

10-23-22

**Colossians 1:24-2:5.**

Last week it was stated that Jesus is God, and He is over Creation; not only is He over it but He created it. I also stated that everything that not only was everything created by Him but for Him. I ended by saying that everything created is here for a reason, a purpose, to bring Him glory and honor.

**Revelation 4:11**, in the New Living Translation, **“You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased.”**

We ended last week with a challenge to make sure that Jesus occupies first place in each of our lives. As we come to the next section of Colossians, we’ll discover our reason for living. **Colossians 1:24-2:5** answers the question, “Now that Jesus is supreme in my life, what is my purpose as a believer?”

If Jesus is supreme (preeminent) in my life, what is my purpose?

**1. Rejoice in Suffering.**

- **Read verse 24.**
- Paul willingly and joyfully suffered on behalf of others for the sake of the gospel. The little word **“now”** does more than just provide a transition. Paul is rejoicing precisely because of what he has just written and he’s rejoicing now (at present) while in prison.
- Most of us try to get rid of suffering when it comes our way. When we’re in pain, we want to relieve it. Paul was different. He found joy in what he suffered.

**2 Corinthians 7:4**, **“I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.”** ESV

- Before Paul’s conversion, he inflicted suffering on believers. And now he’s suffering for them. From the very moment of his conversion, in **Acts 9:16**, Paul was told that difficulty was going to be part of his discipleship when Jesus said: **“I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”**
- Paul suffered for at least three reasons. **First**, he was suffering because of Jesus Christ. Like the early believers in **Acts 5:41**, Paul rejoiced that he was **“counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.”**
- **Second**, he suffered because of the Gentiles. Paul was committed to take the gospel to all people, not just to those who thought they were worthy of it. In fact, he was in prison precisely because he had taken the good news to the Gentiles in **Acts 22:21-22**. In **Philippians 1:12** Paul wrote from prison: **“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.”**
- **Third**, he suffered for the sake of Christ’s body, the church. As the believers saw him suffer, it gave them courage to face persecution in their lives.
- When the gospel is carried to the ends of the earth, it will be accompanied with difficulty. In fact, in order to share the gospel, it is necessary to share in Christ’s afflictions.

**John 15:20**, **“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 keep yours also.”**

- Paul's understanding of persecution, difficulty, and suffering can help us when affliction visits our life. **Verse 24** reminds us to suffer joyfully for the gospel.
- Suffering is part of discipleship. Suffering produces greater faith and accelerates character development.

## 2. Find Your Place to Serve.

- **Read verses 25-27.**
- As Paul likes to do, he refers to himself as a servant. Since Jesus was supreme in His life, Paul was fully devoted to follow Him wholeheartedly. This word **"minister"** can be translated, "servant." The word **"stewardship"** means "management." Just as a well-trusted servant would manage his master's estate, so Paul was entrusted with a special task.
- Paul's task was to **"fulfill the word of God."**
- Paul was a servant, and his calling was to fully make known the Word of God. I recognize my responsibility to preach the Word of God in its fullness. That means that I won't shrink away from communicating the Bible, even when it's not popular.
- A pastor's job is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. My calling, place to serve is to preach God's word and truths not only to the unbeliever but also the believer. That means you!
- Where are you serving in the church God has you at? Unfortunately, I found in my studies that the younger generation isn't stepping up to take over some of the responsibilities. A Barna study showed that they were filling their lives with everything else and very little time for serving God's Church. The biggest reason given, their other obligations to attend to, family, hobbies, outside charities, job. The consensus was that God's calling to serve wasn't being prioritized.
- I personally believe it is more than just the young generation, there seems to be a lull in people serving God's church. I have heard it stated, 10% do 90% of the ministry work. I think it's closer to 3-5% do 90% most of the ministry work. We want to be heard because we love our church and we want to give, but we don't want to serve.
- What would happen if every born-again believer that calls Bethel their church, whether it was members or attenders gave financially what God desired them to give. Prayed for Bethel like He desires them to. What if each one gave 3-5 hours a week to serve at somewhere at Bethel? Each of us are all given 168 hours a week, 3-5 hours would be a drop in the bucket. Many of us spend more time in a day watching tv, tinkering with our toys, on our phones, sitting on the toilet than we do serving God's local church.
- It is our job to share the mystery of the gospel (**v.27**).
- We must be careful that the lack of service in others doesn't derail or sidetrack us, it can happen. We must be watchful that our complaints, our voices, and our opinions don't derail others from serving here at Bethel. Just serve! Find a place and serve Jesus. Try to stay out of the way of those that are trying.

## 3. Move Others to Grow Up.

- **Read verse 28.**
- Paul shifts back to **"we"** in this verse to let them know that he and Epaphras were proclaiming the good news, and the false teachers were not.

