

- **Today we are back in Colossians! Thinking back to BIG THINGS in Chapter one - we went through one of the New Testaments Great Pastoral prayers...**
- **We explored what many scholars view as the NT's highest statement of Christology- the proclamation of the divinity, supremacy, and absolute necessity of Jesus Christ in ALL THINGS**
- **And then, near the end of chapter one we saw the incredible promise- and profound calling- God has given to his disciples- the calling that about 22 years ago was shown to me and changed the trajectory of my life... this is what Paul says about the church, the Body of Christ...**

Colossians 1:25-29 *I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷ 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.*

²⁸ *He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.*

- **Wow! So much there. Now we are diving into chapter two, and as I was reading earlier through the entire chapter, it brought to mind a commercial that ran a few years ago... by TACO BELL.**
- **A person has just finished their seven layer burrito, cruchy taco supreme, and 120 ounce mountain dew... as they stagger from the store, they look into the camera and exclaim...**

✝ I'm full!

- **NOW, being stuffed with the high quality cuisine from Taco Bell might not be the healthiest thing you could do. BUT it reminds us that FULLNESS is something we all desire. We don't like being hungry, either literally or metaphorically. Emptiness is not something we strive for, unless you are trying out Buddhist mysticism.**
- **Over Christmas we explored the miracle of the KENOSIS of Christ- that in coming to live with us, Christ, being GOD, EMPTIED HIMSELF- he humbled himself in a magnitude we can scarcely comprehend.**
- **AND YET, as a result of what Christ accomplished through his life, death, and resurrection, the NT proclaims that IN CHRIST we have been made FULL.**
- **In Christ, we are COMPLETE.**
- **THIS is theme of Colossians chapter 2- that in Christ, we have been brought to FULLNESS. This is also a theme we see throughout the NT- listen to just a few...**

1 John 4:11-12 *Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

Ephesians 4:11-13 *So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity*

in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 3:17-19 *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

- **This is the truth we will explore- that IN CHRIST, we have been given FULLNESS, and in this FULLNESS we have been given great FREEDOM. SO, jump in.**
- **As we begin chapter 2, we see Paul confess how he is...**

† **Struggling toward a goal**

Colossians 2:1-2a *I want you to know how hard I am contending (struggling- straining- athletic images, everything about him working toward a goal) for you and for those at Laodicea, (other community nearby in Lycus Valley of Ancient Asia Minor, modern day Turkey) and for all who have not met me personally. ² My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love*

- **We see word 'heart' thru-out scripture- one of those words that gets constant use in Christian culture. Growing up Sunday School teachers would talk about believing in Jesus as "Asking Jesus into your heart".**
- **Of course, this is much more than intellectual assent- but it's also more than emotion. In Paul's world this term referred to deepest core of a person's concept of who they were- their identity, beliefs, and character.**
- **HEART was the seat of your concept of self, from which would spring YOUR ACTIONS- how you actually lived.**
- **SO, when Paul says 'my goal is for you to be encouraged in HEART', he is saying- "I'm struggling for you to have COURAGE- to be OPTIMISTIC, have an ACTIVE ANTICIPATION of Christ's presence and work in your life.**
- **Not only this, but for our courage to be rooted in a love for other people, especially the community of believers.**
- **You can go to lots of churches and find all sorts of Goals... maybe fund raising goals, attendance goals, volunteer goals, baptism goals- can all be good...**
- **But Paul's great goal (at least here) for the church isn't any of these... it is that we would be authentically characterized by our deep seated courage and optimism- and our love for each other- BOTH flowing from the maturity of our faith in Christ.**
- **THIS is where Paul is going. He declares the purpose of courage and love is that believers would know, experience...**

† **Full riches and hidden treasures**

Colossians 2:2b-3 *My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love... so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

- **In the Greek there is a very strong connection between the phrases 'United in love', and possessing the 'full riches of complete understanding.'" The sense is that not only will a maturing community of faith continually grow in love, but will also grow in their understanding of the Gospel that increasingly leads to the blessing- the riches- of a firm, unshakeable conviction of their faith in Christ.**

