

Colossians 1:24-2:5

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[0 : 00] I'm Matt, I'm one of the elders or pastors here at Shoreline Community Bible Church and it's a great privilege to be able to preach, teach once again here. Thank you worship team! for that worship, you know the last, the chorus of that song, hallelujah, all I have is Christ and that's going to be our topic today is Christ in us. I'm not sure about you but sometimes I have trouble focusing and my wife can attest to this. Husbands you may be in the same boat as me.

In my house I am the king of not finishing projects and one example I think is the storage shelves that I built for my kitchen and they house things like Tupperware, pots and pans and canned goods. Now my goal was to put doors on these, Brittany's laughing because she's been to my house and I'll tell you why. My goal was to put doors on these shelves before our first daughter was born. As you can tell from my statement that didn't happen and if you've been to my house like Brittany has, she's smiling, you know that this is true. It did not happen in fact almost two years later it still hasn't happened. However, and not completing my project, I'm very proud to say that I've given my toddler a lovely new toy area consisting of scattered pots, pans, Tupperware and canned goods. Each day she turns half the kitchen into a personal play space like a private investigator. She carefully removes, inspects, and places each item on the floor that was on the shelves. And this thrills my wife. Thrills.

But I have to let you know that I have started and partially completed almost 10 other projects since I started that one. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I've never got applause when I preach. This is good. I have trouble focusing on completing projects. And usually what it takes is my wife Jules to say, sweetie, we should finish this one before we start a new one because of these benefits. And in this case it would be so that my wife and I don't have to pick up everything on the floor every day of our lives.

[2 : 48] And so what's my point? My point is this. There's tremendous benefit in focusing on the things that we know we need to focus on. And sometimes we need to be reminded of those things. And so Paul wrote this book to the Colossians because he knew they had lost their focus on Christ. And he wrote to combat this and help them refocus on what mattered. And the saving faith in Christ that had given a life to their lost souls was being bought out by the false teaching and deception within the church at Colossae.

They had shifted their focus from being complete in Christ to a new form of spiritual fullness and supposed freedom, a focus on unknown spiritual powers and supposed deeper knowledge and wisdom of God than that which they had been previously taught.

They were being encouraged to cling to things like fasting and other church rituals and to indulge in sexual morality that they had previously left in order that they may fulfill themselves personally. So in our text today at the end of chapter one of this letter to the Colossian church we see Paul sharing some details about his ministry and what he reveals, his ministry to God's church. And he reveals something to us, the reader, that's really vital.

And what it is is he shares the foundation and focus of his entire ministry. And it was this, Christ in you. And it happens to be the thing that the Colossian church had lost focus on.

[4 : 15] And I think it's the thing that we can easily lose focus on too as believers in Christ. And so this is my goal for us today. Here are my words. My goal for us is that in looking at Paul in these verses we'll observe the focus of Christ in him that was the foundation for his life and then ministry that it might help us to see the importance of keeping our focus on Christ in us and how that works itself out in our own ministry.

And we'll do this by breaking up our text today into three sections. The foundation of Paul's ministry, the method of Paul's ministry, and the goal of Paul's ministry. So please bow your heads.

Let's pray as we begin this morning. Definitely, Father God, we thank you for your word, for your inspired, your perfect, your unchanging word, God, which gives hope to our lost souls, God, which informs us of the error in our ways, which teaches us your word that proclaims the truth of Christ, of Christ in us.

I pray that this morning that my words would be honorable to you, that your church would be built up and equipped, encouraged for good deeds. God, that we may bring you glory.

I pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. So first, the foundation of Paul's ministry. Let's go to our passage today and start reading Colossians 1, 24.

[5 : 50] Please turn with me. Colossians 1, verse 24. I'll be reading out of the ESV this morning. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I'm 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, now revealed to the 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. So the first thing I want us to look at is the end of verse 24.

We're going to come back to the beginning of verse 24. So what was the foundation of Paul's ministry? The first thing is this. Paul was a minister of the stewardship from God for the church. We see that Paul stewarded this ministry. The biblical term we see here for steward, right, is this thought of the administrator of a house, right, so one that's given this job of being over the duties, taking care of the duties of watching over an estate and is accountable to the house as owner. And Paul took great ownership of his ministry. After all, he was given it by God. It's not as if Paul chose to be a minister of the church. God commissioned him to be a minister of the church.

[7 : 27] Paul is joyfully obligated to this ministry and sees it as a worthy calling. So Paul's a stewardship, a steward of the ministry from God.

