

The Supremact of Christ in Ministry

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[0 : 0 0] And, yeah, it's a very exciting time because we are trusting God for his meticulous providence to unfold as we're navigating the many possibilities on Vancouver Island.

Nanaimo as a city just eclipsed Victoria as the most atheistic city in Canada by the census results. So what better place to go with the light than into the darkness?

I have prepared a message for you this morning from the book of Colossians. And so if you have your copy of God's word with you, I invite you to open that to Colossians chapter 1. And I'll read verses 21 to 29.

And this message is called Christ is Supreme in Faithful Ministry. Colossians 1 verse 21.

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet he has now reconciled you in his fleshly body through death in order to present you before him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.

[1 : 1 7] If indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Now, I rejoice in my flesh.

But has now been manifested to his saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We proclaim him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

For this purpose also I labor, striving according to his power, which mightily works within me. Three different people with the ability to implicate Peter with the just-arrested religious rebel against the state, Jesus, asked him if he was with these Jesus followers.

[2 : 5 7] And he denied knowing the man publicly and elaborately three times. Peter denied Christ. Peter denied Christ. And it says he wept bitterly.

Have you ever denied Christ before people? Me too. Have you ever come up with excellent rational reasons why it would be better to say nothing?

When in reality it was just harder. Me too. It is heartbreaking to confess to Jesus that you refuse to confess him before people because you are worried about the social outcome.

But God's saving grace comforts believers that his perfect cross has atoned for all our sins. And if Jesus is Lord, do you consider yourself his servant?

If Jesus is your master, what does that make you? It's a comfort that our performance in service to him does not earn us nor lose us a seat at his table, his great wedding feast.

[4 : 1 5] And in our passage today, Paul, writing to the Colossians, describes three components of faithful Christian ministry that gives believers comfort as well as clarity and confidence in Christ's supremacy, even amidst opposition.

Even as we suffer for not compromising our message that Christ is supreme. We are magnifying him.

And we're being transformed into the image of our Savior. And being moved to our undeserved wedding as his eternal holy bride. So let's look at those three components of faithful Christian ministry together in the text.

And they are suffering for Christ, speaking for Christ, and striving for Christ. So look with me at verse 24.

And we'll look at suffering for Christ. The first component. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.

[5 : 28] Now, as opposed to some other time. Now, having been told how much he would suffer for Christ's namesake. Now that he's an ambassador in chains.

Now that he bears in his body the brand marks of Jesus Christ. Now he's boasting about the cross. Now he's rejoicing, not depressed.

The world would say, well, that's just fatalism. And in the flesh, that's right. But in a person who's been delivered from the guilt and the shame of being a hater of God, into a lover of God and God's people, whatever the cost, suffering for Christ is actually cause for joy.

But not all suffering is automatically cause for joy. Yes, Paul did tell Timothy, remember, indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

But, as we just read, and well, in 1 Peter chapter 4, listen to this. It says, But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he's not to be ashamed, but it's to glorify God in this name.

[7 : 14] So in Colossians, in chapter 1, verse 25, he says, I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. He doesn't say, I suffer for your sake.

He's talking about his attitude. Paul's rejoicing in the sufferings, not because of them, and not despite them, but he's rejoicing in them.

Sufferings is plural. It's not just a description of his emotional state. He's talking about things that have actually afflicted him, events that God has sovereignly brought on him and led to him, not for him to be miserable, but actually to rejoice.

And why does Paul rejoice? Because he knows that the sufferings that he is rejoicing in will bless the church. What he's enduring is to bring about the blessing of the church.

Verse 24, So right off the bat, we need to address what does he mean, lacking in Christ's affliction?

[8 : 31] Of course, Jesus' suffering on the cross is not in any way missing something or lacking in any way as an efficacious, atoning death as a substitute for those he redeemed.

There's no more suffering needed after a perfect, propitiating sacrifice. That's unbiblical. Galatians 2.21 says that if by works of the law were justified, then Christ died needlessly.

The worldly and religious elites, which were infiltrating the Colossian congregation and is continually happening in today's church, they still want to harm Christ's faithful servants.

I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. And that's because they still want to harm Christ. They're not done causing Christ's sufferings. As if murdering him on an instrument of torture weren't enough.

They want to keep adding more affliction. Paul's sarcastically saying, if Christ's afflictions weren't enough, I'm receiving in my body the due penalty for preaching Christ.

[9 : 57] Paul's writing this letter in prison. This is one of the prison epistles. But he's not going to compromise his message just because being faithful hurts him personally.

