

Colossians 1:24-2:3

Proclaiming Christ

Image Church // Living Beyond Sunday: Week 3

Intro

Alright, if you have your bibles go ahead and grab them and turn to the book of **Colossians**... We're in week 3 of our journey through the book of Colossians in our series called **Living Beyond Sunday**...

Here's what we go so far, you have a church that's been doing really well, but they've been experiencing some pressure by the surrounding community to turn away from the centrality of Jesus...

- **To see Jesus as a thing, not THE thing that their lives are centered around...**

Paul, who wrote Colossians, starts off by affirming the church, and then he writes out a prayer that he's been praying for them- where he asks that God would fill them with a **deep abiding understanding of Christ**...

Then Paul highlights the nature of Christ, holding up His **supremacy and centrality**...

And he does this to promote the very thing he's prayed for them, he wants them to see who Jesus is and why He's not **a thing, but He is THE thing they need to center their lives around**...

*And we finished last week with another gospel presentation from Paul, where he finishes with this in **verse 23**: This gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a servant of it.*

Paul has been saved by the gospel and has become a servant of the gospel...

What you need to understand is that **when you've been rescued, you become part of the rescue team**...¹

And this morning what we're going to see is **what it looks like to be part of the rescue team** as we look at Paul's ministry and his desire for the church as a model and a framework for us...

*Michael Horton wrote a book called **Christless Christianity** and in it he asks the question: **what would it look like if Satan took over a city**, and to answer the question he quotes Pastor Barnhouse (an old preacher)

- *If Satan took over a city, all the bars closed, porn banished, pristine streets would be filled with tidy pedestrians who smiled at each other, there would be no swearing, the children would say yes sir and no mam, all the churches would be full on Sunday, **but Christ would not be preached.***
- I don't agree with his perspective, but I think what he's getting at is key...
- *Satan doesn't mind a moral improvement plan, what he doesn't want is for Christ to be preached.*²

The proclamation of the gospel is essential because it is the thing that saves us, and it is the thing that sustains us, and it is the thing that grows us...

So, let's look at what the rescue team looks like according to Paul...

Colossians 1:24-2:5

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you,

How does this make any sense?!?! Who rejoices in suffering, much less suffering for other people??

¹ Joby Martin, *Worth It*

² Illustration taken directly from Tony Merida, *Him we proclaim*

He can rejoice in suffering because he knows how God uses it to do something in them...

Here's the key: He understands that **what is gained through his suffering, is greater than the suffering that he's facing...**

Paul is saying I'm willing to suffer, I'm willing to sacrifice, because of what it's producing in you! And not only am I willing, but it brings me joy!

Now, Paul's context and situation is *MUCH DIFFERENT* than ours...

- For some of you, God's going to call you to suffer similar to Paul by going overseas where some of the same elements of suffering that Paul experienced are happening...

But what we need to see in our context is what's at the heart of Paul's suffering, and that's **sacrifice**...

- He was willing to sacrifice his life in order to serve others, He's willing to do whatever it takes for others to know Jesus...

Here's my question, **is the same thing true for you?**

- What are you sacrificing in order to serve others?
- What are you giving up so that

It's all about perspective... All of us are willing to sacrifice when what we gain from it is greater than that which we're giving up...

Example:

- Bloody knuckles in middle school...
- Sports...
- Your job...
- Childbirth... **Worth it...**

At the end of the day it boils down to this: **You are willing to sacrifice for the things that you love...** What does your sacrifice for the mission of God reveal about your love for Christ?

Where are you sacrificing for the sake of others??

- *Serving*
 - Weekend... Talk about how this is an opportunity
 - Throughout the week...
- Giving up comfort/convenience so that others are ministered to.

You say, **what's the motive for this?!?**

- **2 Cor. 5:14** Paul would say: **for the love of Christ that compels us!**

The reason why you're not willing to sacrifice is because you're missing what Christ sacrificed for you!

- He gave up everything... He laid His life down for you when you didn't deserve it!