But what is the ministry that Paul's a steward of? Let's keep reading. Go back to verse 25. Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that's given for you.

Here it is. To make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for the ages revealed to the saints. So Paul was a minister of the mystery now revealed. It's part of the foundation of his ministry.

I think the thing we have to see here, friends, is that there's a big difference between the Colossian church reading this letter and you and I reading it. And the church back then didn't have the completed literal 66 book scripture.

But also, the church didn't have the conclusion of the Bible's greatest question that was not yet revealed. And Paul calls this the mystery.

[8 : 31] And consider the gravity of this mystery. Literally, for thousands of years, God and his interaction with people, in his word, was slowly building up, slowly revealing his great plan of the man Jesus.

Coming to be a savior, a messiah to God's people. How would God finally and fully redeem his people, bringing them back into perfect relationship with him, like how he intended it to be in the Garden of Eden?

It's Jesus. But better than that, God wasn't just the God of the Jews, but the non-Jews as well. Whereas the Jews would consider non-Jews unworthy, God revealed, God's revealed mystery shows that he had chosen to indwell all who come to him in faith.

That is the mystery revealed. Christ has come to redeem and indwell all who trust him in faith. Not just the distant, mysterious deity in heaven, right?

It's Christ and man, right here. So verse 27 says, 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.

[9 : 46] Christ in you. The riches. We see it as the riches. The riches of the glory of the God-man dwelling in the hearts of people.

The foundation of Paul's ministry was that Christ had come to indwell mankind. This is the mystery revealed. That's what he preached. And Christ in Paul, personally, was the springboard from which all of his ministry came.

From his personal experience and encounter of the mystery revealed. That's what he was so excited to share with these people. Friends, it's Christ in you, Paul said.

Maybe that's kind of old news to us. Maybe we can hear that and not bat an eye. Christ in you. I think that we can so quickly allow ourselves to let the things like this become mundane. That which was the most amazing revelation of all time, right? Revealed by God himself. It gets old sometimes.

[11 : 03] It can. Let's remind ourselves. Let's hear these words in Colossians 1, 15. Starting at verse 15. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

For by him all things were created, in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

He is the head of the body, which is the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything and through him to reconcile himself to all things. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Verse 21. And you who were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body a flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

That's the Christ that dwells in us. That's everything. That's got to mean everything to us, friends. That's who dwells in us.

[12 : 18] If you're a follower of Christ here today, you've also been commissioned through faith in Christ and you're being indwelt with him to be a minister of the same revealed mystery.

And here, here are the last words from Christ's time on earth in scripture. It's the Great Commission passage. It's Matthew 28. You don't have to turn there.

Jesus said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you.

And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Each and every Christian has been given a stewardship from God, just like Paul, to reveal to others the long-awaited mystery that indwells them.

Paul was just one of the first ones to do it. We're called to the same thing, a mystery that indwells them, which is Christ. We have a personal duty. We've received Christ through faith.

[13 : 22] You have a duty to share Christ in you. But do you engage in the calling as fully and passionately as Paul did? Or at all? I can promise you that my stewardship of the revealed mystery will only ever be as faithful as the focus of my foundation in Christ.

Say that again. my promise of the steward, the stewardship of the revealed mystery will only ever be as faithful as the focus of my foundation in Christ.

What could be some things that steal our foundation focus? Maybe it's misunderstanding. We don't really understand what it means to be indwelt by God.

Well, Colossians is a really good book to learn that from. And, uh, please be here in the next few weeks, but also, start reading ahead in Colossians. Start to unravel what this means.

Maybe you're busy. And that's stealing your foundation focus, Christ in you. Right? I don't have time to read scripture. I don't have time to think about spiritual things.

[14 : 35] I don't have time to interact with God through prayer. I don't have time to go to my community group. These are ways we focus on our foundation, these kind of spiritual disciplines. And the stewardship you've been given from God, friend, is infinitely higher importance and infinitely higher calling than the stewardship you have to do anything else in life.

So, misunderstanding, busyness. This one's tough. Maybe it's sin. And you've lost your focus on Christ in you because of shame and guilt.

I always mess up. Maybe that leads you to feel distant from God. Start focusing more on your sin and your struggle than the fact that Christ is in you.

My encouragement would be to go to the foot, the cross. 1 John 1.9 says, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive. Cleanse us from unrighteousness.

