

June 11, 2006 by Steve Brandon



# The Christian Ministry

## Colossians 1:24-29

The Christian Ministry involves ...

1. Suffering (verse 24)
2. Serving (verse 25)
3. Proclaiming (verses 26-28)
4. Laboring (verse 29a)
5. Relying (verse 29b)

As I speak with people outside this church, I often find myself having a similar conversation with them. Like most men, I am often asked the question, "So, Steve, what do you do for a living." When I tell them that I am a pastor of a church, they often ask, "Which church?" And then, they often will ask me how long I have been in the ministry. It's at that point that I usually have the opportunity to tell them about the story of Rock Valley Bible Church: "The church started when I was living in DeKalb, doing computer work at a local hospital. I was very involved at Kishwaukee Bible Church, which is in DeKalb. Several families who attended this church were living here in Rockford. I would travel here to Rockford once each week to conduct a Bible Study, which, over the course of time, continued to grow. And then, the church in DeKalb sent me (and my family) to Rockford to formally begin Rock Valley Bible Church. This happened about six years ago." When I tell that story, the inevitable question often comes, "So, do you miss working in the computer world?" I find myself answering this question like this. I say, "Working with computers in the corporate world was a lot easier than the work that I am doing right now. When computers don't work, you simply reboot them. You turn them off and then you turn them on again. More often than not, they usually begin working correctly. But, with people, it's not quite that easy. You can't simply turn them off and turn them on again. With people, you need to care for them, love them, help them, serve them, lead them, guide them, and teach them. Furthermore, in the Christian ministry, the stakes are much higher. You're not dealing with machines and data which will all burn up someday. Rather, you are dealing with the eternal souls of people."

As we come to our text today (Colossians 1:24-29), we get a glimpse of the Christian Ministry, through the pen of Paul, who described what his life and ministry were all about. Consider our text ...

### Colossians 1:24-29

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 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.

With these words, Paul gives us five characteristics of his ministry, which ought to be typical of every man engages in Christian ministry. The first characteristic comes in verse 24. The Christian ministry involves ...

1. Suffering (verse 24)

Paul writes, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake." We won't take too much time this morning addressing this issue, as we spent an entire message on this single verse last Sunday. I simply say that suffering ought to be the expectation of every minister of Jesus Christ. The Psalmist said, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalm 34:19). Jesus told His disciples that the world would hate those who minister in His name. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you" (John 15:19).

It was prophesied of Jesus that He was "appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed" (Luke 2:34). Paul spoke of how the rise and fall of many come through the ministry of the gospel that is preached. He said, that some, the message comes as "an aroma from death to death" and for others it comes as "an aroma from life to death" (2 Cor. 2:16). Some like the gospel message and some don't. When people receive the gospel message, there is great joy in their receiving it. But, when people reject it, there is great pain and difficulty and discouragement. In light of such things, Paul said of the Christian ministry, "Who is adequate for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:16). Indeed, it is only the Lord who can give us joy in our sufferings.

The second characteristic of the Christian ministry is ...

2. Serving (verse 25)

Verse 25 reads, "[Of this church] I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God." Last week, we spent some time dwelling upon God's sovereign role in making Paul a minister of the church. It wasn't Paul's choice to be a minister of the church. God made Paul to be a minister of the church. This week, I want for us to focus upon the task to which Paul was assigned. He was assigned the task of being a "minister" of the church.

In the Greek, the word “minister” is diakonew (diakoneo), from which we get our English word, “deacon.” It fundamentally has this idea of service. In fact, it is often translated, “servant.” For instance, In Acts 6, it describes the serving of tables (Acts 6:1), the giving of food to others, who are waiting to be fed. In John 12:2, it is used of Martha, who was serving food to the guests in her home. Jesus used this word to describe the complete dedication of Himself to the task the Father called Him to do: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

The picture of a servant is of one who gives of himself for the benefit of others. That’s the word that Paul used to describe his relationship to the church. Paul considered himself to be one who did what needed to be done for the wellbeing of the church. In this sense, Paul was made a “minister.” He was made to be a servant of the church. The church didn’t exist for Paul. Paul existed for the church.

The other phrases that Paul chooses in this verse all help to reinforce this same idea. Paul was made a minister “according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me.” Let’s first consider this term, “stewardship.” Literally, this is describing the “law of the house.” There is a master who owns the house. But, in his absence, or in his involvement in other matters, he delegates the responsibility of administering the law of the house to a steward. The steward doesn’t own the house. The steward is simply given responsibility over the house.

