

Colossians: Jesus is First | Week 11

COLOSSIANS 1:24-29

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, **25** of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, **26** the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. **27** To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. **28** Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. **29** For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Introduction

>> **Begin by reading 1:24-29**

For what do you TOIL? (v. 29)

What is it that you give your life for?

Obviously, HOPEFULLY, at whatever job you've been blessed to have or have had in the past... you work hard, as unto the Lord like Scripture commands... but think bigger than that.

What is it you *toil* for?

TOIL = work hard, often times doing things that are unpleasant that are set before you

IN OTHER WORDS:

What is the end game for you?

In the end, what do you want your work to have accomplished?

Notice, Paul works hard, he toils, but he relies on the strength of Jesus to help him accomplish it...

Paul's focus is the LAST DAY. (v. 28)

Paul has the final day in mind, he has the end in mind when he goes about his ministry...

His "eyes are on the prize"... for him, he looks to the last day and says, "I want everyone to be presented fully mature in Christ!" and "I'm proclaiming Jesus Christ so that it might happen..."

Let me ask... ***What does the LAST DAY look like for you?***

See, if you don't go about life and the tasks God has put before you with the end in mind, it will be really easy to shift and accomplish nothing...

You hear this a lot right now in the news with regard to the military operation in Libya...

What does the *last day* of work look like for you?

What does the *last day* you ever lay eyes on your children look like for you?

What does the *last day* of your marriage look like?

What does the *last day* when you stand before Jesus look like?

We focus way too much on the first day, and never give regard to the last day...

Keep those two questions at the forefront of your mind this morning as we work through this passage together.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:

1. **FOLLOW Jesus.**

>> READ v. 21ff

What does it look like to follow Jesus?

FDF:

Learn Continually

Worship Passionately

Love Selflessly

Give Sacrificially

Live Missionally

The mystery is that *YOU* (Gentiles) are able to follow Jesus and be saved – AND – that everyone is given the Holy Spirit.

v. 25 – “of which I became a minister” – what does that refer to in v.24?

God gave Paul a stewardship of the gospel, for the sake of the church

To make God's word fully known – revealing the mystery of Christ

Mystery = something you perceive, but don't fully understand.

Some sects of Christianity, and many cults, get wrapped up in this whole “mystery” piece, and basically make an idol of mysticism

Remember here that Paul has been commissioned by Jesus to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. And the mystery he speaks of is that Gentiles are included in God's plan! That Jesus died to save *all* who would believe, not just the Jews. This is a huge part of the mystery of the Gospel, and a key thing to understand when reading Paul's letters. Paul, a former Jewish scholar and rabbi, now goes out and says the gospel is for EVERYONE! And as we'll see later in Chapter 2, Paul is very clear that Jewish festivals and regulations and laws are no longer binding as they relate to salvation, rather they are simply a shadow of what was to come, namely JESUS!

Preaching Notes – Colossians 1:24-29

2. PROCLAIM Jesus.

v. 28 – *Him we proclaim.*

Francis of Assisi = “Preach the gospel, when necessary use words.”

You cannot fully proclaim Jesus without opening your mouth! ☺

The first three words of verse 28 pretty much sum up the purpose of our church. “Him we proclaim.” It’s all about Jesus.

WHO: Jesus

WHAT: Jesus

WHEN: Always

WHERE: Everywhere

WHY: to present everyone mature in Christ

HOW: Warning and teaching with wisdom

The primary issue must always be Jesus and his gospel. For as long as I’m a pastor here, the primary thing you will hear preached from this pulpit will be Jesus and his gospel. It’s why we’ll be selective about who we allow to come in and preach. It’s why we’re selective about who we allow to perform weddings in our church. — Because it’s all about Jesus. And if someone is going to come in and never mention the gospel, and or never proclaim Jesus — then they should have never been allowed to preach.

EASTER PACKETS

3. Be prepared to SUFFER.

v. 24 – filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions?

Was there something lacking in what Jesus did on the cross? Is it not complete?

Whenever you come to a passage of Scripture that seems unclear or confusing, always first work to interpret it in light of other Scripture. God’s Word is true, and consistent, and does not contradict itself. So to answer, is there something lacking in Jesus work on the cross, we really don’t even have to look any further than in the book of Colossians itself... Paul is clear on a number of occasions that Jesus’ death on the cross is sufficient for our forgiveness and salvation...

2:13-14, 1:12-14, 19-22

So we can eliminate the idea that Paul would somehow say that Jesus and his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave is somehow not sufficient... He says before and after this passage that indeed it is!

Preaching Notes – Colossians 1:24-29

Also, nowhere else in the NT does Paul use the phrase “Jesus’ afflictions” in reference to salvation... He gets much more specific than that... “blood”, “cross”, “death” are the terms used when referring to our redemption.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the idea that Paul was suffering “for the sake of Christ” gained traction. Looking at Acts 9:16 as a prime example. – The difficulty here is that it doesn’t deal with the phrase “what is lacking” – that’s really the pain point in this verse that needs explanation as does “fill up”.

Think of this this way: **Jesus is the head... and if you take a blow to the head, the rest of the body suffers with it.** As part of his body, the Church, you *will* be afflicted as Jesus was.

HOW WE SUFFER

This suffering could take on all kinds of different face...

- depression
- financial loss
- loneliness
- alienation
- physical harm
- stress
- loss of health
- starvation
- loss of family
- loss of friends
- loss of a job or a promotion
- loss of life

v. 24

The word **πάθημα** (meaning “suffering”, “affliction”, or “misfortune”, was used from the time of the Greek tragedians onward to denote that which befell a man and had to be accepted by him. ... Apart from the rare meaning of “passion” or “impulse” (Gel 5:24, Rom 7:5), its usual sense is “suffering” (Rom 8:18; 2Cor 1:5-7; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24; 2Tim 3:11; Heb 2:9-10; 10:32; 1Pet 1:11; 4:13; 5:1-9).¹

Paul had been forewarned by Jesus at his conversion of the ways in which he would have to suffer in Acts 9:16 – “**15** But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. **16** For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

Paul lists suffering as part of Discipleship 101 in Acts 14:22

Acts 14:20

But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. **21** When 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 that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. **23** And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

¹ O’Brien, 75.



@PastorMark (3/7/11 via Twitter) – A true testimony is this: “My life was pretty hard and I met Jesus. It’s gotten a lot worse, but he’s worth it and one day I’ll be with him”

Sometimes suffering is a result of following Jesus... sometimes suffering is allowed by God to compel us to turn to and follow Jesus... But in all suffering, the goal is that Jesus might be First in everything.

How does Paul rejoice in his suffering? Why does he? – James

James 1:2

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, **3** for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. **4** And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

How can you be sure your suffering is truly because of the Gospel, not because you made dumb choices?

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-11

4. It’s only worth it if you keep the LAST DAY in focus, and live to make JESUS FIRST in EVERYTHING!

CLOSE ASKING THE FIRST TWO QUESTIONS AGAIN:

For what do you toil?

What does the Last Day look like for you?