

Colossians: Christ Our Life
Part 5: 1:24-29
Proclaiming Him
1.29.2012

Colossians 1:24-29/Prayer

We are in a series in Colossians that I've called **Christ Our Life**. This is book (letter) is about just that. It is about Christ and who He is, what He has done, and the weight that bears on our life.

HERE

Paul gives us some biography. He tells us of his own ministry and what his calling, his purpose was.

Lets ask three questions:

What was Paul's purpose?

Why was this Paul's purpose?

How did Paul accomplish his purpose?

So first of all, **what was Paul's purpose?**

Look at **verse 24**: *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake...* We will come back to that. *"and in my flesh (body) I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions..."* What does that mean? The words *lacking* and *Christ* don't fit together! They aren't friends, even **MySpace** friends. Scholars trip over this, and for good reason. Paul just finished Christ made all things, rules all things, owns all things (1:15-20). Now he says there is something lacking in Christ's afflictions?!

What does this verse mean?

WHEN I WRITE SERMONS

When I write sermons I read commentaries, which you might call tranquilizers. Most say that what Paul means here, is **that because Christ suffered, we will suffer**. What is **lacking here is not Christ, but us**. We are still suffering and enduring affliction. There are verses on that. But I think they are wrong, and I am right. Why does Paul do this? Look at **verse 25**: *"to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations..."* What is that mystery? Christ! He is the once-hidden-now-revealed mystery. He makes that fully known. So what is lacking in that?

GO TO PHILIPPIANS 2:30 (same language as Colossians)

What is he talking about? He is in jail, as always, and the Philippian church is concerned. They want to serve him, but he's a long way off. Their service is lacking. But's lacking? Paul's receiving it, rejoicing in it, exulting in it. So Epaphroditus fills it up! He goes to Paul and completes their service.

THAT IS WHAT PAUL IS DOING FOR CHRIST

Paul is traveling, writing, preaching, and proclaiming Christ and Him crucified. **But what is lacking?** The **FACT** that many, hundreds, thousands, millions, haven't received it ywt. That is what is lacking. That's what he's filling up. That is Paul's purpose. He wants to fully make known the infinite worth and glory of this Savior.

THATS WHY HE CAN SAY

Verse 24: I rejoice in my sufferings.." That word *in* bothers me. He should say "*I rejoice after my sufferings.*" That is how I rejoice. I rejoice when they are over, when they are complete.

AS A PREACHER

Its funny, I get to pre-apply my sermons. So for **money** sermons where I call you to be generous, and not trust money, that week, I lose money somehow. Or **marriage** sermons about loving your wife, and laying down your life for her, that week my marriage gets tested. Its usually Heather fault, but it gets tested. So **this week**, this text was coming, and of course our pipes burst. My first thought was...I can't say. My second thought, was this verse, "I rejoice in my sufferings." Then I thought, "I just love the Bible."

BUT CHRISTIANS CAN SAY THIS

We and we only can say, "*I rejoice in my sufferings.*" But why? Because **I think all suffering, as Christians is suffering for Christ**. But we **categorize** suffering. We think there is Christian suffering and then just general suffering.

Christian Suffering

So Christian suffering would be a missionary getting arrested or a pastor getting shot at. They are preaching the Gospel, advancing the cause and their suffering is for Christ.

General Suffering

Then there is general suffering. Job loss. Cancer. Car breaks down. House gets damaged. Plumbing leaks. This can come to Christians, atheists, Buddhists, Hindu's, Patriots fans, it does not matter.

BUT IF YOU KNOW CHRIST

But if you know Christ, I think all suffering, is Christian suffering. All of it, is **for** Christ, **through** Christ, and **with** Christ. Wether its cancer or persecution or job loss or arrest. You know why?

- All suffering can **wreck** your faith or **grow** your faith, all of it.
- All suffering can **advance** the Gospel or **hinder** the Gospel.
- Christ will be **enough** for you, or He will not.
- You can suffer **towards** God or **away** from God.
- You can **rejoice** in sufferings, or get **bitter** in sufferings.

Paul rejoiced. The Gospel advanced. Christ was magnified.

