**Colossians 4**

Colossians 1:24-2:5

8/17/25 AM

In 1926, American songwriter B. B. McKinney composed his now famous song “Satisfied with Jesus” which begins with the following words: “I am satisfied with Jesus. He has done so much for me. He has suffered to redeem me. He has died to set me free.”

* Those who understand who Jesus is and what he has done and what He is doing are fully satisfied with him.
* They recognize that Jesus is all that they need.

**Today, we’re going to continue in our study of the NT book of Colossians.**

Unfortunately, the church at Colossae risked losing its satisfaction in Christ.

* False teachers sought to persuade the church that Christ was not enough.
* They taught that those who want to be truly fulfilled needed to follow human traditions and rituals and philosophies rather than depend on Christ alone.

**But as we’ve seen, Paul reminds the Colossians, and us, that Jesus is the supreme, exclusive, and all sufficient Savior.**

* All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and the life of fulfillment and purpose and peace are found in Christ (2:2).[[1]](#footnote-1)

And eventually Paul is going to tell us how to live in Christ, how to lean upon Him, and to truly follow Him as Lord, but in the first part of this letter the apostle focuses on hammering out an answer the “why” question.

* Why should the Colossians trust in Christ and Christ alone?
* With all the fine sounding arguments and philosophies being presented, why should they stick with Jesus?
* In the opening verses, Paul makes all sorts of arguments as to why we should stick with Jesus.

And just by way of review, Paul began by reminding the Colossians of what Jesus had done in their lives.

1. **They should stick with Jesus because of what He’s done for them. Vv. 1-14**

Paul said, *“I keep getting reports on your faith in Christ, and the love you are extending to your brothers and sisters. You used to be faithless, loveless, and hopeless, but God has transformed your hearts. From the day you heard the gospel and recognized the truth of what God is doing, it’s been bearing fruit in your lives. God has rescued you and set you up in the kingdom of the Son he loves.”*

* Paul says remember what Jesus has done in your lives.

1. **They should stick with Jesus because of who He is. Vv. 15-20**

Paul said, *“When we look at Christ, see the God who cannot be seen. When we look at the Son, we see God’s original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank—everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. He was supreme in the beginning, and he is supreme in the end.”*

* Jesus isn’t just a great moral teacher, He isn’t just an example of sacrificial love—He is supreme, He is God, He is the one to which every knee will bow.

Years ago, there was a video that floated around YouTube featuring a clip from a sermon preached by S.M. Lockridge in the 1970’s…

* VIDEO
* S.M. Lockridge told his congregation in San Diego what Paul told the Colossians—stick with Jesus because of who he is.

1. **They should stick with Jesus because of where He is taking you. Vv. 21-23**

Paul said, *“By giving himself completely at the Cross, actually dying for you, Christ has brought you over to God’s side and put your lives together, whole and holy in his presence. But don’t walk away from this gift! Stay grounded and steady in this bond of trust, constantly tuned in to the Message. Don’t get distracted or diverted. There is no other Message, no other hope—just Christ.”*

PAUSE

**But Paul isn’t finished. He lays down one more argument as to why they should stick with Jesus.**

Last week, we listened to the apostle share the testimony of Colossians.

* He tried to encourage and challenge them by reminding them of what God had done, was doing, and would one day do in their lives.

But in our text today, in his last argument for “why” they should stick with Jesus, I think Paul asks the Colossians, and us, to consider his testimony. He asks us to give him a moment to explain what had happened in his life and how his encounter with Christ had changed everything for him.

So, let’s look at the text again…

***Colossians 1:22-2:5 ESV*** *[God] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,****23****if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.* ***24****Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,****25****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,****26****the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.****27****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.****28****Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.****29****For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.* ***2:1****For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,****2****that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,****3****in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.****4****I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.****5****For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.*

PAUSE

You know, there’s never been anyone quite like the apostle Paul. He’s considered by many to be the most effective missionary who’s ever lived. If we consider his resume:

* Scholars estimate that, in his lifetime, Paul traveled some 10,000 miles by foot to spread the gospel and disciple Christians.
  + That would be like walking from here to LA and back twice.
* Paul dedicated his life to spreading the gospel, traveling extensively, founding churches, and writing letters that became part of the NT. His ministry was marked by intense passion, unwavering faith, and numerous hardships.

**And why did Paul do all of this? Because of what Christ had done in his life.**

Surrendering to Christ as Savior and Lord changed everything for Paul.

* In particular, surrendering to Christ changed his life’s mission and perspective.
  + And when we give Paul space to explain himself, these two aspects of his testimony only strengthen his argument for the Colossians, and us, to stick with Jesus.

So, my goal today is for us to tease out these two aspects of Paul’s testimony and then end with some application for our lives today. So, for starters, how did Paul’s encounter with Jesus change his mission in life?