Some of you young girls may be in the habit of babysitting for other families, who need an older, responsible person to watch over their children. As the parents debrief you on where the food is and where the pajamas are and what time bedtime is, you are a steward of the house. You may have some authority, as the apostle Paul did, but fundamentally, you are merely in the house to help carry out the rules and procedures established by the parents of the home.

Paul saw his ministry as simply this. God had called him to be a steward of the household of God, the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). He was to take care of the church, not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of those in the church.

Paul makes clear his focus upon the well being of others in verse 25 with the words, “for your benefit.” He was in it for the good of those in the church. His toil and his labor and his struggle and his imprisonment were for the good of others!

This is Christian ministry. It is self-sacrifice to carry out the plan of God for the sake of others. How different this is than the way of the world. Jesus said, ...

Matthew 20:25-28

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Those in the world would seek to make themselves great by lifting themselves above everyone else and seeking to make others do work for them. But, this is not Biblical ministry. The Christian ministry is one of service and of self-sacrifice.

Let you think that these words are only applicable to those given to full-time Christian ministry, please realize that such a perspective is required of us all. Just as a pastor is given to service, so also are the members of the church to be given to service as well. Peter told the scattered churches, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet. 4:10-11). In other words, God has given us all a measure of grace that we are responsible to employ in the service of others.

The Christian ministry involves ..

### 3. Proclaiming (verses 26-28)

This is the core of all Christian ministry: proclaiming Christ. At the end of verse 25, Paul spends a bit of time describing what his ministry would entail. It’s nothing more than making known what the Lord had revealed to him concerning Jesus. He said, “that I might fully carry out [the preaching] of the word of God, [that is], the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has not been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:25b-27).

The task that the Lord had given to Paul was the task of taking what the Lord had revealed to him and making it known to the world. He calls this revelation, “the mystery.” When you hear this word, don’t think about Sherlock Holmes or Nancy Drew or Agatha Christie, who investigate murders or thefts or other strange behaviors that have taken place. Rather, when you hear “mystery,” think about a turn of good fortune that was totally unanticipated.

Think about your uncle, who you barely knew. He lived half-way across the country. You remember seeing him perhaps twice. Well, he recently died, and left a large estate to you. Why he gave you so much, well, ... “it’s a mystery.” Think about the phone call you received from another company, requesting you to come and work for them, for three times the salary that you are now receiving. Sure, things at work weren’t going too well. But, you weren’t really thinking about leaving. How they heard about you and why they offered you the job, well ... “it’s a mystery.” Think about the letter that you received in the mail. It’s from your father, who had purchased some stock for you some 20 years ago, planning to give it to you when you got older. He purchased 100 shares of Microsoft at its IPO price of \$21 in 1986. Now, those hundred shares are worth \$800,000. It’s all yours. Why your father sent you the letter today, well, ... “it’s a mystery.”

This is like the mystery that Paul is describing. He describes an unforeseen good fortune that brings incredible blessings. “From the past ages and generations” this mystery was hidden. But now (Paul wrote of his generation) the mystery had been revealed to His saints (verse

26). What exactly is this mystery? It comes at the end of verse 27. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." When Paul says, "Christ in you," he's talking about "Christ in the Gentiles."

These Gentiles had no clue that such good news was coming upon them. They knew of the Jewish people. They might have heard something about their Messiah. But, they didn't know all of what the Messiah was going to do for the Jews. Little did they anticipate the abundance of blessings that they would receive through the Jewish Messiah. But now, these Gentiles were recipients of a far greater treasure than an inheritance or a great job or original Microsoft stocks could ever be. They received, "Christ in [them]."

It's not by accident that I have attempted to describe the manner of this mystery using financial metaphors, of unbelievable windfall to you. Paul speaks about the "riches" of God, which are His to make known. Look at verse 27, "God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles." Over in chapter 2, when he speaks of the mystery again, he will again use a financial metaphor. He writes, "... resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2b-3).

Words are vain when attempting to describe exactly how marvelous and wonderful this news actually is. But, I try. There is one little phrase that describes this mystery. It is found at the end of verse 27. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

#### **Jesus Christ, ...**

The One in whom "all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col. 2:9). The One who created the entire universe (Col. 1:16). The One who sustains the universe (Col. 1:17). The One who rules and reigns over every creature (Col. 1:16). The One who "will come to have first place in everything" (Col. 1:18).

