

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

SEPTEMBER 14 - 18, 2020

Above All

8.30 - 11.22

BOOK OF COLOSSIANS



MONDAY

Colossians 1:24

The apostle Paul is not known for drawing attention to himself. Throughout all his writings, he seeks to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, glorying in all Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection. He strikes a similar theme in Colossians 1:13-23; but it would appear that he had his critics, as do most Christians who make a strong stand for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Somewhat unusually, then, he puts the focus on himself from Colossians 1:24 – 2:5.

Having referred to Christ's suffering, Paul speaks of "*filling up*" what is "*still lacking*" in that suffering. This is not to say that what Christ did was in any way inadequate, but Jesus Himself promised His disciples that they, too, would have to "*take up their cross*" to follow Him (Mark 8:34-35). So Paul is simply insisting that he is contributing his share to the sufferings of Christ, which is what all Christ-followers are called to do.

William Hendriksen provides a helpful explanation when he says that the enemies of Christ were not satisfied with killing Him, so, "since He is no longer physically present on earth, their arrows, which are meant especially for Him, strike His followers." (*Commentary on Colossians*, p. 87)

So when we face any kind of physical, mental, spiritual or emotional suffering because of being followers of Christ, we should, to use the words of Jesus' half-brother, James, "*consider it pure joy ... whenever you face trials of many kinds*" (James 1:2). If we're honest, we have to admit that that is not our immediate response to suffering. We want to get out

of it as soon as possible! Of course, if we're suffering because we are a "pain in the neck" to people, then we deserve it. But if trials are coming our way because we have taken a stand for Jesus Christ, then we are simply experiencing what our Lord promised us.

Do note that Paul insists that undergoing this kind of suffering is "*for the sake of His body, which is the church.*" Paul was probably sitting in prison when he wrote these words and, rather than have a pity party because of his suffering, he was using the experience to spur other believers on. He's effectively saying, "If I can cope with it, so can you! Just think of what Christ has done for us!"

QUESTIONS

As I face this day, with all its uncertainty and challenges, how can I have His joy in my life? What one action can I plan today to share intentionally the joy of Christ with a friend or colleague?

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for Missio Community Church in Pasadena, whose vision is to be a multicultural congregation of people who experience life together on mission in their neighborhoods, workplaces and campuses.

TUESDAY

Colossians 1:25

One of Paul's favorite descriptions of himself is that of a servant or bond-slave. But the word he uses in this verse is in fact not *doulos* (a slave) but *diakonos* (a minister). The force of the original is "one who renders any kind of service to others."

Paul has already told us that he is suffering for the sake of the people of God, but now he goes on to stress that his role among Christ-followers is not to lord it OVER them, but to minister TO them. If ever any Christian sees himself or herself in any role other than this, then we have completely missed what it means to be like Jesus. Did He not say that "*even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45)?

Please note that Paul did not seek this role for himself. He maintains that he became a minister "*by the commission God gave me.*" To receive a commission, according to one dictionary definition, is to be "empowered for active service." This is exactly what our Lord calls each of us to do. In a way it's a pity that we often refer to full-time Christian workers as "ministers," almost as if that task is unique to those who earn their living from the gospel. It is certainly true of them, but it is equally true of each of us!

And what is that task, then? Paul tells us that it is to "present ... the word of God in all its fullness." He's going to develop that in the next

verse, but here he's simply reminding all his readers that we are to live out the gospel wherever we can, applying its truths whenever we can, and reaching men and women with the liberating truth of the gospel however we can. There is a possible play on the term "word of God," although it is more usually the apostle John who uses this term to refer to Christ (John 1:1, 14).

All too many Christians sit around waiting for some special "call" to tell others about Christ. Nik Ripken, in his frankly disturbing book, *"The Insanity of Obedience,"* states bluntly that "we have in fact already been called. We have been called to radical obedience." (p. 78) Lord, may we today hear clearly Your call, and may we, surrendering all, be obedient to Your command.

QUESTIONS

Is there something I can change in my life today in surrendering my life to Christ? What new act of service can I pray about regarding how I can be His servant in the world?

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for the new Minister of Discipleship, Austin Blaszczyński, who started in August, as he begins on staff and starts the ECO ordination process and pursues church planting with ECO.

WEDNESDAY

Colossians 1:26

Many of us enjoy reading mystery stories, where convoluted plots unfold through the pages of the book and we are challenged to unravel the mystery before all is revealed at the end. Paul uses that term in this verse to speak of something *“that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people”* (v. 26).

Paul is going to give it all away in the next verse, so we know that what he is speaking about is none other than Christ Himself, coming as the long-promised Messiah, to redeem His people. Way back in Genesis 3:15 we first find this promise, presented in VERY mysterious terms as the *“offspring of the woman”* who will *“crush the head of the serpent”* while Satan will *“strike His heel.”* With the hindsight of history, we know that this is what happened on the cross when Christ was seriously hurt, but Satan was vanquished.

Through the Old Testament there were more than forty “clues,” as it were, that this mystery would take the form of an Anointed One through the line of Judah (Genesis 49:10), as a Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15) but also a King (Psalm 2:6-7), born through miraculous intervention by God (Isaiah 7:14) yet actually Himself part of the Godhead (Isaiah 9:6-7). The greatest “twist” in this mystery came, of course, in Isaiah 53, where instead of being a conquering ruler like David, this one would come as the “Suffering Servant.”

