

Colossians: Jesus Our All In All

Colossians 1:24-29

Colossians 1:24

(KJV) Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

(NIV) Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

This is how we know Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit. He does not lament his suffering for Jesus but rather rejoices! We call to mind the first chapter of the Book of James in which the Jewish diaspora were encouraged by James to consider their trials and temptations pure joy:

James 1:2-4

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Even in our own lives, we can have a Biblical heart toward our sufferings that make them more than inconvenient pain; indeed, God is allowing our sufferings to mould and shape us into the image of His Son! It is so important for us to realize that suffering is an honour in our walk with Jesus, for as our Saviour encountered spiritual and physical opposition to His ministry, so will we:

Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Even as Paul was writing this letter to the Colossians in his chains for the gospel, he understood that he could never suffer more than did His beloved Saviour, therefore his sufferings for Christ would always fall short of his Saviour's sacrifice for His church. And, beloved, we have to emphasize that any and all suffering that Paul put forth was for people, real people, the church. Beloved, guard your hearts against any bitterness, cynicism, or blame towards God's church. Of course it is easy to point a finger at the idolatry, hypocrisy, corruption, lukewarmness, and false teaching historically and presently in the church, but she is still His beloved bride and chosen witness to a lost and broken world. God will always retain a remnant to represent Him and point the nations to the Truth, His Son Jesus Christ:

Romans 11:4-5

But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

As an application point here, remember that pain and suffering for the Gospel to make sense, to truly glorify God, we must stay in His Word, and stay in the posture of humble prayer, offering ourselves afresh each day as living sacrifices:

Psalm 1:2

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

As Isaiah did in Chapter 6 of that book, we can pray to God that after He washes us and cleanses us in His Word, that each of us is available for Him to send:

Isaiah 6:8

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

Colossians 1:25

(KJV) Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

(NIV) I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—

As he did in Colossians 1:1, Paul states his qualifications as a minister called of God, to both encourage the Colossian believers and to defend his calling to any false teachers who seek to deride his mission. Although Paul was an educated and thoroughly religious man before his encounter with Jesus, God had to break him down to nothing in order to build him again in Christ. (See Acts 9:1-22)

Hear me out, dear Christian: There can be no power for ministry for us outside of a born-again life intimately connected to Jesus Christ:

John 15:5-6

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

People need to bear fruit. Ministries need to bear fruit. By their fruit you will know them:

Matthew 7:16-20

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

This should teach us that no diploma or degree would suffice in qualifying Paul for his calling - only his reliance upon the call and anointing of the Holy Spirit on Paul's life would do! In accordance with God's call on each of our lives and ministries, the time we spend at the feet of Jesus, declaring our dependence on Him and His Word, and obedience to it - these things qualify us for ministry.

***QUESTION FOR MEDITATION:** Have you ever felt ill-equipped or not qualified to carry out the ministry you know God called you to? How does the teaching above change your perspective on being spiritually qualified? What specific points of encouragement have you gleaned from this truth?

Our character is front and centre God's way of determining our spiritual fitness for ministry of any kind, and in particular leadership.

Titus 1:5-9

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Colossians 1:26

(KJV) Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

(NIV) the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people.

Oh, beloved, the great mystery has been revealed! Christ has come to live in the Colossian believers - those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour of their lives! (See Romans 10:13) And so it is for us today! When Jesus ascended to heaven after his resurrection and physical appearing to over 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:6), He sent the Holy Spirit, our Helper and Teacher to come and live in us forever.

John 14:15-21

If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Remember that you and I could not have become born-again apart from God's Spirit drawing us:

John 6:44

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

So those who are blind to the goodness of God and His salvation in Jesus cannot come to Him apart from the conviction of the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the Word of God. While we know and understand that the Gospel must be preached to all, we also know that all the world is without excuse with regards to their recognition of God:

Romans 1:18-32

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

God Himself is Spirit, but has become visible through Jesus:

Hebrews 1:1-4

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

This is the Jesus who lives in the Colossian believers, and who lives in us! Beloved, He loves you and strengthens you and guides you today!

QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: How is your level of awareness of the presence of Jesus in your life? How will you increase this awareness?

Colossians 1:27

(KJV) To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

(NIV) To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Paul had his most effective, anointed ministry with the Gentiles, and right in alignment with the heart of God! God knew from the beginning whom among the Colossian believers would accept Jesus into their hearts and lives. Imagine inviting the hope of eternal glory to come into your heart and life! Yet many did and became the Colossian church. This verse clearly states that the hope of glory is not a spiritual concept, but rather a Person - Jesus Christ! Oh, beloved, and if this truth was only relegated to Biblical history, we would marvel at it from a distance. However, this hope of glory is available to us today, simply by calling on the Lord Himself to come in and save our souls, change our minds, and transform *our* lives with *His*! Accept Him today!

Romans 10:13 *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Colossians 1:28

(KJV) Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

(NIV) He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

Paul was called to preach, warn, and teach for the purpose of seeing new believers grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ:

2Peter 3:18

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

While we all have different spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ, there is a sense in which we all are commanded and are given opportunity to preach, warn, and teach those around us, inside and outside the church walls:

Ephesians 4:15

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ

Matthew 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and

of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The digging in and mining of God's Word is not reserved just for pastors preparing a Sunday sermon. The Holy Bible is for all of us, and for all of life:

1Peter 2:2 *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*

2Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Psalm 119:9

BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

And so many more Scriptures about the power of studying and obeying Scripture!

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: What plans can you make to deepen your Scriptural intake today? What sacrifices are you willing to make to make time for deeper study and meditation? Make a list of the spiritual benefits of setting aside this additional time in God's Word.

Colossians 1:29

(KJV) Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. (NIV) To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Beloved, I speak, unfortunately, from experience here. Please do not attempt to labour and strive in the Lord's work *in your own strength!* This neither impresses nor glorifies our Lord, and will lead to certain spiritual burnout! When the Lord is leading you, He promises to strengthen you for the work, as He did powerfully in Paul.

In your weakness God will show Himself strong!

2Corinthians 12:9-10

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Hallelujah!

- Reverend Darren McClelland