His motive is to do the work of an evangelist, the work he was assigned. Preach the truth about Christ. Because without Christ alone, you're without hope.

But through Christ alone, we're given hope. And in Christ alone, you have real eternal hope. So why in the world would we ever add human wisdom to the supreme value of Christ?

Verse 25. Of this church, I was made a minister. According to the stewardship from God bestowed on me. Paul was made a minister.

A servant. He didn't choose it. He didn't love suffering for the sake of suffering's sake. Or for the optics of it.

[11 : 08] And he'll address that at the end of chapter 2. Which has the appearance of man-made religion and self-abasement. And at one point, you remember, Paul was killing Christians for their alleged blasphemy.

Now he's pouring out his life as a drink offering. Sacrificing his life for their benefit. The Colossians pastor, Epaphras, had just walked about 1,500 miles to seek the counsel of the apostle Paul.

Because of this problem. The error finding its way into the church in Colossae. He knows how to suffer for the good of his people. And Paul says, God bestowed this task on me.

Look at verse 25. For your benefit. It's not a career advancement strategy for Paul to bear suffering to get ahead. No pain, no gain.

It's a stewardship from God. If God gave you a gift and asks you to do something with that gift to bring him glory, what would you do with that gift? Well, he has given all Christians spiritual gifts, Ephesians 4.

[12:24] And he does require you to be a faithful steward of that gift for the good of the body of Christ. But he also gave you, as a believer, the gift above all gifts.

And that is saving faith in Jesus Christ. And do you use that gift? Do you tell anyone else about the Jesus that you love and trust?

And so Paul then describes in specifics his particular gifting to include preaching, the ministry of preaching for the benefit of the church. We looked at suffering for Christ.

Now let's look at the content of faithful ministry, speaking for Christ. Verse 25, second half of verse 25. So that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God.

And you say, well, I'm no preacher. And well, that might be the case. You do have a voice. You have a voice.

[13:25] And if you have saving faith in Jesus Christ, you have a view. You have a voice and you have a view. You might not always have a vote.

But guess what? God always has a veto. And that veto comes when all human ideologies bow the knee to the supremacy of Jesus Christ, proclaimed in the gospel that he has given us the privilege of proclaiming.

The Great Commission is not a job description for preachers. It is a command and a privilege to all who have a voice to suffer hardship with him.

To suffer hardship by proclaiming him. And it is, we can all admit, it is easy to say nothing.

When your faith is weak. But it is impossible to remain silent. When your faith in his power to save is personal and precious.

[14:32] Listen to 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9. It's not a task for people in a pulpit.

But every facet of every ministry. Every faithful ministry. Over which the word of God guides, compels, and constrains us.

To glory. With the loving and supreme authority of our head, Jesus Christ. And in verse 25, Paul describes that what he is preaching is the word of God.

The word of God doesn't, in this context, just mean the whole Bible. Remember, there was no New Testament when Paul was writing this letter. Completed, yet.

Though he's writing what will be inspired in scripturated New Testament text. But he specifies what he means. It's the good news. The good news that every believer has been given a love of so as to be saved.

[15:54] 2 Thessalonians 2, 10. Paul's preaching is for the benefit of the church. By proclaiming to them the confidence that they can have in the supreme value.

Of Christ's completed work. As they confront these heretical, worldly ideologies. Infiltrating the assembly in Colossae.

He calls it the mystery. Verse 26. That is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations. But has now been manifested to his saints.

He's not saying it's an elusive, mysterious, secret, hidden, higher knowledge. Which was part of the heresy he was confronting.

The beginning of what would later become Gnosticism. Going through angels and emanations to get to God because it's secretive. You had to arrive at a higher level of knowledge.

[16:53] No. Not at all. He's not meaning mystery like that. In fact, I think he uses the word *mysterion* to mean tongue-in-cheek. Specifically that it is no longer a mystery.

Jesus Christ in the Old Testament is concealed. In the New Testament is revealed. It was hidden from the past ages and generations.

But has now been manifested. It was hidden. Notice it was not hidden to them. It was hidden from them.

God concealed it in the Old Testament period. But now has revealed it in his son. To whom? End of verse 26. His saints.

He revealed it to his saints. He has revealed himself to his chosen. And then verse 27.

[17:54] His saints. To whom God willed to make known. So we see mankind did not arrive at gospel knowledge by pursuing it. They weren't even looking for it.

Because they didn't know it was coming. They knew Messiah was coming. They sure didn't know it was going to be a carpenter's son from Galilee. Galilee. God willed to make it known to them.

And when did he do that? Galatians 4.4 tells us that when the fullness of the time came. God brought forth his son.