- *Paul is describing a positive reinforcing cycle in a healthy church- a loving and forgiving community will lead to greater spiritual maturity as people see this evidence of faith... and in turn greater spiritual maturity will always lead to greater love and unity.*
- *So what are the riches we are to completely understand? In a word, it is JESUS.*
- *Paul describes the ‘riches of complete understanding’ as ‘the mystery of God, which is CHRIST, and in HIM- IN CHRIST- are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*
- *THIS is taking us into deep waters- just a few thoughts here.*
- *First- it is a great encouragement to us as believers that we do not need to labor searching for spiritual truth and meaning in many different places- because we have ALREADY BEEN GIVEN the FULLNESS of Spiritual truth IN CHRIST.*
- *Again, the Colossian church had been infiltrated by teachers who were saying “Jesus isn’t enough- you need additional special knowledge, special traditions- THEN you can really know God”.... AND AGAIN, Paul says- NO! CHRIST IS ENOUGH... Everything we need to know, to KNOW GOD, to have peace with God, and live in the presence and goodness of God, is given to us in Jesus. THIS IS A GREAT SOURCE OF COMFORT.*
- *At the same time, Paul’s words are a challenge to us, as they mean we always will have further to go-more to learn- as we explore the depths of these riches- the mystery- of the spiritual inheritance of NEW LIFE we have received In Christ.*
- *ONE MORE thing we see here- and this is essential for us to remember. The Christian scholar NT Wright points out the PRIMARY THRUST of this passage is that EVERYTHING we might want to know about God and His purposes- should first be answered through the lens of the LIFE, CHARACTER, GOSPEL, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS!*
- *Scripture is full of many different teaching, images, and stories that reveal many different – and sometimes seemingly disparate- things about God, his nature, and his purposes. THE POINT HERE is that when we look to these sources of truth about God, when we wrestle with interpreting scripture, we do so through different LENSES. Filters. (camera). Hermeneutics.*
 - *If you’ve had any formal biblical training, you’ve been taught the lens of OTHER SCRIPTURE. When we consider the teaching of Jesus, we also consider the teaching of Paul about grace and faith.*
 - *Lens of context- cultural, literary, events*
 - *For some, primary lens is a doctrinal perspective- the concept of dispensationalism.*
 - *Lens of historical understanding. Tradition. Your favorite teacher.*
- *HERE (not just here), PAUL tells us- in dramatic language- When we consider God, his nature, his purposes, his relationship to humanity and humanities relationship God- the lens we look through, the limitless source we explore, is JESUS CHRIST. As we said back in the fall- if we construct an image of God and he doesn’t look like Jesus, we’ve missed something.*
- *NOW, Paul expresses his warmth and love for the Colossian believers, and he says something people say all the time, to the point of being a cliché- but as it turns out, IN CHRIST this isn’t a cliché at all...*

Colossians 2:4-5 *I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. (we'll come back to that)* ⁵For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

- **Paul is delighted- he is filled with joy- to hear about the firmness of the Colossians faith- and he says he is...**

✠ Absent in body, present in spirit

- **This isn't just sentiment! One of the great NT themes is that through faith in Christ, we enter into UNION WITH GOD AND CHRIST.**
- **In 1 Corinthians 6:17 we are told "Whoever is united with the Lord is ONE WITH HIM in SPIRIT." AND, our oneness with Christ is not just as individuals, it is a foundation of who we are as a community- as brothers and sisters in Christ.**
- **Listen to how this is described in Ephesians 4:2-6...**

