

## Proclaiming Christ: Paul's Passion for Serving God

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### What's the Big Idea?

Christ's supremacy makes him worthy of joyful suffering and passionate proclamation of the gospel.

### What's the Problem?

We treat suffering and adversity that come to us because of our faith as a wholly negative thing, and we fail to see the great privilege we have in proclaiming Jesus Christ.

### What's our Response?

Trust God for the grace to rejoice in the suffering he calls us to for the sake of his name, and draw on his power to proclaim Christ to everyone God brings our way.

### Memorize

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

Colossians 1:28

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### What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

This passage expresses Paul's heart for serving God. It shows a man who sees suffering for Christ on behalf of God's people as a glorious thing. It shows a man who thrills to God's kindness in revealing the mystery of the gospel: that the God of the universe—Jesus Christ—would take up residence in the lives of his people and thus secure their eternal blessedness. It shows a man who is passionate about drawing on God's power to proclaim Christ to everyone he meets.

### Christ is Worthy of Joyful Suffering-Colossians 1:24

Paul says he rejoices in his sufferings for the Colossians' sake. This is an unexpected statement in at least two ways. First, suffering isn't something that typically makes people happy. But Paul rejoices in his suffering because he sees it as part of the overall suffering of Christ. Christ suffered personally while he walked the earth. But Paul says there is a sense in which Christ continues to suffer through his people as they live for him. This is why he refers to "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." Paul sees it as an honor to enter into this experience. He expresses the same sentiment as Christ's followers in Acts 5:40, who rejoiced that they had been considered worthy to suffer for his name.

Second, Paul's response to suffering is unexpected because he rejoices in suffering on behalf of people he's never met. Even though he didn't have a face-to-face relationship with the Colossians, he rejoiced that he could suffer on their behalf because he saw his calling to serve all God's people—the church—whether he knew them personally or not.

We may not suffer in the same way that Paul did, but we should trust God for a similar disposition toward the suffering and adversity that God allows us to experience. We should rejoice in it because of the high calling of entering into the suffering of Christ. And we should rejoice because it gives us an opportunity to serve God's people, the church.

### Perspective on the Christian Life -Colossians 1:25-27

Paul sees himself as a servant of God's people. He has entered into this role because God has entrusted him with a stewardship: fully laying out the word of God.

Paul explains the word of God as a mystery. He uses this word in a technical sense to refer to something once concealed but now revealed. Although God has been speaking to his people since the earliest days of humanity, the mystery now revealed is that he wants his people to experience a relationship with himself as a result of having Christ living in them. Paul

describes Christ in the life of a believer as the hope of glory. Christ in a believer marks the certainty that he or she will spend eternity with God.

Help your group members appreciate that they too have received a stewardship from God on behalf of the people in their lives to fully lay out the word of God. Help them to see what an incredible privilege this is: they're laying out the prospect of Christ in a person's life, the hope of glory! Help them to realize that their own passion for this privilege corresponds to how much they're gripped with "Christ in you, the hope of glory" in their own lives.

### Passion for Ministry-Colossians 1:28-29

As a result of receiving a stewardship from God to lay out fully the word of God, Paul's response is simple: he proclaims Christ. Note the use of the words "every" and "all": four times in a single verse. Paul is passionate about proclaiming Christ to everyone God brings his way, no exceptions. Paul's end-game in this proclamation is presenting every person complete in Christ. By "complete" Paul refers to maturity in a person's relationship with God.

Paul says he labors in this ministry of proclamation. But he's not laboring in his own power. He's drawing upon the power of Christ, experienced through the work of the Holy Spirit, who mightily works within him.

Help your group members evaluate their own purpose in view of Paul's purpose. Help them see that God has poured out his Spirit in their lives as followers of Christ so that they have all the resources they need to proclaim Jesus Christ.

### What Are the Questions?

#### Launch

Someone has said that everyone is evangelistic about something. Why do you think this is true? What are you evangelistic about and why?

#### Explore

##### Read Colossians 1:24

1. Why does Paul rejoice in his sufferings?

##### Read Colossians 1:25-27

2. What does verse 25 say about how Paul views himself?
3. What do you think Paul means in verse 25 when he says he's become a servant of God's people according to the stewardship from God bestowed on him?
4. What does Paul see as his response to his role as a steward of God's people?
5. How does Paul characterize the word of God in verse 26?
6. What light does verse 26 shed on Paul's definition of the word "mystery"?
7. What is the essence of this mystery according to verse 27?
8. What do you think Paul means when he says, "Christ in you"?
9. In what way is this the hope of glory? See Ephesians 1:13-14 for additional insight.

##### Read Colossians 1:28-29

10. What is Paul's main focus in light of the stewardship he has received?
11. How do you think warning and teaching people with all wisdom fits with proclaiming Christ?
12. What does verse 28 say is Paul's objective for proclaiming Christ?
13. In light these verses, how would you describe Paul's passion for proclaiming Christ?
14. How would you describe the relationship between Paul's passion and God's power in proclaiming Christ?

#### Apply

15. How does this passage change your view of the suffering or adversity you may face for Christ's sake and the sake of his people?
16. Even though our situation differs from Paul, God has still entrusted us as his children with the opportunity to serve people by fully laying out the word of God. How does it change the way you view school, relationships, and other opportunities when you see them through the lens of this stewardship?

17. What difference does it make as a follower of Christ to see your relationship with God as “Christ in you, the hope of glory”?
18. In what way do you sense God calling you to “proclaim Christ” with a view to presenting complete in him the people God has brought into your life?
19. What steps do you need to take to respond to this calling while making sure that you’re “striving according to his power”?

### **What Are the Answers?**

1. Paul rejoices in his suffering because he knows it benefits the Colossians. He sees his sufferings as contributing to the ongoing suffering that Christ endures vicariously through his people.
2. He sees himself as a servant of God’s people.
3. His role as a servant of God’s people comes as a result of God entrusting this role to him.
4. He wants to fully carry out the preaching of the word of God.
5. He characterizes the word of God as a mystery.
6. He defines a mystery as something that had been concealed but is now revealed.
7. The mystery that was once concealed but now revealed is Christ in the life of a believer, the hope of glory.
8. “Christ in you” refers to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, who resides permanently in those who follow him. See Romans 8:9-11; John 14:16-17; and Revelation 3:20.
9. Christ living in us by his Spirit is a down-payment, foretaste, and guarantee of the goodness and love God will lavish on us for all eternity. It’s the certainty of an amazing or glorious future.
10. Proclaiming Christ.
11. Warning speaks to us in situations when we’re tempted to reject Christ. Teaching helps us understand who Christ is and what it means to know him and live for him. We need God’s wisdom to know how best to proclaim Christ to each person in our lives.
12. Presenting every person complete or mature in Christ.
13. His passion is intense and strong. He wants everyone he meets to hear about Christ toward the end of them being complete in him.
14. Paul devotes himself wholeheartedly to proclaiming Christ, and God’s power infuses him with mighty strength to do that.
15. Allow the group to discuss.
16. Allow the group to discuss.
17. Allow the group to discuss.
18. Allow the group to discuss.
19. Allow the group to discuss.