

**Title: Over All.** What's the Best Way to Deal with Your Struggles?

**Text:** Colossians 2:1-5

**Date:** April 18, 2021 at FBCW

## **INTRO.**

**Background.** This is what Paul had already stated in **Colossians 1** –

1:1-2 → We are Paul and Timothy...writing to our brothers and sisters at Colossae.

1:3 → Every time we pray...we thank God for you with fondness and joy.

1:5 → When you heard the Gospel, you received it as the great news that it is.

1:4 → Your reputation as a church is growing...you are known for your faith in Christ and love for all.

1:9 → Therefore, (Paul) I'm continually praying for you: may God fill you with knowledge of His will and teach you how to live.

1:15 → You'll achieve this by always looking to Jesus...never stop looking to Jesus.

1:21 → Never forget who you were...and where Jesus Christ delivered you from.

1:25-26 → The focus of Paul's life, was to get the Gospel – as far as possible, as quickly as possible, by whatever means possible...

- Paul would gladly even work hard and suffer for this Gospel.

1:28 → **Q:** Finally, what was Paul's goal? **A:** He proclaimed Jesus...warning and teaching everyone with the Word...so that every believer may become mature in Christ.

Now we come to the beginning of Colossians 2 – and for the first time, Paul is going to begin disclosing his own personal suffering on behalf of the Gospel and the churches.

- Colossians is a “prison epistle” – it's one of the handful of NT books that was authored in prison, by a prisoner, who was in prison on account of the Gospel.
- Most believe Paul wrote this from his Roman imprisonment.
- He is an older man reflecting back on his many years of ministry.

The Colossae church started → when Paul preached in Ephesus. A man from Colossae, Epaphras, received Christ as Lord. He traveled back to his hometown and begins a church.

- The church started strong...it was really thriving.
- But now, the church has come under harsh attack – false teaching is swirling around.
- Specifically the false teaching was related to the person of Jesus. “*Who is Jesus?*”
- Some taught he was not really God...or he couldn't have been God on earth, in the flesh.

**So Paul is saying, at the beginning of Colossians 2** → I want you to know I am struggling, Colossian church. But I am struggling for you. I want so much for you to know the Jesus that I know. Everything you need...it exists in Jesus. Yes, I am in these chains (4:18). But Christ is worth it. I'd rather be here in jail...and believe in the Gospel and know the power of Jesus...than be free on the outside.

**IRONY:** Paul was willing to suffer, and yet he saw major Gospel success/growth. The American church fears struggle, and the truth is we've seen very little Gospel success.

Paul's mindset → faithfulness even in suffering...and I'll trust God with the results.

Our mindset → God, tell me what I can expect if I really commit myself to you...then I'll decide how much I'm willing to commit!

We also know, today, the message of the Bible as a whole.

- How much were we worth to God? → He poured out the blood of his precious Son, Jesus (John 3:16).
- But what conviction do we have in our hearts about the Gospel? What's it worth? Are we willing to suffer?

**First, Paul told the Colossians, "My struggle on your behalf is very real" (2:1).**

The word "struggle" used by Paul means: "striving." It's the sense of conflict, to contend, to be in agony.

Col 1:29, "I labor for you...striving with His strength that works powerfully in me."

But now in Col 2:1, Paul is acknowledging that his life is not easy.

- Following Christ may mean persecution.
- Christian leadership often means fighting against unseen forces.

Paul's struggle could have been about → 1) his incarceration. 2) the lingering theological error going on in Colossae. 3) how quickly some were falling away. → or a combination of all.

Why would Paul want them to know about his struggle?

- He was not bragging. He's in jail!
- The skeptics → "Your Christian leader is in jail!"
- Paul's response → "It is worth it!"

Perhaps the key to Christian maturity is this: to suffer well, with a good attitude, maintaining your joy, not getting bitter or cynical...what a testimony! The greatest testimony!

Again, we don't know the details. But we do know:

- Paul was struggling...And he was specifically struggling on behalf of the Colossians.

**Second, Paul stated his intended goal for the believers at Colossae (2:2-3).** This is rich!

- He wanted their hearts to be encouraged.
- He wanted their hearts to be united in love.
- He desired that they have a personal, intimate understanding of the Lord Jesus.

Encouragement – to come alive with joy.

Joined together in love – unity, togetherness.

Riches/understanding/knowledge of God's mystery – an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ!

Mystery – it doesn't mean God was trying to hide himself from us in the past.

- It just means – something we *couldn't* previously understand...now we *can* understand.

Hidden treasures – this is the picture of finding gold/diamonds...you've been on a search but now you don't need to search anymore, it's been found!

The false teachers were saying: “We have a secret knowledge that's only available to the spiritually elite.”

But Paul was saying: Jesus Christ is literally God Himself...among us...He is our Messiah! All the richness of truth for salvation, for life, for joy, for the future...it's ALL found in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ!

**LESSON** – this is our desire at FBCW – for everyone!

- That when you come here...you are encouraged – because of our hope in Christ!
- You connect (friendship) with others...united in love – because they, too, trust in Christ!
- That together we receive an ever-increasing knowledge of Christ...for he is everything!

