

Women's Bible Study – Fall/Winter 2018
Colossians 1:24-2:5 – Because of Christ
10/3/18 – Angie Pankratz



Last week we studied Colossians 1:15-23. I really enjoyed Jann's teaching as she stressed how foundational this passage is to our theology. Christ is the invisible God. In Him ALL things were created and ALL things hold together. What we are studying today we cannot separate from that foundation. Paul speaks passionately about his desire to see the church of Colossae spiritually mature. He seems to have a sense of urgency as he speaks of being Christ's servant who strenuously contends for the sake of the Gospel. He does this obediently knowing full well that it is Christ who holds all things together.

Rejoice IN Suffering

Paul begins by stating that he rejoices in what he is suffering for the Church of Colossae. This is so "Paul-like." We have been through many books by and about Paul to know that Paul knew that God has purpose in his suffering.

If you are going to preach about the benefits of suffering, you want Paul to deliver that message. After all four of the books that he wrote, he wrote in chains from prison...Ephesians, Philippians, Philemon and Colossians.

This is a picture of my husband, Tom, and me. Next month we'll have been married for 22 years. Considering we were married when I was 21 (Don't do the math!) that means I've officially been Angela Pankratz longer than I was Angela Weir. I'm so grateful for our marriage.

Tom and I are opposites in many ways. He grew up as a missionary kid in Sweden and enjoyed many summers traveling and moving around different places. I was raised on a farm in NE and never moved from there until I went to college in MN. Tom is talented and knowledgeable in many areas I am not. (Isn't that usually the way it works!?)

- He is a weather nut. In any type of storm our windows are open and Tom can often be found sitting on our front porch explaining to our kids about the various types of clouds and barometric pressure in the atmosphere while I'm heading for the basement with flashlights and blankets.
- He has studied the book of Revelation and could have a detailed conversation with you on different end times perspectives.
- He is a Creative Director at Mayo Clinic and is very knowledgeable when it comes to branding, web design and user interface design.
- For fun he can be found studying maps so if you were to tell him that you were heading to the country of Malta. He would know exactly where it is on a map while I would just assume that you are talking about a drink that you prefer instead of shakes.

However if you wanted to know what it was like to get a speeding ticket, I'm afraid Tom would not be able to give you much insight on this. He is committed to cruise control and so therefore, he has never gone more than a few miles over the speed limit...

I, on the other hand, find cruise control boring. It's never been my intention to go over the speed limit but I have had the unfortunate experience of getting 4 speeding tickets since I started driving.

So Tom may say that you first notice the sirens of a police car behind you and then you need to pull over. After that he might stammer and tell you that the cop will tell you how fast you are going and then hand you a ticket.

However, I have the experience to tell you that usually first you notice the cop riding your tail and the police car lights flashing before you ever hear the siren. Once you pull over and the cop comes to your window. He does not tell you how fast you're driving but always asks the same question - "Do you know why I pulled you over tonight?"

The cop will then tell you how fast you were going. After that the cop will ask for your driver's license and proof of your insurance. (Just for the record being a woman or crying never seems to be beneficial.) The police officer will then go back to his car writing out your ticket and I assume googling your name. After what seems like a good 15 minutes, He will then come to your car and nicely tell you that you should not be going over the speed limit anymore and hand you your ticket which you will need to pay in the next month.

I could tell you the benefits of getting a speeding ticket and how for several months after that I am very attuned to speed limit signs, avoid certain roads and even try to go back to using cruise control but Tom cannot speak on the benefits of receiving a speeding ticket.

Tom could talk to you about meteorology, prophesy or geography but he could never tell you anything about getting a speeding ticket. You would never want to get your information on this from him because he has never experienced it.

There is nothing worse than someone who gives advice on something that they have no clue about. This is not the case with Paul. When he says he rejoices in suffering you want to pay attention because he is nearly an expert on this topic. In 2 Cor. 11 he says:

- 5X he received 39 lashes
- 3X he was beaten with rods
- 1X pelted with stones
- 3X he was shipwrecked
- Spent years in prison or house arrest
- Not to mention all the times he's had to be on the move because of danger from rough seas, bandits, fellow Jews, Gentiles and false believers.

Let's look at verse 24 again...

Now I rejoice in what was suffered 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. Col. 1:24

Though Paul must have been weak from lack of proper nutrition, poor eyesight and scars that revealed the numerous beatings he endured, he knew that God did not waste any of it.

He rejoiced in suffering because he knew that's how God brought forth the Gospel to those who did not believe. He knew that his momentary troubles were achieving an eternal glory. He had experienced Christ's strength made perfect in his weakness.

I love how Paul's passion comes forth in this passage. There is an urgency to help these Gentiles understand that though it is not easy to go against the culture, Christ is worth it!

And how better to receive such a message like this from Paul!

