

“Strengthened with Power”
Colossians 1:11
(Preached at Trinity, December 17, 2017)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. There is something about gossip that feeds the corruption of the sinner’s heart. We naturally like to dwell on the negative. That’s how news agencies function. The public wants to hear the negative. Sadly, this mentality finds its way into the heart of God’s people—the desire to hear and share about the faults of others. What a wonderful thing when there is an atmosphere in the church where people share positive things about one another; when they speak edifying words.
 - A. Paul spoke of this in his Epistle to the Ephesians
Ephesians 4:29 NAU - "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear."
 - B. This is what we have in these opening verses of Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians. Epaphras had arrived in Rome and began sharing with Paul about the Christians in Colossae. He might have spoken of the sins of the members of the church. There would have been weaknesses in the church. He might have dwelled upon the negative in the church.
Instead, Epaphras spoke of good things—things that were edifying. This letter is Paul’s response to the word he received from Epaphras.
 - C. Having heard the positive report about these Colossian Christians, Paul’s response was not that of callous indifference but of heart-felt gratitude to God – and prayer that they might increase more and more in the knowledge of God. He confesses in **Verse 9**, “we have not ceased to pray for you.
2. In **Verse 9** Paul continues to express his prayer for the saints at Colossae—“for this reason” – because of the report from Epaphras. . .
Paul’s great desire was to see them increase in Christian graces. Paul is praying that God would fill them with spiritual wisdom and understanding that they might be filled with a knowledge of God’s will.
As I’ve pointed out, this wisdom comes from above. It is the Holy Spirit’s transforming work upon our mind. It is His illuminating grace that continues progressively in the Christian’s life.
3. In **Verse 10** Paul is describing the result of the spiritual wisdom of **Verse 9**.
"so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God"
 - A. The Colossian church has been walking in a manner worthy of Christ, seeking to please Him in every way. Paul is praying that they might increase more and more.
 - B. The Colossian church has been bearing fruit. Paul is praying that they might increase more and more.
4. Now in **Verse 11** Paul is continuing to express his great desire to see the Colossians continue to progress in the faith. He prays at the beginning of this verse that they might be “strengthened with all power, according to God’s glorious might. “

5. In this brief phrase Paul uses three separate expressions of power.
 - “Strengthened” – a passive participle from the Greek verb δυναμώω. The verb means to empower or make strong.
 - The word for “power” is familiar to us. It is from the noun δύναμις. We get our word dynamite from it.
 - The word for “might” is κράτος which means “strength, might, or power.”
 6. This power granted to Christians is expressed in multiple ways in the New Testament with multiple results.

Acts 1:8 NAU - "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Ephesians 3:16 NAU - "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,"

Romans 15:13 NAU - "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
 7. Paul uses it again in **Verse 29**

Colossians 1:29 NAU - "For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."
 8. This morning I want us to explore this almighty power that is supplied to every believer in Christ. Paul is implying the maxim, “Knowledge is power.” As a Christian grows in the knowledge of God his faith is increased and he is strengthened with confidence and courage with the ultimate result of fortifying the Christian to persevere in the Christian life.
- I. We have to understand our natural weakness – We are in much need of God’s strength
 - A. Because of sin we are plagued by weakness.
 1. In our mortality we are characterized by our frail condition. Our bodies will eventually become too weak to live.
 2. More serious, because of the depravity that sin has brought upon our heart, we lack any power to reconcile ourselves to God. We lack the power not to sin. Paul describes it in **Eph. 2** as being dead in sin—spiritual corpses without hope.
 3. Only by the power of God have we been delivered from the curse of sin. Paul described the Gospel as the power of God

Romans 1:16 NAU - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
 - B. As Christians we recognize our great need of the power of God and we enjoy the power He provides
 1. Paul cried out that God would deliver him from his thorn in the flesh. God’s answer was not to take away the infirmity but to rest in His power.

2 Corinthians 12:9 NAU - "He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

2. Paul understood his natural weakness in preaching, but understood the infinite power of God.
1 Corinthians 2:3-5 NAU - "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, ⁴ and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."
3. As Christians, we remain weak in ourselves and are dependent upon the almighty power of God to live the Christian life.
 John Davenant – "Even after a knowledge of the truth is infused, and the grace of holiness imparted, yet the regenerate remain infirm and weak to undertake any spiritual good, to strive against vices, to resist temptations; unless they are further strengthened and sustained."¹