When you're **compelled by the love of Christ** then what you will begin to see and understand, that **what is gained in sacrifice is greater than what you lose through sacrifice.**

The love of Christ reorients you to **see through what you're giving up to what is being gained** and that is, others seeing, experiencing, and receiving the love of Jesus!

There's something that God does **in you** and **through you** when you sacrifice for the sake of others...

You see it with Paul, he says I **rejoice** suffering and sacrifice, and it brings Paul joy because it identifies him more with Christ...

Christ modeled sacrifice better than anyone, He gave up His life, when you respond with sacrifice you are tethering yourself to Jesus, you are identifying with Jesus, and you are following Jesus...

And when you do that you experience a unique kind of joy that only comes through giving up!

*Some of you need to step out of your comfort, and start sacrificing for the sake of Christ- so that His message and ministry continue through you and watch what God does...

Then Paul takes it a step further here... he says: **and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for his body, that is, the church.**

Ok, let's talk about this...

Paul's not talking about salvation here... Nothing missing or lacking in Jesus' saving work...

What's he talking about then? What *is* lacking, is this: **the afflictions of Christ have not been made known to the world...**

Saving work- complete through the finished work of Jesus... **People hearing about it, being saved by it**, that's what's lacking...

Paul is completing what's lacking by taking on suffering, so that the afflictions of Christ may be made known to the world!

Case and point: Paul's writing this from Prison, he's there because he was preaching the gospel...

- **He was willing to give up his freedom so that others could be set free with the message of the gospel!**

One Romanian Pastor said it like this: **Christ's cross was for propitiation; ours is for propagation. Christ suffered to accomplish salvation; we suffer to spread salvation.**³

Here's what you need to understand, **advancing the message of the afflictions of Jesus, brings on afflictions...**

When you share the gospel with others, it requires sacrifice and even suffering- you have to be willing to give up what people think, how

someone might perceive you, it's going to cost you time as you walk with folks on this journey of showing them Jesus...

For some of you like the _____ it's going to mean that you sell everything and move overseas...

For others of you (college students, young professionals) it means that you pick a different job so that you can go be a part of a church plant..

Here's one, you serve in Image Kids!

- *I know it gets crazy back there!!*
- Share the gospel with our largest non-Christian population- that's what we do, don't do child care...

Paul gets beaten, jailed... You serve in Image Kids?!? You have to suffer through butterflies before you share the gospel?!?!

John Piper says it like this: The point is that taking the gospel to people (across the office or across the ocean) ordinarily requires sacrifice and suffering, a losing of life or a denying of self. This is the way Christ means for his saving sufferings to be taken to the world, through the sufferings of his people. The Calvary road is not a joyless road. It is a painful one, but it is a profoundly happy one.

*God advances the message of Jesus on through suffering and sacrifice, this is how we were saved and this is how the saving message advances...

- The question is, **is Jesus worth it to you?**
- And listen as we sacrifice and suffer, God uses it to do something in us!

Being part of the rescue team means that you're willing to go to great lengths!

Verse 25... Paul continues:

25 I have become its servant, according to God's **commission** that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, **26** the

³ Cited from, JD Greear via John Piper. Also stated by Tony Merida.

mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

*Ok, let's unpack this... We'll see what the **mystery** is in the next verse..*

*Paul says that he has become a servant **according to God's Commission or stewardship...***

- God saved Paul for a specific purpose... God stewarded His grace on Paul for the purpose of the ministry that He's been given...
- We need to recognize that Paul played a specific role in History...

*But watch this, here's what we need to see **God's stewardship to Paul, results in stewardship from Paul!***

- He says ***what I have been given is for you!***

Listen, God's grace has been stewarded to you... ***God didn't save you to sit, He saved you to send you!***

- To not live missionally, to not share the gospel is to squander the gift you've been given...
- ***The purpose of your salvation is not to personalize it but to proclaim it!!***

Word of God plays an important role in this- to make the word of God fully known...

- Not your Word, but God's!
- Do you know it?!? Are you in it? Because it's the Word of God that reveals the mystery of God.

