

Colossians 1:24—29

Sept. 29, 2019

Today, we continue our journey through Colossians. Turn in your Bible to Colossians 1:24. If you need a Bible raise your hand and we will get one to you.

Colossians is a letter written by a man named Paul to a church in the ancient city of Colossae. The original recipients are long since dead, but the message endures.

Today we look to Colossians 1.

“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.”

Colossians 1:24-29

PRAY

All of us have heard of the famous poem The Charge of the light brigade.

I

*Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.*

II

*"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.*

III

*Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.*

VI

*When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!*

"The charge lasted just over seven minutes. The myth has endured for over 150 years."

The irony?

The British lost the battle that Tennyson lionized in verse. The celebrated light brigade went up that hill ultimately for nothing only to give it right back and lose the battle. Not only that but the charge decimated the brigade. The casualties were staggering. No one charging up that hill personally thought it was glorious. They were just aware people were shooting at them.

One officer said, "We all knew the thing was desperate before we started, and it was even worse than we thought."

The Russians who were being charged upon said, "It is madness." They thought that the soldiers had to be drunk to do something so foolhardy.

They just got orders.

*Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.*

That was theirs, but that is not ours though it can feel that way.

They got orders; we get insight.

You ever feel that way? Do you ever feel like you have fought a war and taken ground in your life, only to lose it. And you wonder—was all that effort for nothing? Was it just an tiring exercise of futility?

Do you know what you need today?

You need to know HOW the kingdom of God advances. If we do not know HOW the kingdom advances we will be tempted to think that we are following Jesus for nothing.

PROP: Since we can be tempted to think that all our work is for nothing—that it is futile and fruitless—we must understand that the kingdom advance by Suffering and Proclamation to bring us all to maturity.

Our section this morning describes two unlikely ways the kingdom advances.

PROP: Affliction and Proclamation leads to maturity.

The kingdom advances in our world by affliction and proclamation. Those will serve as my two main points this morning.

Affliction
&
Proclamation

First,

1. *Affliction (Col. 1:24-27)*

The kingdom advances by means of affliction. That is a very strange thing to say. But again and again the purposes of God in our world are advanced

through trials and troubles; suffering and distress; misery and heartbreaks; woe and anguish.

Only in the kingdom of God can a series of losses lead to great advancement. If you aren't convinced of this you will be tempted to live in despair when the hot winds of affliction blow against your soul.

We shouldn't be surprised.

We follow a crucified savior. Our leader was crucified and did not just appear to lose everything, he did. But the means of God's greatest kingdom advancement through affliction.

Kingdom advancement comes through affliction.

Did you see where this idea comes from in our text this morning? The way Paul describes it is somewhat jarring. Look at verse 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..."

Woah.

This does not mean that somehow the atoning death of Jesus is somehow insufficient for our salvation. When you put your trust in Jesus and ask for his forgiveness—his death on the cross is enough.

What does Paul mean? What is lacking?

The afflictions that are yet to be experienced by the body of Christ. Jesus so associates himself with his people that the church is called, 'his body.' That is not just a metaphor, it is reality.

When Paul was on the road to Damascus arrest and imprison Christians—
Jesus met him on the road. Do you recall what he said?

“Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?” Acts 9:4

NOT

Why do you persecute the church.

Why do you persecute Christians.

Why do you persecute my people.

BUT

Why do you persecute me?

When the followers—the people of Jesus suffer—Jesus suffers.

Think about that for a moment. How closely is Jesus Christ associated with us?

When we hurt; he hurts.

When we are persecuted; he is persecuted.

When we suffer; he suffers.

When we are afflicted; he is afflicted.

Piper says,

“Paul's sufferings complete Christ's afflictions not by adding anything to their worth, but by extending them to the people they were meant to save. What is lacking in the afflictions of Christ is not that they are deficient in worth, as though they could not sufficiently cover the sins of all who believe.” John Piper

What is lacking?