1. **In our text, Paul tells the Colossians and us that his mission in life was to make Jesus known.**

**After Paul encountered Jesus on the Damascus Road, the goal of his life became sharing the good news of what Jesus had done with everyone he met.**

He said in verse 25 that God had given him the responsibility of serving His church by making the word of God fully known, proclaiming Christ’s entire message.

* This message had to do with what Paul called the mystery.
* To us today, we think of a mystery as something eerie or maybe even frightening.
* The word makes us think of Agatha Christie or Sherlock Holmes.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**But in Paul’s day, the word meant *“a secret that had now been revealed.”*[[3]](#footnote-3)**

* So, it was something that had been hidden in the past (or unknown) but had now been made known.

In the past, God had called the nation of Israel to be His people, He gave them His Law (including the priesthood and sacrifices), and He gave them a wonderful land. He promised them a King who would one day establish a glorious kingdom and fulfill the many promises made to Abraham and David.

* For generations, the people longed for this King.
* **And as S.M. Lockridge declared, Jesus is that King.** 
  + He is the Messiah of whom the OT prophets wrote. He is the deliverer for whom the people of God longed.
* But the mystery that was not explained by the OT prophets is that both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News will share equally in the riches inherited by God’s children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.
  + The secret is that Jesus opens the door to everyone, not just the Jews. The unprecedented truth is that Jesus Christ lives in all who trust him.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**If you’ve grown up in the Bible belt, it’s easy for us to take this for granted.**

* But in the OT, Gentiles who believed and became a part of Judaism were still considered lower than Jews.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* So, think of the excitement this message must have generated in a church composed of new believers who had no background in the church.
  + Once they had been outside the covenants of God, but now they were members of His family.
  + Once they were living in spiritual darkness and death, but now they were alive and sharing in the riches of God’s wisdom in Christ.
  + Once they had no hope, but now they had a glorious hope because Christ lived within them![[6]](#footnote-6)
  + The Christian hope is not an “I hope that somehow, some way, maybe God can save” but an “I hope because I experience the presence of Christ within me.”

**This good news is what Paul had experienced himself and what he could not keep quiet about.**

He had personally experienced the life-changing power, forgiveness, and redemption of Christ, and his life’s goal became making Jesus known!

* But not only did Paul want to share the good news of Christ—he felt compelled and commissioned, charged with the task of sharing Christ. After what Christ had done for him, it was his responsibility to share Christ with others.
  + He had been appointed for this task, and he was going to faithfully respond to the Lord’s command.

**And notice that proclaiming the message consisted of two parts: warning and teaching.**

* Paul warned people about the judgment to come and provided instruction about who Jesus is and the lifestyle he calls his followers to live.
* Ultimately, Paul wanted to help believers become copies of Christ, joined to Christ and like Christ.
* This is what motivated Paul.[[7]](#footnote-7)
  + This was his mission and his life’s goal.
  + His daily decisions revolved around sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

PAUSE

**Now, how does Paul’s mission to share Christ strengthen his argument for sticking with Jesus?**

PAUSE

One of the fastest growing career paths is that of influencer marketing. In 2023, the US alone spent $26.09 billion on influencer marketing.

* We live in the age of social media, and we want likes and follows and comments.

**But Paul’s mission wasn’t to win an audience. His goal wasn’t to reach one million subscribers on YouTube. His mission was to preach Christ Jesus as Lord.**

* Even if it involved some sharing some uncomfortable warnings.
* Even if it involved telling the difficult truth.
* Even if it involved being misunderstood, rejected, and labelled as a crazy fanatic.

PAUSE

**Church, you know without me telling you that warnings and truth aren’t always well-received in our world today.**

We live in a culture that has convinced us that being nonconfrontational is equivalent with being emotionally mature.

* But being nonconfrontational isn’t the same thing as being emotionally mature.
* Often, being nonconfrontational is just the fear of discomfort dressed up as peace.
* Avoiding hard conversations doesn’t make us calm and mature, it makes us, and the gospel unclear.
* Real maturity is the ability (or willingness) to be honest even when the conversation is heavy.
  + Real maturity is choosing clarity over comfort.

Paul’s mission wasn’t to be comfortable; it was to be clear with gospel.

* His goal wasn’t to be liked; his goal was to be light. And light, by its very nature makes darkness uncomfortable.

**So, Paul’s concern was preaching Christ and warning and teaching every person in all wisdom.**

**And think of how this differed from what the Colossians were hearing in their culture.**

The false teachers exalted themselves and their great “spiritual” attainments.

* They wanted audience, they wanted company because false teachers always want company.
  + And here’s what I know…
* But Paul wasn’t elevating himself; he was elevating Christ.
* Paul wasn’t only saying what he knew his readers wanted to hear, he was preaching the whole truth, the entire message of God’s Word.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Because of what Jesus had done in his life, Paul’s goal was to make the gospel known to people who otherwise might never hear this valuable, life-transforming message.

