



Colossians 1:24-29, part 3

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

I love the “magic wand” question. I don’t care for the name—magic wand—but it’s a good question. Normally you say, “If I could wave a magic wand and make anything happen, what would that be?” Here’s another way to state this. If you had unlimited money and time, what would you want to do? This open-ended question is seeking to uncover your dreams and aspirations. It can help guide high school and college students to a good career. It can help someone in counseling to envision a preferred future for their life. And the other thing it can do is tap into our selfishness. After all, if we had unlimited money and time, most of us would use that time and that money on selfish pursuits—cars, boats, houses and vacations. There’s nothing wrong with those purchases in moderation and I would probably do the same to some degree, especially the travel part. But the question is supposed to help uncover what makes you tick, to help you draw out your true passions.

Here’s how I would answer the question. If I had unlimited time and unlimited money, I would enter into a lifelong pursuit of increasing in the knowledge and experience of Christ’s intimate love for me and out of gratitude and humility serving Christ by leading others toward this same pursuit. Does that sound familiar? This is the mission statement I wrote for my life about twenty years ago. Now please do not think for a minute that I have defined my life purpose and then perfectly executed it. Most of you know me and you know I am a work in progress. But what I am saying is that this is the answer to my magic wand question. If I could do anything I wanted, I would do what I am already doing. Nothing gives me more joy than to watch people experience Christ’s intimate love for them and then to walk in obedience to him. In the last six months I have seen the Lord work in some remarkable ways. A few months ago I told you about an

experience I had—it wasn't related to anyone at Grace—where the outcome just blew me away. I had walked through similar experiences like this many times before and the likelihood of a good outcome has always been extremely low. Call it a lack of faith on my part, but I expected things to turn out badly. Then God swooped and granted repentance to one person and did what I never expected would happen. I have seen people make hard decisions in their personal life to follow Christ that brought them great joy.

Let me remind you of the outline for this passage.

1. The Purpose
2. The Pillar
3. The Process
4. The Power

The **purpose** comes from verse 28—*that we may present everyone mature in Christ*. Several weeks ago we spent a whole message defining maturity, which is bearing spiritual fruit. This is not just my life purpose. It's not merely the apostle Paul's purpose, but it is also your life purpose. You can phrase it differently than I do. The exact wording does not matter but the result is inescapable. You were given breath of life in order to follow Christ and help others follow him. And you can do this in every aspect of your life—as a parent or grandparent; in your job—whatever that is; in your neighborhood and in this church body. Your life purpose is to help present everyone mature in Christ.

The **pillar** or foundation comes from verse 27—*Christ in you, the hope of glory*. In order to bear any fruit whatsoever, you must be connected to the vine. You must be abiding in Christ, but you also must know that you already abide in Christ. If you weren't abiding in the vine, you would be cut off. And the fact that you are bearing spiritual fruit only means that Jesus wants you to bear much fruit.

Most people would spell Christianity as D-O—it's all about what you do. It's about doing all the right things and obeying all the rules so that God will accept us. But Christianity is not spelled D-O. It is spelled D-O-N-E. It's all about what Christ has done for us. Romans 5:8 again. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We were his enemy but through his death and resurrection, he has made us his friend. So we walk toward maturity and lead others to maturity out of this infinite love and sacrifice. We love because he first loved us.

The **process** also comes from verse 28—*Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom*. We're not very used to the word proclaim. Proclaim sounds like a town crier making a proclamation in the town square: "Hear ye, hear ye." It's sort of sound sold fashioned but I hope you will fall in love with this word. Paul tells us exactly what the word means in this context.

Him we proclaim

- *warning everyone*
- *and teaching everyone with all wisdom*

→ that we may present *everyone* mature in Christ.

There are two parts to proclaiming Christ—warning everyone and teaching everyone. This is the process that leads to our end purpose-- *that we may present everyone mature in Christ*. The first thing I want you to see is that there must be a balance between warning and teaching. For example, on one side of the fence you have pastors who are always pounding the pulpit and preaching a message of fire and brimstone every single week. They use constant threats and warnings to scare the people in the pews. But on the other side of the fence we have pastors like the Joel Osteens of the world who wear \$3,000 suits and only tell people what their itching ears want to hear. “God wants you to be rich. God has an incredible plan of success for you. God promises you perfect health.” It’s fluffy garbage. We have to have a balance of both warning and teaching.

This is not only our purpose, but it is also the purpose for which Scripture was given to us. This passage perfectly aligns with 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Colossians 1	2 Timothy 3
Warning everyone	Reproof, Correction
Teaching everyone	Teaching, Training in righteousness
<i>that we may present everyone mature in Christ</i>	<i>that the man of God may be complete</i>

First, we see the source of all Scripture—it is God-breathed. God breathed into the first man Adam and gave him the breath of life. After his resurrection, Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, “receive the Holy Spirit.” God-breathed out Scripture which is to say that it is his personal revelation, his words, not man’s words.

And there are two main purposes for Scripture that work in perfect tandem: teaching and training and rebuking and correcting. You can see how this perfectly aligns with our Colossians passage. There is a continual balance between teaching and correction.

