

A Portrait of Paul: Identifying a True Minister of Christ

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I. The Joy of Paul's Ministry

A. Proof text.

1. *[Colossians 1:24]- Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*

B. The Nature of Paul's Suffering.

1. Imprisonment in Rome for preaching the Gospel to the gentiles.
 - a. *[Colossians 4:10,18]- Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.*
2. Sufferings associated with being a minister of Jesus Christ.
 - a. The evil speech of many.
 - 1.) *[Luke 6:26]- Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*
 - b. Paul's ministry involved a declaration of suffering.
 - 1.) *[Acts 9:16]- For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*
 - c. In union with Christ in suffering.
 - 1.) *[John 15:20]- Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*
 - 2.) *[2 Timothy 3:12]- Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*
 - d. In his physical body.
 - 1.) *[2 Corinthians 11:23-27]- Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*
 - e. From his spiritual children.
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 4:15]- For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*
 - 2.) *[2 Corinthians 12:15]- And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*
 - f. From false teachers.
 - 1.) *[Philippians 1:15-16,18]- Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*
 - g. From the condition of lost.

- 1.) *[Romans 9:1-3]- I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*
 - 2.) *[Luke 13:34-35]- O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*
 - 3.) *[Philippians 3:18-19]- (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*
 - 4.) *[Psalm 2:2]- The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,*
- h. In the care of the body of Christ.
- 1.) *[2 Corinthians 11:28]- Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*
3. Our example of the heart of Christ.
- a. His absolute concern matched by absolute wisdom and power.
 - b. He never ceases to pray for us with perfect insight and awareness.
 - c. He offers up perfectly framed petitions to His Heavenly Father.
 - d. He is the confidence of all undershepherds.
- 1.) *[John 10:28-30]- And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.*
4. The joy associated with suffering.
- a. *[Acts 5:40-41]- And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*
 - b. *[1 Peter 4:12-13]- Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*
- C. The Nature of Paul's Joy.
1. Suffering for righteousness sake.
 - a. Jailed with Silas for casting out demon and spirit of divination from a slave girl.
 - b. Judgment was severe beating, stripes, and imprisonment.
 - 1.) *[Acts 16:23]- And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:*
 2. Paul's disposition in suffering.
 - a. They prayed and sang and the other prisoners overheard them.
 - 1.) *[Acts 16:25]- And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*
 - 2.) He did not succumb to temptation in trial.
 - 3.) He did not doubt or indict God.

- 4.) *“Any man can sing when the prison doors are open and he is set free. The Christian’s soul sings in prison.”* – G. Campbell Morgan
 - 5.) *“Nothing the limb feels in stocks when the mind is in heaven.”*
 - 6.) **[1 Corinthians 11:1]- Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.**
 - 7.) **[2 Corinthians 12:7-10]- And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.**
- b. Trust in sufficiency of God’s grace and manifestation of Christ’s strength in his weakness.
 - 1.) Paul is confident that *‘Christ’s ocean of grace is sufficient to fill the teaspoon of his human need.’* – Charles H. Spurgeon
 - 2.) **[2 Corinthians 12:9]- And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**
3. Paul taking pleasure in his infirmities and not in removing them.
 - a. His great joy in knowledge that when he was weak he is strong in Christ.
 - b. **[Acts 26:25]- But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.**
 - c. **[Philippians 2:12-18]- Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.**
 - d. **[Romans 8:28]- And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**
 4. Paul’s joy is bound up in the God of all grace who saved him.
 - a. **[Philippians 4:10-14]- But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.**
 - b. **[Romans 15:13]- Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.**
 5. Paul’s joy was supernatural, produced by the Holy Spirit.
 - a. **[Galatians 5:22-23]- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**

D. Applications

1. Fellow Christian.

- a. What kind of man do you want as an undershepherd?
 - 1.) Paul's thoughts and emotions were anchored in Christ and His Truth.
 - 2.) One who embraces Paul's attitude towards suffering for Christ's sake.
 - a.) He cannot be a faithful minister if he will sacrifice to avoid pains and persecutions from within and without the church.
 - 3.) Filled with stable joy rooted in the person and work of the Savior.
 - a.) Their joy is the joy of serving Christ and His church in fair and foul weather.
 - 4.) Character glories in tribulation and rejoice in suffering.
 - a.) *[Romans 5:3-4]- And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*
 - b.) *[1 Corinthians 10:13]- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*
 - c.) *[Psalm 62:8]- Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.*
 - 5.) His response to trial and distress.
 - a.) *[Psalm 119:71]- It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*
 - b.) *[Genesis 4:13]- And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.*
 - b. Are you some of the cause of his grief and trials.
 - 1.) *[Hebrews 13:17]- Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*
2. Fellow Pastor.
- a. Are you ready to suffer?
 - 1.) *[2 Timothy 3:12]- Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*
 - b. There will be profound burdens of the soul.
 - 1.) The more you love your people.
 - a.) The more their pains and grief become yours.
 - b.) The more their sins and struggles will trouble you.
 - c.) The more you'll pray for and visit them.
 - d.) The more constrained you be to address their sins and struggles graciously and tenderly.
 - 2.) The more zealous you'll be for His Glory and concerned for His honor.
 - a.) You will be grieved over false teachers.
 - b.) You will be grieved when true saints wander from Him.
 - c.) When He is unloved and disregarded.
 - d.) When His truth is denied, His worship is tainted, His church assaulted, and His Person dishonored.
 - 3.) You will have zeal thrown back in your face.
 - a.) Those who will not receive you.
 - b.) Those who will resist or ignore you.
 - c.) You will be called too old or behind the times.

- d.) Those who regardless of gifts and graces will seek prominence.
- e.) Those who will want to lead but not serve.
- f.) Those angered when called to repentance or reformation.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 119:59]- I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*
- 4.) You may find hurting sheep so maddened with pain, worry and grief.
 - a.) Your probing fingers will find old wounds, breaks, diseases, or afflictions.
 - b.) You may find scars of false teaching.
- 5.) You will seek to advance the cause of truth and call the church back to the old paths.
 - a.) *[Jeremiah 6:16]- Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.*
 - b.) The example of Jonathan Edwards in refusing the Lord's Table to professing Christians whose lives fall short of their profession.
- c. The joy in difficulty.
 - 1.) *[2 Corinthians 6:10]- As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*
 - 2.) *[Romans 8:18]- For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*
 - 3.) *[1 Thessalonians 1:6]- And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.*
- d. Matters that should drive us to search our hearts.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 139:23-24]- Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*
 - 2.) *[2 Corinthians 4:16-17]- For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*
 - 3.) *[2 Timothy 2:12]- If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:*
 - 4.) *[Romans 8:17]- And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*
 - 5.) *[Philippians 4:4]- Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.*
- e. The joy of the faithful pastor is centered in Christ.
 - 1.) If the Master is preached, exalted, known, and glorified, then the servant is more than content.
 - 2.) We will suffer, but when we do we must turn to Christ Jesus and make our complaints known to Him.
 - 3.) His eye is set upon His people.
 - 4.) His heart is entirely for us.
 - 5.) His own hand will bring Him- and us to victory.

II. The Focus of Paul's Ministry

A. Proof text.

1. *[Colossians 1:24]- Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*
2. *The people are not for the minister, but the minister is for the people; and he is to lose himself in their service and for their people. – William M. Taylor*

B. The Problem of Selfishness.

1. We are full of selfishness.
 - a. Caring unduly or supremely for oneself.
 - b. Fixing the eye on one's own comforts and advantage.
2. The world is full of selfishness.
3. When a minister is full of selfishness.
 - a. *[John 10:12-13]- But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*

C. The Principle of Selflessness.

1. The example and teaching of Jesus.
 - a. *[Matthew 20:25-28]- But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*
 - b. *[Mark 10:45]- For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*
 - c. *[John 13:12-17]- So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*
 - d. *[John 6:38]- For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*
 - e. *[Romans 15:3]- For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*
 - f. *[2 Corinthians 8:9]- For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*
 - g. *[Mark 8:34-35]- And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.*
2. The example and teaching of Paul.
 - a. On behalf of you all.
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:18-24]- And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and*

fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

2.) *[Colossians 2:11-13]- In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;*

b. The vital union that exists between the Head of the church and His body

1.) *[Colossians 2:8-18]- Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,*

2.) *[2 Corinthians 12:14]- Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.*

D. The Practice of Selflessness.

1. Paul's characteristic attitude.

- a. Self-denial.
- b. Christ obeying.
- c. Church serving.

2. Examples of Paul's selflessness.

a. Paul's prayers overflowed with thanksgiving.

1.) *[Romans 1:8-10]- First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*

2.) *[Colossians 1:3]- We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,*

3.) *[Ephesians 1:16]- Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;*

4.) *[Philippians 1:4]- Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,*

5.) *[Colossians 1:9]- For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*

- 6.) *[1 Thessalonians 1:2]- We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;*
 - 7.) *[2 Thessalonians 1:3,11]- We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:*
 - 8.) *[Philemon 1:4]- I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,*
- b. Paul unashamed to express love for God's people.
- 1.) *[2 Corinthians 2:4]- For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.*
 - 2.) *[Colossians 2:1]- For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;*
- c. Paul's willingness to endure sufferings for sake of the church.
- 1.) *[2 Corinthians 1:6]- And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*
 - 2.) *[Ephesians 3:1-2,13]- For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*
- d. Paul's willingness to deny himself.
- 1.) *[1 Corinthians 9:19-23]- For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*
 - 2.) *[1 Corinthians 10:33]- Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*
- e. Paul's life labors were directed toward God's people; his gifts, graces, blessings invested.
- 1.) *[2 Corinthians 1:6]- And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*
 - 2.) *[1 Thessalonians 2:8]- So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*
 - 3.) *[2 Corinthians 5:13]- For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.*
- f. One of Paul's highest concerns was present and ultimate salvation of the people of God.
- 1.) *[1 Thessalonians 2:19-20]- For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.*
 - 2.) *[1 Thessalonians 3:7-9]- Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For*

what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

- 3.) *[2 Timothy 2:10]- Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*
- g. Some of Paul's deepest desires and longings were prompted by the state of the church.
- 1.) *[2 Corinthians 11:2,22-28]- For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*
 - 2.) *[2 Corinthians 11:22-28]- Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*
 - 3.) *[Romans 1:11-12]- For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*
 - 4.) *[Galatians 4:11]- I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.*
 - 5.) *[1 Thessalonians 2:19-20]- For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.*
- h. Paul felt and acted like a godly parent towards the church.
- 1.) *[Galatians 4:19]- My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,*
 - 2.) *[1 Thessalonians 2:7-12]- But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*
- i. Paul's closest and most commended companions were of the same mind and heart.
- 1.) *[Philippians 2:19-20,26]- But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.*
 - 2.) *[Colossians 4:12-13]- Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.*
 - 3.) *[2 Corinthians 8:16]- But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.*
- j. Paul modeled an attitude that should characterize every believer.

- 1.) *[1 Corinthians 13:5]- Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*
 - 2.) *[Philippians 2:3-4]- Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*
- k. Paul's selfless service to the church.
- 1.) *[Philippians 2:21]- For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*
 - 2.) *[Matthew 22:39]- And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*
 - 3.) *[Galatians 6:10]- As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*
 - 4.) *[Acts 20:17-38]- And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the LORD with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.*
 - 5.) *[Philippians 2:17]- Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*
 - 6.) *"The whole of our ministry must be carried on in a tender love to our people. We must let them see that nothing pleaseth us but what profiteth them; and that what doeth them good doeth us good; and that nothing troubleth us more than their hurts." – Richard Baxter The Reformed Pastor*
- l. Paul's natural and supernatural changes.
- 1.) *[1 Timothy 1:13]- Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*

- 2.) *[Galatians 1:13-16]- For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:*
 - 3.) *[Galatians 2:20]- I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*
 - 4.) *"Self love prompteth us merely to seek our own things, but charity (love) seeketh the profit of others. It doth not drive on a self-seeking trade, or mind these things which make for our own advantage, but the welfare of others, and is as sensible and zealous for other men's good as of it's own."* – Thomas Manton
- m. Paul's fundamental perception of himself was rooted in the realities of his redemption.
- 1.) *[2 Corinthians 4:5]- For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*
 - 2.) A preacher is simply bringing to bear Christ's rule in Christ's church.
 - a.) *[2 Timothy 2:16-17]- But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;*
 - b.) *[2 Corinthians 12:15]- And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*
 - 3.) The selfless love and concern will sustain service even in the face of resistance and unwillingness to receive it.
 - 4.) Nothing but the grace of God in Christ can breed this sacrificial and servile love for the church and keep it alive.
 - a.) *[Galatians 5:16-26]- This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*
 - 5.) Paul relies on a filling with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and understanding.
 - a.) *[Colossians 1:9-11]- For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;*

E. Application

1. Fellow Christian.
 - a. Consider the degree of selflessness that a pastor demonstrates.
 - b. Consider your willingness to hear from your pastor the unpleasant things like admonitions, corrections, and rebukes.
 - c. Continually pray for your pastor that he may know and feel the privilege and honor of serving Christ's church.
 - d. Selfless attitudes are not restricted to your pastors but urged upon every child of God.
 - 1.) ***[Philippians 2:3-8]- Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.***

2. Fellow Pastor.
 - a. We must ask ourselves the hard and pointed questions.
 - b. Remember that suffering for the sake of Christ's church is not a romantic theory.
 - c. We will not be able to ground our ministries 'for you' until all our being and doing is grounded first in 'for Him'.
 - 1.) To serve the members is to serve the Head.
 - d. We must closely examine our own hearts and discern our own likeness to Jesus.
 - 1.) ***[Matthew 20:28]- Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.***
 - e. Paul commands us as Christians to not seek his own.
 - 1.) ***[1 Corinthians 10:24]- Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.***

III. The Hardships of Paul's Ministry

A. Proof texts.

1. ***[Colossians 1:24-25]- Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;***
2. *"Though millions of precious saints have shed their blood for Christ, whose souls are now crying under the altar, How Long, Lord, how long! Yet there are many more coming on behind in the same path of persecution, and much Christian blood must be shed, before the mystery of God be finished; and notwithstanding this lucid interval, the clouds seem to be returning again after the rain. Thus you see to what grievous sufferings the merciful God hath sometimes called the dearest people."* – John Flavel *Preparations for Sufferings*
3. ***[Ephesians 3:10]- To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,***
4. ***[Revelation 12:11]- And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.***

B. Confusion?

1. The atoning interpretation.
 - a. Paul making a contribution to the work of Christ Jesus in dying as a substitute for His people.
 - b. The implication is that saints need to add to Jesus' work on the cross because it is somehow incomplete.

