

Complete in Christ

Our Sufficiency in Christ

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Bible Text: Colossians 1:24-29

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As we continue our Sermon Series "In Christ Alone" By way of reminder...Last Week Pastor Viars led us through one of the great sections in the bible that focuses on the preeminence of Christ.

We were reminded that Christ

1. Is the image of the invisible God – the exact representation of God's nature.
2. He is the firstborn of all creation – he was not created, he created all things – He has first place or preeminence.
3. He is the creator of Heaven & earth
4. He Holds all things together
5. He is the head of the body, the church
6. He is the first place from the dead – again so he will have first place...in everything
7. He is the fullness of God....
8. HE is the reconciler of all things
9. He is the one whose blood is precious.

So if Christ is preeminent...the question becomes, how does putting Him first effect and change us...

To address that topic, let me start with a question...how do you think about maturity. What do you define as mature? Were there any times in your life, when you recognized you are on the cusp of reaching another level of maturity.

- Maybe it was learning to read
- Losing your last baby tooth
- Getting a checkbook for the first time
- Getting you license
- Graduating HS, college
- Getting married, having kids.

Now unfortunately you can go through all of those life events and not necessarily actually become more mature. I think maturity is a recognition that your life now is bigger than you...that you have more responsibility, you need to think about other things than just yourself. Sometimes you can hit those life events, but still just think about yourself.

When a child picks up their clothes because they understand this effects someone else it's a step of maturity, when a person decides to take the initiative instead of waiting to be told because it helps other out...that is a step of maturity.

I remember a moment when I took a step of maturity. It was in college and I was running around Purdue's campus, and for some reason (college ministry) I began to think about the next phase of my life. I began to think about how the Lord may entrust me with a family. I began to think about how I would be responsible to lead my wife, and disciple my children, and all of a sudden my life became more than just about the next fun thing or the next assignment I had to do. It was this

mixture of wow how can I live my life and be responsible for others, and also, wow what an honor that the Lord might give me that privilege to focus on something greater than myself. (I am sure I did something very immature shortly after that thought)

-so part of maturity is thinking about something greater than yourself and how your actions impacting others.

This is what Paul is seeking to instill in the Colossians. He heard of their faith in the Gospel, but he is challenging them to pursue maturity. He phrases it in V28 so we may present everyone "complete in Christ". That phrase is translated a variety of ways. perfect, fully mature, complete.

- The idea is not that you never mess up, never miss the bullseye (perfect) or its also not talking about being mature compared to someone else, or someone younger/less experienced.
- The idea is that if you are becoming complete in Christ, you are becoming fully mature in viewing the world through your relationship with Christ...your whole being, all aspects of your life are being directed more and more toward Christ (he is taking first place and before all things)...your life is about something bigger than yourself.
- We want to grow to have a mature (Christ centered) view of the world, yourself and most importantly God.

Paul is saying, when you put Christ first, when He is preeminent, life becomes all about Him...that requires a drastic change in priorities and How we approach life....

- So Paul is now testifying how the preeminence of Christ has affected His life, and ultimately how it is to effect the Colossians lives and now our lives.

Read Col 1:24-29

- on Page 157 in the back section in the bible under the seat of the chair in front of you.

As we continue our series in Colossians and our yearly theme of In Christ alone, lets look at

3 ways to pursue Christ-like maturity

1. Expect the message of Christ Alone to spread through suffering (v24-25)

As people mature, they tend to expect things, they see patterns in the world, and they are able to anticipate possible outcomes and situations and be ready for them. This is true in the Christian life...Paul is helping these believers in Colossae know what to expect.

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God,

As we seek to grow in maturity, it is good to...

a. Understand the reason for suffering

Paul talks about his suffering with purpose. There is a reason for suffering. Suffering is not there just for suffering sake, it is for something greater.

- In this case Paul says his sufferings are for the sake of the Colossians. Now he has never met the Colossians, he has never visited the Colossians, so how can he say that he has suffered for them.
- The answer is they are part of the body of Christ. The local church in Colossae was part of the universal body of Christ.
- So when Paul says I do my share on behalf of His body...he is saying that when I suffer, it is ultimately for the body of Christ.

Suffering and the Spread of the Gospel go hand in hand. After all Jesus was a suffering servant, and we are called to follow Him. Paul says in Philippians we are to know him and the fellowship of His sufferings.

- Paul knows suffering, and he wants other believers to be prepared for suffering to go with the spread of the gospel.

Notice also how Paul goes out of His way to talk about “in my flesh”. Following Christ is often going to include physical suffering. Instead of the false teaching saying that all matter and our bodies are evil, Paul actually talks about how there is purpose in Physical suffering...it is for the building up of the body of Christ.

