all these things fit together? And the basis of the Christian faith is this, that God created everything that we see. He created you, he created me and this creation was good.

But humans, we sinned, we rejected God, we disobeyed God, we wanted to be our own gods, do our own things, we wanted to serve ourselves.

Now the Bible tells us that the due penalty for sin is death, that because of our sin, because we've rejected a perfect, good, holy God, we deserve death.

[ 19 : 06 ] But God, in his great love, sent his son Jesus, who came and lived a perfect life in complete obedience to the Father, glorifying the Father, delighting the Father, a life that we have not lived, cannot live.

And then Jesus died the death that we deserve. So he died on a cross in our place. that's where we deserve to be for our sin.

So that if we believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, trusting and believing him as Lord and Savior, that his sacrifice cleanses us and forgives us of our sin, that we will be reconciled to him.

That God's righteous and just wrath have been laid on his shoulders and not ours. So Jesus was murdered on a cross, he was buried, and he was raised to life three days later, proving that he is the Son of God, that he did conquer sin and death.

And now he sits at the right hand of God, where one day he will return to judge the living and the dead. And those who know him, who love him, who believe in him, who have been saved by him, those whose sins are forgiven on his account.

[ 20 : 28 ] When he comes, we, those people, will get to know and love and worship and enjoy him forever without bound. But for those who do not know him, the debt will be due.

And those will pay for their sins. And so this is, this is the gospel, this is the good news, what we mean.

That it's good news that sinners like us, like me, like you, can be forgiven of our sins. And this is the glorious gospel which was entrusted and revealed to Paul in the Colossians and has also been revealed to us.

And we, like Paul, are also called to take this gospel to others. And so I'd ask you, who is, who is someone that you can share this gospel with? A family member maybe?

A spouse? A mother? A father? A son? A daughter? A parent? A grandparent? A grandson? A granddaughter? An aunt? Maybe a neighbor or a friend or a classmate?

[ 21 : 37 ] A teammate? A co-worker? Who is someone that you can share the gospel with? Who can we as a church collectively share this gospel with?

I was excited when I was thinking about this question because all these declarations around me are one of the ways that, are evidence of what we are trying to do as a church to share this gospel. Tomorrow morning, we expect over a hundred children to show up in this very room where we are excited to get to share with them this gospel. Praise God.

So looking back to verse 27, to them, that being the saints, so God's people, 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.

One commentator said this, God himself in the person of Christ will be directly and personally present in the lives of his people and his presence assures them a future life with him when he returns.

[ 22 : 43 ] And if we even look back up at Colossians 1:19, Paul says, for in him, speaking of Jesus, in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

And so we see that as God was pleased to dwell in Jesus, so also Jesus is pleased to dwell in us through his Holy Spirit which is wow.

The God of the universe, the Lord of all has made himself available and present in my life, in our lives as believers, in our sinful broken lives.

How great a Savior we have. For this Savior and his people, Paul serves to take the gospel to others and he rejoices as he endures that cost, his suffering.

So now we'll move to point two, Paul's striving for maturity. Paul's striving for maturity, verses 28, chapter 1, verse 28 through chapter 2, verse 5.

[ 23 : 50 ] Looking at verse 28, him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. So this Christ, this Jesus is who Paul declares to others.

And how does Paul go about proclaiming this Jesus? By warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom. So warning, counseling others in light of Christ, cautioning them in light of Christ, as well as teaching.

So informing, instructing, showing them how to follow Christ, who Christ is and how to follow him, how to live in light of the gospel. So warning and teaching.

Both of these done in wisdom, in the Lord's wisdom, in knowledge and understanding and sound judgment. Which, as you think about it, sounds like we could summarize that as discipleship.

Like when we seek to make disciples, this is what we're seeking to do. And this is how Paul proclaims this message. So we likewise should share the gospel in this way, warning others and teaching others about Christ.

[ 24 : 52 ] What it means to know him and what awaits those who do not. Now we see these three different elements and this week I had the great privilege to feed my son macaroni and cheese.

And I was doing something, Hannah was making the mac and cheese and Luke was ready for the mac and cheese. Hannah had to step out of the house for something and she said, hey, the mac and cheese is on the stove, will you give it to Luke?

So I go, put the noodles on his nice Eddie Bauer high chair that was given to us by the McNeils, which he loves. And he's just going to town as much as he can, as fast as he can.

And it's like, okay, this is great, yeah. So Hannah comes back a little bit later, she walks in, she has kind of this confused look on her face and she looks at the high chair where Luke's food is and then she looks at Luke and then she looks at me and then she looks back and then she looks at me and then she kind of goes back and forth with this look of confusion and she says, Evan, were you going

to put the cheese sauce on the mac and cheese?

