**BCM Bible Study – Feb 1/2 , 2022**

**Colossians 1:24 – 2:15**

Introduction

This section of verses builds upon all that has come before it as Paul begins by speaking of his service and what God has done in his own life. Verses 6-7 can be understood as a positive affirmation and thesis statement for what the Colossians should do. Meanwhile, Paul begins to target the “deceptive philosophy” which has begun to take hold of the Colossians.

* Is it easy for you to identify yourself as a “minister of the gospel” (Col 1:23) like Paul? Why or why not? What does it mean for you to be a minister of the gospel?

Paul's Ministry: **Read Colossians 1:24-2:5**

* How does Paul define God's calling on his life?
* Can you join Paul in rejoicing in the midst of suffering and struggles for the sake of other people?
  + **Read 2 Corinthians 1:5-7 and Romans 8:18**. Do these verses help you see Paul's joy in the midst of suffering?
* Compare this passage about Paul's ministry to his description of it in **1 Thessalonians 2:1-12**. What differences and similarities do you notice?
* What aspects of Paul's life as a minister would you like to see more of in your life?

A Mystery – “In the Colossians’ pagan religious environment, the word ‘mystery’ referred to information about initiatory rites and symbols - things that had to be kept hidden from the uninitiated… Humans cannot know or discover this mystery on their own, no matter how clever they may be.” (Garland)

* What is the mystery that God has revealed in this passage?
* What does this act of revelation show us about who God is?
* How does the original understanding of the Gospel as a mystery impact how you think about sharing it today?
* Considering what we studied about Jesus last week in 1:15-20, what feelings does the idea of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” arouse in you?

Maturity – In v28, Paul says that a goal of his ministry is to present everyone “mature” (or “perfect”, NIV) in Christ.

* “For most, then, perfection is some impossible ideal that no one will ever attain. For the Hebrew, however, something was ‘perfect’ if it fulfilled its purpose.” (Garland)
* How does this impact how you think about spiritual maturity?
  + Would you consider yourself to be spiritually mature then? What areas might still need growth for you?
* What can we learn from Paul’s goal for spiritual maturity here as we consider our own ministry opportunities?
  + Is it surprising to you that this would be Paul’s goal? What else might you have expected from Paul?

In 2:4, Paul directly addresses the danger facing the Colossian church for the first time by warning people not to be deceived by “plausible arguments.” Some heresies in this time (called Gnosticism) taught that secret knowledge only available to certain people higher up on the spiritual ladder was the key to spiritual maturity and salvation.

* How does Paul present Jesus as a contrast to this false teaching?
* What “plausible arguments” today lure us away from Christ and hinder our spiritual maturity?

Walk in Him – **Read Colossians 2:6-7**

As Paul describes what the life of believers should look like, he offers four different characteristics. The first of these, ‘rooted’, is originally written in such a way that it says that this has already been completed in the past and is just ongoing. Meanwhile, ‘built up’, ‘strengthened’, and ‘overflowing’ are all written in the present tense. This would suggest that believers are and will inherently continue to be ‘rooted’ while the other three must be more sought out. (Garland)

* Paul calls the Colossians to walk (or live) in Christ in the same way that they received him. What circumstances do you remember about when you first received Christ? What thoughts or emotions did you have?
* What does it mean to continue to live in Christ in the same way as we received Him?
* Is it surprising that Paul’s primary method so far for combatting false teaching has been ensuring the Colossians’ knowledge and relationship with Jesus? Would you have expected something else?
* Which of the different directions in verse 7 do you think you most need to grow in?
* Paul calls the Colossians to live “as they were taught.” Do you have a sense of respect and attention for the ways you have been taught to live in Christ?

Made Alive With Him – **Read Colossians 2:8-15**

* Verse 8 gives the first real glimpse of the heresy being taught to the Colossians. What was wrong with this false teaching?

As we saw earlier, false teachers of the day claimed that faith in Christ was not enough for true spiritual enlightenment. You must also **do** and **know** certain things. In verses 9 and 10, Paul presents Jesus as the fullness which fills us in all ways.

* How do you respond to the idea of being *complete* or having *fullness* in Christ?
  + “Since Christ is the fullness of God and believers are in him, they have all the fullness humans can ever possess.” (Garland)
* How do you “see to it” (v8) that you are continuing to be filled with Christ rather than taken captive by “human tradition”?
* What do the images of circumcision (v11) and baptism (v12) tell us about our relationship with God?
* What are some of the implications of Jesus' work on the cross from v13-15? How do these realities affect you personally?

**Challenge**: 1) Spend time over the next week praying and asking God what those areas where your spiritual maturity might be lacking are and begin planning ways to grow there. **OR** 2) Spend time meditating upon the fullness of Christ in you and what that means for your daily life.

Extra Notes

*How can Paul say that Christ's afflictions were “lacking” in anything? (v24)*

This is a difficult verse to understand, and commentators disagree on the best interpretation. Here are a couple of things we can know for certain:

* The phrase “Christ's afflictions” doesn't refer to his redemptive act on the cross.
* “Any satisfactory explanation of the passage must take the words 'what is lacking' seriously without suggesting that Christ's sufferings were insufficient to redeem, and explain why Paul's sufferings can be linked with those of the Messiah, at the same time indicating why he should rejoice in his sufferings for the sake of Colossians.” (O'Brien, 78)

One interpretation of this verse takes the phrase “Christ's sufferings” to mean “sufferings which resemble those of Christ.” Paul certainly suffered some things resembling Jesus, so this could be, but doesn't explain why Paul can rejoice in his sufferings for the sake of the Colossians.

Probably a better approach is to read this verse in an eschatological sense. “Jewish apocalyptic writing frequently pictured the disasters and catastrophes coming upon the world as a prelude to the end-time. When these horrors and cosmic disorders reach their climax, their appointed limit, the advent will come. The afflictions of these last days are called the 'woes of the Messiah' as they immediately precede the arrival of the anointed ruler of God. God has set a limit to these sufferings, prescribing a definite measure for the afflictions which the righteous and the martyrs must endure … The limit of the messianic woes has not yet been reached. There are still deficiencies which Paul through his sufferings is in the process of completing.” (O'Brien, 79-80) Thus, Paul rejoices because he has suffered some things that the Colossian church (and all other believers) will not have to go through. See Matthew 24:6-8 for a description of some of these woes.