What is lacking in Christ's afflictions? All Christians—we in the body of Christ—have their allotted suffering to endure.

The kingdom advances through affliction.

Now, there is something unique in Paul's suffering—look again at Verse 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...”

He is clearly suffering for them. Did you see that?

Interesting given that,

Paul did not plant this church.

Paul never led this church.

Paul never even visited this church.

Paul probably didn't know many people there.

Paul was uniquely called by the risen Christ to take the gospel to the nations and that call entailed a great deal of suffering. And because of his suffering the gospel was able to make it around the world and even to us today. The Lord used Paul and his suffering for the good of the church for all time.

While Jesus used Paul in a unique way, there is another idea embedded in verse 24. To be a Christian leader to be a leader in his church you must be willing to suffer for the church.

Church leaders are to be 'human shields' for the church.

This is one of the reasons that leadership in the church must be qualitatively different than anywhere else. For a Church's leaders to be faithful they must serve and suffer for the church.

The gospel advances through affliction, and often through the affliction of her leaders. Church leaders are not the ones who are to send others charging up the hill into peril and stand back and watch. Servant leadership means not being the boss and lording it over others. Or flexing by having the final word.

More often than not it means taking shots for the church they serve.

This sort of affliction does not feel much like gospel advancement. The pain and tears associated with leadership often feels hurts more than I can put words to.

Do you want to be a church leader? Do you want to be a pastor? Do you want to faithfully shepherd?

You need to be willing to take shots for the church you serve. I recently heard a pastor talking about his pastoral tenure and he said, "I've been doing this nearly 20 years and it is way harder than I ever knew. If I knew how very hard pastoral ministry was, I never ever would have wanted to be a pastor in the first place."

What are a few ways a pastor/church leader is to suffer for others.

- Protecting the flock from internal and external threats.
- Protect those who need help.
- Stand in the way of bullies.
- Run into trouble instead of away from it.
- Preach and teach the truth week in and week out.
- Preach and teach the truth when it is popular and when it is not.
- Lead by serving.
- Treat everyone the same.

- You are to be servant of all.

I am convinced that God takes the weakest amongst us and calls them to be pastoral ministry. Those that would never study the Bible closely unless they had to teach, preach and counsel with it. Those whose weakness is clear to all so that the power of God might s

But it is through weakness and sacrifice that the kingdom advances.

As leaders serve—what is the affect in them and all the people?

Vs. 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.

Christ in you all, hope of glory.

The effect of the gospel faithfully preached is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' We take this amazing truth for granted. How can the life of God occupy the soul of mankind.

How can the king of the universe be concerned with us, here?

What an amazing truth—God now dwells not just with his people but in them. For most of human history, God kept his distance from his people. Yes, he lived in their midst but his presence was bottled up.

When people did experience his presence—they wanted to go the other way.

But today—what is our hope? Christ in us the hope of glory.

You see? Our hope is NOT just:

- We have eternal life
- We will live in heaven
- We are forgiven

Those things are true but our hope is much grander—our hope is in the fact that Christ is in us and that fact gives us hope. The reason we can hope that eternity will hold better things is because Christ is in us.

NOT just in you individually: Christ in all of you the hope of glory. There is the reality that all genuine Christians stitch their lives together with other Christians in local communities, called churches. You will not have the same hope of glory if you are alone.

We all need each other.

The kingdom advances as the church's leaders suffer and all of us grow in our hope in Christ. Because we have no other lasting hope. Nothing else will deliver the way Jesus does. Nothing.

The kingdom advances by means of affliction but also through—

2. Proclamation (Col. 1:28-29)

Did you see that in verse 28?

Vs. 28?

"Him we proclaim."

Who? Jesus.

