

# The Struggle of Life

Colossians 2:1-7

**MPS** Jesus Christ is supreme as Lord, and He calls people to live in full submission to become like Him.

**OBJ** Every person can understand full submission to Jesus Christ as Lord by Four Struggles, and why His supremacy makes the struggle worth it.

**READ** Colossians 2:1-7

*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup>that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup>I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. <sup>5</sup>For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.*

*<sup>6</sup>Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. **Colossians 2:1-7***

When Paul writes Colossians, he writes from the pit of prison to exalt the supremacy of Jesus Christ. And because of the superiority of the gospel, He calls the church out of sin and all of its deception, to the transformation of the Lord Christ, a transformation that only comes by one's full submission to Jesus. From the depth of his struggle, he writes of the heights of life's glory.

**ILLUS** Nick Saban recently retired as the Head Coach of Alabama Football. One of his well-known quotes shares his philosophy, "There are two pains in life. There is the pain of discipline and the pain of disappointment. If you can handle the pain of discipline, then you'll never have to deal with the pain of disappointment." I like Coach Saban's philosophy. It is counsel that applies well to the Christian life in what Paul teaches. You can struggle in Christ or you can struggle in the world, but life is a struggle. The difference with Jesus is that as you struggle in Him, you are transformed to be like Him. In the world, your struggle in sin only destroys. **Our struggle in Christ in always for our good and guaranteed to produce Christlikeness in us. A struggle in the world with sin makes you like sin and destroys you with it. There is no life without a struggle, it just depends on what you want to be made after, and whether you want your struggle to matter for your good and God's glory.**

**Q?** **What's the greatest struggle you've faced or witnessed?** Physical illness, substance abuse, societal evils, sinful habits and patterns, and relational brokenness are all struggles this world deals to us.

**TRANS** Friends, make your struggle matter for a glory beyond this world so that no matter how hard it gets, it produces that which is far more glorious than anything in this world.

**Jesus Christ is supreme as Lord and He calls people to live in full submission to become like Him.**

**TRANS** Submission to Christ does not come without a struggle.

Paul begins(.1), "*I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,*". Paul was in the midst of his own worldly struggle. He was not beckoning for their attention of applause, but wanting them to understand the struggle of all that is required for their growth and maturity into Christlikeness. While the struggle he addresses includes all earthly heartaches, it is far greater than any worldly problem; he is speaking of the human condition. His struggle is one of competing against evil forces for the eternal destination of souls. **In the midst of his earthly struggle, Paul teaches the Colossians that because Christ is supreme, He is worthy of their full submission because He alone will bring a glory beyond any they could imagine.**

**OBJ** **Four Struggles define our full submission to Jesus Christ as Lord, and why His supremacy makes the struggle worth it.**



Paul struggled for it. You will struggle through it. Christ will prove supreme through it.

**TRANS** The first struggle where Christ will provide supreme is in...

### 1. The struggle of spiritual growth and maturity. .2-3

*<sup>2</sup>that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Paul states that he labors for their heart to be encouraged by the power of the gospel. When Christ become one's heart's strength, communion becomes a sin-killer, His greater glory a heart-filler, and His love a life-thriller. All one's needs are fully supplied in Christ. But Paul makes the point that God has given us an earthly presence to manifest this heavenly work as our hearts are knit together in love. This is the fellowship of Christian community, where we unite in love to expose or confess sin, learn to live to know and to become known by others, so that we can serve them in their life as the aim of our community. How opposite this is to typical patterns where one comes to church to make people think we are better than we know we are, hide our true self because we fear being known, and fail to serve others, stunting them in their growth. But when we settle for this we create a gospel-less, gospel-absent community.

Paul says we are here to for more that the gospel provides, "*to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" The struggle of spiritual growth and maturity is the purpose of this communion and community, distinctively the work of Holy Spirit through the gospel among the church. We can see a specific trajectory of growth unto maturity.

