

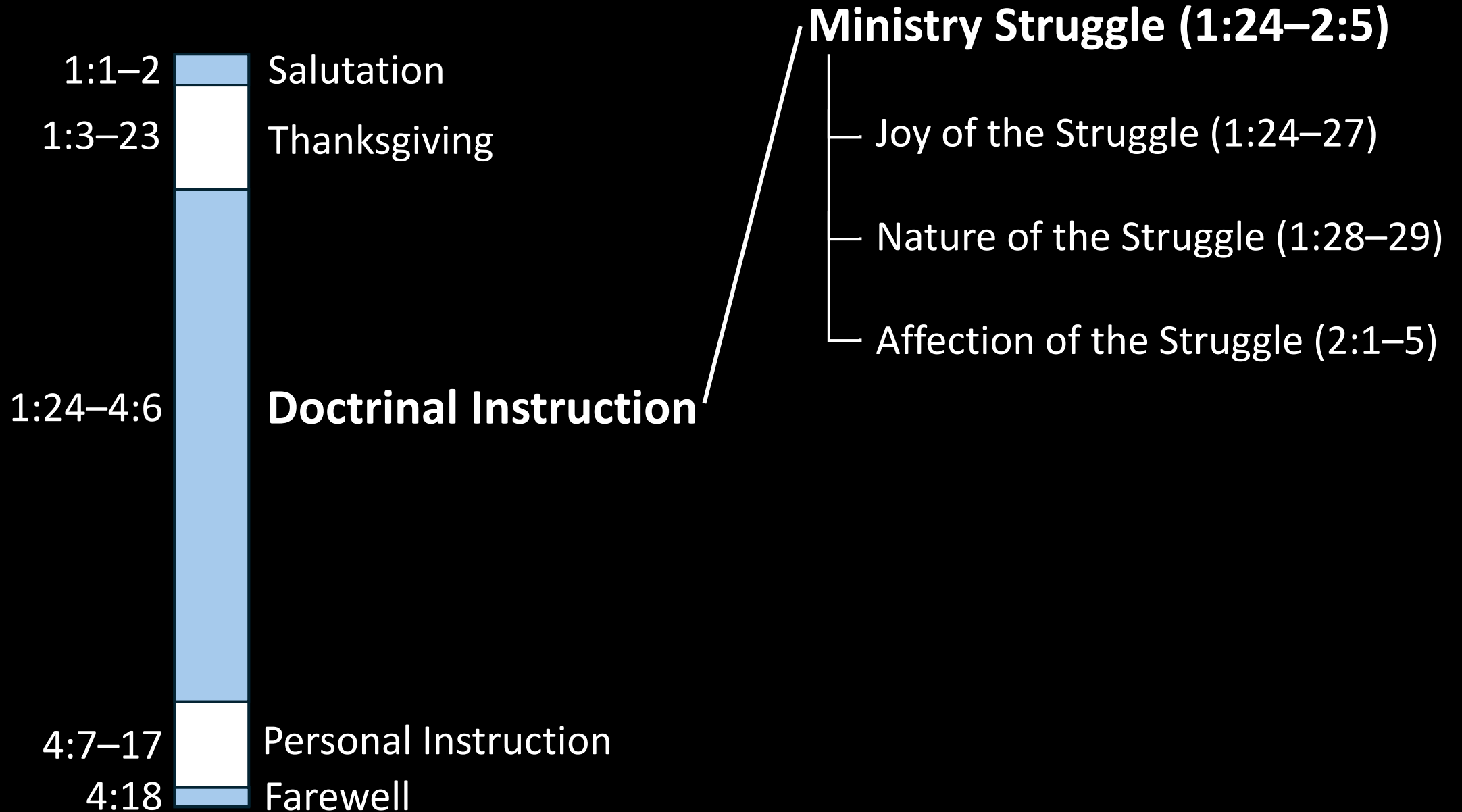
*Christ over All:
Paul's Letter
to the Colossians*

“The Nature of
the Struggle”

Colossians 1:28–29



THE OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS



TEXT – COLOSSIANS 1:28–29

“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

I. The Content of Ministry

II. The Method of Ministry

III. The Breadth of Ministry

IV. The Skill of Ministry

V. The Purpose of Ministry

VI. The Requirement of Ministry

VII. The Energy of Ministry

I. The Content of Ministry (1:28)

“We proclaim Him admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”

- Literally, **“whom we proclaim”**; the use of the pronoun adds a beautiful simplicity to Paul’s summary statement.
- The pronoun points back to the end of v. 27 to a *who*, not a *what*: **“Christ in you, the hope of glory”**; Paul preaches *a Person*!
- The pronoun points even further back to the great confession of Christ that began in v. 13 (“His beloved Son”) and reached a climax in vv. 15–22; it also points forward to 2:3, 9–15.