2. The eschatological interpretation.

- a. Paul refers to the full measure of sufferings that the entire church must go through before Jesus returns.
 - b. Understanding of fulfillment from the Old Testament.
 - 1.) *[Daniel 7:21-22]- I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.*
 - 2.) *[Daniel 12:1]- And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*
 - c. Understanding of fulfillment from the New Testament.
 - 1.) *[Matthew 24:4-14]- And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*
 - 2.) *[Mark 13:9-20]- But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.*
 - d. Belief that passages have a sense of a given measure of suffering that must be completed before Christ comes in glory.
 - e. Suggestion that the suffering of those associated with the Messiah will quicken the coming of the end of this age and will usher in the age to come.
3. The mystical or spiritual interpretation.

- a. Paul is referring to Jesus' active sympathy with His people in their afflictions, so that what His people endure, Christ endures as well.
- b. Grounded in the identification of Christ with His people.
 - 1.) *[Acts 9:4-5]- And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*
- c. Suggestion that Paul is undergoing in physical sufferings that were aimed at Jesus by his enemies because the Lord Jesus is not physically present to bear them.

C. Clarification.

- 1. Consider the words of the verse.
 - a. Meaning of 'fill up'.
 - 1.) Completing something for someone else.
 - 2.) The present tense and immediate context points to continual action.
 - b. Meaning of 'which is behind'
 - 1.) Suggests something lacking.
 - 2.) Suggests something that still exists or is left over.
 - c. Meaning of 'afflictions'.
 - 1.) Oppression, tribulation, trouble, or persecution.
 - 2.) Not to be used in the to refer to the sufferings of Jesus underwent on the cross for our sins.
- 2. Consider the context in the letter to the Colossians.
 - a. Establishing Christ's supremacy as the saving and sovereign head of His people.
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:14]- In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*
 - 2.) *[Colossians 1:19-22]- For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:*
 - b. There is nothing lacking in the Lord Jesus Christ, either in His person or His work.
 - 1.) *[Romans 1:4]- And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*
 - 2.) *[Romans 4:25]- Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*
 - 3.) *[Ephesians 2:13-14]- But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*
 - 4.) *[Colossians 2:13-14]- And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*
 - 5.) *[John 19:30]- When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*
 - c. Take into account the comprehensive and consistent testimony of Scripture.
 - 1.) Christ alone accomplished all that was required for salvation.

- a.) *[Isaiah 53:4-6]- Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
 - b.) *[Hebrews 1:3]- Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:*
 - c.) *[Hebrews 10:14]- For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*
 - d.) *[1 Peter 3:18]- For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*
- 2.) Unity in Christ includes unity in suffering and mission.
- a.) *[1 Corinthians 12:12]- For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*
 - b.) *[Matthew 25:34-40]- Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*
 - c.) *[Acts 13:47]- For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.*
 - d.) *[Acts 9:4-5,16]- And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*
 - e.) *[1 Corinthians 1:5]- That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;*
 - f.) *[1 Peter 4:13]- But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*
 - g.) *[Matthew 10:22,25]- And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*
 - h.) *[John 15:18-21]- If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.*
 - i.) *"We should bear in mind that although Christ by means of the afflictions which He endured rendered complete satisfaction to God, so that Paul is able to glory in nothing but the cross (Galatians 6:14), the enemies of Christ were not satisfied!*

They hated Jesus with insatiable hatred, and wanted to add to His afflictions. But since He is no longer physically present on earth, their arrows, which are meant especially for Him, strike His followers. It is in that sense that all true believers are in His stead supplying what, as the enemies see it, is lacking in the afflictions, which Jesus endured. Christ's afflictions overflow toward us." – William Hendrickson *New Testament Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*
1.) [Galatians 6:14]- Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

- j.) *"Paul was receiving the persecution that was intended for Christ. Jesus, having ascended to Heaven, was out of their reach. But because His enemies had not filled up all the injuries they wanted to inflict on Him, they turned their hatred on those who preached the gospel. It was in that sense that Paul filled up what was lacking in Christ's afflictions."* – John MacArthur *Colossians and Philemon*
- 3.) The eschatological edge to Paul's thinking.
- a.) ***[Revelation 13:17]- And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.***
- b.) ***[Mark 13:9-20]- But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.***
- c.) The apostle's sufferings are ministerial sufferings as a man of God, not mediatorial sufferings rivaling or contributing to those of the sinless Son of God.
- 4.) Paul suffers due to his allegiance to Christ.
- a.) ***[John 8:40]- But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God : this did not Abraham.***
- b.) ***[John 16:1-4]- These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.***
- 5.) Paul delights in the privilege and dignity of association with Christ in afflictions.

- a.) *[Daniel 3:17-18,25]- If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*
- b.) *[Acts 9:5]- And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*
- c.) *[Matthew 25:41-45]- Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was ahungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

D. Clarity: for the Church.

- 1. Paul's ministry and suffering was for the sake of the Gentiles.
 - a. Rich comfort and consolation to the church.
 - 1.) *[2 Corinthians 1:8-11]- For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.*
 - b. Exhortation and example to others.
 - 1.) *[2 Timothy 3:10-12]- But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*
 - 2.) *[1 Corinthians 11:1]- Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*
 - c. The advance of the kingdom and Gospel.
 - 1.) *"Christ in His rank suffered what was necessary for my redemption; now I, in my turn, (by His gift, Philippians 1:29), undergo what afflictions are useful for His glory. He purchased salvation by His cross, I advance His kingdom and cause by my combatants." – Matthew Poole [A Commentary on the Holy Bible](#)*
 - a.) *[Philippians 1:29]- For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*
 - 2.) *"Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's Grace, in England as I trust shall never be put out." – Hugh Latimer fastened to the stake with Nicholas Ridley*
 - a.) *[Philippians 1:12]- But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;*
 - b.) *[2 Timothy 2:10]- Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

3.) *“Because Paul’s apostolic ministry is an ‘extension’ of Christ’s work in the world, Paul identifies his own sufferings very closely with Christ’s. These sufferings have no redemptive benefit for the church, but they are the inevitable accompaniment of Paul’s ‘commission’ to proclaim the end-time revelation of God’s mystery (vv 25-27). It is in this way that Paul’s sufferings are ‘on behalf of’ the church, including the Colossians Christians. And, of course, as a prisoner for the gospel, Paul is suffering for them even as he writes. As members of the fellowship of those raised with Christ and forming therefore part of Paul’s body, we also are the beneficiaries of Paul’s sufferings.”*
 Douglas Moo *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*

a.) *[Colossians 1:25-27]- Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

4.) He who once persecuted the church is now being persecuted for the church.

a.) *[1 Corinthians 15:9]- For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

5.) The enemies of the church have become his enemies.

a.) *[2 Timothy 2:10]- Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

2. Paul’s willingness is grounded in his sense of vocation.

a. He had been commissioned a servant of the church of Jesus Christ by God Himself.

b. There was a holy resignation in his attachment to the church, a disposition of readiness to suffer for her sake, that surfaces throughout his writing.

1.) *[2 Corinthians 4:7-12]- But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.*

2.) *[Colossians 1:24]- Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church:*

E. Application

1. Fellow Christian.

a. How do you tell about the church of Jesus Christ? What do you think of her? What is your commitment to her?

1.) Love for the brethren is non-negotiable.

a.) *[1 John 3:14]- We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

2.) The call to suffer for the sake of other saints has broad application to every member of the body.

a.) *[1 Corinthians 12:18,22-26]- But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more*

abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

- b.) *[Acts 14:22]- Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*
 - c.) *[2 Timothy 3:12]- Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*
- 3.) Let us not be so afraid of Christ's afflictions that we rob Him of His honor and ourselves the blessings of suffering for His name.
- a.) *[Philippians 1:29-30]- For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*
 - b.) *[Daniel 3:16-19,23]- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.*
- 4.) Do not loose sight of the dire warning to all who lay hand upon the apple of Christ's eye.
- a.) *[Acts 9:5]- And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*
 - b.) *[Matthew 25:41-46]- Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked,*

or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

- c.) *[Revelation 6:9-11]- And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*
- d.) *[2 Timothy 4:8]- Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

5.) Stand and pray for your pastors. Recognize their calling, and support and encourage them in it.

a.) *[1 Thessalonians 3:7]- Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:*

2. Fellow Pastor.

a. If you serve Christ faithfully, you will suffer.

1.) *“Good bye, Ellis; you will never see me again, this fight is killing me.” – Charles Spurgeon Autobiography*

b. You will often be unappreciated by the people you serve.

c. Your faith may be shaken and then be established.

d. You will observe error and preach truth.

e. You will watch for wolves and feed the sheep.

f. You will be like your Great Example.

1.) *[Ezekiel 34:16]- I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.*

g. You will see men and women whom you love bruised and broken and battered by assaults of the world.

h. You will see the hosts of hell and all the expressions of satanic malice the world can conjure flung against the church of Jesus Christ.

i. Why do you do it? Because the church is the body of Christ, and every member is precious to Him.

j. Like the apostle, we must reckon with the union between Christ and His people, recognize the antagonism still directed toward the Head and His body, and not sit by and let it happen.

1.) *[1 Corinthians 16:13]- Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*

2.) *[Matthew 16:18]- And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

3.) *[Philippians 1:12-14]- But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

- k. As we stand between the people of God and the enemies of God, many good things will come.
 - 1.) The body of Christ will find an example of principled courage and holy rejoicing in bearing witness for the Lord.
 - a.) *[Philippians 2:15]- That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*
 - b.) *[Philippians 1:12-14]- But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*
 - 2.) Suffering will be a source of comfort to the body of Christ in times of trouble.
 - a.) *[2 Corinthians 1:6]- And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*
 - 3.) Suffering will bring you through fire and water and out to a place of rich fulfillment.
 - a.) *[Psalm 66:12]- Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*
 - b.) *[1 Thessalonians 2:19-20]- For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*
 - 4.) Suffering will serve the glory of the Head.
 - a.) *[Isaiah 8:18]- Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.*

IV. The Origin of Paul's Ministry

A. Proof text.

- 1. *[Colossians 1:24-25]- Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;*
- 2. *"You can never safely look upon the ministry as a profession, the entrance to which is spontaneous and subject to choice. It is a dispensation, an 'Oikonomia,' a law of the household of God; rising above the mere acknowledgement of duty, to an experience of the constraining love of Christ; to an appreciation of the infinite value of the Gospel, which we have been taught by His own Spirit and power, and the joy and hope of which we have truly and clearly received."* – Stephen H Tyng *The Christian Pastor: The Office and Duty of the Gospel Minister*

B. Intro: Paul's marvel and response

- 1. Paul's marvel of the new creation in the elect.
 - a. *[2 Corinthians 5:17]- Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*
 - b. *[Ephesians 3:8]- Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*
- 2. Paul's marvel of the new creation in himself.
 - a. *[Acts 9:26]- And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.*

3. The effect of Paul's new creation on his identity and calling.
 - a. *[Acts 26:16-18]- But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*
 4. Paul's privilege in the new creation.
 - a. Security in God's calling.
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:1]- Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,*
 - b. Community with other Gospel laborers.
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:7]- As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;*
 - c. Meek as one who received a particular mercy.
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 15:8-10]- And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*
 - d. Paul's expression of his calling to Christ's church.
 - 1.) *[2 Corinthians 4:5,15]- For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.*
 - e. Paul's example for his fellow servants in the churches.
 - 1.) *[Titus 1:7]- For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*
 - 2.) *[Colossians 1:7]- As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;*
 - 3.) *[Colossians 1:28]- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*
 - 4.) *[Philippians 3:17]- Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*
- C. The Servant of the Church.
1. Paul's sense of wonder at becoming a minister of God's Gospel.
 - a. He who was a monster was 'made a minister'.
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:25]- Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;*
 - b. Paul's calling.
 - 1.) He was not a volunteer.
 - 2.) His desire and delight in this labor were not a product of nature.
 - 3.) Contrast with the false teachers.
 - a.) *[2 Corinthians 3:1]- Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?*

- c. Paul's role in his calling.
 - 1.) He became a minister, a working servant.
 - 2.) He was a leader but not a lord.
 - a.) *[Luke 22:25-27]- And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*
 - b.) *[1 Peter 5:2-4]- Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*
 - 3.) Christ reverses the expectations of the world.
 - a.) His greatness lies in service, as Christ did.
 - b.) The true man of god leads by serving.
 - c.) He is called to ministration, not domination.
 - d.) He rises by falling.
 - e.) *[Mark 10:45]- For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