ARE YOU?

Are you rejoicing in sufferings? When you do, Christ looks good in your life. He looks beautiful and glorious and powerful and sufficient, and the Gospel looks attractive.

So that is Paul's purpose, to fill up what's lacking.

But **why was that Paul's purpose?** There are 2 reasons. Look at **verse 25** (notice the passive language here): "of which [the church] I *became* a minister according to the stewardship *from* God that was *given* to me for you..." Now that is a nice way of saying, "**Christ almost killed me.**" In **Acts 9** Saul/Paul is arresting Christians. He hates the church. He hates Jesus. So Jesus shows up. Paul sees His glory and light, and it blinds him and knocks him down. **That day, Paul's world blew up.** He was *murderer* turned *missionary*. He began preaching, traveling, writing, teaching, that this Jesus was the Christ. He was Lord, Savior, Messiah, King and God.

That is why Paul is **suffering** and **preaching** and **rejoicing** and **getting beaten** and **locked up** and eventually killed.

HOW DO YOU THREATEN PAUL?

Paul says "*To live is Christ, to die is gain*" (Phil 1:21). How do you threaten him?

"We're gonna kill you Paul!" "That'd be awesome!"

"We're gonna arrest you!" "Great. I'll write books."

"We're gonna beat you!" "Bring it!"

You can't, because when you see Christ and who He is and what He has done for you, no cost is too high, no suffering is too deep. That is one reason.

THE SECOND REASON

The second reason is in **verse 26 and 27**: *the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.* But what is the mystery that was made known? The word *mystery* in Greek is *mystery*, we get our word *mystery* from it. Paul will tell us in **27**: *To them [the saints] God chose to make known how great among the*

Gentiles [non-Jews, outsiders, the unclean ones] *are the riches of the glory of this mystery*, [what is the mystery?] *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” Thats it! Did you catch it? The mystery is, Christ will live in His people. He will make His home in us. He will abide in us. He will be that close and that real and that near to us.

BUT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

that most young Americans, are what Christian Smith calls, **Moralistic Therapeutic Deists**.

- *They believe in a God who made all things.*
- *He wants us to be good, nice people who pay taxes, use blinkers, and recycle.*
- *The goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about yourself.*
- *God can help solve your problems, but He isn't always needed.*
- *If you're good, you'll go to heaven.*

Now I think we would all reject that! But we function that way sometimes. We push God out. We exclude Him from our jobs, from our marriages, from our money, our recreation, and we just wing it. But this God will not be pushed away. He **lives** in us. He takes **ownership** of us. I can't explain this. But when it happens, it changes you.

SEE, WHEN YOU LIVE WITH SOMEONE

See, when you live with someone, you become like them. You say what they say, think how they think, you watch what they watch. So right now Heather is watching *Toddlers and Tiaras*. Its a reality show of beauty pageants for little girls. Its terrible. But I've found myself watching it...and getting into! Im like, ***“She got grand-supreme?” “What is she wearing?”*** I just lost man points! But I'm watching because she is watching.

GOD DOES THIS

God does this! When He takes up residence in us, it changes us, even us Gentiles! See the **Jews were a bit self-centered**. For Americans, you are either **American** or **British** or **Spanish** or **Chinese** or **Asian** or whatever. For a Jew you are either a **Jew** or a **Gentile**.

You are first or last.

You are in or out.

You are clean or unclean.

BUT IN CHRIST

But in Christ, God blurred those lines. There is no distinction now. Anyone can come to Christ. He can live in anyone. When He is in us, we have the *hope of glory*. You might just say, “The certainty of glory.” He will complete His work in you. He will bring you to glory one day.

IS CHRIST IN YOU?

Have you opened your life to Him? Does He own He? Do you love and treasure Him? If not, come talk to us, stay after, stop by Connections, don't put Him off. You have heard this message, over and over. So that is why Paul is doing this.

So what is Paul's purpose? To fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Why is that Paul's purpose? God called Him, and Christ will live in anyone.

But how did Paul accomplish this?