The sad part of this mystery is that, when Jesus appeared in fulfillment of these prophecies, the very people to whom all these promises had been given rejected Him; and to this day they have failed to understand the mystery that Paul assures us in today's verse "*is now disclosed to the Lord's people.*" This is just an amazing reminder to all of us that, unlike other religions where people have to seek after their gods, Christianity is established on the fact that God came looking for us! Paul reminds the Roman church that "*when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly*" (Romans 5:6).

We rejoice in the knowledge that God has shown His love through Christ as the "solution" to the mystery!

QUESTIONS

Is my personal relationship with Jesus growing through a disciplined time of studying His Word and intimate prayer? How can I remind myself throughout the day that Jesus is Lord over everything that I do?

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for the monthly racial justice forums to reach both believers and unbelievers who are committed to racial justice in Pasadena.

THURSDAY

Colossians 1:27

We spoke yesterday about the “mystery” that has been “disclosed to the Lord’s people” with Christ’s coming, His death on the cross to redeem us, and His resurrection to assure us of an eternal future. However, Paul is not finished with his good news.

In our verse today, he adds a few defining terms to this mystery by saying that it involves “*glorious riches*” for the people of God. As we dig into what these are, any earthly riches fade into insignificance since we are told that the final dimension of this mystery is that we get to share with both Jews and Gentiles the mind-boggling reality of “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*.” William Hendriksen spells it out: “It is Christ in all His glorious riches actually dwelling through His Spirit in the hearts and lives of the Gentiles. In all the preceding ages this had never been seen, but now every child of God could bear witness to it.” (*Commentary on Colossians*, p. 89)

Hopefully, the immensity of this statement is gripping your heart and mind. We do not just “follow” Christ; we do not just “join” His church; we actually experience having the Godhead IN our lives. Jesus put it more simply when He told His disciples that “*you are in me, and I am in you*” (John 14:20); and He goes further to say, “*All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and WE will come and make our home with each of them*” (John 14:23 NLT).

By His Spirit, God actually indwells us, enabling us to share in who Christ is and what He is accomplishing in the world. Even more thrilling is the phrase “*hope of glory*,” since that reminds us that all we do for the kingdom of God in our lifetime is but the preface to the fulfilment of our hope that we will also share heaven with Christ, for all eternity. Just spend some time allowing the implications of this phrase to seep into every part of your heart, mind and life. It puts so many trials and problems of this life (especially now) into such a divine perspective. We’re in the waiting room now, and it can often be messy, uncomfortable, and even downright unpleasant—but one day the door will open to glory! Just imagine that!

We wait expectantly for the unveiling of all these mysteries when we will see Jesus one day. Lord, keep us willing, obedient, and patient until that time.

QUESTIONS

How do I live and serve today with the joy that I will see Jesus one day and the “hope of glory” will be revealed? What does it mean to me personally to have “Christ in me”?

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for Pastor Len, his wife Amy, and their three boys to thrive as a family during quarantine.

FRIDAY

Colossians 1:28-29

Just in case the thought of “glory,” which we discussed yesterday, is in danger of making us “so heavenly minded that we’re of no earthly use,” Paul hurries on in the last two verses of this chapter to get our feet back on the ground.

First of all, there is work to be done before we head Home to glory. For Paul (and for all of us) that involves “proclaiming Christ.” After our conversion we are not left in the world to sit around, as someone once put it, “in third-class accommodation waiting for our first-class accommodation in heaven!” If we are all ministers of the Gospel (as Paul told us in verse 25), then we must all be seeking to find what gift/s the Lord has given us to further that Gospel through telling people (“proclaiming”), warning people (“admonishing”), “teaching wisdom” (which, unlike knowledge, is not information in the head but formation in the life), and doing our best to ensure that our hearers find out how to become “fully mature” in Jesus Christ.

If you feel a little overwhelmed to read that last sentence, then join the club! None of us feels adequate for this task, but the amazing thing is that Christ does not FIND us worthy to be His mouthpiece to the world; He MAKES us worthy! Do note that this requires a lot of hard work. Various translations use the terms “strenuously contend,” “labor,” and

“struggling,” but do you see that the energy does not come from us? We accomplish our tasks for the kingdom of God “with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” Whom God calls, He equips!

So when you look around you at the needs of our world (and they seem to be almost overwhelming these days), don’t allow Satan to whisper in your ear that “there’s nothing you can do.” Our answer is, of course, that there IS nothing WE can do, but “*I can do everything through Him who gives me strength*” (Philippians 4:13). Let us adopt the spirit of young Samuel when he went before the Lord and said quite simply, “*Speak, for your servant is listening*” (1 Samuel 3:10). May we listen this day for God’s small quiet voice and be obedient for the growth of His kingdom here on earth.

QUESTIONS

What can I, or should I change in my life to move my dependency from who I am to Jesus? As I reflect on my life today, do I really believe I can do all things in His strength? What can I change to grow in His strength?

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for God to reveal creative ways to reach the undergraduate and graduate students in Pasadena at Caltech (despite Caltech undergrads being fully online), Fuller, Pasadena Community College, and the new Kaiser Medical School.

Sources:

- William Hendrickson, *Commentary on Colossians* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971).
- Nik Ripkin, *The Insanity of Obedience: Walking with Jesus in Tough Places* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014).