#### **Jesus Christ ... in you**

Jesus Christ has come to dwell among us. As He is in us, we are partakers of everything that Jesus Christ is. We are the benefactors of everything that Jesus Christ has done. Was Jesus crucified? Because He is "in us," our sin was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14, 20). Was Jesus made alive? Because He is "in us," we too were made alive together with Him (Col. 2:13).- Was Jesus now exalted to the right hand of God? We too have been raised up with Him (Col. 3:1). Will Jesus someday be revealed for all the world to see as the sovereign king over all? We too will share in His inheritance (Col. 1:12).

#### **Jesus Christ in you, ... the hope of glory.**

Apart from Jesus Christ, we have no hope. But, in Jesus Christ, we have a hope of entering into glory. We saw this hope in verses 12-14. Jesus Christ has qualified us to share in the inheritance of His kingdom (Col. 1:12). Jesus Christ has rescued us (Col. 1:13). Jesus Christ has transferred us into His kingdom (Col. 1:13). Jesus Christ has redeemed us from our sins (Col. 1:14). Jesus Christ has forgiven us of all our sins (Col. 1:14). Jesus Christ ... in you ... the hope of glory.

We have intimate connections with the God of the universe. In Him our sins are wiped away. In Him, we will enjoy the His presence someday. This is the message that Paul preached. This is the message that we preach. We preach Jesus Christ. We preach Jesus Christ and all of the fullness of the implications of His work. We preach Jesus Christ and the resultant blessings that will come upon you if you but believe in Him. We preach Jesus Christ and the terrible consequences of refusing to believe. Jesus Christ is your biggest hope. And if you refuse him, He is your biggest threat. He is returning someday as judge and will set all things in order (Acts 17:30-31).

So crucial and central is Jesus to our faith that he consumes our proclaiming ministry Look at verse 28 and see how Paul puts it. He says, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ." Notice that we aren't preaching some special philosophy (Col. 2:8). Notice that we aren't preaching religious ceremonies or rituals (Col. 2:16). Notice that we aren't preaching certain statutes and rules that you need to follow (Col. 2:18). Notice that we aren't preaching some type of religious experience (Col. 2:18). Notice that we aren't preaching how you to keep from being defiled (Col. 2:21). No, ... we are preaching a person, who is all you need. There is nothing more than you need than Jesus. There is nothing less than you need than Jesus. You need Him.

Colossians 1:28 could easily be a theme verse for Rock Valley Bible Church: "We proclaim Him!" As a church, we will continue to place Jesus Christ always before us, as our grand hope. And we will do so joyfully, because of the greatness of the what awaits us. In Him we have "hope of glory."

Have you believed upon the name of the Lord Jesus? Have you embraced Him? Have you come to the end of yourself and realized that you have no hope in this life? Have you come to the point where you realize that Jesus Christ is your only hope. I admonish you to believe upon Him. Week after week after week after week, we assemble as a church to be reminded of the greatness and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Week after week after week from this pulpit, you hear teaching that is centered upon Him. We can't ever stop. Why? ... because we have a goal. As Paul said, we want to "present every man complete in Christ." Paul is describing the day when pastors of churches will present the people of their congregations before the Lord.

This is graduation season. I trust that quite a few of you have been to either a graduation or a graduation party for a friend or relative of yours. At some point during the graduation ceremony, a person will normally stand at the podium and announce how all of the people in front of him are being presented as candidates for receiving their diploma. They are being presented to the board, who has the authority to give the diploma to them. This is similar to the time that Paul envisions in the future for every pastor of a church. There will be a day when each and every pastor will stand before Jesus to present each and every one of those involved in the congregation as candidates for the kingdom. The only way to be presented as worthy is by being "complete in Christ." That is, by believing in Jesus Christ, alone for one's salvation, apart from his works.

At this point, I would like to read a verse from the end of Hebrews that is describing the same event. This verse is ever before me as a pastor of this church. The writer admonishes the people of the church to "Obey your leaders, and submit [to them]; for they keep watch over your

souls, as those who will give an account" (Hebrews 13:17). You may find the first half of this verse to be a bit difficult: "Obey your leaders, and submit [to them]," especially as you know us to be sinful men. But, as a leader in the church, I find the last half of this verse to be difficult: "They keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account."

There will be a day in which I will stand before Jesus. Surely, of first importance, He will deal with my own sins, first. If I have an opportunity to speak before the Lord, I will tell him that I deserve to be sent to hell for my sins, and that He would be totally just to condemn me on that day. However, I will also say to him, "Lord, you promised that all who place their trust in Jesus Christ will be forgiven of their sins. I have trusted in Him. He purchased my redemption upon the cross." I trust that He will allow me to enter into the kingdom on that basis.