Verse 29: *"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom..."* That is how Paul accomplished his purpose. He proclaimed Christ in all of his *beauty* and *glory* and *sufficiency* and *power*. He proclaimed who He was, what He had done. That is the Gospel Paul proclaimed. So in 10,000 ways, Paul got this message out.

I LOVE THAT PAUL SAID THIS

We proclaim Him. The answer, the solution, the message was Jesus alone. See, as humans are so complex and so different. Think of all our issues! Pride, greed, lust, depression, fear of man, anxiety, worries, stresses, our problems. Our hearts are just deceitful.

I READ THIS WEEK

That we are more apt to lie through texting, than face to face. That so intrigues me! Our hearts are just sick at times. And I am all for digging beneath the surface, finding idols, finding sins beneath sins, and peeling our layers back. **But you will never, ever, know your heart fully.** At some point you must say, ***"I just need Christ!"***

The goal was, verse 28: *that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*" Fully devoted followers of Jesus was the goal.

SOMETHING STRANGE HAPPENS IN 28

In every verse Paul says *I* or *me*. In verse 24, 25, 29 he speaks in first person. Then in verse 28 he says, "we." Why say *we*? Because that is our purpose! **He is calling us into this.** What else is there? If we are not proclaiming Christ and warning and teaching and maturing people, what is there?

CS Lewis said: The church exists for no other purpose, than to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christ's. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time.

So are we doing this? Are we proclaiming Him? As a church? As Christians? God will not do this for us.

IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

God does miraculous things. He heals people, casts out demons, speaks, kills people, teleports people, angels open doors, unlock prisons, earthquakes, snake bites don't kill people. But the **one thing God never does in Acts, is preach the Gospel**. He always uses a human. So in **Acts 9**, Christ appeared to Paul. Paul is on his back, blind. He could say: *Paul, Romans says (which you'll write one day) you are a sinner. I died for you, I rose. Repent, believe.*"

But what does he do? He sends Paul to Annias. He explains the Gospel to Paul. God uses people. He uses preachers, teachers, bankers, lawyers, doctors, coaches, accountants, moms, dads, students, people... to spread the Gospel.

IS THIS BURDEN ON YOU?

Do you love non-Christians? Are you scared of them? Are you praying, by name, for non-Christian friends? So if tomorrow, God answered all your prayers, would anyone come in kingdom?

NOW HOW DO YOU DO THIS?

I have the answer, which is so simple and so relevant. Write this down. **The best way to get the Gospel in someone's life is through food**. That is how Christ did it. He said, *"The Son of Man came, to seek and save the lost, not to be served but to serve, and eating and drinking."* Eating and drinking? Yes. Think of it, in the Gospels, He is always at a meal.

Robert Karris: In Luke's Gospel Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.

He is always eating.

WHY?

But why? The kingdom is like that. God holds a feast and invites everyone to it. **You can hold a feast**. You can get a fire and some meat and call some sinners over. You have 21 meals a week. Use 1 of them for a neighbor, a co-worker, a friend, and let God use that. Just talk to them, and eventually, the Gospel will come out of you.

That is how you got here. Someone just talked to you, invited you to church, opened the Bible with you, or had you at their house for dinner.

IVE BEEN ASKED BEFORE

I've been asked before what my outreach strategy is. My short answer is, you. You are the strategy. Not a program or an event or a building, but people.

SEE AT ONE TIME

mass evangelism worked. Crusades drew thousands, the Gospel is preached, lots of crying and conversions. Then it was **door-to-door evangelizing**. You knock on someone's door, "*If you died today.*" Now, I think **network evangelism** works best. You start where you are, with who you know.

WHY SHOULD WE DO THIS?

Look at verse 29: *for this I toil struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.* Paul said he labored and worked and sweated and suffered and struggled to do this. **But Paul was not working to accomplish anything. He was working to apply what had been accomplished.** See, on the Cross, Jesus said, "*It is finished.*" Not, "*We're getting there.*" Redemption, salvation, freedom, life, hope, joy, forgiveness, righteousness was finished. The work had been done. That's why we do this!

Let us eat with sinners.

Let us live holy lives.

Let us warn, teach, admonish, love, serve our city.

Let us proclaim Him!