D. The Stewardship from God.

- 1. Paul's governing awareness behind the service he undertakes.
 - a. His ministry a dispensation of God.
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:25]- Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;*
 - b. He was called unto service by God Himself.
 - 1.) *[2 Timothy 2:4]- No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*
 - c. Paul works on God's terms and is governed by God's will; his desire is to please God.
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 4:1-4]- Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*
 - 2.) *[1 Corinthians 9:16-18]- For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.*
 - d. Dispensation meaning and derivation.
 - 1.) Working with God's overarching administration or sovereign plan.
 - a.) *[Ephesians 1:10]- That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*
 - b.) *[Ephesians 3:2,9]- If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: And to make all men see what is the fellowship*

of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

- 2.) Stewardship, management, arrangement, or direction of household.
 - a.) *[Genesis 39:4-6]- And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.*
 - b.) *[1 Timothy 3:5,15]- (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*
 - c.) *[Hebrews 3:6]- But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*
 - d.) *'For the steward, or dispenser, has power not to do anything of his own head, and after his own fancy, but only to dispense what the master has given him, and precisely in such a manner as he has described to him. If he takes upon himself to do more, he exceeds the bounds of his commission; and all that he does or says beyond them is void and of no force, nor does it oblige any one of the household to obey it.'* – Jean Daillé *An Exposition of the Epistles of Saint Paul to the Philippians and Colossians*
- e. Paul's constant awareness of his place.
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 9:17]- For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.*
 - 2.) *[Ephesians 3:1-2]- For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:*
 - 3.) *[Galatians 2:7]- But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;*
 - 4.) *[1 Timothy 1:11]- According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*
 - 5.) *[Romans 15:15-16]- Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*
 - 6.) *[2 Corinthians 5:18-19]- And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*
 - 7.) *[Titus 1:1-3]- Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;*
 - 8.) *[Acts 20:18-21]- And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the LORD with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and*

temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 9.) *[Galatians 1:10-12]- For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*
 - 10.) *[1 Thessalonians 2:4]- But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*
 - 11.) *[Ephesians 4:11-16]- And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*
- f. The liberation to be a pastor that a church needs rather than one she simply wants.
- 1.) *[Colossians 2:1]- For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;*
 - 2.) *'The way in which a man hears the Gospel is an index to the state of his heart and the nature of his affections and desires. If we were to suppose that Satan came into the congregation, what kind of hearer would he be? He is the inveterate enemy of all truth, righteousness and godliness; and the sanctification of the soul, devotion, and spiritual affections in the worshippers of the house of God vex [annoy] him sorely [greatly]. If one day, then, in human form he took his place amongst the hearers of the everlasting Gospel, we may fancy that, in order to hinder and annoy as much as possible, he would take his seat in a conspicuous place, either under the pulpit or in front of the gallery, before the eyes of all. Then he would pull ugly faces and close his eyes, and appear as if asleep. He would most anxiously guard against giving the slightest indication of being touched by what was said. Not a trace of conviction, submission, peace and joy should on any account ever appear. He would scowl and knit his brows and shake his head, and show every disapproval of the Gospel he hears, as if he would change every man in the place into the same devilish disposition. Such, I say, would be the deportment of the arch-enemy as a hearer of the Word of God. But have we not seen many that have the name of Christ upon them an exact picture of this?' – Christmas Evans from Owen Jones, Some of the Great Preachers of Wales*
- g. There are also true sheep who are learning, saved sinners who are sinners still.
- 1.) They embrace a faithful minister in principle but not always enjoy it in practice.
 - 2.) The faithful pastor may only overcome such opposition through a robust sense of his responsibility to God.
 - 3.) This sense of stewardship from God, a divine mandate, secures for the church a pastor's affections, concerns, labors, graces, and gifts.

E. Application.

1. Fellow Christian.
 - a. Recognize and rejoice in God's kindness to us. His purchased possession!
 - 1.) God redeemed us and keep us as the apple of His eye.

- 2.) God also gave us and keeps giving faithful men to shepherd the flock.
- b. How do you think of your pastor?
 - 1.) We are often tempted to separate people from our understanding of providence.
 - 2.) We are happy to account things and events as under God's control but to complain about the people with whom we come into contact.
 - c. How do you relate to your pastor??
 - 1.) *[Hebrews 13:17]- Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*
 - 2.) *[1 Thessalonians 5:12-13]- And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*
 - d. Do not forget the wider church in our prayers.
 - 1.) That He will send forth laborers.
 - a.) *[Matthew 9:38]- Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*
 - 2.) If your pastor is only an hireling or a thief.
 - a.) *[2 Samuel 18:18-23]- Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies. And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead. Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran. Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi.*
 - b.) *[Romans 8:28]- And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*
 - c.) *[Genesis 50:20]- But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*
 - d.) *[1 Corinthians 3:12-15]- Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*
 - e.) *[Genesis 18:25]- That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*
 - e. Remember that you too have a stewardship.
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 12:4,22]- Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:*
 - 2.) *[Romans 12:6]- Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*
 - 3.) *[Ephesians 2:10]- For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*
2. Fellow Pastor.

- a. When considering your identity and calling, go back to the root of the matter.
 - 1.) What were you by nature? A black-hearted wretch.
 - 2.) What have you become by grace? A child of God.
 - 3.) To you who are least of all the saints, this grace has been given, that you should preach.
 - a.) *[Ephesians 3:8]- Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*

- b. Remember that as a servant, you are called to be blameless as a faithful steward in God's own house.
 - 1.) *[Titus 1:7]- For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*
 - 2.) You duty is to be carried out on God's terms, in accordance with His will.
 - a.) *[1 Timothy 3:15]- But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*
 - b.) *[1 Timothy 4:12-16]- Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

- c. Let us therefore be zealous to carry out with the utmost diligence being found faithful.
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 4:2]- Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*
 - 2.) *[Matthew 24:45-47]- Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.*
 - 3.) *'I know the vanity of your heart, and that you will feel mortified that your congregation is very small in comparison with those of your brethren around you; but assure yourself, on the word of an old man, that when you come to give an account of them to the Lord Christ, at his judgment-seat, you will think you have had enough.'* – James Hay and Henry Belfrage *Memoir of the Rev. Alexander Waugh*

- d. This sense of stewardship frees you to be the man God has called and sent you to be.
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 11:1]- Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*
 - 2.) *[Matthew 25:21,23]- His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

V. The Essence of Paul's Ministry

A. Proof text.

1. *[Colossians 1:25-27]- Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

2. *'A new way of 'doing' church is emerging. In this radical paradigm shift, exposition is being replaced with entertainment, preaching with performances, doctrine with drama, and theology with theatrics. The pulpit, once the focal point of the church, is now being overshadowed by a variety of church-growth techniques, everything from trendy worship styles to glitzy presentations and vaudeville-like pageantries. In seeking to capture the upper hand in church growth, a new wave of pastors is reinventing church and repackaging the gospel into a product to be sold to 'consumers.'* - Dr. Steven Lawson *Famine in the Land*

B. The elements of the ministry of a true man of God.

1. The design of Paul's gospel labors.
 - a. His assignment or commission was to fulfill the word of God
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:25]- Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;*
 - 2.) Fulfill to fill up or carry something out completely.
 - a.) *[Matthew 13:38]- The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;*
 - b.) *[Romans 15:19]- Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*
 - c.) *[Acts 12:25]- And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.*
 - d.) *[Acts 26:12-20]- Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.*
 - e.) *[Colossians 1:12-14]- Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*
 - f.) *[Acts 9:15]- But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:*
 - g.) *[Acts 14:26-28]- And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples.*
 - h.) *[Acts 22:17-21]- And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; And saw him saying unto*

me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

- i.) *[Romans 15:16]- That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*
- j.) *[Galatians 1:15-16]- But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:*
- k.) *[Galatians 2:7-9]- But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*
- l.) *[I Timothy 2:5-7]- For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.*
- m.) *He carried out its design-held it up as the balm of the world-proclaimed it without distinction of blood or race. He did not narrow its purpose, or confine it to a limited sphere of influence; but, as the apostle of the Gentiles, he opened for it a sweep and circuit adapted to its magnificence of aim, and its universality of fitness and sufficiency. He carried it beyond the frontiers of Judea, lifted it above the walls of the synagogue, and held it up to the nations. The gospel since the apostle's time has received no fuller expansion nor have any wider susceptibilities been detected or developed in it. As an instrument of human regeneration, he brought it to perfection. - John Eadie *A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul's Letter to the Colossians**

2. The description of Paul's gospel labors.

a. The Word of God as a mystery.

- 1.) *"What is the meaning of the word 'mystery' in the New Testament? It is used to describe not a fancy, not a contradiction, not an impossibility, but always a truth, yet a truth which has been or which is more or less hidden. A mystery is a truth, a fact. The word is never applied to anything else or less; never to a fancy, never to an impossibility, never to a recognized contradiction, never to any shadowy sort of unreality. But it is a partially hidden fact or truth." – H.P. Liddon Penny Pulpit # 1152*

2.) Hidden knowledge;

a.) Of things to come.

- 1.) *[Daniel 2:29-30]- As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.*
- 2.) *[I Peter 1:10-12]- Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in*

them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

b.) Of the Kingdom of God.

1.) *[Mark 4:11]- And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:*

c.) The glorification of the saints.

1.) *[1 Corinthians 15:51]- Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

d.) The wisdom of God.

1.) *[1 Corinthians 2:7-10]- But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

e.) The mystery of salvation.

1.) *[Romans 16:25-27]- Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

f.) Of the mission to the Gentiles.

1.) *[Acts 26:16-18]- But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

g.) Of Jesus Christ.

1.) *[1 Timothy 3:16]- And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

2.) *[Deuteronomy 29:29]- The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

h.) Of the heart of Man.

- 1.) *[1 Corinthians 2:14]- But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
 - 2.) *[Isaiah 55:8-9]- For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*
 - 3.) *[1 Corinthians 2:9]- But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*
- 3.) The mystery concealed.
- a.) The truth of the nature and scope of God's good news to sinners.
 - b.) Many saw the kingdom as a thing of this world.
 - 1.) *[John 6:15]- When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.*
 - 2.) *[Acts 1:6]- When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*
 - c.) The blessings for the Gentiles.
 - 1.) *[Isaiah 49:6]- And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*
 - 2.) *[Acts 10:34-36,47]- Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?*
 - 3.) *[Galatians 2:11-12]- But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*
 - 4.) *[Ephesians 2:11-12]- Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*
 - 5.) *[Psalm 147:19-20]- He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.*
 - d.) The Gentiles did not know God's Word.
 - 1.) *[Romans 2:14]- For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:*
 - 2.) *[Romans 3:1-2]- What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*
- 4.) The mystery revealed.
- a.) A dramatic appearance.

- 1.) In contrast to former days, what was hidden has now been brought to light, made visible in the new covenant in Christ Jesus.
- b.) A divine disclosure.
 - 1.) Discovery not accidental or by human means.
 - 2.) ***[Acts 11:17]- Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?***
- c.) A delightful privilege.
 - 1.) We ought to sense Paul's excitement.
 - 2.) A glorious thing to be made possessors of these things, not just in intellect but also in saving experience.
- d.) Recognize that the revelation of God's plan was also its fulfillment.
 - 1.) ***[Romans 3:25]- Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;***
 - 2.) God's plan goes on being fulfilled.
 - a.) Revelation by participation as well as instruction.
 - b.) Not only do we know the truth, but we enter into it!
 - 3.) ***[Colossians 2:2-3]- That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***
- e.) The glory displayed among the Gentiles.
 - 1.) At first revelation to His covenant people.
 - a.) ***[Romans 9:4]- Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;***
 - 2.) God in His love and mercy, willed to make known the riches of the glory of the mystery to the Gentiles.
 - a.) *"That He should dwell in the heart of a child of Abraham was deemed a marvelous act of condescension, but that He should find a home in the heart of a Gentile was incredible."* – F.B. Meyer *The Secret of Guidance*
 - b.) *"Christ in all His glorious riches actually dwelling through the His Spirit in the hearts and lives of Gentiles."* - William Hendrickson *New Testament Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*
 - c.) ***[Colossians 3:10-11]- And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.***
 - d.) ***[Ephesians 2:11-16]- Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of***

commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

- e.) *[Ephesians 3:1-12]- For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*
- 3.) This is not God's Plan B.
- a.) God had not failed with the Jews.
- b.) God is not making the best of a bad situation by reaching out to the previously ignored Gentiles.
- c.) *[Genesis 12:1-3]- Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*
- d.) *[Genesis 22:18]- And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*
- e.) *[Psalm 2:8]- Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*
- f.) *[Isaiah 11:10]- And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.*
- g.) *[Hosea 1:10]- Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.*
- h.) *[Hosea 2:23]- And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.*
- i.) *[Isaiah 49:6]- And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

- j.) *[Romans 15:8-12]- Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.*
- k.) *[Galatians 4:9]- But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*

5.) The mystery explained.

a.) "Christ in you,.."

1.) *[Colossians 1:27]- To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

b.) To use John Bunyan's imagery in The Holy War, Emmanuel has taken up residence in Mansoul.

c.) Is it not the Holy Spirit who indwells us?

1.) *[1 Corinthians 6:19]- What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

d.) He is the Spirit of Christ; the Spirit is the promised Comforter.

1.) *[John 14:16-17,26]- And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

e.) Christ in His saving fullness, in all His reconciling triumph, as the glorified Messiah. Christ Himself-not just His blessings or His gifts-is in us.

1.) *[1 Peter 2:4-10]- To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

f.) "...the hope of glory."

1.) *[Colossians 1:27]- To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

g.) The unshakeable promise of eternal life.

1.) *[2 Corinthians 5:1-5]- For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.*

2.) *[Ephesians 1:11-14]- In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

h.) The whole body of Christ will not perish.

1.) *[Hebrews 2:13]- And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.*

2.) *[Romans 8:9-11]- But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

3.) *[Colossians 3:4]- When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

C. Application

1. Fellow Christian.

a. Consider the privilege and glory of the saints of God.

1.) You have come to know, by revelation involving participation, the mystery of the gospel.

b. Will you not seek preachers who will make this known in its glorious fullness, as God helps them?

1.) The gospel is not too high, too complex, and too bizarre to be understood.

2.) Reason cannot subdue this gospel-cannot exhaust it, cannot encompass it.

c. You should not forget to pray for your pastors who are seeking to be faithful.

1.) *[Colossians 4:2-4]- Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

2. Fellow Pastor.

a. Let us not lose sight of the glorious extent of God's gospel plan.