Born of a woman. Born under the law. And Romans tells us that at the right time. Christ died for the ungodly. It happened according to God's redemptive timetable.

At the perfect time. God willed to make what known? A new doctrine? An additional piece of knowledge that was needed to enter into the kingdom?

[19:00] Or as Nicodemus was told in John 3. To be born again. And Jesus told him. You're the teacher of Israel. And you don't know that God saves people sovereignly.

The way that wind blows where it wants. And it wasn't because of your advanced theology. Or even your profession.

What you profess. It's because God gives faith. Apart from the sinner. Saving faith in Jesus Christ. Is not faith in mere religious knowledge.

Or ideas. But faith in a person. The God man. Jesus Christ. Who is the only mediator. Between God and man. And who alone can give life.

To a spiritually dead heart. Romans 9.16. So then. It does not depend on the man who wills. Or the man who runs. But on God.

[19:58] Who has mercy. God didn't just make it known. He made it known to those he chose. Those he qualified. Colossians 1 verse 12. Those he rescued and transferred.

To the kingdom of his son. Verse 13. His saints have been shown this truth. That Jesus is supreme. He's the supreme savior of the world. And it's only by trusting in his sinless righteous life.

And sinless death on a cross. As a substitute in your place. Without Christ. You are without hope. But in Christ.

You have real hope. That's our message to the world. And verse 27. What is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles?

The Jewish Messiah. He was not just for the people of Israel. Hallelujah. What a savior. But for the true Israel.

[21:07] Those who would by faith. Be grafted into the olive branch. Romans 11. The promises to Israel. Are irrevocable.

Unconditional. And eternal. And all true Israel. Will be saved. But only through faith. In the servant of Yahweh. The son of God. The Messiah.

The unmixable offices. Of prophet. Priest. And king. All to come together. In one person. Who was to be a light to all the nations.

He came to seek and save that which was lost. The plan was never just to save one little nation. But it is from the Jews that salvation comes.

John 4. Jesus is the true vine. John 15. The riches of the glory of this mystery. Truth. Previously concealed.

[22:06] Now revealed in Jesus. Among non-Jewish people. Like us. Christ. Is simply this. Verse 27.

Christ in you. The hope of glory. It boggles the mind. Christ. And this is the heart.

Of Christianity. This is the heart of this letter. This is the heart of all Christianity. If you are in Christ. Christ is in you. Producing first of all.

Justification. From sin. And second. Sanctification. The ongoing process. Of being made. More and more. And conformed to the end.

The image of the dear son of God. And third. Your certain hope. Confident expectation. That he who began a good work in you.

[23:06] Will complete it. Until. Not on the day. But until. There's a progression towards it. When he. That day when he removes all tears. And suffering.

And gives eternal rest. And reward. And the reward is being in the presence of him. Forever. We're to suffer for Christ. We're to speak for Christ. And thirdly.

This is the purpose of faithful ministry. We're to strive for Christ. Verse 28. We proclaim him. We proclaim him. This is the job description of any faithful servant of Jesus.

Paul and Timothy with him. In prison in Rome. Don't send a clever argument. That will wow. The philosophers. The empty speculations.

They proclaim.

[24:14] This is the reality. And it will take care of itself. And the line of Judah is no exception. They don't engage in apologetics without the gospel.

The superiority and the sufficiency of Jesus alone. Apologetics is defensive. The gospel is offensive.

And the goal of evangelism is not to win arguments, but to win souls. And the goal of suffering for proclaiming the supremacy of Christ is not, especially within a debate in the church, it's not to show off your superior knowledge, but to show your superior Savior.

Christ is unsurpassable. Why in the world would you water that down with human so-called wisdom? And when Paul came to the Corinthians, remember, he did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom in the world's definition, proclaiming to them the testimony of God.

No, he determined to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and him crucified. Faithful servants talk about the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, their Lord.

[25 : 39] He's not debated. He's declared. He's not pontificated. He's proclaimed. We have this message.

The cross is sufficient to humble every argument of man. But what does it look like to proclaim Christ in a church where the supreme authority of Christ is being openly questioned?

The answer is verse 28. Admonishing every person speaking against the supremacy of Christ. Or introducing the notion that something could be added to that.

Sounds like Jeremiah 2. Why would you add something to living waters? How much sewer water can you add to living waters before it's no longer drinkable?

Paul and Timothy in this letter are admonishing right now. And the remedy for untruth is truth. They confront wrong living with the gospel.

[26 : 46] Sin must be called what it is. The heresy in Colossae had to be confronted with Christ. Commentators, I've read there's something of 44 possible theories about what this Colossian heresy really was.