### Four Stages of the path of spiritual growth and maturity.

- a. The path of spiritual growth and maturity begins with the knowledge of Christ. In his gospel, Luke uses the phrase "knowledge of salvation"(1:77) to refer to God's saving work in us. Paul clarifies the basic facts of the gospel as of first importance for the Corinthians to understand(1 Corinthians 15:3-4). John captures the gospel in one verse when he writes what is, likely, the most well-known verse, John 3:16. Spiritual growth begins by the knowledge of Christ by the gospel. **Do you know the gospel of Jesus Christ, that Christ died for the ungodly, while we were still sinners and enemies of God, that He who was without sin became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God?**(Romans 5:6, 8-10; 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- b. The path of spiritual growth and maturity prioritizes the knowledge of Christ into life-convictions. Convictions are what you live your life by, and they come by filtering all knowledge to discern by prioritizing the knowledge of the gospel. Paul teaches this to the Philippians(4:8) when he says, "*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*" **You can fill your mind with as much of anything you want in this world, but you can only grow and mature into Christlikeness when you prioritize the truth of God. Are you prioritizing God's Word in your and thinking?**
- c. The path of spiritual growth and maturity develops a pattern of thinking that leads to Christ-honoring living. How you process information and knowledge to draw conclusions and form convictions matters. Paul captures how Jesus processed knowledge in Philippians 2:5f when he exhorts, "*Have this mind in you...*". He warns the Corinthians (14:20) about this when he states, "*do not be childlike in your thinking...be mature*". Peter exhorts Christians in this as well when he states, "*Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin*".(4:1) **Do you ever listen to your thoughts? Does your thinking follow Biblical patterns or worldly ones? How do you draw conclusions and form convictions? Do you set the glory of God as the glory of your life? You will only know the richness of full assurance of understanding as you engage your struggle of life with the truth of the gospel to follow Jesus.**
- d. The path of spiritual growth and maturity applies the knowledge of Christ to discern God's Will and walk by faith in obedience to His Word. This is how one walks in the wisdom of God's Word. Proverbs 2:1-6 gives a practical picture of living in God's wisdom. **The life of walking in God's wisdom is a life that treasures Jesus Christ!**



The struggle of growth and spiritual maturity only comes as one immerses themselves in communion with Christ and community with other Christians to experience life transformation by a renewed mind.

**TRANS** The second struggle where Christ will provide supreme is in...

**2. The struggle to guard against deceptive ideologies, philosophies, teachings, and practices. .4**

*<sup>4</sup>I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.*

There is a very practical reason to renew your mind in Jesus because there is plenty of confusion in this world to darken it. The Evil One is constantly proposing and propagating ideologies that oppose the counsel of God's Word, philosophies that twist, skew and pervert the truth, teachings that deceive, and practices that entangle one in sin. We live in a time when mental health crisis is at an all-time high. But this is no surprise, because for decades we've been talking about the illiteracy of God's Word. And not just in the world, but in the church among those who claim the Name of Jesus Christ. When people don't know the truth, they don't believe in nothing but buy into everything. [When the light of truth is absent, the dark of deception fills the void.](#)

There are two primary sources one must guard against, false teachings and false teachers. False teachings oppose the truth of God's Word. But the challenge is that they often start with God's Word, refer to it, or even use it to promote their wrong teaching. In the same way, false teachers also claim to represent God, even using His Word, only in a way that is not consistent with Biblical truth. They always hold enough truth to sound convincing, but substitute glory away from Christ onto some other object, usually the favor of others upon themselves. Charm is their key quality because they capture your attention and amuse you before they twist their message to deceive you. They promise a greater blessing but only harm by deeper deception. The second source comes from a false testimony. Like false teaching / teachers, a false testimony deceives by centers on the individual and the counsel they give to you from their experience.