Verse 27:

27 God wanted to make known among the **Gentiles** the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Paul highlights his call here, which was to take the Gospel to the gentiles...

- Praise God because it means that we're included!! We are gentiles...

- We're here because of Paul's faithfulness! Who says that about you?

An incredible mystery has been revealed: Christ in us...

- ***Mystery:*** what was unknown before Christ has become clear in Christ!

GOSPEL!!

- What/who would bridge the gap for humanity? Who would be the deliverer? How would everything fit together?
- ***Christ-*** and more than that ***Christ in us would be the bridge of the divide!*** We would get access to God through Him!!

And this message is for all people...

Paul is preaching and pointing to a newly established **multi-ethnic family** that's brought together through Jesus!

What we need to see from this is God's intentionality to engage ***all people!***

And our call to engage all people: Jesus says in our great commission to ***make disciples of all nations!***

And this is our mission that's been laid out in **Matthew 28:19-20** to go and make disciples- to teach people to know Jesus and what it means to follow Jesus!

The question is will you be faithful to that end?

- This is why at Image we want to engage all, why we want to pursue all people...
- This is why we care about being a multi-ethnic church that reflects our community!
- This is why we want to be a sending church that reaches people out of state and overseas!

Verse 28: We proclaim him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone **mature in Christ. 29** I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me.

Example: Rescue team

- When you get recruited for any rescue squad (coast guard rescue, firefighters, etc) you are part of the team but..
- They are not going to send you into a burning building or drop you into the ocean to save someone without the proper training..
- They would wait until you are mature enough to handle the task...

Paul's goal here is the **maturity of the church...**

There's a lot of people that say that they want to go deep... Well here you go you ready: one of the greatest ways to deepen your relationship with Jesus is to help someone else discover a relationship with Jesus!⁴

Advancing the gospel is work... You were saved from something to something and what you were saved to is the the body of Christ whose call is not to sit stagnant but to be actively laboring...

It's hard to do this, but we have the power we need- the strength that works within me...

Example: Spurgeon: there are 2 of us...

Some of you need to lean into this!

Paul Continues in **Chapter 2:**

1 For I want you to know how greatly I am struggling for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person. **2** I want their hearts to be encouraged and **joined together in love,**

Notice, the gospel that Paul's proclaiming should bring about **unity** and **love among one another** within this newly established **multi-ethnic family...**

Here's what I want you to see: The gospel is the goal, and a direct implication of the gospel is unity... and the byproduct of unity is diversity...

Here's why this is important... Paul want this for them:

so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery—Christ. **3** In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Listen, **unity** and **love** take us deeper in the gospel...

- It's what Jesus pursued with us, and we respond by pursuing this with others...

*So being part of the **rescue team** means that we are **unified** around the mission together...

The degree to which you hold Jesus as preminent will determine how far you are willing to go for him...

Maybe let me ask it like this: **How much are you willing to give up to follow Jesus?**

- **Example:** Garrett and the trip...

How much are you willing to give up so that others can experience the hope that you have?!? What's it worth?

- **Serving...** On the weekend and beyond...
- **Sharing the gospel with others...**
 - **Example:** NAMB Survey, 55% of church goers report they haven't shared the gospel with anyone in the past 6 months, BUT 51% of americans say they are open to conversations about Christianity
- **Going on a mission trip: Honduras**

⁴ Joby Martin, *Worth it*

When you've been rescued, you become part of the rescue team

- Being part of a rescue team means sacrifice is in the job description

Conclusion [VAMP]

See, it is in the oppositions and in our laboring, suffering, that Jesus uses that to make **His name famous** and not yours...

One scholar says it like this: *"When we offer the Christ of the cross to people, they see the Christ of the cross in us. We are to make the afflictions of Christ real for people by the afflictions we experience in offering him to them and living the life of love he lived."*

*The plan all along was for God to use you to take the ministry and message of Jesus to your, neighbors, work place and around the world... Will you be faithful to steward the message that Jesus has trusted you with??

Appeal:

- Pray, repent, believe...