

# Colossians

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[ 0 : 0 0 ] with the Lord's help and blessing I will continue upon the first chapter of the epistle of Paul to the Colossians reading the eleventh verse strengthened with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness the first chapter of the epistle to the Colossians the eleventh verse strengthened with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness my friends whatever there is any evidence any real spiritual evidence of the grace of God in any it is an occasion for thanksgiving and for prayer it is so with regard to ourselves personally if we have any real good ground to believe that the Lord has imparted to our otherwise so dead and desolate and barren hearts any measure of his grace and love we ought to be very thankful for it very because it might not have been so we might have been left to our own way and our own will and our own spirit and unhindered left to go the narrow way to eternal ruin and if we are not in that way if our steps are in the way of life if there is in our hearts by the grace of God any measure of faith and love to him or we ought to be thankful for it for it's all of his unmerited sovereign purpose towards us and so we ought to pray we ought to pray for ourselves because if the Lord has given us any measure of grace

Mark however small it may seem to us to be still we ought to pray that the Lord will give more grace and if it seems not very clear to us whether the Lord has ever really given us grace still a good reason to pray that he will make it clear that he has and increase the measure of his grace in our hearts no one has enough grace no one we all need more and as we need more grace he giveth more grace love if the Lord has given us any measure at all of that pure and holy and heavenly love which is of his very nature we ought to pray for more love that is our great need more love that we might walk in love bring forth the fruits of love manifest its spirit and enjoy its blessedness if the Lord has taught us anything by his good spirit of his truth of himself we ought to pray that the Lord will deepen in our hearts his holy and his gracious teaching if we know anything at all spiritually and savingly that's a blessing but there's much that we don't know yet and what we do we only know in a very poor way comparatively with what real knowledge of God and of Jesus

Christ and of the gospel really is so I might go on now if you can feel the Lord has done anything for you be thankful for it be thankful for it never cease to praise his name if he has shown you his mercy and then pray pray for more and so it is of course with regard to others wherever you can see any evidence of grace there's something to be thankful for and I cannot understand any spiritually minded person not being thankful to see the grace of God in anyone and even though it may seem as though it's only so to speak a spark of grace still there is something for us to concentrate our prayers upon be thankful for any evidence of the grace of God and then pray that it might be more evident one of that was exactly how the apostle felt with regard to the believers at

Colossae as soon as he heard of their faith in Jesus Christ and loved all the saints the first thing he did was to give thanks for him and then to pray and it is upon his prayer that we are at this time engaged in our meditation looking over it again quietly and privately I was struck with two features of it and that is first how comprehensive it is in a comparatively few expressions the apostle inspired as he was by the holy ghost of course comprehends so much he prays that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will that they might walk worthy of the Lord that they might be fruitful that they might increase in knowledge that they might be strengthened with might and so on and another thing also that impressed my mind is that not only is this prayer so comprehensive in general but it's so comprehensive in every particular have you noticed you probably haven't how often the apostle uses that little word all in this prayer that he might that he might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing strengthened with all might unto all patience

I must say that the more I am able to ponder over the scriptures the more full they seem to be to my mind there seems so much that we read in the scriptures and yet don't really pause to look into now apostle's prayer is very comprehensive means it embraces so much and as I spoke on the tenth verse the other Sunday evening and some of the friends have not heard that discourse I'll just explain that tenth verse briefly again this morning and then come to the verse I've read for our present subject that he might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing as I said this seems a very high standard to take to set up to walk worthy of the Lord for it might seem to us that nothing in us and nothing in our war could ever be worthy of the

[ 10 : 24 ] Lord well nothing can be worthy of the Lord in a meritorious sense but in another sense yes it can be worthy of the Lord for that is worthy of the Lord brethren that in any degree evidences and manifests his own spirit now not to enlarge on this I'll just mention it this way now we walk worthy of the Lord when we walk worthy of his love and we walk worthy of the Lord's love when we walk in love to walk in love in the spirit of it and exercise of it to walk in love is to walk worthy of the

Lord's love not a worthiness that means we merit his love but it's a worthiness of suitability the Lord is very gracious now we walk worthy of the Lord when we walk in a gracious spirit and a gracious spirit is humble and me and kind and tender now if you walk in a gracious spirit then you walk worthy of the Lord because he is so gracious we walk worthy of the Lord's compassion toward us when we show and manifest compassion one toward another so I might go on and demonstrate this that to walk worthy of the Lord is to walk according to his own love and grace and compassion and kindness and this is pleasing it is pleasing in the sight of God it is pleasing in the sight of his people and in a certain sense it's pleasing in the sight of the world for thereby at least we adorn the doctrine of God our saviour to be fruitful in every good work every good work it means every good work that is appointed for us to do and to do that from a good motive and principle and with a good objective end that's a good work and to increase in the knowledge of God means for the knowledge of