* This was his mission.

PAUSE

**There’s something irresistible about someone who’s sold out to Jesus like that.**

Elisabeth Elliot was a missionary, author, and speaker whose life of obedience continues to influence both believers and seekers of the Christian faith.

* The resounding theme of her life was the boundless love of Jesus, and her greatest commission was to tell others of His saving grace. This costly call led her into the Amazonian jungle of Ecuador where her husband, Jim Elliot, was one of five missionaries speared to death in 1956 while attempting to make contact with members of the Auca/Waodani tribe. Elisabeth, along with her young daughter Valerie, would later return to Auca territory to live among and minister to the people who killed her husband.
* *“To pray ‘Thy will be done’, I must be willing, if the answer requires it, that my will be undone.”*

**Today, we may not be in the same situation as Paul.**

However, we are called to the same mission.

***Matthew 28:19-20 NLT*** *Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.* ***20****Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

* It’s not just a suggestion, it’s our command.

Encountering Christ changed Paul’s mission in life. He wasn’t trying win an audience or fame or status. His goal was proclaiming the entire message of Christ.

Not only did encountering Christ change his life’s goal…

1. **Surrendering to Christ as Lord changed his perspective in life.**

Look again…

***Colossians 1:24, 29, 2:1 NLT*** *I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church.* ***29*** *That’s why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.* ***2:1*** *I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally.*

This is similar to what Paul says in…

***2 Corinthians 11:23-27 NLT*** *…[I have worked hard] been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again.****24****Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes.****25****Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea.****26****I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not.* ***27****I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.*

**Again, Paul wasn’t trying to elevate himself. He was trying to elevate Jesus.**

And his attitude was that Jesus took the blows meant for him; so, he would take the blows meant for Christ. He was willing to suffer on behalf of the church because he saw himself as the church’s servant. He saw his current, temporary struggles as nothing compared to his future reward.

* God gave him a commission to proclaim the gospel, and he was going to remain faithful to it.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Today, we may not be in the same situation as Paul.**

Most likely we’re not going to be beaten or shipwrecked. We probably won’t go hungry for the sake of the gospel or suffer cold or exposure.

However, we are called to count the cost and to be willing pay the price for sharing the gospel. Paul told Timothy…

***2 Timothy 4:5 NLT*** *But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don’t be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.*

After encountering Christ, Paul’s perspective in life changed. In particular, his perspective changed in regard to hard work and suffering…

**In verse 29 Paul said, *“This is why I work and struggle so hard…”***

A literal translation would be “For this I labor to the point of exhaustion, agonizing.” Paul exerted his spiritual muscles the way a Greek runner would exert himself in the Olympic Games.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Growing a garden.

* Gardening is hard work. It takes time and effort and being intentional.

**The reality is, going and making disciples is like that.**

* It takes intentionality and hard work.
  + It involves praying hard, sharing the gospel with people, helping new believers grow, and addressing false teaching.

**Though we may not be in the same situation as Paul, we can still work hard.**

Darryl Dash. Here are three hard-work things we can all do:

* **Get to know people.**

We can be intentional about cultivating relationships with our neighbors, or those who may not know Christ. We’re all busy and we all have routines, but we can push ourselves to get to know people, to build relationships that can open the door for us to be able to share the good news.

* It’s work. But if we could ask Paul, he’d tell us there’s no greater privilege.
* **Pray for them.**

As we get to know people who do not follow Christ, we can pray for them. We can pray regularly that they would get to know and love Jesus. We can ask God to work in their lives. Pray for them and their needs.

* In this passage, Paul prayed with some umph!
* He strained in prayer for people he didn’t know. He taught Epaphras to pray with some blood, sweat, and tears.
* It’s work. But if we could ask Paul, he’d tell us there’s no greater privilege.
* **Ask God every day to use you.**

We can ask God to use our lives to bring people closer to Jesus.

PAUSE

Proclaiming the gospel the way Paul proclaimed the gospel is hard work, but it’s worth it and like Paul, we have been commissioned to proclaim the gospel and make disciples.

But not only did Paul have a change of perspective towards hard work, but his perspective towards suffering also changed…

**Paul said in verse 24, *“I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church.”***

Paul is not suggesting that there was a deficiency in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

* No one can, or needs to, add to his perfect, finished work.
* As John said, only the sinless Lamb of God could die for the sins of the world (John 1:29).[[11]](#footnote-11)

Here, Paul is talking about the afflictions that Jesus said we would bear as his people.