- **1 Corinthians 1:22–24** – “For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”



- **1 Corinthians 2:2** – “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”
- **2 Corinthians 4:5** – “For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake.”
- When Christ is proclaimed, there is no room for competing ideologies: *self, the world, philosophies, politics, programs, etc.* (see Colossians 2:4, 8, 16–23).

II. The Method of Ministry (1:28)

“We **proclaim** Him, **admonishing** every man and **teaching** every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”



- “**Proclaim**” – “to make known in public, with implication of broad dissemination”; emphasizes that a message *must* be authoritatively declared to *all people*.



- “**Admonishing**” – “to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct”; emphasizes *warning* and *correction*.



- “**Teaching**” – “to provide instruction”; the necessary explanation of that which was announced; emphasizes the systematic communication of knowledge.

“The preacher comes with good news; but he does not come with something to be trifled with. His message has an insistent demand, because he comes from a King.”

—G. Campbell Morgan, *Preaching*, 13



III. The Breadth of Ministry (1:28)

“We proclaim Him, admonishing **every man** and teaching **every man** with all wisdom, so that we may present **every man** complete in Christ.”

- “**Every man**” – repeated three times to emphasize *universality*; this ministry pertained to *each and every one* whom God brings in.
- Paul may hint here of one of the problems of the Colossian heresy: *religious elitism*—the idea that only certain individuals who attained a level of knowledge/maturity were worthy of attention.
- Later, Paul denounces those who were seeking to divide by *legalism* (2:16–17), *mysticism* (2:18–19), and *asceticism* (2:20–23).



“There are no heights in Christian attainment which are not within the reach of all, by the power of heavenly grace.”

—F. F. Bruce, *Colossians*, 87

IV. The Skill of Ministry (1:28)

“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”

- With such authority connected with this ministry (proclamation, admonishment, teaching), abuse could easily result.
- **“With all wisdom”** – the means by which this ministry is implemented.
- **“Wisdom”** refers here to *skill* or *know-how*.
- That it is **“all wisdom”** indicates the extent to which this skill is needed; sometimes admonishment is needed, sometimes teaching is needed.

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,
with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another
with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

—Colossians 3:16

The advice of Ignatius (died AD 108?) to Polycarp (AD 69–155)
about skill in ministry:

“Every kind of wound is not healed with the same plaster.”

“Mitigate [the pain of] cutting by tenderness.”

V. The Purpose of Ministry (1:28)

“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, **so that** we may **present every man complete** in Christ.”

- “**So that**” – introduces the *purpose* for the proclamation that is done through admonishment and teaching.
- “**To present complete**” – points to a future readiness to stand before the Father; see 1:22, where Christ’s redemption has this same purpose.
- “**In Christ**” – the context—the only one—in which this presentation can be made.



Ultimate Agency:
Christ's Work
(Col 1:22)

Intermediate Agency:
Man's Work (Col 1:28)

**THE BELIEVER'S
PRESENTATION
BEFORE THE
FATHER**

VI. The Requirement of Ministry (1:29)

“For this purpose also **I labor**, **striving** according to His power,
which mightily works within me.”

- “**I labor**” – a strong verb that means “to exert oneself physically, mentally, or spiritually”; a *continuous* activity that is *wearisome*; Paul’s favorite way for describing ministry (e.g., Rom 16:6, 12; 1 Cor 4:12; 1 Tim 4:10).
- “**Striving**” – describes the *wearisome labor*; the verb was used to describe athletic competitions as well as engagements in literal or figurative battles (see 4:12).



“His apostolic work did not rest with the conversion of his hearers. That was a beginning; the end would not be reached until the day of Christ, and the quality of his ministry would then be tested by the quality and maturity of those whom he could present as his spiritual children.

What joy would be his if they were genuine and worthy believers; what shame if they were not! No wonder that he toiled and agonized for their growth in grace with this day of review and reward before him.”

—F. F. Bruce, *Colossians*, 88

“The minister’s work debilitates nature;
like the candle, he wastes while he shines.”

—William Gurnall



VII. The Energy of Ministry (1:29)

“For this purpose also I labor, striving **according to His power,**
which mightily works within me.”

- “**According to His power**” – literally, “**according to His working**”; ἐνέργεια, *energeia*—always used of supernatural power (see 2:12; Eph 1:19; 3:7); although it is Paul who strives, it is God that works.
- “**Which mightily works**” – literally, “**which works in power**”; a word-play with the previous word, emphasizing divine operations.
- “**Within me**” – i.e., “within my laborious striving”; the sphere of these divine operations.

“You forget, Mr. Livingstone, there are two of us working.”

—Charles Spurgeon

Application



- ✓ Do you know Christ well enough to proclaim Him? / Do you hunger to know Him such that you demand Him proclaimed?
- ✓ Is it your ultimate priority in the church to build others up in Christ? / Is it your ultimate priority in the church to be built up?
- ✓ Are you being spent joyfully for the sake of Christ and others? Are you particularly thankful for those who spend their lives on you?