But it doesn't matter. Because any way you slice it, Christ trumps them all. The gospel trumps so-called human wisdom. Listen to 1 Corinthians 1.20.

Where's the wise man? Where's the scribe? Where's the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? Admonishing.

Verse 28. And teaching every man with all wisdom. This is the means of admonishing. Teaching. Paul told the Corinthians that their enemy is ideas.

Ideas. Logismos. What they think needs to be taken captive to the obedience of Christ. He trumps every psychological attempt to help out what the Bible says about itself.

[27 : 56] It is sufficient. Admonishing. Admonishing. Admonishing. It's the same word used in biblical counseling. The lexicon describes it as counseling about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct.

To admonish. To warn. To warn. Instruct. I like to think of it as a boat. Somebody's going disastrously off course. You don't grab the steering wheel.

You tell them the truth. And have them turn their own boat. By telling them, look at the barrier reef that's coming up.

And give them the new GPS coordinates that will allow them to steer their boat around it. And miss it. Based on the truth that they now understand, they're making the decisions for their own lives.

Based on truth. Maybe you're saying right now, well, I'm no biblical counselor. Paul is going to write just two chapters later in Colossians 3 that we are to admonish one another.

[29 : 00] With the word of Christ dwelling in us richly. Colossians 3.16. And again, we see here that this word wisdom. And Paul in chapter 1 in his prayer, verses 9 to 14.

He uses that word wisdom. That they would be filled with the knowledge of God in all wisdom. It's not an intellectual debate. It's one of wisdom.

Wisdom is not what you think. It's what you live. His proclamation of the gospel admonishes every man to live in a way that honors Christ alone.

Who alone is worthy of honor. They're alienated. This is description of every human being before salvation.

Verse 21. Look at it. They're alienated, hostile in mind, and engaged in evil deeds. Those who are not in Christ. This is every human being who is a Christian before they were saved.

[30 : 01] They're not neutral. They're not this close. They're alienated, hostile in mind, and engaged in evil deeds as a result of that.

But Christ is the great liberator. And Christ uses instruments. Praise God. He uses instruments to proclaim his perfect completed work that alone transforms lives and brings them to glory. This is why we suffer well for Christ. This is why we do it. This is why we speak the truth about Christ without apology.

And this is the purpose of any faithful pastor. The sanctification of his people. That's what your faithful servant leaders here at Squamish Baptist are doing.

They're rejoicing. Even if suffering is needed. And speaking the truth in love. And in striving to see the Lord's people grow in your love for Christ.

[31 : 06] Verse 28. So that. There's the purpose again. We may present every man complete in Christ. Complete in Christ.

Not philosophy. Not religious zeal. An effort. And it's Paul and Timothy writing this letter, but they're not going to present you.

Look at verse 22. Christ Jesus reconciled you in order to present you. Paul's job as a servant is to be useful. He's an instrument in the Redeemer's hands.

Verse 29. For this purpose also I labor. He's laboring to see every Christian come to completion in Christ. It doesn't mean he punches the clock.

It doesn't mean that he's really busy or engaged. He does work in such a way that it produces fatigue. I remember grade 12 physics teacher, my great tale, Mr. Leary.

[32 : 14] He said, you actually can push on a boulder that's 4,000 pounds for hours until you're out of energy. And if it doesn't move, you've done no work. But Paul works to the point of not losing heart.

But he works to the point of not being ashamed of his excellent effort. He strives and struggles to the point of weariness to see his people move towards Christlikeness.

He's not just a hard worker. He's a smart worker. He's got goals. And he's got a purpose. He wants to see Christ's lambs brought to glory and greater maturity by resting on the completed work of Christ and his supreme authority.

2 Corinthians 3.18. That's how we move from one level of glory to another, by beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 3.18.

You want to be brought to completion in Christ? Listen to Hebrews 12. Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who, for the joy set before him, joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[33 : 36] For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Where does Paul get the energy for this work?

How does this guy not experience burnout? Why is he not depressed when people malign him and punch him and spit on him every single day?

And his ministry. Because one, he knows he can do nothing by human means. To accomplish salvation, and that includes sanctification and glorification.

And also, too, he knows it is divine power working in him. And that's how he is able to rejoice, not be depressed. Divine power is working in him.

Faithfulness to Christ doesn't leave people depressed. It leaves them comforted by Christ, rejoicing in Christ. They find it all joy. Listen to James. Consider it all joy, the brother of Jesus, who was converted after Christ's ascension.

