

The last time I had the opportunity to teach we were in the book of Colossians and this morning we are going to continue where we left off last time. Our passage this morning starts in verse 24.

Colossians 1:24-29 ESV

- (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.

When Paul was writing his letter to the Colossians he was in prison. This is the suffering He is referring to in verse 24.

Colossians 1:24 ESV

- (24) Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake,

Paul had been preaching the gospel and the Jews wanted it to stop at any cost, so they imprisoned Paul, and he was transferred to Rome, where he spent two years under house arrest. His words are not empty when he says it is for their sake.

He was under house arrest for sharing the gospel with them

Colossians 1:24 ESV

- (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,

This verse is one of the most controversial of the entire book. At first glance it can seem to say that there is something missing in Christ sacrifice and that Paul is finishing the job through what he is suffering.

The suffering that Paul is referring to in this verse has nothing to do with Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

It would be impossible for Paul to take part in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. When Christ offered himself it was finished.

John 19:30 ESV **NP**

John 19:30 ESV

(30) When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (teleo)

Christ's sacrifice was perfect, completed, brought to an end, not lacking in anything. Hebrews 10 makes this very clear.

Hebrews 10:12-14 ESV

- (12) But when Christ had offered for all time **a single sacrifice for sins**, he sat down at the right hand of God,
 (13) waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.
 (14) **For by a single offering he has perfected** for all time those who are being sanctified.

The best way to explain this verse is to read it in the New Living Translation, because it does a great job of capturing the heart of the verse.

Colossians 1:24 NLT

(24) I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church.

The Word used in this verse about Christ's afflictions (ESV) or suffering (NLT) is never used to describe Christ on the cross.

It is not referring to His sacrifice on the cross, but to the suffering that He underwent on a daily basis.

This type of suffering Paul can participate in, and Christ even told us it was going to come.

John 15:18-20 ESV

- (18) "If the world hates you, **know that it has hated me before it hated you.**
 (19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.
 (20) Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

The World hated Christ, if we are living for Him the World will hate us as well.

As believers we need to stop acting surprised when persecution from the World comes. Christ guarantees that it will, listen to how Peter put it.

1Peter 4:12-16 ESV NP

1Peter 4:12-14 ESV

- (12) Beloved, **do not be surprised** at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, **as though something strange were happening to you.**
- (13) But rejoice insofar as you **share Christ's sufferings**, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.
- (14) If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

We should expect suffering to come because we are living for Christ.

This was what Paul was partaking in, and this is what we are called to, we are not of this world, and our lives as Christians will bring persecution.

As believers we don't have to seek persecution out, but living a life for Christ will condemn and in turn bring persecution from non-believers.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 ESV

- (14) But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.
- (15) For we are **the aroma of Christ** to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,
- (16) to one a fragrance from **death to death**, to the other a fragrance from **life to life**.
Who is sufficient for these things?

We are called the aroma of Christ. To a believer it is the aroma of life. This is the encouragement we can receive from other believers.

Seeing Christ in another believer's life is such an encouraging thing. It is an aroma of life. It is the common bond of Christ, and it can be so refreshing to see how Christ is growing and leading fellow believers.

To see Christ in a fellow believer is a breath of fresh air a breath of life.

To non-believers our lives will be an aroma of Death. This is only true if our lives look different.

If we are living for Christ, our lives will confront and condemn the non-believers around us. Because we are different.

Dinner on cruise ship- once they found out my job they had no interest talking to us

As believers our lives should look different from the World, and that is going to lead to persecution and suffering, this is what was happening to Paul and is what we are called to.

So what does this look like for us today, in America? It means our entire outlook on life is different, our values, morals, ...

This different outlook should be true about us in the Church the body of Christ, Paul starts to describe the Church in more detail.

Colossians 1:24 NLT

(24) I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ **that continue for his body, the church.**

Colossians 1:25 ESV

(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,**

The Church is the body of Christ, and it belongs to Him, we are just stewards, it is an incredible privilege to be a part of the body of Christ and we must protect it.

Notice how Paul is a good steward or takes care of the body:

“to make the word of God fully known”

It is by teaching the Word of God.

It is not up to us in the church to decide what we want to be focused on or what we want to do on a Sunday morning. We have been called, all of us as believers to take care of the body of Christ and to be committed to the Word of God and making it known.

Listen to how Paul instructs the Elders of Ephesus

Acts 20:28-31 ESV

(28) Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, **in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.**

The elders have been given the task to oversee the local body of Christ that, Christ bought with His own blood.

This is true for the elders but is also true for all of us as believers Christ bought us, He bought the Church with His blood it is not ours to change or to take lightly.

- (29) I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;
- (30) and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.
- (31) Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Paul warns them that when he leaves false teachers will rise up and he reminds them that for three years he has not stopped teaching them the Word of God and he is begging with them to continue teaching the Word.

The Church was so important to Christ that He gave His blood to by us, we must be faithful to what He has called us to do, to teach the Word of God.

Paul then starts to marvel at how incredible of a gift the church, the body of Christ is.

Colossians 1:26-27 ESV

- (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.

The Church was a Mystery throughout the Old Testament. The fact that the Holy Spirit would live inside of gentiles was beyond their imagination

All we know is the church, the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit living in us, so it can be hard for us to grasp what a huge shift this was to the people at that time.