Fifteen year old Cori Gauff just played in her first Grand Slam tournament. She is ranked 313th in the world but she beat Venus Williams who is ranked 44th and another 60th ranked player to make it into the third round of Wimbledon. I’m not a tennis fan but I think she will continue to be a rising star. How did she do it? Teaching and correcting. Like Venus and Serena Williams, Cori’s coach is her father. Cori picked up a tennis racket at age 7 and the first thing her dad did was teach her the fronthand stroke. But what happened when Cori made a mistake? Her dad would have corrected her form and shown her the proper form again. Since she first held a tennis racket in her hand, her dad as led her in this continual rhythm of teaching and correcting, teaching and correcting.

We understand this when it comes to sports, but we fail to see the connection in our spiritual lives. Also, you might be inclined to think that this kind of proclamation of Jesus is limited to

pastors and professional Christians. After all, most people are not teachers or preachers, right? So that lets us off the hook. Again, let's go back to the purpose of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3. Scripture is God-breathed, it is revealed and passed down to us for one purpose—to train and correct us. But not just training and correcting you so that you can be a better person, but that we might be “mature in Christ. That we can be complete in Christ. That we can bear much fruit because we are connected to the vine.

Is this just for pastors and professionals? If you had any doubt about this fact, all you need to do is ask yourself, is the word of God just for pastor and professionals? Of course not. It is for every man, woman and child who has breath of life within them, but we must see that this is the end goal of the Scripture. Each time you pick up the Bible or hear it preached or taught, you should have one end goal in mind. How can I be taught and corrected so that I can bear much fruit? And how can I be taught and corrected so that I can help others down this same path?

Would you rather be taught or corrected? Would you rather be trained or rebuked? We like to be taught. Teaching increases our intellect. When we learn the Bible we beginning to feel like we have grasped the Bible, that we “get it.” But mere learning is not enough. We need to be warned and corrected and rebuked. We are hopelessly blind to our own faults. I was in Kwik trio a few weeks back and talking to an employee who I knew. I noticed she had this two inch long black smudge on her cheek. For a moment I thought, “Should I tell her? Would it embarrass her if she knew?” I decided it was better to tell her and she thanked me for it. She made the comment about how many dozens of people had noticed the same thing but didn't mention it to her.

This is obviously a low stakes example, but it demonstrates the need to help one another. And in so doing, not only do we help the other person, but we also help everyone who interacts with the other person. Let me explain what I mean by quoting from an awesome article called Beg to Be Rebuked.

One of wisdom's warnings weighs as heavily on me as any other: “Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray” (Proverbs 10:17). As much as I might suffer personally for not receiving rebuke, the people depending on me may suffer even more — my bride, my son, my friends and partners in ministry, my lost neighbors.

The people we love need us to be reproved. If we're married, our wives need to know we persistently seek out counsel and correction from other husbands. Same for wives. Same for mothers and fathers. If we skip this for a few busy years, it's not only we who miss out. Others will suffer. Instead of rescuing them from harm, we deliver them into the villain's hands.¹

We don't like to be corrected but when we do, we think of the benefit it will give to us but we don't usually consider what this author is saying. “The people we love need us to be reproved.” Because if we are not both taught and rebuked, what is left in us will spill over into the lives of our loved ones. I will be less loving toward my wife and children. I will be more likely to continue in my sin patterns. I will be far less likely to be able to identify the idols of my heart—

energy produced every single second in the universe. Ten seconds of energy produces 1⁵⁰⁰ joules of energy.

10 seconds = 1⁵⁰⁰

1 hour = 1^{180,000}

1 day = 1^{4,320,000}

The amount of energy produced in the universe is quite literally, unfathomable. So who created the universe that produces this unfathomable energy? And if you have the power to create nearly infinite energy, does that not make you infinitely greater than that which you created? With all of this in mind, now we can read verse 29 again. *For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.* Paul was toiling and struggling. These two words convey the idea of a soldier on the battlefield or an athlete in the game of his life.³ There is sweat and blood and sacrifice. That is our part, but God's part is to supply this limitless energy to do his work. Don't tell me it can't be done. Don't tell me you can't bear much spiritual fruit and help others do the same. This is why you exist. This is why God has granted you breath of life—to use the pillar of Christ and the process of his word and his immeasurable power to accomplish the purpose of presenting everyone mature in Christ.

Let's read this beautiful prayer together.

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

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¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/beg-to-be-rebuked>

² <https://www.learnastronomyhq.com/articles/how-much-energy-does-the-sun-produce.html>

³ *For this I toil* (κόπος—exertion, severe labor; the soldier in battle, the hard working farmer)

struggling (ἀγωνίζομαι—agony, conflict, contest)

with all his energy (ἐνέργεια—energy) energy is always someone else working. It is outside of us.

that he powerfully (δύναμις—dynamite, power ability) it carries the sense of sufficient ability. In other words, it is not possible that this power would not be sufficient.

works (ἐνέργεια—energy) *within me*