[34 : 43] Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect results, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Verse 29. The faithful servant says, I labor, striving according to his power, which mightily works within me.

Paul is suffering in joy to be a prisoner in chains. Not for the sake of lasting, but for the sake of seeing Christ's name, Christ's glory, be made much of, and his followers grow and mature and give testimony that suffering for Christ is a blessing.

Suffering for Christ is a blessing. Church history says so over and over again. Paul says so, and Peter says so.

We just read chapter 1. God caused you to be born again to a living hope. We're protected by the power of God through faith. In this we greatly rejoice, even though we've been distressed by various trials.

[36 : 03] Paul says he's striving, not through the power of Christ available to him, but according to it. Christ's power is working in him. He doesn't turn off and then sputter out and then need battery recharge.

He doesn't need to flip a switch. He doesn't need to name it and claim it. Christ's power is in a state of perpetually working in his faithful servant, and it is in all believers.

What a comforting thought. Christ's power is perpetually at work in all believers. Maybe you're thinking, this passage is related more to those who are in ministry.

I'm just a normal Christian. Well, maybe you're thinking, well, we can't all be like Paul. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ. And in some ways you're right.

Paul was uniquely given an office that no longer exists and spoke with a unique office.

[37 : 08] But in some ways you're wrong if you think you shouldn't strive to be like Paul. Paul told everyone that Christ is the supreme treasure of the human soul. Everywhere he went. Wouldn't you want that to be true of you?

No. Paul called himself the least of all saints. Wouldn't you want that to be true of you? Paul said he was not adequate for this task.

Isn't that true of you and me? But he always preached the gospel, even if it meant suffering. And is that true for you and me? Serving Christ is not an optional role.

Suffering for Christ is an undeserved privilege. Speaking for Christ is an undeserved privilege. Striving for Christ is an undeserved privilege. And Peter, we've been reading a lot of Peter this morning.

Peter would tell believers that they're to be ready to give a defense. Be always ready to give a defense for the hope that is in you. And if they suffer, implied when you suffer for being faithful to proclaim the gospel, you should know that it is God's will that you should suffer for that to happen.

[38 : 27] It's God's will. And you are blessed if you suffer for the gospel. You're like Paul, standing in the path of filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

putting on display the grace of God's Son to go like a lamb before the slaughter without complaining or bad-mouthing people.

Do you suffer in order for Christ's glory to be seen and heard? By suffering in the proclamation of Jesus Christ against worldly wisdom and religious effort, we proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness.

We put on display the grace of God to endure hostility. The grace of God that saves undeserving sinners like you and me.

And we give evidence that the infinite value and the absolute pleasure of knowing Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

[39 : 38] When we suffer well for Him, we give evidence that our hope is not mere wishful thinking. But it's based on the certainty that suffering for Christ's glory is well worth it.

And He's moving us in that towards our final glory. Our lives give credible testimony of the message of salvation that we proclaim.

When we consider it joy, when the world attacks us in our message, even when someone in the church attacks the gospel or some component of the supremacy of Christ.

And we consider it joy to confront that with the simple truth about Jesus Christ's perfect work. We pour water on the flames, as it were, when they see not reviling in return, but they see grace in return.

It jogs people. It jars them. It shocks them. What's the purpose? Jesus, we have one who suffered in our place on a cross for a purpose.

[41 : 03] He didn't just die to save us from hell. He died to bring us to glory. Hallelujah. What a Savior. And He accomplished that on the cross.

It is finished, He said. We're going to be presented spotless, without blemish, not because of our suffering, but because of the suffering servant who took His cross to ransom us and to present us to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

He was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief, so we could rest in Him and find joy, even when it becomes costly, knowing that our failures in this regard, He Himself has already borne His body on the cross.

He chose us and He saved us. Let's pray. Father, these mercies are new every morning.

When we reflect on the suffering servant, when we reflect on suffering servants that You have called to now give us inerrant Scripture and give us instruction into how we are to follow in these footsteps and not compromise this supremacy of Christ over His church when the world desperately wants to infiltrate the teaching of the church, teaching of Christ, the teaching of the apostles.

[42 : 44] Father, give us strength, give us comfort, and give us clarity to point all of these arguments captive to Christ and His supremacy in whom we have redemption, forgiveness of sins.

Father, I pray that You would make us here in this room more like our suffering servant, not ashamed of the gospel, but actually boasting in the cross of Christ through which the world was crucified to us and I to the world.

Make us more like Your Son to glorify Your name through the ages. In Jesus' name and because of Jesus' name, I pray. Amen. Let's stand.

Let's stand. Thank you.