Be encouraged...be joined together in love...let us always be growing in our knowledge of Jesus!

**Third, Paul shared this heart with the Colossians so that they would not be led astray, and so that they might continue forward in Christ (2:4-5).**

- “*Don't be deceived by arguments that sound reasonable...but are wrong.*”

How could Jesus be God in the flesh?

How could a virgin conceive a child?

How could a deceased man rise from the grave?

How could a person possess the power of the Holy Spirit?

These may “seem” impossible...and indeed they are...unless you place your faith in God!

Matt 19:26, *With man this is impossible, but nothing is impossible with God.*

Luke 1:37 (Angel), *“For nothing will be impossible with God.”*

Luke 1:38 (Mary), *“I am the Lord's servant...may it be done according to His Word.”*

It's the same way still today:

- I'm not going to keep the faith...it doesn't matter.
- I'm not going to keep praying...praying can't change anything.
- I can't afford to tithe...if I had more money I would give...but not now.
- You shouldn't go to church...it's full of hypocrites.
- My family and I...we don't need church...we can experience God anywhere.
- My sexuality is my business...and nobody can tell me what to do.

V4 – you have all sorts of options, theories, and philosophies about how you intend to live.

V5 – or you can be well-ordered, and strong in your faith in Christ.

*“Well-ordered”* = “together, whole, bringing all my baggage to the Teacher.”

**Summary.** Paul told the churches, “Yes, I am struggling. But it's for you. So keep on looking to Jesus!”

- Sometimes following Christ can be costly and confusing! It's not easy!
- But listen to the man sitting in jail – it's worth it! Every step for Jesus is worth it!

**Big Idea.** What's the best way to deal with our struggles? Keep on looking to Christ!

- Will we struggle? Yes.
- Will life sometimes hurt? Yes.
- But is Christ alone the hope we need today and for eternity? Yes, yes, yes.

**Application of today's message.**

**Let's reconsider the concept of “struggle.”**

- Anthony talked about this last week. “Not being lazy.”
- Anthony's message was about the burden Paul (and us) must have to see people saved.

Q: Do we struggle for this? Labor for this...urgency...effort...work...no laziness?

ILLUS: “Mask up...or...get vaccinated” → the people saying this are sincere...they truly believe/know that Covid is real and could be dangerous.

- Others say, “I'm not getting vaccinated...I'm not wearing a mask...Covid isn't real.”
- How confusing!
- But for the church → do you believe heaven and hell are real? Eternity?
- Are we striving to get the Gospel to ALL?

**Am I struggling to make the Gospel known to my circle of influence?**

- Be honest – is there no struggle for you?
- Are we making the gospel known to the people we are responsible for?

- Family...kids...grandkids...
- Classmates...teammates...
- Neighbors...co-workers...employees
- If it's not you, for these, then who's responsibility is it? We are the church!

### **What do I mean by struggling to do this?**

- Yes, there are often awkward conversations.
- Lots of service opportunities to even earn the right to share the Gospel.
- When is the last time I did NOT spend money (take a trip, buy something) just so I could be more generous for missions?

Note, Perhaps our lack of Gospel success...is related to our lack of Gospel struggle!

Note, Paul's struggle was not about a lack of clarity with the Gospel. It's about getting that gospel to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible!

ILLUS: Zeke and Carrie talking about Hideki Matsuyama at the Masters, after his win. Think about the hours of practice...the sacrifice...the commitment when no one was watching.

### **If Paul wanted the Colossians to know how great his struggle was to get them the Gospel and to help them grow, here are some honest questions for reflection:**

- Who has struggled to help me grow?
- Who's suffered so that my life might be better?
- Who in my life went a long way...just to help me take baby steps?

Though you can never pay back those that invest in you spiritually...the #1 response you can make about this is:

- Live out what they taught you. Follow their example. Build on their foundation!

Parents: if we want our kids to "do better" than us spiritually – then we must ask, "Are we doing better spiritually?" Are we struggling? Contending? Striving? – is our effort obvious?

- Every parent I know – "I want my kids to have a better life than me."
- Well, what about spiritually? Are you helping your kids have a better life spiritually?
- (ILLUS: Pastor JH and I in Vietnam, when his translator abruptly got emotional when talking about his mother...)

Paul's concern is the picture of a coach, teacher, or parent → laboring/striving for their kids.

ILLUS: Ross Wakefield and I at Yellowstone Park with the middle schoolers on the mission trip. We got a brief lesson on what to do if we encountered a bear.

- If Black bears – attack! Act big and tough.
- If Brown bears – get down, lay down and play dead.
- If White bears – goodnight – Polar bears are the most aggressive!
- BUT if you see a momma with her cubs...lookout! The worst!

Are we aggressive about caring for our cubs? Those under our influence? Or do we just hand them over to the world and let the world do what it will with them?

Today's text makes us ask → do we labor for "others" like this when it comes to sharing the Gospel?

**CONCL.** In light of the way Christ loved me...and gave the good news of the Gospel to me...may I, in turn, spend my life...getting that gospel to others.

Is it a struggle? Yes. Satan is opposed to me!  
What do I do with this struggle? Keep on looking to Christ!