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- **Part of this miracle is that as fellow believers, we DO SHARE a common source of life, we share a union among us that is greater than any of the other unions or partnerships we experience in this life.**
- **This gets practical. Because we ARE present to each other in Spirit, if we view our relationships with fellow believers this way, it will lead us to...**
 - **Pray for each other, sincerely...**
 - **Love each other, to relate with kindness, patience, forgiveness, seeking to build each other up**
 - **Contend for each other, advocate for each other, in word and prayer when not in person.**
- **WE ARE CALLED to be part of the gathered church- scripturally there is no such thing as a lone ranger Christian, and the primary context of our faith is CORPORATE, not personal. HOWEVER, there will be times when we are separate physically, but we are never separated spiritually.**
- **OKAY.. having described the spiritual treasures and riches we have received in Christ, Paul makes a statement central to the entire letter.. CHRIST IS OUR SOURCE OF LIFE... and...**

✠ As you received **Christ as your life...** continue to live

Colossians 2:6-7 *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him,* ⁷ *rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

- **The importance of this cannot be understated! Let's think about this.. WHAT are the attributes, the realities, of how we entered into faith in Christ- how we RECEIVED JESUS AS LORD?**
 - **FAITH. We had some understanding of Gospel in our mind, and with whatever knowledge we had, prompted by the Spirit, we took a step of FAITH.**
 - **SURRENDER.**
 - **It was all God's GRACE. Nothing we could do to deserve it. Nothing we achieved. Had nothing to do with our moral performance- Christ would come to impact us morally, but we took that step of faith JUST AS WE WERE. GIFT RECEIVED.**

- **Concept of DEPENDENCE.** Life used to be all about me, dependent upon what I can do myself- but now I am trusting in God, HE, not ME, is my source.
- **It was with idea- even very simply- that I was leaving behind the old person I had been, and was entering into A NEW LIFE... and a new WAY OF LIFE.** I wasn't just intellectually assenting to a truth, I was being made into a NEW PERSON, and this would impact how I THOUGHT, HOW I LIVED- my mind, my emotions, and my will- my choices.
- **I knew, to my core, that I was accepted, valued, and loved.**
- **AND SO GOD SAYS TO US... THIS IS HOW YOU RECEIVED CHRIST as LORD- CONTINUE TO LIVE THIS WAY.** Now, even years later, as a disciple of Jesus living in the midst of life as it really is- may we...
 - **Live by FAITH in the presence, power, and goodness of God.**
 - **Live SURRENDERED to the goodness and leadership of Christ, through his word and Spirit**
 - **Live in a humble DEPENDENCE upon God's Grace! Your acceptability, value, and meaning to God WASN'T ABOUT YOU THEN, and IT ISN'T ABOUT YOU NOW!**
 - **Live as if you are a NEW PERSON. YOU ARE!**
 - **Live as if you are, to your core, accepted, valued, and loved- and extend this life to the people around you.**
- **To put it in one phrase... YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED BY THE LOVING GRACE OF GOD... SO CONTINUE TO LIVE IN THE LOVING GRACE OF GOD.**
- **Paul continues on to say "rooted and built up in Him"... quick note: Verb tense of ROOTED is accomplished. This is something that happened once, and it's effect continues on. We have been PLANTED, ROOTED BY GOD into our relationship with Christ.**
- **In contrast, the phrase "BUILT UP" has the tense of continuing... we are always, continually, being built up and strengthened in our faith. This is a journey that will continue until all the days of our life.**
- **And BECAUSE we are rooted, being built up and strengthened, as we live IN CHRIST the same way we RECEIVED CHRIST.. the result will be overflowing gratitude.**
- **If you've ever asked yourself, "am I growing in my relationship with Jesus", one powerful answer will be "am I thankful... do I see my life with Gratitude." SAME question could be asked about the health of a church.**
- **OKAY- to wrap up today... as you CONTINUE TO LIVE in the Grace of God, with Christ as your Lord...**

✠ **Don't be taken captive**

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

– **Back in In verse 5...**

5 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.

- ***Don't be deceived. Don't be fooled and taken captive... THIS IS one of the primary themes of this letter... and as THERE IS MUCH that needs to be said about this, we will go there next week***