- We are to proclaim Christ, which is exactly what Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:5**: **“For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord.”**
- When we talk to others about our faith, we must always focus on Christ, not on ourselves. Notice that the word **“every man”** is repeated twice, which shows that every single believer is capable of Christian maturity.
- The first word **“warning,”** carries with it the idea of helping to set someone’s mind into proper order. Paul didn’t hold back when he thought someone needed to be warned about what they were doing or about what they believed. We need to be willing to admonish one another in a spirit of love, as well as RECEIVE warning and correction when we need it.
- The second emphasis is on **“teaching,”** which refers to the clear communication of the Word of God. Instruction in creed and conduct is critical to Christian growth.
- Jesus left us the responsibility in **Matthew 28:20** to teach disciples to obey everything He commanded. We need to look for opportunities to teach and we need to make sure we’re taking advantage of learning opportunities.
- An effective presentation of the gospel always includes both warning and teaching. The warning is that without Christ, people are lost and headed to the agony of hell. The teaching is that salvation is available only by grace through faith in Christ. But it is available to everyone.
- Paul was a perfectionist in the sense that he desperately wanted everyone to become complete in Christ. The word-perfect means “full grown, or spiritually mature.”
- Our job as a church is not just to admonish, warn, or even to teach. We do those things in order to create spiritually mature Christ-followers. We should all be in the process of growth, of becoming more like Jesus every day. Our focus is not on numerical growth, but on spiritual growth, if there is lacking in spiritual growth, it could result in a lack of numerical growth. We don’t want to just build buildings; we want to build believers. We’re all about transformation, not just information.
- If we’re serious about moving people to maturity, then we can’t be passive or lazy. Instead, we must...

#### **4. Work Powered by God’s Energy.**

- **Read verse 29 and verse 1 of chapter 2.**
- When Paul says, **“To this end I also labor,”** he’s referring to proclaiming Christ and presenting believers. He labors and struggles in this task. To **“labor”** means to “grow weary through hard toil.” The word “struggle” comes from the root word in Greek translated “agony.” Both words were used of athletes competing in the arena, or of a laborer working to the point of exhaustion.
- Paul used this same word at the end of his life as he reflected on how he had lived in

#### **2 Timothy 4:7: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”**

- Notice that Paul doesn’t just work in his own strength; **“striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”** We might translate it this way: “Striving according to His energy which powerfully energizes within me.” Paul surrendered his availability to God’s ability.
- Since Christ is in us, the hope of glory, He will provide us with His supernatural strength and explosive energy as we labor to propel people to maturity.

- The work of salvation is “all of Christ and none of me” but to live out my purpose it must be “all of Christ and all of me.” This is another mystery - that God would choose to use you and me, despite our weaknesses, to help people, become mature in Christ.
- Let’s not become spiritually lethargic or lukewarm. Let’s burn bright and take it up a notch as we labor and lean on Christ for His strength. In our efforts to help people, Paul next clarifies what this involves.

## 5. Be a Blessing in the Lives of Others.

- **Read verses 2-3.**
- Paul very clearly states that his longing is for believers to be encouraged in heart. The word **“encouraged”** means “to call alongside.” The picture is of someone trying to move a heavy object when another person comes to help.
- A discouraged individual has lost “courage.” When we come alongside, God can use us to pour some courage back in. Paul gave similar instruction in **1 Thessalonians 5:11: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are now doing.”**
- To be **“knit together in love.”** As members of the body of Christ, we’re not to be out of joint with anyone.
- Did you notice that it’s impossible to fulfill these responsibilities unless we’re living in community with one another? You can’t do it alone. Everyone here needs you, and you need everyone else.
- Do you know of anyone who seems a bit low today? If so, do what it takes to encourage him or her. Are you out of sync with someone? Anyone you’ve been avoiding because of some conflict or hurt feelings? Meet face-to-face and make things right.
- As we take responsibility for one another, we’ll understand and know Christ more fully. As we get to know Him better, we’ll discover treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which are hidden in Christ.

## 6. Find Pleasure in Obedience.

- **Read verses 4-5.**
- Just as one germ can infect the entire body, Paul recognized the threat of false teaching. These teachers deceived by using faulty logic and by enticing people with words that sounded good.
- Paul delighted in their obedience. The words **“order”** and **“steadfast”** are used in a military term. Paul is there in spirit, like a general inspecting the troops before battle. Orderly soldiers were those who had no breaks or breaches in their ranks.
- This terminology helps us see that through our discipline and obedience we can be prepared for any kind of battle. We must each do our part, and we must stand united.
- It’s the picture of the wall builders in Nehemiah, who worked as a team, with their swords at their side (**Nehemiah 4:18**). The emphasis of **“order”** is on individuality. Everyone is doing his or her part. **“steadfast”** points to a “solid front,” with the focus on corporate strength, as the soldiers line up in battle formation.

**Nehemiah 4:18, “Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me.”**

## **Conclusion**

How are you at living out your purpose? How are you doing with in the 6 areas?

Are you rejoicing in the suffering? Are you suffering for the gospel?

Are you serving in your church? 3-5 hours a week? What are you doing?

Are you helping others to grow? Inspiring? Challenging?

Is the work you do powered by His strength? Or your own?

Are you being a blessing in the lives of others? Or are you taking from the lives of others?

Are you finding pleasure in obedience? Are you even trying to be obedient?