Notice how suffering is a regular theme in the NT

2 Corinthians 1:5–6

⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

⁶But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

2 Corinthians 4:10–12

¹⁰always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

¹¹For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

¹²So death works in us, but life in you.

Paul has a mature (Christ centered) view of suffering...it is about something greater than himself. It is to exult the name of Christ and to encourage the Body of Christ.

There is a very curious phrase that Paul says. ..filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.

- Now this does not mean that there was anything lacking in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Paul is not making up for that, but rather if Christ were still here people would want to persecute Him.
- Remember he said in John 15:20, if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. 2 Timothy 3:12 that “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”
- The Lord has appointed the Christ to suffer, and He has also appointed the body of Christ to suffer until the affliction of Christ including His body is filled up.
- Think about How God defeated death by dying...and he is going to grow His body by allowing it to suffer.

Christ like maturity understands the church has always been built on the suffering of God’s servants. (that displays His great power)

And so there is reason to rejoice...not only are we to expect suffering, we are to rejoice in it. More specifically...

- b. Rejoice in the outcome of suffering

Paul says I rejoice in my suffering for your sake. He goes on to speak how he was made a minister to the church according to the stewardship of God, and that it was for their benefit.

- So there is something Good that comes out of the suffering, something of benefit.

In this case Paul is focused on, the preaching of God’s word.

- The bottom line is people do not like the authority of Christ, nor the authority of His word, and so suffering will often be closely associated with the preaching of God's word.
- But as faith comes by hearing and heading by the word of God, so the preaching of God's word is how a person is rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved son.
- What Paul is saying, if I have to suffer physically in order to preach the word of God and people can be rescued from the domain of darkness, then that is worth it, that is of benefit. If I have to suffer physically temporarily, and God will use that to rescue someone so they do not have to suffer eternally, that is worth it.

Think about this practically...say you break down on the side of the road, and when you try to change the tire, you gash your hand open.

- You have to call a tow truck, and you have an opportunity to share your testimony with the tow truck driver, and then in the ER, you have a pleasant spirit even though you know this whole tire situation is going to get you behind at work you are going to have to work late to catch up and miss out on something enjoyable, and you are able to talk to the nurse or doctor about your relationship with God...was that suffering worth it knowing God can use it to add people to the body of Christ.

Think about the testimony of Phil and Robin Byars that will be at the February conference this year and streamed online for our church family... They will share how the Lord has strengthened them despite their daughter being murdered last year. Think about the Gospel impact their family has because of the terrible suffering they have had to endure.

When you suffer you have a unique platform to exult the suffering servant who died for us.

You see Christ like maturity means sharing the word of God is something to rejoice in even if suffering is part of the process.

Another way we pursue Christ like maturity is to have the right focus...that is our second point.

2. Focus on the message of Christ alone as the only message of hope to this world (v26-27)

As you grow in maturity, do you appreciate different things than before?

It could be just going for a walk, when as a kid that might be boring, it may mean sitting and catching up instead of just going to the next activity, or it might mean carrying more about being around friends and family on your birthday than what gifts you got...you focus on and appreciate different things as you mature.

Paul is saying that there is something very special that we as NT believers should value and focus on.

After he talks about the benefit of preaching the word of God he goes on to say...

26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,

27 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.

As we pursue Christ-like maturity, we must

- Appreciate God revealing Himself to us

Do you enjoy mysteries...do you enjoy the suspense and the dramatic details being revealed. There is something that we love about anticipation. Where do we get that from...well we get that from our creator who loves to reveal himself.

When Paul uses the term mystery, he is not talking about God trying to hide something from us, but rather that God has chosen to reveal himself and His great rescue plan for mankind. He has revealed himself in progressive ways such as a burning bush, a pillar of fire, the one who sits on the mercy seat in the holy of holies, and culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

There is such depth to God, that he chooses to reveal himself in stages so that we are absolutely captivated by Him.

Do you ever think about the only fact that the only reason we know anything about God, is that He chose to reveal himself to man.

As we mature, we appreciate time we get to spend together with friends and family...do you realize that God wants to be with us, and He wants us to know Him.

Christ like maturity means that if God has made himself know, we will spend our time wisely learning about our God.

[Possibly develop the definition of Saints.]

As we mature we are also to...

b. Value the diversity and exclusivity of the Gospel

Part of this amazing Mystery is that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel is choosing to reveal himself to not just His people Israel, but to the gentiles, to all the nations.

God was willing to reveal himself not just to one people group, but to all people groups.

