

Brian - Bitter-sweet...last, of 20, sermons Colossians...SWEET AS WE GROW...talk vision and leadership

Expansive understanding of Christ...our identity in Christ...and our response to being in Christ

End – Personal greetings, words of encouragement and exhortation...2nd most extensive after Romans

**READ** - Kinda tough to preach...no commands and no theology...2 Tim. 3:16...so what do we take?

- Historical Understanding – Real people...real time | Related & Struggled | God used them...us
  - Timely Inspiration – We're not Colossians...we are a church...we fight for the same mission
- Never forget – The Bible is a full of real people doing real things for a real God...we are...HOOK

Paul was one of the most gifted people in the history...he has people helping him...serving with him

Early-day saints - Team...win and influence people for the Kingdom for Christ = Team effort

We have a marching order...a mission...every one of us has been called into service for the Lord

**BI – The Church Walks in Faith and Watches for God at Work**

Every one of these people – every description – every comment = a reminder of God's faithfulness

Unique God's Family: We walk in faith...not in people...faith in God...faithful God uses faithful people

- Growth isn't determined by our giftedness / abilities...God gives growth! We go as God grows!
- I want to be ready for the growth...in 6 years we have not seen a single year not move forward...

- That's God in His grace & kindness – People in this text are a portrait of God's grace and kindness
  - o All down through the ages...people living mural...their painting is complete...ours is in process!

We have faith...God takes care His family...WORK...from that foundation we move forward w/ purpose

**1. As God's People We: Carry out the Ministry** | Don't have time...extensive portrait studies | Quick

(7) Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother & faithful minister & fellow servant in the Lord. I've sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are & he may encourage your hearts

- Tychicus: Gentile – Timothy - Delivering letter - Good thing didn't ask me – No big deal...however

Rome to Colossae – Cross Italy foot - Sail Adriatic Sea - Greece foot – Sail Aegean Sea = Coast Asia Min

- o After all that...journey of nearly one hundred miles on foot to reach Colossae = **RESPOND TEXT**
  - Cargo was precious – Only communication...receive from Paul – Now Canonized WORD
  - o Carrying the letter, but he was carrying Paul's heart with him...update and encouragement
- (9) and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

- Who's Onesimus – Slave who ran away from Colossae...His master...Philemon...Leader Colossae
    - o Onesimus ended up in Rome and Paul led him to Christ – Sending to Colossae w/ Philemon
    - o Vouching for his character...sincerity of faith...be forgiven & welcomed into church fellowship
- These men were called to carry out the work of ministry | Not an easy or comfortable job.

- Physically difficult – Unpredictable – Costly – Onesimus = Obedience...Humility & Grace & Trust
- They, Paul, were dedicated...call of ministry...we, like them, must be dedicated to the call of ministry

**2. As God's People We: Exhort one another**

(10) Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions-if he comes to you, welcome him)

- Aristarchus – He is in prison with Paul...with him for years = Mutual Encouragement | NERO
  - Mark - Abandoned Paul & Barnabas...now...he's a redemption story...God...just like Onesimus
- (11) and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

Paul lists others whose hearts are on mission: Justus – Epaphras - Luke, Demas, Nympha, Archippus  
Carrying out work - Devoted to one another- Purpose and Mission in front of them...Different & Same

- Archippus – (17) "see that you fulfill the ministry you have received in the Lord."
- Luke – Gospel & Acts | Demas – Bailed | Epaphras – Planted three churches we know of!

Team of people who: Bring updates – Encourage – Exhort – Comfort – Pray – Lead – Follow...WHY?!?!  
Two reasons – Glory and the Gospel! – Do you know? Do you act like it? | Easy...cost...worth it!

The church, like a family, isn't static - Always Growing – Increasing - Struggling. The church is to:

**3. As God's People We: Prepare for more...**

Paul wrote to prepare them: Doctrine – Conduct - Purpose, for what God was going to do next

- We need to be prepared for the same - More is coming for our family; we need prepare for more
- I have the exciting privilege this morning of telling you a little about what that's going to look like

As a church, God has blessed us:

- Cultural context where: Congregations declining - Leaders are failing - Doctrine is wavering
- God has blessed Vertical Church, and he's called us to prepare, not for decline, but for growth

Tell you what we need to prepare for...then how that looks in our church | Prepare for:

- a) **Increased Community:** Growing the God-focused - relationship-driven discipleship
    - This is men, women, students, children, small groups, even our Sunday worship.
  - b) **Intentional Outreach:** We need to be present and visible in our community
    - Showing God's common grace to those around...through: Actions – Relationship - Preaching
    - We also need to be involved with the global church
      - o Purposeful and focused in seeing the Gospel preached, the church strengthened, and the hopeless given hope to the ends of the earth
  - c) **Intensifying Opposition:** It's no secret that the world is in opposition to the cross
    - It's Scriptural and true throughout the history of the church...
      - (18) 'I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.'
    - In our changing cultural context - We believe that the culture is growing increasingly hostile
      - o That there will be consequences for us as a church and as believers...those of us who say:
- While there were 25k less abortions since RvW...900k+ is 900k too many  
- We will never find Pride in sinful identities that lead people far from their Savior  
- Always has been, will always be, only two genders | Men Competing / Invading Space = Wrong  
- Chemical manipulation and physical mutilation being premised by children, against medical advisement, and without parental consent, that is celebrated by our cultural, is criminal

Tip of Iceberg - We don't know what this is going to look like, but we know we need to be ready  
Not just ready to weather the storm, but ready to stand firm  
And ready for the opportunities for the light of the Gospel to shine bright as the world darkens  
**Preach Gospel – Engage Loving Community – People set free from worldly demonic lies**

- d) **Improved Ministry:** For all this to happen, they have to happen on purpose and with purpose
  - As pastors and elders, our job is to equip the saints for works of ministry and we spend a lot of time thinking, talking, praying, and figuring out how best to do this.
  - Zach Grafe – Executive Leadership Team (Build up Brian and Zach)
  - Jay Magnant – Campus Pastore Barelás | **ORG CHART**
  - (Bring up Brian) Family Ministries | Abercrombie's – Burge's – Grafe's
  - Men's & Women's – Administrators | These new teams are in 'yes' and 'not yet' | **SEPTEMBER**

This is going to stretch us: We are trusting the Lord financially – Trusting the Lord for the growth  
Trusting the Lord for the opportunities – Trusting the Lord of the Harvest for more...**MORE...**

- e) **God at Work:** Our church, our fellowship, our effect on the city we're in, belongs to God
- Our goal: Response to what God is doing - Positioning ourselves to be part of what he does next

Paul is saying, 'Jesus is enough' – You don't need to add anything to Jesus because Jesus is better than anything or anyone else. If you have Jesus, you have everything you need

God will build his church. It will grow, it will be sanctified, the Gospel will be preached.  
And there is no greater joy for us than to be part of how he does this...