God to be deeper in our hearts than it is to have clearer understanding of his divine name and nature and to increase in the knowledge of God is to so increase in the knowledge of God that our desires and affections are drawn out more towards his blessed name that's to increase in the knowledge of God well I just mentioned that to give connection to the subjects now the apostle goes on strengthened with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness this text gives me occasion to speak somewhat upon our need of being strengthened and the way in which the Lord does strengthen as we need and then the end and purpose for which he strengthens it is unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness now I hope that this word will be profitable it may be that this word is especially suitable to some here this morning is there anyone listening to me feeling perhaps in some special way their weakness anyone feeling low in spirit is it with anyone that things seem to have got you down as we say sometimes and you hardly know how to go on any longer are you feeling as though you're at the end of your strength and unless the Lord appears for you and strengthens you you really hardly know how you can go on any longer is anyone feeling like that this is the word of the

Lord for you this morning it really is strengthened with all might that's exactly what you need and in as much as it is often the Lord's way to strengthen by his word applying its truth to our hearts I hope he might grant a blessing that way today but even if you're not in any special need of this word still we always need it we need the Lord to be continually strengthening us we feel our strength decays unless unless our souls are failed and to attempt an entrance into the substance of the word

I might take a few minutes to dwell upon our need of being strengthened for our case and our need is the background in us for all that the Lord does in the way of grace and mercy for our good our own case is the background his mercy his goodness his favor his grace that stands in the front but our own needy case is always the background to and there needs to be that background in our own experience of things now if we never have any heavy sense of sin we shall never have any blessed sense of mercy if we never have any sense of weakness we shall never have any experience of being strengthened you see our natural condition is the background in us and in our experience as we feel it against which the Lord's goodness and grace does appear so blessed to us and is sometimes so sweetly felt in our hearts now we need to be strengthened and we need to be strengthened for these reasons first because spiritually considered we have no strength inherent in ourselves that we can depend upon no reserves of strength except the

[ 19 : 11 ] Lord supplies us that we can draw on we have natural strength of course for natural things to some extent that we can pour back upon but not spiritually it is a feature of every spiritual experience to be absolutely dependent on the Lord and very much so with regard to our spiritual strength and it's where that it should be so it really is because whatever we have if we could have anything inherently in the way of strength in ourselves it would so far make us independent of the

Lord's supporting hand it would rob us of many many gracious interventions of the Lord in helping us in times of need if we could help ourselves the Lord's way with his children is to weaken their strength he permits many things to come upon them to this end to make them feel how weak they are the psalmist said he weakened my strength in the way he weakened we have no strength in ourselves and we come to know itself especially at times there are special times in our experience when we feel very weak for instance sometimes our mind becomes burdened and depressed we sink down in our spirit we can't help it whether it may be from the constitution of our mind or the effects of things on our mind there are times when we sink into a very heavy depression and feel our weakness we just cannot throw it off or rise above it there are times too when we feel very weak in a sense of frustration and failure that makes us feel very weak success as we usually speak of the term is very invigorating to us failure is very weakening very frustrating when we are left to that healing we know how weak we are in it how it weakens us now

Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves but we shouldn't have thought it if it hadn't been recorded of Elijah that on one occasion his spirit failed him and fearless as the man appeared to have been he just ran away from Jezebel and went a three days journey into the wilderness and sat down under a juniper a tree lord he said take away my life it's no good there's no use battling any longer he said in his spirit I've been faithful I've declared thy truth I've stood for thy worship but it's no use they've killed thy prophets they've broken down thine altars and they seek my life to take it away lord it's no use

I can't battle on any longer it's done no good all my labours have done no good Elijah sank down into a state of utter and absolute depression and frustration and you would never have thought that a man like Elijah could ever come into a state of mind like that how compassionately the lord dealt with him for one thing he let him sleep for a while and even that somewhat relieves our nervous condition and then he woke him up and there was food provided for him which not only supplied his natural need was very symbolic of that the lord strengthened him in his spirit