Ephesians 3:4-7 ESV

- (4) When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,
- (5) which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.
- (6) This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.**
- (7) Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

As believers we have become fellow heirs, in the body of Christ

It is a fact that we can take for granted, well of course we can be saved, and of course when someone becomes a believer they receive the Holy Spirit, but this truth was revolutionary and it is all because of Christ,

He is the head of the Church and it is only through Him that the Church is possible

Paul then tells us what we should be focused on as the Church.

Colossians 1:28 ESV

(28) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

The Church should be focused on Christ, as the church teaches the Word faithfully, it will proclaim Christ because the Bible is about Him.

This is one of the ways to evaluate teaching is it about man, or about proclaiming Christ.

Notice the goal of proclaiming Christ: at the end of the verse

Colossians 1:28 ESV

(28) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **that we may present everyone mature in Christ.**

The goal of teaching the Word, and proclaiming Christ is not just head knowledge it is not just to learn more facts

The goal is that we would mature as believers.

This is a common misunderstanding that exists today. The church is not to be focused on unbelievers.

The church has been called to “**present everyone mature in Christ**” the goal is to help believers grow in their relationship with God and to be mature.

This fits perfectly with the great commission.

Matthew 28:18-20 ESV NP

Matthew 28:18-20 ESV

- (18) And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
 (19) Go therefore and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 (20) **teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Notice it says to make disciples, not converts

Christ commands us to teach them, not to simply share the gospel and move on. The church should be about maturing believers, and God has given us the tools we need to mature.

Notice in verse 28 how many times Everyone is repeated

Colossians 1:28 ESV

- (28) Him we proclaim, warning **everyone** and teaching **everyone** with all wisdom, that we may present **everyone** mature in Christ.

Spiritual maturity is not something that is reserved for a select few, and it is not something that is out of reach for some believers. It is easy to fall into this trap and believe that maturity is not possible for me, we look at other mature believers and think I will never be able to be like them or we look at someone else and think that they will never mature.

Scripture tells us the opposite, maturity is offered to all believers.

Listen to Ephesians 1:3

Ephesians 1:3 ESV

- (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ **with every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places,

God has given us every spiritual blessing, He has not held back at all. He does not call us to be spiritually mature and then not equip us to be able to reach it. Romans 8 makes this clear.

Romans 8:29-32 ESV NP

Romans 8:29-32 ESV

- (29) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
- (30) And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
- (31) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
- (32) **He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?**

If God cared enough to save us, If He cared enough to send His son to die for us, why do we think that He wouldn't give us everything we needed to be spiritually mature?

Ephesians 4:11-16

- (11) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,
- (12) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, **for building up the body of Christ,**
- (13) **until we all attain** to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to mature manhood,** to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Notice again, it is everyone, we all are called to maturity

- (14) so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.
- (15) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,
- (16) **from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.**

God is faithful to give the Church everything it needs to help believers reach spiritual maturity. He gives the local body the right mix of spiritual gifts so that the church will be built up. For His Glory!

Conversation with Missionary who plants Churches in foreign Countries.

Think about everything we have been blessed with:

- The Word of God- The truth
- The Holy Spirit – Helps us understand that Truth
- Spiritual gifts- help us build and grow the body
- Prayer- communicating directly to God
- Fellowship with other believers- and being built up by their gifts

Even with all of these incredible gifts given to us, we know that some believers still do not mature. We see this in Hebrews 5

Hebrews 5:12-14

- (12) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,
 (13) for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.
 (14) But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

These believers haven't matured like they're supposed to. It is possible even with everything we have been given to not grow to maturity. To not have a life of Faith, that Jim has been talking about in Hebrews.

So what is our response? It is found in verse 29

Colossians 1:29 ESV

- (29) For this I toil, struggling with all **his** energy that he powerfully works within me.

In this verse Paul describes how we grow as believers. It sounds like it contradicts itself. He starts off by saying He toils. The Word is to agonize. He strives after maturity and helping others to be mature. But notice the key to the verse.

With all **HIS ENERGY** that **HE** powerfully works within me.

We will never grow as believers based on our own effort or strength, we don't have it in us.

It is only when we use the gifts given to us in the body of Christ, that we will grow, it is only when we let Him grow us.

Christ has given us everything we need and He uses it all to mature us.

- The Word of God- Jim has stated this plainly (you will only be as mature as your knowledge of the Word of God)
- The Holy Spirit – Helps us understand that Truth
- Spiritual gifts- help us build and grow the body
- Prayer- communicating directly to God
- Fellowship with other believers- and being built up by their gifts

This was Paul's attitude throughout His entire ministry, He wanted to reach maturity at any cost and knew it was only possible through Christ working in Him

Philippians 3:11-15 ESV

- (11) that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.
- (12) Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, **but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.**
- (13) Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: **forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,**
- (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
- (15) Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Paul want spiritual maturity above all else,

In verse 13 he says

- (13) Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: **forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,**

This is 1 John 1:9, he forgets his pass sin, He confesses the times where he has not been growing or maturing and He seeks to mature he seeks to let Christ power live through Him and grow Him

1 John 1:9

- (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Colossians 1:28 ESV

- (28) Him we proclaim, warning **everyone** and teaching **everyone** with all wisdom, that we may present **everyone** mature in Christ.