- 1.) *[Revelation 7:9-10]- After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*
- b. Is the church that you serve representative of such an aim, in principle even if not yet in experience?
- c. Consider the privilege that has been given you.
 - 1.) *[Ephesians 3:8-12]- Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*
- d. Do we capitalize on this privilege?
 - 1.) *[Galatians 2:20]- I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*
 - 2.) *[Colossians 4:3]- Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:*
- e. We do not need to guess at the motive, manner, matter, or mode of our ministry.
- f. We cannot abandon the preaching of the Word of God for something else.
 - 1.) *[John 12:21]- The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.*
 - 2.) *[2 Timothy 4:2]- Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.*
- g. If you are a young man considering the ministry, then bring yourself to this touchstone: Is this what you desire? Is this your aim?
 - 1.) *[2 Timothy 2:15]- Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*
 - 2.) *[John 21:15-17]- So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*
 - 3.) *[1 Peter 2:1-3]- Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

VI. The Subject of Paul's Ministry

A. Proof text.

1. *[Colossians 1:28]- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*
2. *You have been pursuing an education of mind and heart, preparatory to the office of a minister of the gospel. You are now upon the threshold of that sacred work. How far your ministry will*

be that of a faithful 'steward of the mysteries of God' will depend on how far it shall be the faithful preaching of Jesus Christ. No inquiry, therefore, in the course of your preparation, or at this stage of your career, should seem to you of such importance as that which seeks a full understanding of the work of preaching Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour, according as it is taught in the Scriptures and set forth before us in the example of the apostles. It is an inquiry with which the work of a minister of Christ will be more and more identified as he himself shall grow in the mind of his Master, and in a personal experience of the power and preciousness of the grace revealed in Him. - Charles P. McIlvaine, Preaching Christ: The Heart of Gospel Ministry—An Address to Those Entering the Christian Ministry

- B. Jesus Christ is the focal point of all preaching.
1. Example of Charles Spurgeon.
 - a. ***[Acts 5:42]- And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.***
 2. In defense against false teachers.
 - a. ***[Colossians 2:14-17]- Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.***
 3. "Him we preach"
 - a. ***[Colossians 3:11]- Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.***
- C. Paul's constant tools in making known Jesus Christ.
1. Proclamation.
 - a. To make known, to tell out, to communicate.
 - b. A solemn, public declaration of authoritative truth.
 - c. What does it mean to preach Christ?
 - 1.) Proclaiming the great truths and profound implications of His glorious person and finished redemptive work in the place of sinners on Calvary
 - 2.) Making Him known as He is set forth in the entirety of Scriptures.
 - 3.) Declaring a person, a living person who is the source of all true life, in whom is found the hope of glory.
 - a.) ***[Colossians 1:13-20]- Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.***
 - b.) ***[Colossians 1:15-16]- Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:***

- 4.) Making plain that all that is necessary for salvation in the fullest and most complete sense is found in Him alone.
- a.) ***[Acts 4:12]- Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.***
 - b.) *This Christ, so glorious in person and perfect in work—the incarnate God—the bleeding peacemaker—the imperial governor of the universe—it is He, none else, and none besides Him, whom we preach. Not simply His doctrine, but Himself; and He was preached, not by Paul alone, but by all his colleagues. This Christ is the one and undivided object of proclamation; and if He be the hope of glory, no wonder that they rejoice to proclaim Him wide and far, and on every possible occasion. The apostolic preaching was precise and definite. It contained no reveries about the heavenly hierarchy. It was overlaid by no tasteless and tawdry declamation about invisible and worthless mysteries. It dealt not in ascetic distinctions of meats and drinks. There was about it none of those abstruse transcendentalisms in which the Colossian heresiarchs seem to have indulged. It did not gratify the morbid and curious, by prying into celestial arcana. It did not nourish a carnal pride under the delusion of a “voluntary humility.” Nor did it dethrone a Saviour-God, and substitute the worshipping of angels for the faith, love, and homage due to Him. The one theme was Christ—“Him first, Him last, Him midst.” Christ, as the one deliverer, conferring pardon by His blood, purity by His Spirit, and perfection by His pledge and presence, securing defense by His power, comfort by His sympathy, and the hope of glory by His residence in the believing heart; - John Eadie [A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians](#)*
- 5.) Christ preaching Christ.
- a.) To the Jews.
 - 1.) ***[John 5:16-18]- And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.***
 - 2.) ***[John 5:37-39]- And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.***
 - 3.) ***[Romans 3:1-3]- What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?***
 - b.) The Bible remains a closed book to those who do not embrace its main focus.
 - 1.) ***[2 Corinthians 3:15-16]- But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.***
 - 2.) ***[John 5:46-47]- For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?***
 - 3.) *“The tragedy was that these people, for all their painstaking exploration of the sacred writings, had never found the clue which would lead them to their goal. The goal at which they aimed was eternal life, but that life could be received only through him to whom the Scriptures bore witness.” – F.F. Bruce [The Gospel of John](#)*

- 4.) *“Rightly read, the Old Testament leads to Christ. But the scribes of his day, with their wooden reverence for the letter of the Scripture, failed to understand the wonderful thing it was saying and thus were quite unable to recognize him to whom the Scriptures pointed.” – Leon Morris Reflections on the Gospel of John*
- c.) To His disciples.
- 1.) *[Luke 24:11,18, 25-27,44]- And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*
- 6.) The Apostles preaching Christ.
- a.) *[1 Corinthians 15:1-4]- Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*
- b.) *[Acts 9:20]- And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.*
- c.) *[Acts 13:23]- Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:*
- d.) *[Acts 13:38-41]- Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.*
- e.) *[Acts 17:2-3]- And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.*
- f.) *[Acts 26:22-23]- Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*
- g.) *[Acts 28:23,30-31]- And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*

- h.) *[Romans 1:1-4]- Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*
- i.) *[Acts 2:22,36]- Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*
- j.) *[Acts 3:18-26]- But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*
- k.) *[Acts 10:43]- To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*
- l.) *“The experimental preaching of the Reformers and Puritans focused on preaching Christ. As Scripture clearly shows, evangelism must bear witness to the record God has given of his only begotten Son (Acts 2:3; 5:42; 8:35; Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:2; Galatians 3:1). The Puritans thus taught that any preaching in which Christ does not have the pre-eminence is not valid experiential preaching. William Perkins said that the heart of all preaching was to ‘preach [only] one Christ by Christ to the praise of Christ’. According to Thomas Adams, ‘Christ is the sum of the whole Bible, prophesied, typified, prefigured, exhibited, demonstrated, to be found in every leaf, almost in every line, the Scriptures being but as it were the swaddling bands of the child Jesus’. ‘Think of Christ as the very substance, marrow, soul, and scope of the whole Scriptures’, advised Isaac Ambrose. In this Christ-centred context, Reformed and Puritan evangelism was marked by a discriminating application of truth to experience.” - Joel R. Beeke - What is Reformed Experimental Preaching?*
- m.) *“Let it be a settled principle in our minds, in reading the Bible, that Christ is the central sun of the whole book. So long as we keep Him in view, we shall never greatly err in our search for spiritual knowledge. Once losing sight of Christ, we shall find the whole Bible dark and full of difficulty. The key of Bible knowledge is Jesus Christ” – J.C. Ryle Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Luke 11-24*
- n.) *[1 Timothy 1:15]- This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*
- d. What does it not mean to preach Christ?
- 1.) To not only preach ‘Calvary sermons’ but the whole counsel of God.

- a.) *[1 Corinthians 2:2]- For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*
- b.) *[Acts 20:27]- For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*
- 2.) To preach on other great themes found in the Bible.
- a.) Doctrines of justification, sanctification, glorification, and providence.
- b.) They must be preached in light of Christ and find the road that brings us back to the Savior.
- c.) *“A ministry of which the Christ who lived and died for us is manifestly the center to which we all converges and from which all is viewed, may sweep a wide circumference, and include many themes. The requirement bars out no province of thought or experience, nor does it condemn the preacher to a parrot-like repetition of elementary truths, or a narrow round of commonplace. It does demand that all the themes shall lead up to Christ, and all teaching point to Him... Preaching Christ does not exclude any theme, but prescribes the bearing and purpose of all; and the widest compass and richest variety are not only possible, but obligatory for him who would in any worthy sense take this for the motto of his ministry, “I determine not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”” – Alexander Maclaren The Expositor’s Bible*
- d.) *“The Gospel, as Paul preached it, was far-reaching enough in its application to touch at every point the conduct and experiences of men. The Cross, as he used it, was an instrument of the widest range and of the greatest power. When, therefore, I insist that you like him should “preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” I do not mean to make the pulpit for you a battery, of such a nature that the guns upon it can strike only such vessels as happen to pass immediately in front of its embrasures. On the contrary, I turn it for you into a tower, whereon is mounted a swivel-cannon, which can sweep the whole horizon of human life, and strike down all immorality, and ungodliness, and selfishness, and sin. I do not shut you into a small chamber having but one outlook, and even that into a narrow court ; but I place you in an observatory, with a revolving telescope that can command the landscape round and round, and sweep, besides, the hemisphere of the stars. I do not mean that you should keep continually repeating the words of “the faithful saying” like a parrot-cry, until every particle of meaning has dropped out of them; but rather, that you should make application of the great principles that lie beneath the Cross, to the ever-varying circumstances and occurrences of life, and that in such a way as at once to succor the Christian and arrest’ and convert the sinner.” – William Taylor The Ministry of the Word*
- 3.) Some boast of finding Jesus in all the Scriptures but fail to enforce the demands of holiness.
- a.) The Lord Jesus is the motive and the means to all true morality.
- 4.) The preaching of Christ keeps us from the preaching of our own opinions.
- a.) *[1 Corinthians 7:40]- But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.*
- b.) *“A young man had been preaching in the presence of a venerable divine, and after he had done he went to the old minister, and said, “What do you think of my sermon?” “A very poor sermon indeed,” said he. “A poor sermon?” said the young man, “it took me a long time to study it.” “Ay, no doubt of it.” “Why, did you not think my explanation of the text a very good one?” “Oh, yes,” said the old preacher, “very good indeed.” “Well, then, why do you say it is a poor sermon? Didn’t you think the metaphors were appropriate and the arguments conclusive?” “Yes, they were very good as far as that goes, but still it was a very poor sermon.” “Will you tell me why you think it a poor sermon?” “Because,” said he, “there was*

no Christ in it." "Well," said the young man, "Christ was not in the text; we are not to be preaching Christ always, we must preach what is in the text." So the old man said, "Don't you know young man that from every town, and every village, and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London?" "Yes," said the young man. "Ah!" said the old divine "and so from every text in Scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ. And my dear brother, your business in when you get to a text, to say, 'Now what is the road to Christ?' and then preach a sermon, running along the road towards the great metropolis—Christ. And," said he, "I have never yet found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it, and if I ever do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one; I will go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savour of Christ in it."” – Charles H. Spurgeon *Christ Precious to Believers*

c.) “If you wear the livery of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was his like the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold he always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the cross lies ever on his shoulders. If he bids us carry a burden, he carries it also. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind, and tender, yea lavish and superabundant in love, you always find it in him. His service is life, peace, and joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ!” – Charles H. Spurgeon *The Statute of David for Sharing of the Spoil*

D. Admonition and instruction.

1. Two currents in preaching Christ
 - a. ***[Colossians 1:28]- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:***
2. Warning to drive deep into the will and the affections.
 - a. ***[Acts 20:31]- Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.***
 - b. ***[1 Corinthians 4:14]- I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.***
3. Instruction to work upon the understanding.
 - a. ***[1 Timothy 3:2]- A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;***
 - b. ***[Colossians 1:9]- For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;***
 - c. ***[Colossians 2:3,23]- In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.***
 - d. ***[Colossians 3:16]- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.***
 - e. ***[Colossians 4:5]- Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.***
 - f. ***[1 Corinthians 3:13]- Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.***

E. Application.

1. Fellow Christian.

- a. Are you sitting under a Christ-centered, Christ-saturated, Christ-magnifying ministry?
 - b. The ministry of a faithful man will have the savor of Christ about it.
 - 1.) *[Matthew 1:21]- And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*
 - 2.) *[John 15:4-5]- Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*
 - 3.) *[John 10:27-28]- My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*
 - c. Settle for nothing less!
 - d. Listen to a man's preaching. Does he belt out only the commands and demands of Scripture and leave you battered and broken by them?
 - 1.) *[Colossians 2:6-7]- As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*
 - e. You yourself have opportunities to declare Christ to others.
 - 1.) *[Acts 8:4]- Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*
 - 2.) *[Romans 15:14]- And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.*
 - 3.) *[Colossians 3:16]- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*
 - 4.) *[2 Thessalonians 3:14-15]- And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*
 - f. The 'downside' of praying for such a ministry is that you ought to receive it.
 - 1.) Every Christian like the idea of holiness and applauds the notion of a faithful ministry, but we are not always so keen when we feel its spiritual force.
 - g. When you pray that you might enjoy the privileges of a faithful gospel ministry, pray also that you will be disposed to receive it.
 - 1.) *[2 Thessalonians 3:1]- Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:*
2. Fellow Pastor.
- a. We must be fundamentally and profoundly Christ-centered.
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:25]- Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;*
 - b. What hinders us from preaching Christ more fully and more freely in our ministries?
 - c. Can you say with the apostle, "Him we preach"?
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:28]- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*
 - 2.) *[Colossians 1:18]- And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*
 - 3.) *"If you preach Christ, you need not fear for want of matter. His person and work are rich in fulness. Every Divine attribute is seen in him. All the types prefigure him. The prophecies point to him. Every truth bears relation to him. The law itself must be so*

explained and enforced as to lead to him... The preaching of Christ will answer every end of preaching. This is the doctrine which God owns to conversion, to the leading of awakened sinners to peace, and to the comfort of true Christians. If the doctrine of the cross be no comfort to us, it is a sign we have no right to comfort. This doctrine is calculated to quicken the indolent, to draw forth every Christian grace, and to recover the backslider. This is the universal remedy for all the moral diseases of all mankind.”
 – Andrew Fuller “Preaching Christ” in Complete Works

- d. To proclaim Christ Jesus our Lord is to preach Him by whom the kingdom advances, in whom is the power of God to salvation, through whom comes life and peace and blessing to the church.
 - 1.) ***[John 1:29]- The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.***

- e. We must preach Christ in a Christlike manner.
 - 1.) ***[James 1:5]- If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.***
 - 2.) ***[James 3:17-18]- But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.***

- f. If you preach in this way, you may see sinners bored, frustrated, irritated, and angered, but you must esteem Christ too highly and their souls too precious to hold back that which, under God, will also prove the means of their being humbled, convicted, and converted.
- g. Consider the plaque that sits on many pulpits.
 - 1.) ***[John 12:21]- The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.***
 - 2.) We need to spend more time with Him.
 - 3.) We must not read the Bible for our “professional” needs.
 - a.) *“Live the life of a Christian, as well as a minister. Read as one, preach as one, converse as one-to be profited, as well as to profit others. One of the greatest temptations of a ministerial life is to handle Divine truth as ministers, rather than as Christians-for others, rather than for ourselves. But the word will not profit them that preach it, any more than it will them that hear it, unless it is “mixed with faith.” If we study the Scriptures as Christians, the more familiar we are with them, the more we shall feel their importance; but if our object be only to find out something to say to others, our familiarity with them will prove a snare. It will resemble that of soldiers, and doctors, and undertakers with death; the more familiar we are with them, the less we shall feel their importance.”* – Andrew Fuller Spiritual Knowledge and Love Necessary for the Ministry, Compete Works

- h. Let us not handle the Scripture in our studies as mere scholars, but receive them as humble saints.
 - 1.) We must read the Word of God with a Christian appetite, as a fiancée reads the love letters of her groom-to-be, pouring over the pages, reading and re-reading the love-laden phrases.
 - 2.) We must meditate on the truth as it is in Jesus.
 - 3.) We must memorize and chew over the Scriptures.
 - 4.) We must be much in prayer, conversing with the Author of the Book, and seeking the Spirit’s illumination that more and more we might be given eyes to see the “light of the knowledge”.
 - a.) ***[2 Corinthians 4:5-6]- For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light***

to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

i. If we are to preach our Lord to others, we must have an ever increasing heart attachment to Him.