But, as a pastor of a church, I won't be able to enter the gates just yet. I have other souls for which I will have to give account. I will have to account for those in this church. And so, as each of you stand before the Lord, I will be present for your trial. It will be my eternal delight for each and every one of you to stand before the Lord and give similar testimony to Jesus. "Lord, I know that I have sinned. I have not lived as I ought to live. Like Steve, over there, I deserve to be condemned to hell. However, he has faithfully taught me that those who trust in Christ will be forgiven of their sins. I know that it wasn't his own teaching, because it all came straight from the pages of the Bible. I claim the righteousness of Jesus Christ."

It will be my horror for one of you to stand before the Lord and say something like this: "Lord, I'm thankful that you didn't make me like many of the world's sinners. I was born into a righteous family. I was faithful in my attendance at Rock Valley Bible Church. I even attended a Flock and went to the prayer meeting. I tithed faithfully of all that I received. I was faithful in my Bible reading. I even went on a few missions trips to spread your name. Please let me into your kingdom" (Luke 18:9-14; Matt. 7:21-23).

Should one of you come to stand before the Lord with such a testimony, the Lord may well turn to me and say, "Steve, do you know this man?" I will have to confess, "Yes, I do." God may then ask, "Did he attend your church?" Again, I will have to confess, "Yes, he did." He will say, "Have you heard his testimony he just gave to Me now?" "Yes," I will say. And then will come the most difficult question of all. "How is it that he has come to give a testimony that trusted in his own righteousness? Did you know that he believed these things? Did you teach him these things? If not, what sort of efforts did you make to persuade him away from such beliefs?" I will have to give an account for his soul before the throne of God. This is what Hebrews 13:17 teaches. This is the day that Colossians 1:28 anticipates. This is why Paul says that Christ is what he constantly proclaims and teaches. It is in Christ that he constantly admonished people to believe.

How I long to be able to say what the apostle Paul said to the elders of the church of Ephesus, ... "You ... know, from the first day that I set foot in [Rockford], how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me; ... I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to [all ...] of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ... I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. [including this man standing before you, Lord] For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.... night and day for a period of [fifty] years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."

I look at Paul's words and shrink in fear of the awesome responsibility that is given to leaders of the church to proclaim Christ to everyone. It's far more than merely standing up on Sunday mornings and saying a few words. It means getting into your life. It means being with you. It means seeking to know each and everyone personally. Notice how personal Paul's words are. He says, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ."

I received an email from someone in the congregation this week that expressed this idea a bit in some great words. He was talking about how I need to be a spiritual man, engaging people in the word and prayer as an encouragement to the spiritual life. He suggested a few ways to do this. He said, ...

Before church, find someone [maybe a couple of guys] ... and pull him/them aside and ask if he/they would pray with you before the service [specifically for the upcoming service]. Just a quick 2-3 minute time huddled in a corner somewhere. After church, find someone ... and ask them '... Could you do me a favor this week? Could you pray for this?' Like it or not, I think that we want to see you doing things like this, ... because we want to feel spiritually needed by you, just as much as we want to be spiritually led by you. I think we want some spiritual time with you. Just you on a personal level. No studying, no groups, just a pastor that needs us. Why? Because we need you! We need YOU, not just your teaching, preaching and leading. And at the same time, we continually push you away. Yeah, people are funny.

That's the type of thing that is needed. A pastor's role is to get to every single person in the congregation and admonish them and teach them. Public admonishment and teaching and leading is necessary, but personally work is needed as well. Some of my personal work this week involved counseling a family with a difficult circumstance. One on one with a straying sheep. Meeting with a future leader in the church. Helping a family to understand some things about the church. In addition to this, there were the usual assortment of emails and phone calls. Having been a pastor of this church now for several years, I know how difficult it is, especially as we have grown in numbers. I know how much I am failing in these things. Would you pray for me in these things? I want to grow in this area, but I need divine help.

The Christian Ministry involves ...  
4. Laboring (verse 29a)

Paul writes, "For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (verse 29a).

Two words in this passage describe the intensity of the work. Paul first says that he labors. The Greek word here describes a labor to the point of fatigue. The pastoral work is fatiguing work. The second word that Paul uses in this verse is translated as "striving." The Greek word here is *agwnizomenoV* (*agonizomenos*), from which we get the word, "agony." The pastor's work is an agonizing work of labor.

Did you know that the pastor's work is never finished? If you frame a building, you can see the physical process of the building going up. If you program computers, you can see the computer do what it's supposed to do. If you work on cars, you can see them come in with a rattle and go out of your garage running smoothly. But, if you are pastoring a church, your work seemingly never ends. There are always things to do. I never lack something to do. You can ask my wife how many times we put the children to bed and I head out to the office to do something that I didn't quite get to during the day.