And it was at that moment that I realized I had just given my son plain noodles. So he got the macaroni, he did not get the cheese. Now I really don't know how I missed that because like this particular type of mac and cheese has like this yellowish orange color and pasta noodles don't look yellowish orange.

[ 26 : 25 ] But nonetheless, in Luke's mac and cheese there was a missing ingredient. Not everything was there. And so as we proclaim Christ we want to make sure that the whole message is there.

We want to make sure that we don't leave anything out and just give a portion or a part. We want to warn and to teach in God's wisdom. And so a question for us is as we proclaim Christ as we proclaim Christ are we tempted to leave something out?

Are we tempted to only proclaim one part and not the whole message? And if so why?

as we continue here you'll notice that in this verse Paul mentions everyone three times.

So who is he proclaiming Christ to? Who does he warn? Who does he teach? Who does he aim to present blameless? Everyone. He mentions that three times for emphasis.

[ 27 : 30 ] So who is everyone? Well everyone is everyone. old young rich poor male female Jew Gentile liked unliked honored dishonored those who are gifted physically intellectually or in some skilled way and those who are not everyone.

Those who look like Paul and those who do not. And notice also in this verse that Paul this is the first time that Paul uses the word we instead of I. Now this we not only includes Paul's co-laborers but also the Colossians and I think by extension us.

They get the responsibility and we too get the joy and the responsibility to proclaim Jesus to everyone. But also look at what is the end goal of Paul's proclamation.

Presenting people who are mature in Christ Christ. Now Pastor Mike got to talk about this a little bit today but this maturation this being mature in Christ we can think of this as the process of sanctification so this already but not yet.

As we are made holy positionally but Christ is working and making us more and more like himself as we walk. So this is the process of sanctification being made more and more like Christ.

[ 28 : 55 ] And we know that as we walk with Christ he makes us look more like him. He progressively prunes and removes that which he does not delight in that which does not honor him that he does not like and he cultivates within us that which he does.

And this maturation will be complete when Christ returns and when we are perfected when we no longer experience sin and its effects the brokenness the pain when we no longer have our sinful nature.

If we look at Colossians chapter 1 verse 22 it says Jesus is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

So Paul's aim to present them as mature in Christ and Christ's aim to present them holy and blameless and above reproach before him. So their aims are the same, right?

Both of them are aiming at our holiness. By holy Paul means set apart distinct different set apart from the common and wholly devoted to God specially set apart for God being made perfectly clean and righteous by God and wholly devoted to him.

[ 30 : 14 ] And one commentator put it like this, whenever we reach this holiness when we are made perfect perfectly holy, when that is realized we will glorify God fully as he desires and we will be utterly and completely satisfied in him.

So this is Christ's aim, this is Paul's aim, and I think you can see the step of this should be our aim as well. And so some questions for us as we think about this, one, do I have a desire to be mature in Christ, to look more and more like Christ?

Or am I happy with where I am now? Am I happy with whatever percentage of Christ and whatever percentage of heaven? And secondly, do I want to help others mature as believers?

Do I want to help others to be mature in Christ? Is this what I strive for? This is what Paul is striving for. there are many people who want to make followers, just not followers of Jesus.

So am I striving for disciples of Christ or disciples of Evan? If we continue on in verse 29, for this I toil, Paul says, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

[ 31 : 45 ] For this Paul toils to present everyone maturing Christ. And so, what does this toiling look like? Well, struggling with all his energy. Wait, whose energy?

Paul's energy? No, Christ's energy. His energy, Christ's energy that Christ powerfully works within Paul. What is the secret to Paul's labor, the secret to Paul's toiling?

Christ's powerfully, working within Paul. It's not a special ability, it's not giftedness, it's not anything else that Paul would have possessed. It's Christ working in Paul.

I recently saw a commercial from 1994, and it was of the Energizer Bunny. You might remember the Energizer Bunny.

I think they still have some commercials on today, but Energizer, it's a company that makes batteries. You can think of the AA batteries. In this commercial, you have Darth Vader with his lightsaber, and you have the Energizer Bunny, which is a bunny that runs on battery power, and he has a bass drum, so he just goes back and forth, around and around, hitting this bass drum.

[ 33 : 00 ] In the commercial, Darth Vader has the lightsaber, and he's ... I didn't really show somebody else, so he had the lightsaber out. I'm not sure if it was to attack the Energizer Bunny, but nonetheless, he has his lightsaber out and intends to use it, and then all of a sudden, his lightsaber goes out, and you see him open up the lightsaber, and it has this other brand of batteries that's not Energizer, and here, all of a sudden, to end, you see the Energizer Bunny just zoom right on past him and keep on going.

Energizer, in the ad, says that with their batteries, you go farther, you go longer, you go better, that nothing outlasts the Energizer battery, and by extension, this bunny.