So where are you at today? I'm pretty certain you're not chained in prison but there are likely other "chains" you feel trapped in? Be assured that as you continue to be obedient to God in your chains - This may be a greater witness than any obedience in times of success and ease.

So Paul talks about rejoicing in suffering and also mystery in Salvation.

Mystery IN Salvation

The belief system that seemed to be dominate in pagan Colossae.

1. Minimized the person and work of Jesus Christ
2. Was based on the empty philosophies and fine sounding arguments of man
3. Took pieces from all religions and make one belief system out of these fragments
4. Promoted severe self-discipline that controlled the flesh.
5. Worshipped angels and spiritual beings
6. Flaunted mystery, secrecy and superiority

(<https://bible.org/seriespage/background-colossians>)

Paul uses the word mystery in verses 26 and 27 in this passage. He also says in Col. 2:3 that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This is an excellent way that Paul relates God's plan for these Gentiles in using terms that they were very familiar with... They used terms like mystery and hidden secrets in their Gnostic culture all the time. Paul is speaking on their terms.

The word mystery is not that far-fetched especially for Gentiles. Their former path to God was through the God of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac. God first revealed himself to Jews - to Abraham- and made an everlasting covenant for Abraham` and his descendants.

Now there were non-Jews who believed in Yahweh (like Rahab, Ruth the Moabite and even the Ninevites) but they were grafted into the promise for their faith and obedience in Yahweh. They were never allowed to go into the Inner Courts of the temple because were not Jewish

However, now through Jesus Christ Gentiles have the same access as God's original chosen people, the Jews.

"I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. 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." Col. 1:25-27

Interestingly it's Paul (a Jew - of all Jews) who is called to bring this message to Gentiles. It would be one thing for another Gentile to bring this message of hope but for a high ranking Jew (who once prided himself on his exclusive achievements) to bring this message of inclusion is even more powerful.

Christ died for all. For God so loved THE WORLD that WHOSOEVER believes in Him shall not perish. This is the message that Jesus delivered to the Woman at the well, the Roman Centurion and a corrupt tax collector... And it's the same message Paul delivered to the Gentiles in Ephesus.

Salvation is for all.

If you have ever felt like you do not belong into the Family of God than you are exactly who God is pursuing to be part of His team.

Christ IN You, the Hope of Glory

"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." Col. 1:27

Since the beginning of time God has been on a pursuit of us. After Adam and Eve sinned, it is God who is walking in the garden looking for them. Then God pursued Abraham giving him a promise to make his nation great. God pursued Moses in a burning bush. The Lord draws near to the Israelites leading them with a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire.

Even the name of Jesus - Immanuel - displays God's desire to be with us - as his name means that - God with us! God pursues the disciples by going to where they are at and asking them to follow him. As a merchant who lost a coin or a father who runs to his long lost son, God runs towards a relationship with us - a lost people.

This is different than any other religion - It seems that in almost all other belief systems mankind is pursuing their God - hoping that their works and sacrifices will make their God (or gods) be pleased with them. However for us, Believers, our Heavenly Father pursues us - in spite of our failed attempts to be righteous.

When we believe in the image of the invisible God and the sacrifice He made for our sins, we are promised that the God of the Universe dwells within us.

"It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." Gal. 2:20

When you believed in Jesus Christ you were sealed with the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:20) That is the invisible God living inside of you. Do you walk around knowing that you have Christ in you and that's your hope of glory?

I don't think I do. Imagine how that would transform our lives if we lived knowing that one of the greatest benefits of being a believer of Jesus Christ is that we know Christ now resides inside of us.

- Feeling inadequate for a job you've been given? You are not alone - The God of all Knowledge lives inside of you.
- Dealing with a health crisis? You are not alone - The Great Physician lives in you!
- Unsure of how to respond to an unsaved family member? You are not carrying this burden alone. Christ lives in you!
- Struggling with your past? It is no longer you but Christ who lives with in you!
- Needing direction for your future? The Comforter Counselor resides within you!
- Do you have a relationship that needs mending? Christ, the Reconciler lives within you!
- Unsure of even how to pray? The Intercessor resides within you!
- Dealing with loneliness - Your Savior, Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace resides within you - You are not alone!

Paul probably knew it was unlikely that he would ever meet the Church of Colossae but that did not matter. What the Church of Colossae had was greater than a visit from Paul. Paul wanted them to know that the Living Lord resided within them and that was their hope of a day when they would be forever in the Lord's presence.

If there is one thing that I could leave you with - one thing that impressed on my heart - For those of us who are believers - we have that blessed assurance that Jesus Christ is not just someone "up there" we pray to but rather is the Living God residing in us!

We will close singing a song that reminds us of that Blessed Assurance. You will be dismissed to your small groups afterwards.

Let's pray.

Women's Bible Study is a ministry of Autumn Ridge Church, Rochester, MN 55902

Question: ouren.jennifer@autumnridgechurch.org or call 507-288-8880