Perhaps you parents can relate. In raising your children, there are always things to do. They need to be fed. They need to have their faces wiped. They need to have their diapers changed. They need to have their clothes washed. They need to have their shoes tied. They need to have their bedding changed. They need to have their rooms cleaned. They need to have their behavior corrected. They need to be taught how to treat their brothers and sisters. They need to have their schooling in order. They need to have counsel and advice in dealing with their friends. They need to be taught how to use their free time. They need to be taught how to speak well. The list goes on and on and on and on.

Dealing with the church it is somewhat the same. Certainly, the maturity levels are different and the issues are different. Also, the amount of time that a pastor can spend with each of the people is significantly less. But, the spiritual well-being of others requires work. Just as a parent's work with his child is seemingly never done. The work of pastoring a church is seemingly never done. There is always another sermon to write. There is always another phone call to make. There is always another prayer to pray, scripture to memorize, book to read, service to plan, question to answer, email to send, function to attend, and note to write. There is the burden of the hurting family that is upon the heart. There is the strategic future of the church to plan. There is the next meeting to prepare for. From experience, I can tell you that the work that I don't get done can be a bit discouraging. This is why it is labor. Oh, it may not be physical labor, as many men who work outside and sweat do. But, its labor none the less.

Unless you can labor with joy and great desire for the work, the work will become overwhelming for you. I believe that such an understanding was behind the words of Charles Spurgeon, who was addressing his students about the difficulties of the Christian ministry. He said, ... "Do not enter the ministry if you can help it. ... If any student in this room could be content to be a newspaper editor, or a grocer, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a senator, or a king, in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way; he is not the man in whom dwells the Spirit of God in its fullness, for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants." <sup>[1]</sup>

Apart from the Spirit of God giving strength to the work, it's impossible. This leads me to my last point this morning. The Christian Ministry involves ...

#### 5. Relying (verse 29b)

I get this from the last phrase of verse 29, where Paul says that he labors, "striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."

Though Paul labored, and though Paul exerted himself mightily, He knew that there was a greater reality working within him that his strength alone. Paul knew that it was God who was at work within him to accomplish all that he needed to do. This same thing came up when he wrote to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul wrote that "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of [the apostles], yet not I, but the grace of God with me." On the one hand, Paul said that you could line up all of the 13 apostles in a line and say, "O. K. Which of these men labored the hardest for the Lord?" Without question, I believe that all of them would look to Paul and say that he did. But, Paul wouldn't be accepting any "hardest-working apostle" awards, as he knew where the strength came from. He said that it wasn't he that was laboring, rather it was "the grace of God with me" (1 Cor. 15:10).

You might ask, "How can this be?" I don't fully know. But, I do know that it is a reality. Ministers of the church of Christ are called to work hard in their labors. But, in their working, they are to do so according to the strength which God supplies. I believe that this is what Paul was getting at when he told Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1). "Be strong" in the ministry. But, don't "be strong" in your own might. "Be strong" in the grace of God. This is what Psalm 63:8 speaks of, "My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me." David said that he was clinging to the Lord. Yet, in reality, it was the Lord who was upholding him, and even causing him to grip the Lord with all of his might.

About a week ago, I was on the phone with another pastor. After a short conversation, we prayed for each other. In the midst of his prayer, he said, "O Lord, we have to be strengthened by you, or we simply won't make it." How true this is. "We have to be strengthened by you, or we simply won't make it." This is the Christian Ministry. The Christian Ministry involves (1) Suffering (verse 24); (2) Serving (verse 25); (3) Proclaiming (verses 26-28); (4) Laboring (verse 29a); and (5) Relying (verse 29b). And there is no other task to which I want to give my life, than to the task of shepherding this church. <sup>[2]</sup>

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 11, 2006 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] Charles Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, pp. 26-27.

[2] How appropriate it was for us to end the service by singing, "Lead On, O King Eternal," which was written by a Ernest Shurtleff in the late 1800's, shortly before he was to graduate from Andover Theological Seminary. His fellow students had asked him to write a hymn that they might sing on the day of their graduation. The first stanza describes the countless hours of preparation for the difficult work to come. Mr. Shurtleff also included how they would need to be strengthened by the grace of God. He wrote, ...

Lead on, O King Eternal, the day of march has come;  
Henceforth in fields of conquest Thy tents shall be our home.  
Thro' days of preparation, Thy grace has made us strong;

And now, O King Eternal, we lift our battle song.