Elijah came out of that experience my friends the lord does sometimes leave us to feel our weakness somewhat like that we find that we are like passions with others that no one look down upon a child of god if he is low in his spirit and burdened and depressed you may feel just the same presently just the same and find that you are a man of like passions for the very weakest of the lord's people you may indeed there are times too when in a special way we come into conflict with temptation and feel how weak we are to stand against it and overcome it temptation tries our strength and it isn't everyone who professes the gospel of

[ 26 : 07 ] Jesus Christ and so on it isn't everyone who professes the truth overcomes temptation there are some overcome by it it's too strong for them they fall by it but if we're not left to that which may God prevent lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil of it we know enough of temptation to feel how weak we are against the power and subtlety of the enemy times of temptation and conflict of mind cause us to feel how we need to be strengthened let me put the same matter to you in another light now we need to be strengthened not only because we are so inherently weak if we are left to ourselves and there are times when we are sadly and painfully conscious that we are so weak but a spiritual life and a spiritual pathway of itself in its very nature makes it that we need to be strengthened now when you read a promise like this and it's applicable still to those that fear

God thy shoes shall be iron and brass that doesn't suggest a very smooth path to walk does it and when it is added and as thy days so shall thy strength be plainly indicates that there will be days when we should live to be strengthened very much now it is not an easy path to walk that no one suppose that the way to heaven is an easy way and that they have strength enough to walk it themselves the word of God does not so express it to us does it one thing there's much we have to conflict with the good fight of faith is not fought without strength and it is a fight in which as I have said we shall be overcome and perish or we shall overcome and be victorious we must either win or lose we must either conquer or be defeated and doesn't seem sometimes as though it's a close issue it's a close issue oh there's no fighting without strength

I know that there are weapons in the gospel armory but we need strength to wield them there's no use putting a sword into a paralysed arm however sharp the weapon may be there must be strength to use it and there's no fighting a good fight of faith without spiritual vigor and then you have to consider further that the pathway is long to run the race that is set before us year in and year out needs strength and it needs perseverance an enthusiastic spurt is one thing but to continue patiently steadfastly running the race year after year after year after year that's another matter now unless the Lord strengthen us we shall get weary weary and weariness is dangerous be sure of that weariness is dangerous you say why dangerous it's dangerous for this reason when the way seems hard going and the mind gets weary there's such a tendency to look for an easier way a bypass meadow when the right way is rough and hard going and that may be a subtle temptation

I will tell you a temptation that can be very subtle this way and that's this when the way you are walking seems hard and the conflict sometimes trying and you think of others well they don't have all these exercises of mind they take everything simple and plain and easy they don't seem to have to wrestle on toward heaven like I do they don't seem burdened with fears and unbelief and if they get to heaven why shouldn't I seek an easier path but my friends how can you be sure they'll get to heaven how can you be sure with their easy religion they'll get to heaven you can't be sure can you well now we are in this as a temptation to us to seek an easier way is the cross heavy rugged to your spirit does it seem sometimes as though it's more than you can do to keep bearing it although

Jesus said if a man will come after me let him take up his cross and follow me do you feel sometimes as though you wish you could free yourself of it is there some some service or other some matter of obedience to God's word and God's will you feel it's too heavy matter for you to take up and fulfill you feel no I don't feel I can do that I can't face up to that has God a command to fulfill that your nature would shun well now in all these ways brethren we come to feel how much we need to be strengthened the answer to bearing the cross if it's hard and heavy is not to shun it but to be strengthened to bear it the way with regard to any spiritual duty obedience to the

[ 34 : 35 ] Lord's word and will in any matter that he set before you and laid on your mind if you feel that's more than you can do the answer is not to turn away your minds from it but to seek to be strengthened to do it if there's something very heavy in your heart perhaps even this morning you'll be glad to be freed from it a better way is to seek to be strengthened to bear it yes and I will tell you why because that cross may be the Lord's means of fitting you to bear the crown and that affliction that seems as though it's more than you can bear may well be the

Lord's way of working for you that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory never try and avoid the cross brethren you may lose the crown never think it would be better if you were free of your afflictions you may lose the preparation you need for a glory that's eternal well now in all these things and I think I've spoken sufficiently on that this morning I've set before you how we need to be strengthened now I must come for the few minutes I have left to show you how the Lord does strengthen now he does strengthen there's no question about that not only is it so set before us in his word but the innumerable demonstrations of it in the experiences of the people of