***John 15:18-21 NLT****“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.****19****If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.****20****Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.****21****They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.*

PAUSE

**You know church, Paul could have avoided a great deal of suffering and persecution and discomfort and awkwardness and rejection if he had toned it down a little bit…**

* He could have avoided prison and trial and beatings and rejection if he had just been a little less radical, if he had just been a little more selective in his sharing of the gospel.
* B**ut God himself had commissioned Paul to preach the gospel and if the task involved suffering, Paul was going to remain faithful to gospel.**

Naturally, none of us wants to suffer, experience persecution, or face rejection.

But Paul gives us a beautiful reminder here…

***Colossians 1:28-29 NLT*** *We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ.* ***29****That’s why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.*

Elisabeth Elliot wrote, “The deepest things that I have learned in my own life have come from the deepest suffering. And out of the deepest waters and the hottest fires have come the deepest things I know about God.”

* **Paul reminds us that we’re not alone as we give our lives to the gospel. As we toil and struggle, God is there, and He will help us.**

**As we consider Paul’s argument for why we should stick with Jesus again I’ll say, there’s something appealing about someone who lives with such an other worldly perspective.**

*“Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven, without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell, when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle.”*  
― **C.T. Studd**

Paul had personally experienced the transforming power of Christ, so his mission was to proclaim the message of Christ. His mission involved hard work and suffering.

* But God had appointed and commissioned him to take the gospel to everyone, so he would not abandon his calling just for personal safety and comfort.
* He was going to share the good news.
* He had been made a minister by God; he had been given a “stewardship” and he had to be faithful to his calling (1 Cor. 4:2). It was not a matter of choice: he was called to fulfill the Word of God, and he would not compromise any truth.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In the humblest of ways, Paul tells the Colossians and us, this is what God has done in my life, this is what He’s doing, and this is what He’s going to do in the future. Stick with Jesus because of what the Lord has done in my life.

APPLICATION

**For non-believers:**

We’re not a Christian because we used to be…

1. We become a Christian when we recognize that we’ve sinned against God and we turn to Christ as our Savior and Lord.
2. We become a Christian when we choose to trust in His death and resurrection…
   1. Believing that Jesus absorbed the wrath of God toward our sin on the cross (1 John 2:2)
   2. That he credits His righteousness to those who believe (2 Cor. 5:21)
   3. And that he rose from the dead victorious over death itself (1 Cor. 15:1–8)
3. And turning to Jesus as Savior and Lord involves walking in repentance of sin and newness of life through obedience to God’s Word.

**I don’t know where everyone stands, but you do.**

1. Have you considered the gospel?
   * The wages of our sin is death.
   * Who absorbed the wrath of God toward sinners on the cross (1 John 2:2)
   * Who credited His righteousness to those who believe (2 Cor. 5:21)
   * Who rose from the dead victorious over death itself (1 Cor. 15:1–8)
2. Have you considered those who’ve given their lives that you may know that Jesus died for your sins?

**For believers:**

1. What is your mission?
2. What is our perspective on hard work and suffering? Are we willing to work hard and suffer?

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2. Max Anders, [*Galatians-Colossians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc69ga?ref=Bible.Col1.26-27&off=102&ctx=+mystery+should+not+~evoke+images+of+Agat), vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, [*Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*](https://ref.ly/logosres/cstonecm70eph?ref=Bible.Col1.26&off=215&ctx=+in+Judaism+and+the+~NT+it+generally+mean), vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Anders, [*Galatians-Colossians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc69ga?ref=Bible.Col1.26-27&off=443&ctx=t+is+the+secret.+He+~opens+the+door+to+ev), 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Norman L. Geisler, [“Colossians,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/bkc?ref=Bible.Col1.25-26&off=1550&ctx=hem+(Eph.+2%3a12%E2%80%9314).+~In+the+Old+Testament) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 675. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ntbec?ref=Bible.Col1.25-27&off=2631&ctx=+is+no+difference!%E2%80%9D%0a~We+who+have+grown+up), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Hoehner, Comfort, and Davids, [*Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/cstonecm70eph?ref=Bible.Col1.24-2.5&off=11621&ctx=m+8%3a15%E2%80%9316%2c+23%2c+26).+~The+Christian+hope+i), 265–266. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ntbec?ref=Bible.Col1.28a&off=70&ctx=e%2c+to+Jesus+Christ.+~%E2%80%9CFor+we+preach+not+o), 122–123. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Anders, [*Galatians-Colossians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc69ga?ref=Bible.Col1.24-25&off=1319&ctx=e+of+the+body.+Paul+~was+willing+to+suffe), 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ntbec?ref=Bible.Col1.29-2.1&off=234&ctx=omfortable%2c+and+yet+~Paul+exerted+his+spi), 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ntbec?ref=Bible.Col1.24&off=1832&ctx=hrist+on+the+cross.+~Only+the+sinless+Lam), 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ntbec?ref=Bible.Col1.25-27&off=114&ctx=to+the+Gentiles%2c+he+~could+have+been+spar), 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)