1.) *[1 Corinthians 1:9]- God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

2.) *[1 John 1:3]- That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

3.) *[2 Peter 3:18]- But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

4.) *[2 Corinthians 3:18]- But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

j. *The means of grace are in my hand,
The blessing is at God's command,
Who must the work fulfil;
And though I read, and watch, and Pray,
Yet here the Lord directs my way,
And worketh all things still*

*I cannot speak a proper word,
Nor think aright, but from the Lord,
Preparing heart and tongue;
In nature I can see no good,
But all my good proceeds from God,
And does to grace belong.*

*I see it now, and do confess,
My utter need of Jesus' grace,
And of his Spirit's light;
I beg his kind and daily care,
O Lord my heart and tongue prepare,
To think and speak aright.*

*Prepare my heart to love thee well,
And love thy truth which doth excel,
And love thy children dear;
Instruct me how to live by faith,
And feel the virtue of thy death,
And find thy presence near.*

*Prepare my tongue to pray and praise,
To speak of providential ways,
And heavenly truths unfold;
To strengthen well a feeble soul,
Correct the wanton, rouse the dull,
And silence sinners bold. – John Berridge*

VII. The Goal of Paul's Ministry
A. Proof texts

1. ***[Colossians 1:28]- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:***
2. *"We do not limit the infinite extent and power of Divine grace, when we speak of the necessity of the Christian Ministry. These uses of the sacred institution are not and cannot be necessary to God, as if he were unable to work without them. But they are such as he has appointed and made necessary in the constituted order of means, for the accomplishment of his own purposes of mercy to the world. His sovereign pleasure has ordained this office as a first link of means in the chain of salvation; so that without a Ministry there should be no hearing of the word—consequently no faith in the only Saviour of whom it speaks—no calling upon his name—no salvation. It is not our province to prescribe what he ought have done, but to mark the consummate wisdom of what he has done, and to exercise the humility of faith, when we cannot discern the reasons of his dispensations. Doubtless he might have instructed as well as converted Paul by a miracle; but it was his pleasure to direct him to a fellow-sinner for the explicit revelation of his will. The angel also might have been an instructor to Cornelius; but, in order to maintain the order of the divine economy, the Ministry of the word was made the medium of conveying evangelical light to his soul. This, therefore is the ordained means of conversion, and of subsequent establishment in every stage of the Christian life; and its necessity must continue, while there is a single sinner to be brought into the family of God, or a single grace in the heart of the saint to advance to perfection." – Charles Bridges *The Christian Ministry; With an Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency**

B. Paul's reasons for giving himself to the ministry.

1. False charges against Paul and others in the ministry.
 - a. Not good for anything else.
 - b. Opinionated and know it alls.
 - c. Love to have preeminence.
 - 1.) ***[3 John 1:9]- I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.***
 - d. Interfering and intrusive busybodies.
 - e. Inherently aggressive.
2. The concern for true godliness.
 - a. The use of the gospel minister's tools (preaching or proclamation, warning or admonition, and teaching or instruction) is simply *"to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."*
 - 1.) ***[Colossians 1:28]- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:***
 - 2.) ***[Colossians 4:12]- Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.***
 - b. The Gospel is for every man.
 - 1.) ***[Mark 16:15]- And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.***
 - 2.) ***[2 Peter 3:9]- The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.***
 - 3.) ***[1 Timothy 1:12-16]- And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might***

shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

3. The cultivation of mature holiness.
 - a. What is perfection?
 - 1.) When God brings all His chosen ones to complete and glorious likeness to His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - a.) *[1 John 3:2]- Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*
 - 2.) Perfection as maturity or completeness in faith.
 - a.) *[1 Kings 8:61]- Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.*
 - b.) *[1 Kings 11:4]- For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.*
 - c.) Perfection as loyalty to God-having a heart wholly tuned to God's will and in step with His Word.
 - 3.) Perfection as blameless.
 - a.) *[Genesis 6:9]- These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.*
 - b.) *[Deuteronomy 18:13]- Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.*
 - c.) Being sound, possessing full orb'd health, of being intact and unblemished.
 - d.) Being fully bound to God, walking with Him without offense.
 - 4.) Perfection is a sincere, principled, balanced holiness of life, an honest and comprehensive loyalty to the Lord our God
 - 5.) Perfection is careful and cheerful obedience to God's commandments, demonstrating a heart wholly attuned to the Lord and in step with His Word.
 - a.) *[John 1:47]- Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*
 - b.) *[Ephesians 4:11-16]- And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*
 - b. The dangers of a belief in a mystical perfection.
 - 1.) False teaching in Colosse.
 - 2.) Belief in a spiritual completeness, an advanced and assured attainment, that belonged only to a spiritually elite class of people.
 - 3.) Such ideas give grounds for some to fall into puffed-up delusion, as if they have already arrived on the highest plane of spiritual accomplishment.
 - 4.) Others may cease to pursue godliness, convinced that they were outside the sacred circle and doomed to low attainments in godliness.

- 5.) Use of phrases like, “*just an ordinary Christian*”.
- c. Presenting every man “*perfect in Christ Jesus*”.
- 1.) An end to all pride and despair and laziness.
 - 2.) The progress that any Christian makes is by virtue of union in Christ.
 - 3.) **[Romans 8:29]- For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.**
 - 4.) **[John 17:3]- And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.**
4. The consciousness of Christ’s return.
- a. **[2 Corinthians 5:9-11]- Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.**
 - b. **[Colossians 1:22-23]- In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;**
 - c. “*a way to hell, even from the gate of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.*” – John Bunyan *The Pilgrim’s Progress*
 - d. **[Colossians 1:28]- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:**
 - e. **[Romans 2:16]- In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.**
 - f. **[Philippians 2:14-16]- Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.**
 - g. **[1 Thessalonians 2:17-20]- But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.**
 - h. **[1 John 3:2]- Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.**
 - i. “*Every temptation to be sidetracked from the task of eternity which is the task of the hour-your hour-must be seen in relation to the finished product. What is the end of what you are doing? The God-appointed end?*” – William Still *The Work of the Pastor*
 - j. **[2 Timothy 3:15-17]- And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**
 - k. **[John 17:17]- Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.**
 - l. **[1 Corinthians 15:50-58]- Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be**

raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

C. Application

1. Fellow Christian.

- a. Do you believe that God expects His servants to call His people ever onwards and upwards toward full-orbed spiritual maturity?

1.) *[2 Peter 3:11-14]- Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

- b. Do you sit under the sound Word of God and receive pastoral counsel with the awareness and disposition of God's expectation for you?
 c. Is your pastor speaking to you as a man called, equipped, and deeply concerned to see you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ?

1.) *[1 Thessalonians 2:19-20]- For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.*

- d. Pray to God that He help His servants-who are your servants for Jesus' sake-to keep this great purpose, this state of Christian maturity, always fixed in their minds.

- e. Seek out a man who wants you to be sanctified, changed from glory to glory as he proclaims Jesus to you, admonishing and instructing you.

1.) *[2 Corinthians 3:18]- But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

- f. Reckon with eternity yourself.

1.) *[2 Corinthians 5:10]- For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

2. Fellow Pastor.

- a. God expects us to call His people ever onwards and upwards toward full-orbed spiritual maturity.

1.) We must appreciate that our authority is God-constituted and that we are both entitled and obliged faithfully to discharge our calling.

2.) We will be answerable for its use and abuse.

3.) Disregard of our duty and brutality in our shepherding are equally fearful crimes.

4.) *"A shepherd no mere warder-off of wild beasts. To save the sheep from wild beasts and all other dangers is not to feed them; and if they are not fed, what matters whether they are safe or not? What is the good of being saved to starve?" - William Still The Work of the Pastor*

- b. Are you persuaded that you have a definite purpose in hand that calls forth all the strength that God gives you?
- c. Are you persuaded that God has called you into fellowship with Him in pursuing-for yourself and for those committed to your care-a sincere, principled, balanced holiness of life?
 - 1.) We are to work so that God's people may view the coming day of judgment without fear of the unbeliever and might stand before Christ without confusion.
- d. Are you persuaded that your life's work is to be carried out with this definite occasion in view?
 - 1.) *[Matthew 25:31-33]- When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*
- e. Let us be constrained to a tender and Christlike discharge of our duty with all faithfulness and righteousness.
 - 1.) *[1 Thessalonians 2:7-12]- But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*
- f. Do not lose sight of the preciousness of souls and your commission to proclaim Jesus to them.
 - 1.) You will be tempted to be deterred by the frowns of men.
 - 2.) You will be coaxed by the smiles and charms of flattery to water down your faithful dealings.
- g. You will continue because you have a great and glorious calling.
 - 1.) *[Philippians 3:14]- I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ****
 - 2.) *[Colossians 1:28]- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*
- h. You will know this calling as various times.
 - 1.) At the worst of times, you know that you cannot turn away.
 - 2.) At the best of times, when you see the light of understanding dawn in the eyes of one who has been walking in darkness.
 - 3.) *[Psalm 1:1-3]- Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*
- i. Let eternity press upon your soul.
 - 1.) Meditate on the coming day.

- 2.) Consider the significance of that hour for every soul that has lived, is living, or will live.
- 3.) Remember that there is “a way to hell, even from the gate of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.” – John Bunyan *The Pilgrim’s Progress*

VIII. The Strength of Paul’s Ministry

A. Proof text.

1. ***[Colossians 1:29]- Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.***
2. “God does not work instead of our working, but through our working. God does not energize instead of our having energy; He energizes our energy. Therefore it is unbiblical and irrational to say that because the grace of God produces an active trust in God, we don't need to exert an active trust in God. At the end of your life, after decades of loving ministry, however God uses you to stir up the obedience of faith in others, what are you going to say about the grace of God and your lifelong labors? Are you going to boast? No. You are going to use the words of Paul in Romans 15:18, “For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles. You will say something like a paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 4:7, “What did I have that I did not receive? If then I received it, why should I boast as if it were not a gift?”” – John Piper *A Godward Life (Book Two): Savoring the Sustenance of God in All of Life*
 - a. ***[Romans 15:18]- For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,***
 - b. ***[1 Corinthians 4:7]- For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?***

B. Paul’s effort.

1. I also labor, striving.
 - a. ***[Colossians 1:29]- Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.***
2. Paul was not a false teacher in his labor.
 - a. ***[Colossians 2:4,6]- And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:***
3. Paul is not embarrassed by his labors.
 - a. ***[2 Corinthians 11:16-21]- I say again, let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.***
 - b. ***[1 Thessalonians 2:4-5]- But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:***
4. Paul was not a hireling in his labors.
 - a. Paul was not in the ministry in order to make merchandise.
 - 1.) ***[John 10:12-13]- But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf***

*catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.****

- 2.) *[John 2:16]- And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.****
- b. He was conscious that he lived before God.
- 1.) *[Romans 1:8-9]- First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*
 - 2.) *[2 Corinthians 1:21-24]- Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.*
 - 3.) *[Philippians 1:8]- For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*
 - 4.) *[1 Thessalonians 2:10]- Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:*
- c. Paul labored the entirety of his life *coram Deo*.
- 1.) *"Before the face of God"*
 - 2.) *"In the presence of God"*
- d. Paul bends his back to the task in his labor.
- 1.) The word "labor" means constant exertion, wearisome and steady toil
 - 2.) *[Ecclesiastes 5:12]- The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.*
- e. Paul is striving, expending unsparing labor.
- 1.) The word "striving" means agonizing, fighting with all of our effort toward something.
 - 2.) The minister's way of life is of consistent, rather than his occasional, contribution.
 - a.) *[Ephesians 6:12-13]- For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*
 - b.) *[2 Corinthians 11:22-28]- Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*
 - 3.) This attitude is required because the world opposes the Christian, his own fleshly inclinations hinder him, and the devil stands against him.
 - 4.) It is about the engagement of the whole man in truth, whatever character God has given him.

