

Colossians 1:24-2:5

The Normal Christian Life

Bottom Line:

We become more like Christ as we suffer for bringing others to a knowledge of God and the fullness of maturity in him.

Quote:

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

Read:

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, 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, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 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. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

(Colossians 1:24-2:5 ESV)

From the ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible:

Here Paul transitions to explain the content, method, and goal of his labors. In doing so, he provides an exemplary model of Christian ministry.

He first unequivocally states that the only *content* of his ministry is Christ: “Him we proclaim” (1:28; cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 4:5). Paul asserts that this formerly hidden “mystery” is not some form of esoteric knowledge reserved for a select few, but is God’s unfolding plan of redemption through Jesus Christ revealed to all. No longer exclusive to Israel, the content of this message (i.e., Christ, “the hope of glory”; Col. 1:27) is now accessible to all and must be preached to all. We preach not fundamentally an ethical code or a set of doctrines or right behavior, but *Christ*.

As for *method*, Paul continues the paradigm of seeing and preaching Christ from all the Scriptures that was made clear by Jesus himself on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27, 44). Paul knew that all of God’s Word centers on Christ and what he has done to save sinners, not on what sinners must do for God. As Old Testament believers looked forward to the Christ whose coming was prophesied in Scripture, and as New Testament believers look back to the Christ whose coming was recorded in Scripture, so also are we to look to Christ in all of Scripture as we await his return. Thus he warns and teaches from all the Scriptures through this lens (Col. 1:28). Paul recognized that only Jesus fulfills all the redemptive themes in Scripture. So we too must grow in our understanding of Christ as the center of Scripture.

Lastly, Paul states that he labors tirelessly with this content and method toward a specific *goal*: to “present everyone mature in Christ” (1:28). He does this so that the Christians in the Colossian church would be encouraged and edified with the knowledge of all the blessings included in being united to Christ (2:1–3). Paul experienced the new life that occurs when Christ transforms the believer from the inside out (1 Tim. 1:12–16). As he presents the treasury of wisdom and knowledge that is Christ, he focuses on *maturity in* faith and not just *profession of* faith. He knows that many Christians face the temptation to give up their faith in Christ alone—especially through false teaching (Col. 2:4). But as they grow in their knowledge of Christ through the Word of God, Christians can combat heresy in whatever shape or form.

Questions:

1. What was your big takeaway from Sunday’s message?
2. Read Colossians 1:24-2:5
3. What does this passage teach about God? (His character, his actions, his involvement in our lives, his purposes)

4. What does this passage teach about humanity? (Our natural state, our needs, our abilities, our tendencies?)
5. What does this passage teach about discipleship, ministry, and growing in Christ?
6. What's your next step?
 - a. Do you need to change your perspective towards something in your life?
 - b. Do you need to begin to take action towards living something out?