Not just one time at salvation, but our sins have been forgiven. We need to go to the Lord and confess and accept his forgiveness. He's waiting.

[15 : 48] So, in this first section about the foundation of Paul's ministry, I hope we've been able to see Paul's foundation for ministry was his understanding of and focus on the Christ that was in him.

And everything he did in the declaration of his ministry came from that, came out of that. And there was no moving forward in ministry for Paul without the focus on Christ. and the same is true for us. So, now that we've learned about the foundation, let's look at the methods. Paul's methods of ministry, which are the ways in which he stewarded this commission from God, the ways in which he did it. Let's look back at our text in verse 28, Colossians 1.

So, the first method of Paul's ministry was proclaiming, warning, and teaching.

Proclaim. Charles Spurgeon noted, it is not so much what we preach as whom we preach. We preach the person of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1.23 says, Paul says, we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles.

[17:07] Paul was unashamed of his proclamation of Christ, wasn't he? And he shared the gospel even when it meant jail, torture, and suffering. Paul didn't preach religion.

He didn't say, come join me in my religion. He preached the risen Christ who came to redeem mankind through the blood of his son. Paul proclaimed the God who redeemed him personally. Paul, the killer of Christians, the persecutor of the church. And I can imagine what it would have been like to hear Paul proclaim Christ in person.

Look at me! Remember who I used to be? People did do that, right? We see it in the Bible. People are like, this is Paul! Paul, you can't trust this guy.

Look at me! Remember me? Christ is in me now. He had to proclaim this message. He had to let people know what had happened to him.

[18:11] He had to. He had no other choice. It just came out of him. And it came from a place of urgency and excitement and awe in what God had done and that Christ now indwelt him.

So the second thing is warning. Some translation uses the word admonishing. In the Greek it conveys the concept of placing in the mind of another and so to warn or give notice beforehand especially of danger or evil.

Now Paul warned the Colossians against the false teaching. Look over at chapter 2 verse 4. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

And the Colossians were being deceived. Moving away from their deep trust and faith in Christ and being told that truism and the mystery of God's hidden truth was found elsewhere.

But it wasn't. In so many ways Paul's interaction I think with the church was like a parent's interaction with a child. Right? And so he reprimanded them.

[19:21] He rebuked the church. But he did so in such a loving, such a compassionate way like a parent with their child.

And a love for them in sharing the potential dangers and abandoning the great truth of Christ in them for lesser and foolish and frankly dangerous false teachings. And Paul warned them to focus on Christ.

Christ. The third thing is teaching. And the text says teaching with all wisdom. The proclaiming and admonishing must be followed up with wise discerning teaching.

And if someone comes to Christ through proclamation they need to be taught the basic truths of Christianity. And if someone is warned against the dangers of evil and sin they must be taught correctly how to avoid those things and walk in righteousness.

And with the delusion of another unrevealed mystery of God and hidden wisdom apart from Christ being believed by this Colossian church Paul needed to teach them. He really did.

[20:23] Read with me in Colossians 2 2 and 3. Paul longed for there and to the text hearts to be encouraged knit together in love to reach all the riches of full assurance and understanding in the knowledge of God's mystery which is Christ not something else in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

It was the unity and love for each other along with the full understanding of Christ in them that would keep the church from giving in to the alluring mysteries and wisdom apart from what they had in Christ.

So friends your focus on Christ in you ought to propel us propel you to proclaim admonish or warn and teach just as they did for Paul.

But I think that some of us are prevented from ministering in these ways because we feel inept. We don't feel adequate. We don't feel capable like we're smart enough, like we're bold enough.

So in our own ministering, when it comes to proclaim, I wonder if sometimes we preach Christianity and not Christ in us. So many people are turned away from Christianity or they get tangled up in the

do's and don'ts that their perceived inability to meet the rigid standards of being a Christ follower eclipse the reality of being personally offered new life by God himself, dwelling the heart of man.
[21 : 59] Maybe you're ready to start proclaiming in a new way or with a new boldness with Christ in you as the foundation and the focus for your proclaiming.

Go! Seriously, go! Not the second, but go! Join up with that outreach ministry, like Sailfest that Shoreline does. Start a new one! Look on the back table.

There's ministry opportunities there. Go! Reach your unreached coworkers or unbelieving friends, the lost. Talk to the family member who doesn't know the Lord, right?

Proclaim with a lifestyle that exhibits Christ likeness. Proclaim. Proclaim that Christ dwells in you and longs to dwell in them too.