- a.) *[1 Timothy 3:1]- This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*
- 5.) Paul's competitive spirit turned to aggressive and assertive work towards others.
- a.) *[Romans 7:7]- What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*
- b.) *[Galatians 1:14]- And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*
- c.) *[Philippians 3:5-6]- Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*
- d.) *[Philippians 2:3,17]- Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*
- 6.) Paul's striving was not an occasional zealous exertion but rather the constant tone of his ministry.
- a.) *[1 Corinthians 16:15-16]- I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.*
- b.) *[2 Corinthians 6:3-5]- Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;*
- c.) *[2 Corinthians 11:23]- Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*
- d.) *[Galatians 4:11]- I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.*
- e.) *[1 Timothy 4:10]- For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.*
- f.) *[2 Timothy 4:7]- I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*
- 7.) Paul never embraced a view of the Christian life advocating, "letting go and letting God".
- a.) Roots in the Keswick Movement of the late 19th century.
- b.) This surrender is complete passivity, a call to exert no conscious effort of our own in the Christian life but rather abandon ourselves to the power of Christ.
- c.) J. C. Ryle's book Holiness was written primarily to counter these vapid teachings of the Keswick Movement.
- 8.) Paul saw the work of regeneration as monergistic (God alone accomplishes the work) but sanctification as synergistic (God and us as God lives in us).
- a.) *[Colossians 1:12-14]- Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*

- b.) *[Colossians 2:13]- And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;*
- c.) *[Philippians 2:12-13]- Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*
- d.) *“Throughout his life, from the moment of his regeneration and conversion to the moment of his final elevation to heavenly glory, the Christian, by virtue of his union with Christ’s death and resurrection and through the power of God’s word and Spirit dwelling within him, will necessarily experience progressive sanctification, this process to be understood negatively in terms of putting to death the deeds of the flesh which still remain in him and positively in terms of growth in all saving graces.” – Robert Reymond A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*
- e.) *[John 17:17]- Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*
- f.) *[I Thessalonians 5:23]- And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- g.) *[Titus 2:13-14]- Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*
- h.) *[Romans 8:13]- For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*
- i.) *[Galatians 5:24]- And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*
- j.) *[Colossians 3:5]- Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*
- k.) *[Ezekiel 36:26-27]- A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*
- l.) *[Ephesians 4:20-24]- But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*
- m.) *[3 John 1:2]- Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*

C. Paul’s energy.

1. Paul’s commission from Jesus.
 - a. *[Acts 26:15-18]- And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*
2. According to His working, which worketh in me mightily.

- a. *[Colossians 1:29]- Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*
3. Where man is toiling, God is mightily working.
- a. Word for “working” is the source of the English word for energy.
- b. “Mightily” has to do with strength and force.
- c. *[Colossians 1:11]- Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;*
- d. *[Philippians 4:13]- I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*
- e. *[Romans 15:17-18]- I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,*
- f. *[Ephesians 3:6-7]- That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.*
- g. *[1 Peter 4:11]- If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*
- h. *[1 Timothy 1:11-12]- According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;*
- i. *[Colossians 1:29]- Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*
- j. *[2 Corinthians 3:5-6]- Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*
- k. *[Galatians 2:20]- I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*
- l. *[2 Corinthians 12:9]- And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*
- m. *[2 Corinthians 4:7-11]- But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*
- n. *“It was indeed no sluggish heart that beat in the apostle's bosom His was no torpid temperament. There was such a keenness in all its emotions and anxieties, that its resolve and action were simultaneous movements. But though he laboured so industriously and suffered so bravely in the aim of winning souls to Christ and glory, still he owned that all was owing to Divine power lodged within him-*

*The work to be perform'd is ours,
The strength is all His own;*

*'Tis He that works to will,
'Tis He that works to do;
His is the power by which we act,*

His be the glory too.” – John Eadie A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul’s Letter to the Colossians

- o. [1 Corinthians 15:10]- But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.***

D. Application.

1. Fellow Christian.

- a. What has been your approach to salvation?
 - 1.) ***[Luke 13:24]- Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.***
 - 2.) ***[Matthew 11:12]- And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.***

- b. What about the path to glory? Have you been passive when it comes to serving God and being holy before Him?
 - 1.) ***“Yet thus life rolls away with too many of us, in a course of "shapeless idleness." Its recreations constitute its chief business. Watering-places, the sports of the field, cards! never-failing cards! the assembly, the theatre, all contribute their aid; amusements are multiplied, and combined, and varied, "to fill up the void of a listless and languid life;" and by the regulated use of these different resources, there is often a kind of sober settled plan of domestic dissipation, in which, with all imaginable decency, year after year wears away in unprofitable vacancy. Even old age often finds us pacing in the same round of amusements which our early youth had tracked out. Meanwhile, being conscious that we are not giving in to any flagrant vice, and it may be, that we are not neglecting the offices of religion, we persuade ourselves that we need not be uneasy. In the main, we do not fall below the general standard of morals of the class and station to which we belong; we may therefore allow ourselves to glide down the stream without apprehension of the consequences.” - William Wilberforce A Practical View of Christianity***

- c. Do you have inadequate conceptions of practical Christianity?
 - 1.) The Christian life as a fight.
 - a.) ***[2 Timothy 4:7]- I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:***
 - 2.) The Christian life as a race.
 - a.) ***[1 Corinthians 9:24-27]- Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.***
 - 3.) The Christian life as a wrestling match.
 - a.) ***[Ephesians 6:12]- For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.***
 - 4.) The Christian life as a real battle.
 - a.) ***[Romans 6:12]- Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.***

- 5.) *How strange is the course that a Christian must steer!
How perplexed is the path he must tread!
The hope of his happiness rises from fear,
And his life he receives from the dead.*

*His fairest pretensions must wholly be waived,
And his best resolutions be crossed;
Nor can he expect to be perfectly saved,
Till he find himself utterly lost.*

*When all this is done, and his heart is assured
Of the total remission of sins;
When his pardon is signed and his peace is procured,
From that moment his conflict begins. – Joseph Hart Hart's Hymns*

- d. Have you been diligent in your walk with the Lord?
- 1.) *[1 Timothy 1:18]- This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;*
 - 2.) *[Romans 13:14]- But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*
 - 3.) *[2 Corinthians 7:1]- Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*
 - 4.) *[Psalm 119:57-60]- Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words. I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*
- e. How do we pursue this calling to diligently walk with the Lord?
- 1.) According to His working which works in us mightily.
 - a) *[Colossians 1:29]- Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*
 - b) *[1 Peter 1:3]- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
 - 2.) God has given means of grace.
 - a.) His Word.
 - b.) His Spirit.
 - c.) Prayer, preaching, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and fellowship.
 - d.) *[Colossians 3:10]- And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*
 - 3.) Christ, by His Spirit, dwells within every Christian.
 - a.) *[Ephesians 3:16]- That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*
 - b.) *[Ephesians 1:19]- And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*
 - 4.) The fresh mercies of God.

- a.) *[Lamentations 3:22-23]- It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*
- 5.) Believing the promises of God.
- a.) *[Hebrews 13:5]- Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*
- b.) *[Philippians 1:6]- Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*
- c.) *[Hebrews 12:1-2]- Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
- f. Considering the hard work our pastors are called to, are you not called to labor as well?
- 1.) *[1 Timothy 4:12-13]- Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*
- 2.) *[Romans 16:3-4]- Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*
- 3.) *[Philippians 1:27]- Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;*
- 4.) *[1 Thessalonians 1:2-3]- We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;*
- 5.) *[Colossians 4:12]- Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*
- 6.) *[Matthew 24:45-51]- Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
- 7.) *[Matthew 28:16-20]- Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*
- 8.) *[Mark 5:19-20]- Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.*

- 9.) *[John 4:39]- And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*
- 10.) *[Acts 8:1-13]- And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.*
- 11.) *[Galatians 6:9-10]- And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*
- 12.) *[Hebrews 10:23-25]- Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

g. Counsel in task of identifying of vocational elders for a church.

1.) Get a man who is not afraid of hard work.

a.) *[1 Timothy 5:17]- Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*

b.) *[1 Thessalonians 5:12:13]- And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*

2.) When you find such a man, encourage him in his labors.

3.) Do not expect more from a pastor than does God in His Word.

4.) Pray for your pastor.

a.) *[2 Thessalonians 3:1]- Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:*

2. Fellow Pastor.

a. Such a spirit as Paul's condemns us.

1.) These words and this example expose our sins.

a.) *[Luke 5:8]- When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

2.) What in other spheres would be enthusiasm is, in the service of the Christ, restraint.

- a.) *[Luke 17:10]- So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*
- 3.) Who is sufficient for these things? It is the Spirit of Christ who makes us adequate for the accomplishment of the task to which we have been called.
- 4.) It is hard and often painful, but still blessed and truly joyful, to spend and be spent in the service of the King of kings.
- a.) *[1 Timothy 3:1]- This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*
- b.) *[2 Timothy 4:7]- I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*
- 5.) Take heed to Paul's example and examine our principles and practices.
- a.) Have you been giving your all and your best for the people whom God has committed to your care?
- 1.) *[2 Timothy 2:15]- Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*
- 2.) *"The oil of the lamp in the temple burnt away in giving light; so should we."* – Robert Murray M'Cheyne
- 3.) *"God gave me a message to deliver and a horse to ride. Alas, I have killed the horse and now I cannot deliver the message"* - Robert Murray M'Cheyne
- 4.) The call to Christ's service is not a call to neglect the sixth commandment. Costly service is not the same as suicidal service.
- 5.) Recognize the effect of your call on your family.
- a.) *[Ephesians 5:28]- So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.*
- b.) *[1 Timothy 3:2-5]- A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)*
- c.) *[Ephesians 6:4]- And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*
- d.) *[1 Corinthians 9:5]- Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?*
- e.) *[1 Corinthians 7:32-33]- But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.*
- f.) *"Perhaps no event of Mr. Edwards' life had a more close connection with his subsequent comfort and usefulness than his marriage [to Sarah Pierrepont]"* – Samuel Miller *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*
- 6.) *"It is our duty and our privilege to exhaust our lives for Jesus. We are not to be living specimens of men in fine preservation, but living sacrifices, whose lot is to be consumed; we are to spend and be spent, not to lay ourselves up in lavender, and nurse our flesh."* – Charles H. Spurgeon *Lectures to My Students*
- 7.) Have you slipped into cruise control? Have you become used to frittering away minutes and even hours on the apparent harmless frivolities of life??

- a.) *[Daniel 11:32]- And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.*
- b.) Do you sometimes feel like you are on the end of your tether?
- 1.) We must learn to come back to Jesus time and again, to our gracious Jehovah who gives power to the weak.
 - a.) *[Isaiah 40:29-31]- He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*
 - 2.) From Him we will and do receive all of the help and strength and power that we need to fulfill our tasks as undershepherds of His flock.
 - a.) *[John 15:4-5]- Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*
 - b.) Abide means to remain, to dwell or to depend.
 - c.) John Owen quote Page 150
 - d.) Let us daily humble ourselves and always look to God in Christ for all the help that moment by moment we need.
 - e.) *[Colossians 2:9]- For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*
 - f.) *[Acts 10:34]- Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:*
- b. Paul models characteristics for us to follow.
- 1.) Holy aggression for God.
 - 2.) Righteous reliance upon God.
 - 3.) Press on in the things of God.
 - a.) *[Galatians 6:9]- And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*
 - b.) *[1 John 4:4]- Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*
 - c.) *[1 Peter 1:4-5]- To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
 - 4.) One day in glory, our Lord will reward you for your faithful service to Him.
 - a.) *[2 Timothy 4:6-8]- For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*
 - b.) *[2 Corinthians 4:16-18]- For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

c.) *[1 Corinthians 15:58]- Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

IX. The Conflict of Paul's Ministry

A. Proof texts.

1. *[Colossians 2:1-3]- For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*
2. *"I long exceedingly to know if the oft-spoken-of match betwixt you and Christ holdeth, and if ye follow on to know the Lord. My day-thoughts and my night-thoughts are of you: while ye sleep I am afraid of your souls, that they be off the rock. Next to my Lord Jesus and this fallen kirk, ye have the greatest share of my sorrow, and also of my joy; ye are the matter of the tears, care, fear, and daily prayers of an oppressed prisoner of Christ. As I am in bonds for my high and lofty One, my royal and princely Master, my Lord Jesus; so I am in bonds for you. ... Oh, if any pain, any sorrow, any loss that I can suffer for Christ, and for you, were laid in pledge to buy Christ's love to you! and that I could lay my dearest joys, next to Christ my Lord, in the gap betwixt you and eternal destruction!... My witness is above; your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all as two salvations to me." - Samuel Rutherford Letters of Samuel Rutherford*

B. The Nature of the Ministry.

1. The reason a pastor needs the strength that only God can give.
2. The great conflict on their behalf.
 - a. False teachers.
 - b. *[Colossians 1:29]- Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*
 - c. *[Colossians 2:1]- For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;*

C. Paul's fervent heart for the Colossians.

1. By his preaching, sinners were saved and churches were established and growing.
 - a. *[Colossians 1:6-7]- Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;*
 - b. *[Colossians 4:17]- And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*
2. Paul shows the concern of his heart.
 - a. The church is exposed to grave spiritual danger.
 - 1.) *[Colossians 4:15-16]- Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*
 - b. The largeness of his heart shows there is a total absence of favoritism.
3. Paul shows the warmth of his heart
 - a. *[Colossians 1:29]- Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

- b. *[Colossians 4:12]- Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*
4. There is a profound travail of soul expressed in the language of deep solicitude and earnest contention.
- a. It speaks of spiritual combat.
 - b. Paul is conscious of the assaults being made upon them and he is engaged against the enemy on their behalf.
 - c. Even while in prison, Paul shows he is willing to meet the conflict head on for the sake of God's redeemed people.
 - d. The striving for God's people demands enough of a minister apart from the strivings against God's people.
 - 1.) Nothing saps the strength of a man of God; nothing grieves his heart and hinders his work more than contending with God's people as they slide into dullness, error, and sin.
5. Paul outlines the activities of his heart.
- a. Paul is physically limited and financially constrained.
 - 1.) Imprisoned, he cannot visit the church not preach to them in person.
 - 2.) He can send Epaphras to them for encouragement and instructions.
 - 3.) He can write using the pen of a minister to their souls.
 - 4.) He agonizes for them manifesting in prayer.
 - a.) While true heart affection for God's people will find every legitimate avenue of expression, prayer is always legitimate.
 - 1.) *[2 Thessalonians 1:11-12]- Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - b.) Prayer was the unceasing expression of Paul's heart burden.
 - c.) Paul's prayers are an agony.
 - 1.) *[Ephesians 6:12,18]- For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*
 - b. Love is the key ingredient in the work.
 - 1.) *[2 Timothy 2:10]- Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*
 - 2.) *[1 John 4:21]- And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*
 - 3.) *"John Welch, who often in the coldest winter nights rose for prayer, and was found weeping on the ground and wrestling with the Lord on account of his people, and saying to his wife, when she pressed him for an explanation of his distress, 'I have the souls of three thousand people to answer for, while I know not how it is with many of them.'"* – William S. Plumer *Pastoral Theology*
 - c. Paul shows us a faint picture of Christ's heart.
 - 1.) Paul is a mere man but is imitating Christ.
 - 2.) How much more fervently and effectually Christ prays for His church!