II. The Christian life is one surrounded by many battles

- A. The Christian life is characterized by warfare
 1. At the close of Paul's life he declared – "I have fought the good fight" – 2 Tim. 4:7
 2. The soldier metaphor is used throughout the New Testament
- B. Paul is praying that they would stand in the power of God
 1. The Colossian Church was facing powerful forces seeking to destroy the church. They needed power from on high.
 2. Paul prayed for the Church of Ephesus
Ephesians 6:10-11 NAU - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."
 3. The life of a Christian demands strength and courage
 We must be valiant warriors.
 4. Matthew Henry – "Religion tends to make men, not cowardly, but truly valiant. The righteous are bold as a lion. The true Christian is the true hero."²
 This is true of both men and women.
 3. The Bible gives us many examples of men and women who stood upon the mighty power of God:
 - Noah boldly built the ark for 120 years while he was mocked daily
 - Abraham boldly left his homeland trusting the promises of God. At one point he took a mere 300 men and conquered four kings and their armies
 - Joshua fought valiantly, Caleb fought with courage.
 God's charge to Joshua:
Joshua 1:9 NAU - "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

¹ Davenant, John, *Colossians, Geneva Series of Commentaries*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009) page 133.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 38.

- Esther risked her life to defend her people
Esther 4:16 NAU - "And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."
 - David stood boldly before his enemies
The list goes on and on
- C. The Christian soldier must manifest strength and courage
1. This has always been expected of God's people
Psalm 31:24 NAU - "Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the LORD."
 2. Christianity is not for the faint of heart – We are commanded to count the cost. The Christian life is difficult!
 - a. This was the teaching of Jesus – Count the Cost
Luke 14:27-33 NAU - "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸ "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹ "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."
 - b. Paul's words to Timothy -
2 Timothy 2:3 NAU - "Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."
 3. Unfortunately, many Christians today have been influenced by our hedonistic society—it has infiltrated the church. We lust for pleasure – the good life. They see the church more as a playground than a place to equip for hard labor.
 4. Christianity has never been described in this manner
Throughout history men and women have suffered greatly for their faith. Thousands and thousands of Christians have died simply because of their faith in Christ. They've endured every hardship in their service to Christ.
 5. Part of my job as pastor is to remind you of this—to prepare you for these stark realities. This was Paul's method
Acts 14:21-22 NAU - "After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

- D. Discipleship demands that we behave like men – with courage and boldness (This applies also to ladies as it applies to the Christian life)
1. **1 Corinthians 16:13 NAU** - " Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."
 2. William Barclay – “As a sentinel, be ever on the alert. When under attack, stand fast in the faith, and yield not an inch. In time of battle, play a hero’s part. Like a well-equipped and well trained soldier, be strong to fight for your King.”³
 3. As Christians we will spend more time on the battle field than on the playground. We must stand our ground. We must overcome temptation. We must stand in opposition to all that would bring dishonor to our Lord. We must be resolved maintaining our integrity. We must do what we know to be right to the honor of our God.
 4. Where do we obtain such power?
We must be "strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might"
- III. This power is the fruit of the Holy Spirit working mightily within us
- A. The Holy Spirit is God’s gift to His people to empower them to holiness and equip them for every good work
1. He indwells every Christian
 2. Paul prays in **Verse 9** that they would be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding. The Holy Spirit is the source of this wisdom.
 3. The unbeliever may become very religious, but is lacking in this essential power.
2 Timothy 3:5 NAU - "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these."
- B. The Holy Spirit strengthens us with His power. He works His graces mightily in us and through us.
1. In **Ephesians 3** Paul prayed that the Ephesian Christians receive this spiritual power
Ephesians 3:16 NAU - "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man"
 2. To be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit is to have all of the graces of the Christian life manifested mightily.
 3. The Apostles demanded that the first deacons be endued with this power.
Acts 6:3 NAU - "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task."
 4. The Holy Spirit is the source of all joy and peace within the believer
Romans 15:13 NAU - "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

³ Barclay, William, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956) page 185.

5. The Holy Spirit enables us to know the will of God; the power behind our sanctification.

Stephen Tyng – “The redeemed man has the love of holiness, and the desire for holiness implanted in his heart, as a divine gift. He approves of the precepts of the Law in his inner man. He has the law of written upon his heart by the Holy Spirit, and the grace of God which has brought him salvation, teaches him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”⁴

Conclusion:

1. We need spiritual wisdom and understanding because we are naturally ignorant. We need to be strengthened with all power and might because we are naturally frail and weak.
2. But God hasn't left us in our weakness. We have been indwelt with power from on high. We need to pray daily for God to empower us to glorify Him this day.
3. And we must never forget the source of our strength.

Psalm 18:1-2 NAU - "I love You, O LORD, my strength." ² The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

Colossians 1:9-11 NAU - "we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience"

⁴ Tyng, Stephen, *Lectures on the Law and Gospel*, (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, from the 1846 edition) page 335.