So for warn, for warning, perhaps you have a close friend who you've seen in an unhealthy place and maybe it's been a while since you've talked to them or maybe not as much friends anymore.

[23 : 00] It's maybe someone that you talk to every day and you're really close to. And there's not in a good spot. And sometimes those hard conversations, I think, wind up being the most fruitful.

We have to be bold. Remind them of the dangers engaging in sin. How much God hates sin.

And remind them of the power of the indwelling Christ. In them, who has broken the power of sin that we may walk in righteousness. So, we ought to proclaim.

We ought to warn. One last thing on warn, especially for you cadets. Maybe it's a classmate or for others not in school, a coworker, someone that needs to hear the harsh truth about what a future apart from God really is.

And I've encountered so many times people just thinking that hell's a joke or a party. Party? I think it's the Christ in us that longs to warn others of the dangers of sin, separation from God.

[24 : 21] So, for teach, I think the degree to which we teach shows the degree to which we understand the importance of spiritual growth in others. And we don't have to go to seminary.

If you did, that's great. We don't have to go use eloquent speech. I don't have eloquent speech. We don't have to be the wisest person in the world to teach the truths of Scripture.

Christ in me empowers me. Christ in you empowers you to teach. teach. Paul says later on in Colossians 3 verse 16, he says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching, admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

And all who have Christ in them are called to teach. So, friends, let the word of Christ, the Bible, dwell in you richly, let it linger.

Read it. Go to it throughout the day. May it be in the deepest depths of our heart and the tip of our tongue that we may help others to grow in their faith. So, maybe you need to start teaching your children biblical truths or a young brother and sister in Christ or your spouse or whoever you interact with.

[25 : 49] Friends, teach Christ. When I focus on Christ in me, I'll find utmost importance in Christ in you. And that works itself out in an urgency of teaching and proclaiming and warning others.

So, that was Paul's, the one group of Paul's, the first group of Paul's ministry method. And so, the second one is suffering. And suffering many times is something we choose to do for the result that it gives.

It's not always bad suffering that's an accident or something bad that happened to us. A friend of mine ran for four hours yesterday and he's sore.

An athlete puts him or herself through suffering with pain, fatigue, shortness of breath, hours of training, blood, sweat, and tears, right?

Why? Why do they do that? Somebody say the answer. Out loud, say the answer. Why would an athlete do that to themselves? Nobody knows. Something better!

[27 : 02] We've got an athlete here. You win. We want to win. They do it because they know that what they're going to yield is what they want and that's to produce a greater result, something better.

Thank you, Ian. In the end, right? That's why athletes train. Blood, sweat, and tears keeps me on the couch. Thanks for your inspiration, Rob.

And so, Paul underwent suffering for the sake of his, Christ's, body, that is the church. That's what we read here in our text. The specific reason why comes in verse 28.

We're going to talk about that in a little bit. Without a doubt, one of the most recognizable aspects of Paul's ministry was his suffering. And we have to remember, as Dave said last week, he did write

this letter from jail along with three other letters.

And here are these words from 2 Corinthians 11 and 12. You don't have to turn there. Paul describing his ministry. This is in the middle of the sentence. It says, with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, often near death.

[28 : 14] Five times I received at the hand of the Jews, the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked.

A night and a day I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger from bringing utmost glory to the God who so rightly deserves it.

So in closing, if you're here today, you do not have Christ in you. You are missing out on the point of your existence.

What you heard today, the good news of Christ, the hope that Christ offers, will you trust him in faith today for you're being made right before God?

If you want to make that choice, please come talk to me. Someone that you know here that knows Jesus personally. It's the greatest thing anyone could ever do. Believers in Jesus, Christians, I pray you've been challenged today and are considering whether or not your focus in life and thus in ministry is on the Christ in you.

[29 : 45] I trust that the Lord will bear fruit from our looking at Paul's ministry and focus, that we might apply the same truth to our life and stewardship of our ministry. And there's much more to come in Colossians by way of practical application, and I pray that our future in this book will be informed by the foundation that was established today.

Christ in you. Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, we, God, are so unworthy of this offering that you've given us in your Son.

God, I pray that you would soften our hearts and turn our ears to you, Lord, that we might focus on the reality of Christ in us. God, that an understanding of that, Lord, might yield to a greater ministry, and Lord, ultimately that we would join in building up your saints to maturity, God.

That we may bring glory to your great name. pray these things in the name of our Messiah, Jesus. Amen.