

We started two weeks ago looking at the letter of the apostle Paul to the church / Christians in Colossae, this was relatively a young church started by this guy called Epaphras. Epaphras brought report of this church to Paul who we all know was in prison at that time, he brought the news about their love for Christ and for the saints but most importantly about their deepest struggling with false teachers.

These teachers want to introduce these Christians to a deeper knowledge of God, a deeper experience, a higher life, teaching that they ought to be keeping certain rituals, believing certain mystical things.

And Paul's answer to them we can read in

Colossians 1:3-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, 7 just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf 8 and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; 12 giving thanks[d] to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

And last week brother Victor continued by focusing on the second part of the first chapter - The Preeminence of Christ. He used an example which I will never forget in my life do describe what Paul was saying to them here. He used the example of people who are being trained to recognize false money, their training is not what false money looks like but how to really identify the original. So Paul was focusing on the real truth which is Jesus – basically saying know Jesus you know it all

Colossians 1:15-23 English Standard Version (ESV)

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by[a] him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation[b] under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

And so we continue with this beautiful letter with the apostle Paul talking about his ministry to the church – the body of Christ

Colossians 1:24-29 English Standard Version (ESV)

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, 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.

Paul is suffering and it's clear that the sufferings in view in verse 24 are physical. They are "in my flesh" he says. He has endured persecution, imprisonment. He's been beaten. There's pain in his limbs. He has the scars to show for it. For Paul, following Jesus and preaching His Word came sometimes at a terrible cost.

Matthew 10:16-23 English Standard Version (ESV)

16 "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. 17 Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, 18 and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. 19 When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20 For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, 22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

So Paul gets it, he knows he has to suffer for the body of Christ, it has been said by Christ and he is aware that he is not alone because Jesus has promised to be with us to the end of time – the great commission.

So Paul goes on by saying - "In my flesh," he says, "I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." That's a challenging phrase, isn't it? Of course, Paul doesn't mean that Jesus' suffering for the Church at the cross was somehow deficient. The world hates the Church, meaning that the world hates Christ and the world is not done afflicting Him.

If you remember when Paul was on the road to Damascus and was converted and Jesus Himself said to him, He said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And you know, Jesus that seems like an odd question. Paul's not persecuting You; he's persecuting Christians. And so what's Jesus saying? Of course He's saying that His people's suffering, that His people's persecutions, that He is so connected to His people that when they suffer, He suffers. And if that's the case then this is important for us to get, that our afflictions are not our own, they are also Christ's. Think about it like this. Jesus is our Advocate. He's our Shepherd. He's our sympathetic High Priest. He personally knows our sorrows, our pain, our struggles, our disappointments. He knows when you're lonely, He knows when your family misunderstands you, He knows when your friends seem like they don't care. He's with us in all those times carrying us on to glory. And through Paul's conversion, this transformation of Paul's life, he realized that his calling was not to inflict suffering on the church, on the body of Christ, but to endure suffering for the body of Christ. [Paul's Identity rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ](#)

Galatians 2:19-21 English Standard Version (ESV)

19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

So Paul continues by highlighting the fact that he was chosen by God for one purpose and one purpose only – to preach Christ because it is all about Him.

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.

Hebrews 1 English Standard Version (ESV)

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”?

Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”?

6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God's angels worship him.”

7 Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.”

8 But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

10 And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; 11 they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, 12 like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.” 13 And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Isaiah 9:6-7 English Standard Version (ESV)

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon[a] his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

1 Peter 1:3-5 English Standard Version (ESV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.