God if you were to read down with this in view the 11th chapter to the Hebrews you would see what I mean now we might think if it was not for one revealing sentence in that long list of the sufferings persecutions martyrdoms and the like that those heroes of the faith endured if it were not for one revealing sentence we might think they were people of a different caliber to what we feel to be they were not subject to the depressions and weaknesses that met our way sometimes so heavy going and make us feel so weak that the Holy Spirit put in inspired Paul to put in one sentence out of weakness were made strong out of weakness so every one of those instances demonstrates that the

Lord strengthens and strengthens those who feel so weak how does the Lord strengthen perhaps I ought to speak first of all a little of the strength itself or the way in which it is expressed to us in this verse strengthened with all might that is might of all kinds might suitable to all conditions and there's a great deal in that for as our needs to be strengthened are various so the way in which the Lord strengthens is various too that is to say he strengthens according to the particular need that we feel and for which we need to be strengthened all all might might of all kinds to meet all kinds of need all by all might we might even understand the all mightiness of God himself as though

God would say or the apostle would pray that God would strengthen with his own all mightiness let but thine own almighty arm sustain a feeble worm I shall escape secure from harm amidst the dreadful storm all might oh help he who is almighty can support and strengthen what is it to him to strengthen us why sayest thou Jacob and speakest to Israel my way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God has there not known has there not heard hath it not been told thee from the beginning that the everlasting

[ 40 : 32 ] God the Lord the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not neither is weary there is no searching of his understanding yes might Jacob say that's true enough I don't doubt that he is almighty but what of my case I'm weak dependent in a fainting state how does that help me that he is almighty when I'm so weak why saith the prophet to them that have no might he increaseth strength even even the youth shall faint and be weary and the young men shall utterly fall that is those who have strength inherent in themselves you know our natural strength in our youth is at its peak it reaches its peak and then it passes that and goes into a decline until our old age we never go back again to the peak of our natural strength you see the young men shall utterly fail but a child of

God never passes the peak of his strength because his strength is not in him it's in the Lord even the youth shall faint and be weary and the young men shall utterly fail but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not aim for he who is almighty can strengthen us according to his glorious power his glorious power how are we to understand that well I think in two ways when I have explained this

I must close this morning his glorious power for one thing everything that is of God is glorious there's a glory in it that is essentially his own glory glory it is glorious power because it is the power of such a glorious God as he really is for God is glorious no question about that beyond all thought to understand and beyond all words to express God is infinitely glorious but I feel the apostle in his prayer meant something more or something beside the power of God being glorious because it is his power who is so glorious himself but I believe he means his glorious power as it operated so gloriously in

Jesus Christ now everything of God that is glorious is manifested to us in Jesus Christ now that was a glorious power brethren that sustained Jesus Christ in his intense weakness wasn't it there was a glorious power that strengthened him in the garden to drink that bitter cup there was a glorious power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and there was a glorious power that exalted him to the right hand of the majesty above I believe that expression his glorious power means his power as it was gloriously manifested and demonstrated to us in

Jesus Christ and I want to close with this feeling this expression everything of God that operates in us through Jesus Christ has a glory in it from Jesus Christ himself if you can see what I mean the glory of God is Jesus Christ he is the essential brightness of the Father's glory the glory of God's love is Jesus Christ the glory of God's mercy and wisdom is Jesus Christ he is the glory of it and the glory of God's power is

[ 46 : 42 ] Jesus Christ now when the apostle Paul in that remarkable experience of his after being exalted to heaven in vision anyway was brought down again to earth and to himself and to his conflicts and to his weakness and to his thorn in the flesh and to his pleading with the Lord to take it away there came a word to him my strength is made perfect in weakness and who said that Jesus that was a word direct from Jesus Christ to him and that power that strengthened the apostle and was perfected not in its nature but in its operation in the apostles weakness was a glorious power to him because it was the power of a glorious saviour a glorious

Christ and that is his glorious power it is glorious brethren far above the glory of his power in creation and in every other manifestation of it the glory of the power of God is as it is in Jesus Christ and acts upon our poor hearts through and from Jesus Jesus in whom the Godhead raised be port with mildest majesty now if you and I my brethren have ever felt at all the power of Jesus Christ the power of his name his love his truth his grace if we've ever felt his power acting on our hearts we felt there was a glorious there was something glorious about him it was his glorious power strengthened with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness now in my measure

I do pray you may know this and that I may know it more God is my witness and my heart too that what the apostle prayed for the Colossians my heart prays for you and for myself thankful I feel where the grace of God appears and is appearing and I pray that God will fulfill all this prayer to you and in your experience and to his name will be all the praise and honor and glory forever amen amen