And as we think about laboring in our energy versus Christ's energy, I think it looks a little bit like that, but on a grander scale. So, what we have to realize about our energy is that we do not possess the necessary power or the necessary energy to accomplish that which Christ has called us to.

We don't have that power or that energy to save ourselves from our sins. We don't have that power or energy to walk in the good works which he has called us. My self battery is insufficient.

I need a better source of energy, and that's Christ. He is an infinitely better source of energy, source of strength. And this is his amazing offer that he himself, the God man, would work his own powerful energy in us.

[ 34 : 43 ] We labor, we toil, we strive, depending on him and trusting him to bring about the good works that he has promised. We think of Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which he prepared that we would walk in them.

We labor in Christ's strength, trusting him to be faithful to what he's promised. Trusting that his supernatural, divine, otherworldly, infinite energy would work as he pleases.

And like the Energizer Bunny, I think we'll go a lot farther than anyone else. And I think this is particularly helpful for us as we are about to walk into a vacation Bible school camp week.

I don't know about you, but at this very moment, I'm not extremely well rested. Some of you may not be either. But we can trust, certainly want to steward our bodies well and get rest and eat things and consume things that are good for our body that will help steward our bodies well for energy.

But at the same time, we trust that God is working his energy in us. And so for those who, as we go in labor this week, whether it's for vacation Bible school or for whatever other things the Lord has called you, labor in his strength this week.

[ 36 : 10 ] Let's turn to Colossians 2, verse 1. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all those who have not seen me face to face, 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.

I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments, for though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

So Paul is struggling, he's striving here to strengthen the Colossians and the Laodiceans, so this is another group of people that are neighboring and right next to the city of Colossae.

So he's striving to strengthen them and two things he's after, he wants their hearts to be encouraged, knit together in love, so he wants them strengthened, uplifted, and being knit together in love, unified, unity within the church, within Christ, a oneness.

And too he wants for them to reach the full assurance of understanding and knowledge of God's mystery, which is Jesus. Paul wants them to know Christ and that which is found in him, the treasures of all knowledge and wisdom.

[ 37 : 35 ] Jesus personifies these, Jesus alone holds perfect knowledge and wisdom, they come from him, Proverbs 2.6 says, for the Lord gives wisdom and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

He is the originator of these things. Now why does Paul tell them this? Specifically so that no one else can delude them.

No false teachers, no false gospel, no additions to the gospel, no subtractions, so that nothing can mislead them to believe something other than the true gospel. He wants them to know that they do not need anything other than Christ.

And just as that is true for the Colossians, that is true for us today. We need nothing other than Christ. We don't need any other sort of knowledge or understanding from any other source of this world apart from Christ.

We go to him for these, not false God or false spiritual practices. Others will come to you with persuasive and seemingly reasonable false teachings just as they came for the Colossians.

[ 38 : 46 ] And so when you get there, don't swerve from the gospel. that you first believed. Paul could not be with them in person because he was under house arrest, yet he was with them in spirit.

He was supporting them from afar. He was serving, suffering, stewarding the gospel, striving for them, wanting to strengthen them. And we see that Paul is confident that they will remain steady in Christ because of Christ.

Paul strives for everyone to be mature in Christ. And so as we conclude, know that Paul did serve Christ well.

He did endure suffering. He did strive for others to be mature in Christ. He did strive for others to strengthen the church. He serves as a positive example for us to follow because he follows Christ. Ultimately, Jesus is our Lord in the sacrificial service of our Lord who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as ransom for many. that saves us.

[ 39 : 54 ] He saves us. He holds us fast. He brings us to maturity. So friend, know that as you strive, as you toil, as we walk day in and day out in whatever season you're in, in great suffering now and little suffering, you can be certainly walking faithfully and not experiencing suffering right now.

But as we walk faithfully, as we try to live godly lives, we will experience suffering. But as we endure those, whether it's in grade school or as we deal with the realities that, yeah, whether we deal with health complications or difficult situations in school or in work, in our families, in our marriages, know that Christ is present, Christ is Lord in that, and we have reason to rejoice.

So, friends, trust in Christ, serve him, endure and rejoice in suffering, pursue maturity, strengthen others, all in complete and utter dependence on him.

Christ, Jesus, he is worthy of our suffering. let's pray. Father, help us to see your goodness, your beauty.

Help us to see how you are caring for us right now in each of our situations. Move our hearts to delight in serving and striving as you've called us.

[ 41 : 33 ] Make much of your son, Jesus, in our lives and particularly as our church gets to serve and strive this week with Vacation Bible School and in other coming weeks with Children's Camp and the various other ministries.

God, we pray that you would strengthen us, God, that you would work powerfully through us, that your good news would be proclaimed, and Jesus, that you would be glorified, that our hearts would be turned in love and adoration and enjoyment in you.

It's Christ's name we pray, amen. Thank you.