Ray Orlund Jr. is exactly right when he said,

"Him. Paul summarized his ministry in one word: "Him." Not "Christ + _____" but Christ as the only focus. All other topics of interest had to fit in around Him and promote Him and make Him clearer. If they didn't serve that purpose, Paul got bored quickly. (and we should too)

We. Whatever others may do, this is what we do. Whatever message others may shout out, we'll shout louder about Jesus Christ. We are responsible to Him and will give an account to Him only and finally. *Proclaim.* Not beg, as if He were poor. Not suggest, as if He were doubtful. Not propose, as if He were the premise of something larger. But proclaim as the only life that is truly life, accessible to everyone on terms of grace, received with the empty hands of faith, giving all, demanding all."

Ray Ortlund

NOT—HIM we proclaim in passing.

NOT—HIM we proclaim, sometimes.

NOT—HIM we proclaim, but not so much to make ppl. Uncomfortable.

NOT—HIM we proclaim, but our real interests lie elsewhere.

NOT—HIM we proclaim, when it suits us.

No.

HIM and no one else we proclaim.

HIM and not ourselves we proclaim.

HIM and not financial success we proclaim.

HIM and not our opinions we proclaim.

HIM and not theological distinctives we proclaim.

HIM and not preferences we proclaim.

HIM and not success we proclaim.

HIM and not happiness we proclaim.

HIM and not sin we proclaim.

HIM we proclaim.

Notice that the text says, "Him we proclaim." This is not just the job of church leaders. This is a responsibility for all of us. We all must proclaim him. We all must fix our lives on Jesus.

Part of the reason we are here is to Proclaim HIM to each other and to the community. This is a task for all of us.

This means:

We are going to consciously focus on Jesus and the hope the Christians and non-Christians have in him. This means we are going focus on Jesus and all he has done, all he is doing and all he will do in our—

Singing
Praying
Preaching
Fellowship

Does this mean we will somehow miss out on other important topics? No way. What Paul means when he says, "Him we proclaim." Does not mean that all we ever talk about is Jesus. Rather, it means that when we talk about anything we must understand how it relates to Jesus or we don't understand it correctly.

So all we talk about is Jesus all the time? No. We follow the pattern in scripture and connect everything to Jesus. In this book alone Paul can say in

chapter one, "Him we Proclaim." But go on and talk about topics as varied as:

- Fighting sin
- Pursuing holiness
- Obedience
- How husbands and wives are to treat each other
- Forgiveness
- Church unity
- Prayer
- Wisdom

We can go so far as to say—you do not adequately understand anything unless you understand how it relates to Jesus. That is why all that we are, all that we do we must be fixed on Jesus.

You might think that sounds reductionist.

Vs. 28 again,

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

This is for everyone. Look again at the repetition of the word, "everyone" in verse 28—

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

Everyone is in view here.

Proclaiming Him is NOT just for people who are not following Jesus—we proclaim him in our church.

How?

We warn those who seem ready to wander away and teach everyone all wisdom. This means you don't understand how you are to function in life if you don't understand how it relates to Jesus.

We must warn AND teach—

Warnings—

- Do NOT fall away, following Jesus is worth it.
- Do NOT live for anything else, only Jesus is worth it.
- Do NOT think your suffering means Jesus abandoned you.
- Do NOT think your sin can disqualify you.
- Do NOT think you can find yourself anywhere but in him.
- Do NOT live for money.
- Do NOT live for attention.
- Do NOT live for influence.
- Do NOT be trapped by the enticement of sin.
- Do NOT forsake the gathering of the church.
- Do NOT be taken in by pride.

We must warn—we must also teach with all wisdom.

- Forgive others when they ask and when they don't.
- Honor God with how we speak.
- Overlook sin of all kinds from people of all kinds.
- Pray.
- Pray.
- Pray.
- Put your hope in Jesus.
- You do not live by food alone but by his word.
- Obey God.

Why?

Here is the purpose—verse 28,

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

We don't just get order not really understanding what we are doing and why.

We cannot say about us—

*Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.*

You and I are working to advance the kingdom of God.

You and I don't just blindly follow orders. We know what we are aiming for—
did you see it in verse 28?

Maturity.

We might not understand flawless how all God takes us through is to
present us mature and complete.