- a.) *[Hebrews 5:6-8]- As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;*
- b.) *[John 17:20-24]- Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*
- c.) *[Hebrews 7:25]- Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*
- d.) *[Hebrews 9:24]- For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:*

3.) Paul's heart-like that of his Savior-opens to reveal fervent feeling for and earnest contention on behalf of the people of God.

D. Paul's protective prayers for the Colossians.

- 1. Paul's prayers are comprehensive
- 2. Paul's prayers are Christ-centered and Christ-exalting.
- 3. With largeness of heart, Paul enters into the particular needs and concerns.
 - a. *[Colossians 2:2]- That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*
- 4. Paul prays for three petitions that are inseparably bound together-the heart.
 - a. Strong hearts.
 - 1.) That their hearts may be comforted.
 - a.) *[Colossians 2:2]- That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*
 - b.) *[Ephesians 3:16]- That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*
 - c.) *[John 14:16-18,26]- And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*
 - d.) *[John 15:26]- But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:*

- e.) *[John 16:7]- Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*
 - f.) *[Ephesians 3:17]- That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*
 - g.) *[Luke 22:32]- But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*
 - h.) *[Acts 15:32,41]- And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.*
 - i.) *[1 Thessalonians 3:1-2]- Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:*
- b. United hearts.
- 1.) *[Colossians 2:2]- That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*
 - 2.) Dangers of error.
 - a.) Error is both destructive and divisive.
 - b.) Error brings personal declension.
 - c.) Error breeds corporate dissolution.
 - d.) Error encourages suspicion, alienation, and coolness of heart toward one's fellow saints.
 - 3.) Unity is a preparation and a product for strong hearts.
 - 4.) Love is not matter of mere warm feelings or sentimental words but a love of sacrificial deeds and investment in one another's souls.
 - a.) *[1 John 3:17-18]- But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*
 - b.) *[Ephesians 4:25-5:2,6]- Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*
 - 5.) When true brotherly love is cultivated among us, the Spirit of truth draws near.
 - 6.) The need for humility in the cultivation of such a love.
 - a.) *[Colossians 3:12-13]- Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;*

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

b.) *[Philippians 2:1-8]- If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

c. Assured hearts.

1.) *[Colossians 2:2-3]- That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

2.) Error enters in through weak hearts, unloving hearts, and doubting hearts.

3.) Strong faith is related to clear comprehension and genuine love.

a.) *[1 Corinthians 8:1]- Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.*

b.) *[Ephesians 3:17-18]- That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*

c.) True assurance is built upon a degree of accurate understanding and in the application of truth.

1.) *“The fixed persuasion that you comprehend the truth, and that it is the truth which you comprehend.” – John Eadie A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul’s Letter to the Colossians*

d.) Assurance comes from a proper hold of and a joyful dwelling upon Christ.

4.) It is relatively easy to give the appearance of strength, unity, and assurance without possessing the reality.

E. Paul’s high hope for the Colossians.

1. All riches of the full assurance of understanding

a. *[Colossians 2:2]- That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*

b. The necessity of God’s revelation.

1.) *[Colossians 1:27]- To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

2.) *[Matthew 11:25-27]- At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*

c. The content of God’s revelation.

- 1.) *[Colossians 1:26-27]- Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*
- 2.) *[1 Timothy 3:16]- And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*
- 3.) *[Matthew 11:27-30]- All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*
- 4.) *[2 Corinthians 5:16]- Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*

d. The riches of God's revelation.

- 1.) *[Colossians 1:27]- To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*
- 2.) *[Colossians 2:2-3]- That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*
- 3.) *[Isaiah 33:6]- And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.*
- 4.) *[Hebrews 1:1-4]- God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*
- 5.) *"And after those combinations of wisdom, power, and love, which characterize the counsels and government of God, have attracted and engaged the inquiring soul through innumerable ages, there will still remain heights to be scanned, and depths to be explored, facts to be weighed and wonders to be admired." – John Eadie [A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul's Letter to the Colossians](#)*

2. The root of assurance is a firm grasp on the Lord Christ in whom is hidden all these treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
3. Paul develops protective petitions of scope and penetration, weighty and purposeful pleas, and brings them to the throne of grace, seeking that the hearts of the Colossians might be strong, united, and assured, that having received Christ Jesus the Lord, they might walk in Him.
 - a. *[Colossians 2:7]- Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

F. Application

1. Fellow Christian.
 - a. Consider that you have a Great Shepherd who prays for you-Jesus Himself.
 - b. Give your pastors no ground to contend against you, but only for you.
 - 1.) *[1 Thessalonians 5:12-13]- And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*

- 2.) ***[Hebrews 13:17]- Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.***
- c. Are you fighting alongside them with the same alms in view?
- 1.) ***[Proverbs 18:1]- Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.***
- d. Do you have anything of Paul's concern for the body of Christ at large?
- e. We need to pursue significant petitions of a wide and well-instructed kind for the well being of our souls.
- 1.) ***"We may keep up a communion by faith, hope, and holy love, even with those churches and fellow-Christians of whom we have no personal knowledge, and with whom we have no conversation. We can think, and pray, and be concerned for one another, at the greatest distance; and those we never saw in the flesh we may hope to meet in heaven."*** – Matthew Henry *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Acts to Revelation*
- f. If you are looking for a church or a pastor in which you will know the care of a Christlike man, his prayers will tell you much about him.
- 1.) Does his heart spill over with biblically informed richness when he intercedes with God?
- 2.) Get his sense of his general attitude to pastoral labor.
- 3.) Pray for such men. Pray that God will raise them up, and then pray for those whom God has raised up.
- a.) ***[Philippians 2:25]- et I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.***
2. Fellow Pastor.
- a. Reckon with the fact that your service to Christ and His church deserves the name "agony".
- 1.) ***[2 Timothy 4:6-8]- For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.***
- b. Remember your calling. Consider yourself an enlisted man.
- 1.) ***[2 Timothy 2:3-5]- Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.***
- 2.) Cultivate this spirit as you legitimately can. Cultivate it in the whole man.
- c. Remember your goals; a strong, united, assured church, a people whose hearts are rooted and grounded in Christ.
- d. Remember your weapons. Employ all scripturally legitimate means to accomplish your ends, and remember the place of prayer above all.
- 1.) ***[Ephesians 6:18]- Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;***
- 2.) ***"Above all other Christians, the pastor must be a man of prayer. All others need to be daily at the throne of grace, but he more. He has to do with such purely spiritual things that nothing but the Spirit can qualify him for his exalted work. In the cause committed to him such tremendous interests are involved that he needs constant guidance from on***

high. Of himself how can he reach such hard and impenitent hearts as he has to do with? His vocation requires him to stand so near to God that he must have the purifying of the Holy Spirit for that awful presence. It is his to intercede for others as well as to pray for himself, and how can he do that unless he has the aid of that Intercessor who inspires groanings that cannot be uttered? Eminently is he to be a temple of the Holy Ghost; oh how holy, how holy doth it become him to be! Even Christ, the divine Shepherd, spent whole nights in prayer; how much more do those who are mere men, though in the most sacred office, need to tarry long, long in that exercise! Among other ends he had in view in praying so often, and in causing that fact to be recorded, did he not intend to set an example to his under shepherds in all time? Ah, prayer should be their daily breath. Emphatically should it be true of them that they “pray always”.” – Thomas Murphy Pastoral Theology: The Pastor in His Various Duties of His Office

- e. Do you expect to lie on your deathbed, and voice regret, “I spent too much time in prayer”?
- f. Remember your people, those for whom you strive.
 - 1.) Show no favoritism among them in your prayers.
 - 2.) **[2 Corinthians 12:15]- And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.**
 - 3.) Let none of the sheep doubt that what you do is done out of love for their souls and a concern for Christ’s glory.
- g. Remember your destiny. First the cross, then the crown.
 - 1.) **[Romans 8:18]- For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.**
 - 2.) **[2 Timothy 4:8]- Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.**
- h. Remember your Savior. It is He who called you to this conflict, and He will sustain you in it.
 - 1.) He expects nothing of you that He has not already embraced for Himself.
 - a.) **[Hebrews 12:1-4]- Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.**
 - 2.) Do they hate you? They hated Him first.
 - a.) **[Psalm 35:19]- Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.**
 - b.) **[John 15:18-21]- If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.**
 - 3.) Do they crucify you? They crucified Him, the Lord of Glory.

a.) *[1 Corinthians 2:8]- Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

i. Keep Christ before your own eyes, and you will be able to keep Him before the eyes of the saints.

1.) It is Jesus that the people of God need.

j. In such a battle, you are in good company-the best company.

1.) *Lo, round the throne, a glorious band,
the saints in countless myriads stand,
of every tongue redeemed to God,
arrayed in garments washed in blood.*

*Through tribulation great they came;
they bore the cross, despised the shame;
from all their labours now they rest,
in God's eternal glory blest.*

*They see their Saviour face to face,
and sing the triumphs of his grace;
him day and night they ceaseless praise,
to him the loud thanksgiving raise:*

*'Worthy the Lamb, for sinners slain,
through endless years to live and reign;
thou hast redeemed us by thy blood,
and made us kings and priests to God.'*

*O may we tread the sacred road
that saints and holy martyrs trod;
wage to the end the glorious strife,
and win, like them, a crown of life. – Rowland Hill*

X. The Warnings of Paul's Ministry

A. Proof texts.

1. ***[Colossians 2:4-5]- And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.***
2. *"This is by no means the first time the Truth War has intruded into the church. It has happened in every major era of church history. Battles over the truth were raging inside the Christian community even in apostolic times, where the church was just beginning. In fact, the record of Scripture indicates that false teachers in the church immediately became a significant and widespread problem wherever the gospel went. Virtually all of the major epistles in the New Testament address the problem one way or another. The apostle Paul was constantly engaged in battle against the lies of "false apostles [and] deceitful workers [who transformed] themselves into apostles of Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:13). Paul said that was to be expected. It is, after all, one of the favorite strategies of the evil one: "No wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is not great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness." (vv. 14-15) – John MacArthur *The Truth War**
 - a. ***[2 Corinthians 11:13-15]- For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.***

- B. The Nature of Deception.
1. Equally revolting whether we are deceiving or being deceived.
 2. Every lie is an affront to the God who made us, going against the very being of the Triune God.
 - a. *[Exodus 34:6]- And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,*
 - b. *[Deuteronomy 32:4]- He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*
 - c. *[John 1:14]- And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*
 - d. *[John 14:17]- Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*
 3. Deception is contrary to everything God calls His people to be.
 - a. *[Psalm 15:2]- He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.*
 - b. *[Psalm 51:6]- Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*
 4. The devil-the prime adversary of God and His people-is the master deceiver.
 - a. *[Genesis 3:1]- Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*
 - b. *[1 Timothy 2:14]- And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*
 - c. *[2 Corinthians 11:3]- But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*
 5. The devil's minions as deceivers.
 - a. *[Isaiah 14:12-14]- How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.*
 - b. *[John 8:44]- Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*
 - c. *[Revelation 12:9]- And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*
 - d. *[Revelation 20:3]- And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*
 - e. *[Acts 5:2-3]- And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*
 6. Satan's captives aid in deception.
 - a. *[2 Timothy 2:24-26]- And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they*

may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

- b. They seduce people and “*carry them out of the right way into by-paths and blind thickets of error, blasphemy, and wickedness, where they are lost forever.*” – Thomas Brooks *Precious Remedies against Satan’s Devices*
 - c. [2 Peter 2:12]- *But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;*
 - d. [2 Peter 2:17]- *These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.*
 - e. [2 Timothy 3:8]- *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.*
 - f. [2 John 7]- *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*
 - g. [Romans 16:18]- *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*
 - h. [Jude 12-13]- *These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.*
 - i. [Matthew 7:15]- *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*
 - j. [Matthew 24:5,11]- *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*
 - k. [Matthew 24:24]- *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*
7. False teachers at Colosse.
- a. Traded in what appeared to be genuine.
 - b. The demonic message subtly but definitely devalued the glory, majesty, supremacy, centrality, and sufficiency of Jesus our Lord as the sole provider of our salvation.
 - 1.) They taught, “*Christ is not enough*”.
 - 2.) [Colossians 2:16-23]- *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*
 - 3.) The Christian life is not a process of adding to Christ, but a matter of appropriating what we already possess in Him.
 - 4.) [Colossians 2:10]- *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*
- C. Paul’s polemic.
- 1. Lest any man should beguile you.
 - a. [Colossians 2:4]- *And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.*

2. Lifting Christ up as a repository of all wisdom and knowledge.
 - a. *[Colossians 2:3]- In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*
3. Warning springs out of concern for saints' well being.
4. Warning rides on the back of a warm greeting and earnest prayer.
 - a. *[Colossians 1:9-12]- For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*
 - b. *[Colossians 1:28-2:2]- Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*
 - c. *[Colossians 1:4,24,27; 2:5]- Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.*
5. Paul identifies them as essentially healthy.
 - a. *[Colossians 1:23]- If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;*
 - b. *[Colossians 2:5,8]- For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*
6. Their delusion by means of false reasoning, leading astray by means of plausible words.
 - a. "Beguile"-to reason alongside of.
 - b. Incorrect notions are brought in alongside the truth concerning Christ.
7. Some deceivers simply hate the truth and try to drive us from it.
8. Some deceivers actually believe the lie, mworshipping the creature rather than the Creator.
 - a. *[Romans 1:25]- Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*
 - b. *[2 Thessalonians 2:11]- And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:*
 - c. *[John 8:44]- Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*
9. Enticing or persuasive words have been the devil's modus operandi from the beginning.