**APPL** We live in an age where we have forsaken the value of critical thinking and idolized therapeutic thinking. We don't ask, "Is this true?" Or "Why does this matter?", but instead we draw conclusions by asking, "How does this make me feel?" Truth is now determined by how one feels above the objective reality of the data. Hence, truth become individualized as "my truth" and "your truth". Emotions have moved from a thermometer of life that measures what is going on within to provide self-correction to now become the prescription for life that determines the reality we are to pursue, and demand everyone else comply. Demanding an emotion and looking to your feelings to fix you is classic addiction, where you are controlled by substance and situation above what is real and truthful. This is why the plethora of worldly ideologies and philosophies today are so widespread, because we have become fools, people who live as if there is no God, so they make a god of everything in their heart.(Psalm 14:1)

You are most susceptible to deception with the topics or subject matters that most deeply resonate with your heart. They tell you what you want to hear to win you, guide you to their end to deceive you, and harm you by taking what they need from you. They often use the good things that are important for our life, like relationships, to recreation, to self discovery and care, to good causes, and promise a better outcome. But they are the only one that gets a better outcome as they steal from and harm the one they deceive. [The struggle to guard against deceptive ideologies, philosophies, teachings, and practices will remain in this world, and change to become even more deceptive, but they will not overcome if you remain fully submitted to Christ.](#)

**3. The struggle for spiritual discipline that produces transformation into Christlikeness. .5**

*For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.*

Paul's desire was to see a people who were standing firm in their faith in Jesus. "Good order" and "firmness of faith" are military terms. The image represents a soldier who has learned the discipline necessary to sharpen his skill in all areas so he can continue to implement them as he advances up in rank and responsibility.

Maturity in the Christian life best observed in the one who has ceased from the wavering between two worlds, who is standing on the promises of God's Word by the power of Holy Spirit for their life. This isn't a perfect person, nor one who has ceased from the struggle with sin. Rather, it is one who remembers sin's deception, hurt, and pain, and how it deceives



to want it no more, and has learned to recognize sin's temptation so to fight it where it "buds" instead of where it "blooms". Spiritual growth never happens by accident and must continue to produce what is intended by it. Paul lays this out in Colossians 3, where he begins by teaching how we deal with sin; some we "put to death" to be done for good (.5), some we "put away" continually every day(.8), and all so that we can "put on"(.12) the righteousness that is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul writes to the Philippians, he tells them of spiritual discipline when he says, "*Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.*"(Philippians 3:12) Spiritual discipline is not about walking in perfection, but in renewal whereby we take captive the dark thinking of sin that leads to sinful destruction and submit it to the truth of Jesus Christ.(2 Corinthians 10:5) By the gospel, God makes you "new" to walk in the glorious light of His truth. **Maturity reminds us that the righteousness we have been given from God in Jesus Christ is our true reward!**

**4. The struggle for godly living that proves Christ's supremacy and produces greater thanksgiving in all. .6-7**

*<sup>6</sup>Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

The whole of the Christian life is learning to walk in Jesus Christ just as you received life in Him, by faith. As we walk in Him, we are built up and established in Him. Being established in Jesus Christ does not mean faith is no longer necessary, but now less resisted and more relied upon. Faith never gets easier because it always demands trust in submitting to Him to obey. But remembering Christ's faithfulness motivates our faith toward the reward He gives, above the result sin leaves. The more you walk by faith in Jesus, the more He abounds in your life, the deeper He resides and works in you, the greater He works through you, the more you long for Him and His righteousness in you, the more of Him that overflows from you.

**Jesus Christ is supreme as Lord and He calls people to live in full submission to become like Him.**

**CLOSE** Yes, Paul the Apostle struggled for it, and you will struggle through it, but Christ will prove supreme through it. But you will either submit to follow Jesus Christ by faith, or you will be subject to every wind of deception this world offers.

I invite you to "struggle toward Christlikeness" in the way God intended for every Christian, with other Christians through Covenant Membership in a local church. NAVigation Series – THIS Saturday, May 18, 8:30-11:30Am, to learn our Core theology, the Christ-follower as a new creation, and the Culture of our church.

**TRANS** to Lord's Supper