- a. *[2 Corinthians 11:3]- But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*
 - b. *[Genesis 3:1,4]- Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:*
 - c. *[Matthew 4:6]- And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*
 - d. *[Psalm 91:11-12]- For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*
10. False teachers operate much like their master.
- a. *[1 John 2:22]- Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.*
 - b. *[Matthew 16:18]- And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*
 - c. *“For...the power and policy of hell ever were, and ever will be, engaged in opposition unto the church built on this foundation — that is, the faith of it concerning his person, office, and grace, whereby it is built on him. This, as unto what is past, concerneth matter of fact, whereof, therefore, I must give a brief account; and then we shall examine what evidences we have of the same endeavor at present.*
The gates of hell, as all agree, are the power and policy of it, or the actings of Satan, both as a lion and as a serpent, by rage and by subtilty. But whereas in these things he acts not visibly in his own person, but by his agents, he has always had two sorts of them employed in his service. By the one he executes his rage, and by the other his craft; he animates the one as a lion, the other as a serpent. In the one he acts as the dragon, in the other as the beast that had two horns like the lamb, but spake like the dragon. The first is the unbelieving world; the other, apostates and seducers of all sorts. Wherefore, this work is this kind is of a double nature; — the one, an effect of his power and rage, acted by the world in persecution — the other, of his policy and craft, acted by heretics in seduction. In both he designs to separate the church from its foundation.” – John Owen Works
 - d. *[Romans 16:18]- For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*
 - e. *[Jeremiah 23:16]- Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.*
 - f. *[Mark 13:5-6]- And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*
11. Apostles did not neglect the danger of deceit.
- a. *[Acts 20:28-31]- Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*
 - b. *[Philippians 3:2]- Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.*
 - c. *[2 Timothy 4:14-15]- Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.*
 - d. *[2 Peter 2:3,18]- And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their*

damnation slumbereth not. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

- e. *[1 Timothy 1:18-20]- This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.*
- f. *[2 Timothy 2:16-18]- But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.*

12. The saints are also in danger.

- a. *“The Sandemanian heresy affected me so much as to drive away the spirit of prayer for the salvation of sinners. The lighter matters of the kingdom of God pressed heavier on my mind than the weightier. The power which gave me zeal and confidence and earnestness in the pulpit for the conversion of souls to Christ was lost. My heart sank within me, and I lost the witness of a good conscience. On Sunday night, when I had been fiercely and violently condemning errors, my conscience felt ill at ease, and rebuked me because I had lost communion and fellowship with God, and made me feel that something invaluable was now lost and wanting. I would reply that I acted according to the Word. Still it rebuked me, saying that there was something of inestimable value gone. To a very great degree I had lost the spirit of prayer and the spirit of preaching.” – Tim Shenton Christmas Evans: The Life and Times of the One-Eyed Preacher of Wales*
- b. *“I was weary of a cold heart towards Christ and his sacrifice and the work of his Spirit; of a cold heart in the pulpit, in secret and in the study. For fifteen years previously I had felt my heart burning within as if going to Emmaus with Jesus. On a day ever to be remembered by me, as I was going from Dolgellau to Machynlleth, climbing up towards Cader Idris, I considered it to be incumbent upon me to pray, however hard I felt in my heart and however worldly the frame of my spirit was. Having begun in the name of Jesus, I soon felt as it were, the fetters loosening and the old hardness of heart softening, and, as I thought, mountains of frost and snow dissolving and melting within me. This engendered confidence in my soul in the promise of the Holy Ghost. I felt my whole mind relieved from some great bondage. Tears flowed copiously and I was constrained to cry out for the gracious visits of God, by restoring to my soul the joys of his salvation and to visit the churches in Anglesey that were under my care. I embraced in my supplications all the churches of the saints and nearly all the ministries in the principality by their names. This struggle lasted for three hours. It rose again and again, like one wave after another, or a high, flowing tide driven by a strong wind, till my nature became faint by weeping and crying. I resigned myself to Christ, body and soul, gifts and labours, every hour of every day that remained for me and all my cares I committed to Christ. The road was mountainous and lonely and I was wholly alone and suffered no interruption in my wrestling with God.
From this time, I was made to expect the goodness of God to churches and to myself. Thus the Lord delivered me and the people of Anglesea from being carried away by the flood of Sandemanianism. In the first religious meetings after this, I felt as if I had been removed from the cold and sterile regions of spiritual frost, into the verdant fields of the divine promises. The former striving with God in prayer, and the longing anxiety for the conversion of sinners, which I had experienced at Lëyn, was now restored. I had a hold of the promises of God.” – Tim Shenton Christmas Evans: The Life and Times of the One-Eyed Preacher of Wales*

D. Paul’s pleasure.

1. Paul is about to dismantle with the hammer of truth and the crowbar of warning the specific errors and particular dangers that threaten the saints.
 - a. *[Colossians 2:8-10]- Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*
2. Paul assures the Colossians of his close attachment to them and gives them joyful endorsements and vigorous encouragement.
 - a. *[Colossians 2:7]- Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*
3. Paul writing from a Roman prison with Timothy close and probably Epaphras nearby.
 - a. *[Colossians 2:5]- For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.*
 - b. *[Hebrews 10:25]- Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*
 - c. *[1 Corinthians 5:3-5]- For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*
4. How can Paul say he can understand their circumstances in his absence?
 - a. The truth of their union with Jesus Christ.
 - 1.) *[Romans 12:4-5]- For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*
 - b. God's providence and calling have established a particular relationship between Paul and the Colossians.
 - 1.) *[Colossians 1:25]- Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;*
 - c. The accuracy of knowledge in what had been taken place. He is close to Philemon, Onesimus, and Epaphras.
 - d. An undeniable depth of feeling: a deep affection given to rise to penetrating concern.
5. Paul's absence may cause some to question being part of or attending a local church.
 - a. A dangerous attitude and fundamentally flawed view of the church.
 - b. We do not reason from exceptions to norms.
 - c. Listening to online sermons, reading blogs, gathering news, but never fully entering into God-ordained community, with all its commitments and comforts, is not an option for most healthy saints.
 - d. Other restrictive situations may legitimately have to suspend some of the elements of life in the body of Christ.
 - 1.) Soldiers on battlefield.
 - 2.) Those confined to hospitals or nursing homes.
 - 3.) A pastor absent because of sickness has the flock in his heart may still write pastoral letters to their flock. (i.e. Charles Spurgeon and Robert Murray M'Cheyne)
 - 4.) Business reasons or providential hindrances.

6. Remembering sister churches, friends, and fellow saints facing challenges, needs, joys, and trials.
 - a. *[Hebrews 13:3]- Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

7. The reality of the relationship of union with Christ, the head of the body.
 - a. Paul's absence in the flesh, but intimately near in the spirit.
 - b. The Christlikeness of this attitude.
 - 1.) *[Matthew 18:20]- For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*
 - 2.) *[Acts 9:4]- And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*
 - 3.) *[Matthew 25:40]- And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*
 - 4.) *[Colossians 1:18,24]- And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*
 - 5.) *[Matthew 28:18-20]- And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

8. While Paul sits in prison he casts a mental eye over the Colossian congregation and situation as he knows it and has been described to him.
 - a. He sees things as they are not as he wishes or fears them to be.
 - b. He is blind neither to danger nor to sin, but he can also see grace and goodness.
 - c. He can see faith and frailty, advance as well as opposition.
 - d. He is viewing a battle from a distant hill-a great conflict in which his own soul has a deep conflict.
 - 1.) He is reviewing an army under fierce assault but with an unbroken line and with discipline intact.
 - 2.) They have good order.
 - a.) *[Colossians 2:2]- That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*
 - 3.) They have steadfastness of faith in Christ.
 - a.) *[Colossians 2:5]- For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.*
 - b.) *[Acts 3:7]- And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.*
 - 4.) They are holding.
 - a.) The dangers are real, the battle being joined.
 - b.) There are no significant successes for the enemy.
 - c.) The Colossians had not wavered in their doctrinal integrity and in their commitment to Christ.

- d.) *“Eighty-six years I have been his servant, yet in all this time he has not so much as once hurt me. How then may I blaspheme my King and sovereign Lord, who has thus saved [or preserved] me.” – Polycarp Foxes Book of Martyrs*
- e.) *[1 Thessalonians 3:8]- For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*
- f.) *[2 Thessalonians 2:15]- Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.*
- g.) *[Philippians 4:1]- Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*
- h.) *“As the contrivances of men have...an appearance of wisdom, the minds of the pious ought to be preoccupied with this persuasion -- that the knowledge of Christ is of itself amply sufficient. And, unquestionably, this is the key that can close the door against all base errors. For what is the reason why mankind have involved themselves in so many wicked opinions, in so many idolatries, in so many foolish speculations, but this -- that, despising the simplicity of the gospel, they have ventured to aspire higher?” – John Calvin Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*
- i.) *[Philippians 2:9-11]- Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
- j.) *[Colossians 1:15-20]- Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

E. Application

1. Fellow Christian.
 - a. Deceit is not merely an ancient problem but a perpetually modern phenomenon, afflicting every age.
 - b. Whether you realize it or not, you are in a spiritual warfare.
 - 1.) *[1 Peter 5:8]- Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*
 - c. How can you withstand the devil and those who work for his cause?
 - 1.) Let your heart be fully and firmly attached to Christ.
 - a.) *“There is the assured truth of God; there is the revealed character of God; there is all the fullness of God.”*
 - 2.) You will be helped by entering into the life of a God-honoring, Christ-exalting, Spirit-filled, Bible-preaching, well-balanced, biblically ordered church.
 - a.) *[Isaiah 28:10-13]- For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and*

there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

- b.) *[1 John 2:14]- I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*
- 3.) Do not neglect the cultivation of personal holiness.
 - a.) *[Ephesians 6:10-12]- Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*
 - b.) *[Psalm 119:9-11]- Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*
- 4.) Get to know the men who are leading the church to which you belong or might belong.
 - a.) *[1 Timothy 3:1-2]- This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;*
 - b.) *[Acts 17:11]- These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*
- 5.) If you find faithful men full of the Spirit of Christ, esteem them, love them, help them, encourage them, be open to them, and never stop praying for them.
 - a.) Your faithful pastors are marked men so for their sake, stand in the gap for them and pray that their faith may not fail them
 - b.) Heed their warnings.
 - c.) *[1 Corinthians 10:12]- Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

2. Fellow Pastor.

- a. A ministry of warning is part of your calling.
 - 1.) *[Acts 20:26-32]- Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*
 - 2.) *[Titus 1:9]- Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*
 - 3.) *[1 Samuel 17:33-36]- And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I*

caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

- b. Consider the stewardship that has been entrusted to you and for God's sheep entrusted to you.
- 1.) *[Ezekiel 34:5-6]- And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.*
 - 2.) We must guard our own hearts.
 - a.) Before we are Christian pastors, we are Christian men.
 - b.) Never get to the point where you read your Bible as a minister rather than a man.
 - c.) The shepherd does not go looking for wolves but does watch for their approach.
 - d.) Keep in close contact with other faithful shepherds.
 - e.) Hold fast to the old past; for they are safe for travel.
 - 3.) We must preach positive truth.
 - a.) Two truths that should grip us as pastors.
 - 1.) Where the true knowledge of Christ declines, declension and debilitation follow, and room is made for suspicion, ritual, mysticism, and numerous other follies.
 - 2.) Positive truth prevents error's grip-clear views of Christ as a shield against deceptive rhetoric and the only means to spiritual vitality.
 - 3.) *[2 Timothy 4:1-5]- I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*
 - 4.) We must be aware of enemy activity.
 - a.) *[2 Corinthians 2:11]- Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*
 - b.) Let us never cease to take care when handling spiritual poison.
 - 5.) We must not shirk our responsibility.
 - a.) Pastors are called to lead the people of God and keep them from danger, not to wander after them into it.
 - b.) *[John 10:4]- And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*
 - c.) As false teaching begins to intrude and false teachers begin to circle our particular flock, we must rise up to warn our people earnestly and faithfully.
 - d.) Warnings must come from an evident heart of love.
 - 1.) *[2 Timothy 2:24-26]- And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

- 2.) *[1 John 2:19]- They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*
 - 3.) *[Acts 20:26]- Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.*
- 6.) We must pray for our people.
- a.) *[1 Samuel 12:23]- Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:*
 - b.) *[Hebrews 13:20-21]- Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

XI. Epilogue

A. Proof text.

1. *“And as [this doctrine that Christ is the great Prophet and Teacher of the church] will serve us for the test of doctrines, so it service for a test of ministers; and hence you may judge who are authorized and sent by Christ the great Prophet, to declare his will to men. Surely those whom he sends have his Spirit in their hearts, as well as his words in their mouths. And according to the measures of grace received, they faithfully endeavour to fulfil their ministry for Christ, as Christ did for His Father: “As my Father has sent me (saith Christ) so send I you,” John 20:21. They take Christ for their pattern in the whole course of their ministration, and are such as sincerely endeavour to imitate the great Shepherd.” – John Flavel The Fountain of Life*
2. *[John 20:21]- Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

B. Final exhortations.

1. A portrait painted of Paul.
2. Paul opened a window into his own heart, showing pastors what they ought to be.
 - a. In terms of calling, character, commitment, and concerns.
 - b. Shown their tools, their task, and their toil.
3. Showing local churches the kind of men that they ought to be praying for.
4. Paul’s portrait also has qualities of a mirror.
5. Pray the only ministers modeled on Paul would serve Christ’s church throughout the world.
6. Men such as these;
 - a. Commend the gospel of God’s grace.
 - b. Do good to God’s redeemed people.
 - c. Set out to bring glory, honor, and praise to God’s most precious Son.
7. *[Ephesians 3:20-21]- Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*