Romans 16:25–27 (NASB95)

²⁵**Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,**

²⁶**but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;**

²⁷**to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.**

So The gospel is both extremely diverse in that it is for all the nations, it is for the gentiles...no matter your nationality, ethnicity, your background...the good news of Jesus rescuing sinners is for all people.

But the gospel is also exclusive...there is only one way to be reconciled to God...there is only one hope.

- That hope does not come from false teachers who have special knowledge that they choose who to dispense it to, but from God who is making Himself known.

So Christ-like maturity will not look down on anyone as though they could not be part of the body of Christ...but nor does it jettison Christ as the way, the truth and the life and the only way to come to the father.

We must value the diversity and exclusivity of the gospel. We must also...

c. Recognize the significance of the hope of glory

This mystery is even more amazing. It is not simply to include the gentiles in God's saints (holy people), but it is to include Christ in us.

Just as God dwelt in the midst of his people Israel in the tabernacle and then the temple, he has now chosen to draw even closer to us, to actually dwell in us.

This mystery is not just interesting, there is real physical value associated with what God is doing.

The riches of the glory of this mystery

It is like a VIP badge at the super bowl where you get to go to a suite and enjoy all the blessings, the view, the snacks, the comfort...

Romans 8:18

¹⁸**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

But instead of a badge, Christ in you is what is identifying you. What God is revealing is that His people are going to be defined by a close, intimate relationship with Him.

The hope of Glory – Hope is an interesting word in the bible. It is not used like we use it. I hope it doesn't rain today. It is used more as a looking forward to. Like I can't wait to go hang gliding today.

Christ-like maturity knows what to look forward to, and where not put your hope. We must understand that Christ in you is the only hope of Glory.

We must be aware that people in this world are constantly looking forward to something. Constantly wanting something.

- Some want financial freedom, so they can buy the things they want, and experience the activities they want in the hope that will satisfy them
- Some want relationships that are meaningful and bring them happiness and give them a feeling of self-worth, that they are appreciated, valued, wanted.

Kids want a great many things. Have you ever heard of FOMO. Fear of Missing out.

- Kids just don't want to miss anything, because they believe that it will be detrimental to not experience something.
- If we are watching something and my kids have to go to the bathroom, they say, can you pause it...during a commercial...I really don't want to miss this deodorant commercial.
- They are immature, and they don't always know what to look forward to.

Christ-like maturity means we have a hope to look forward to in the future.

You understand that the Glory of seeing Christ and being no longer effected by the curse of sin is really the only hope that we really need to look forward to as nothing really compares to the riches of the glory of the mystery that is Christ in you, the hope of Glory.

- That glory, I don't know exactly what it looks like, but it includes a lack of sin affecting our fellowship with Christ or anyone else. It means no more suffering in an earthly body, and it means no more distractions from my worship of God, just pure delight in who He is.

[develop the gospel – the hope of Glory Christ in you.]

If that is what we have to look forward to and hope in...how will that effect what we talk about in this short time here on earth.

That is why the third way we pursue Christ like maturity is to...

3. Labor to proclaim Christ Alone (v28-29)

Part of being mature is knowing where to put your energy wisely. Because of the riches and the glory of the mystery of Christ in you...proclaiming Christ is incredibly valuable and worthy of our labor.

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

29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

- a. Admonishing and teaching with wisdom

How do we proclaim Christ? Well it starts with admonishing and teaching. When you admonish someone, you warn them, it is fairly corrective in nature. It is what Paul did earlier in Colossians

1:23...he says if you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel.

He warns them to not move away from the gospel. We also see Paul in Acts 20:31 reminding the Ephesians that he was with them day and night for 3 years admonishing them with tears. So it is not an easy thing to do, but it is a mature thing to do as we all need warnings from time to time.

When we scold our kids to not play with outlet, or touch a hot stove, we warn them, and that can come off mean at times, but Christ like maturity understands we all need to be warned from paths of destruction.

- So for the sake of growth toward maturity I would like you to turn to your neighbor and on the count of 3 say...I am willing to admonish you...then smile.

We also proclaim Christ by teaching about Christ...this is about speaking the truth in love and growing up into Christ as Ephesians 4 talks about or as 2 Peter 3:18 says, grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and savior Jesus Christ. Or as Paul says earlier in vs 9 in His prayer for the Colossians that they would be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Notice how Paul says, We proclaim Him. This is not simply an activity for a pastor. This is something all who are in Christ, all who have the hope of glory are to engage in.

Later in Colossians Paul says in 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Did you ever think about how you may be admonishing and teaching those around you as you affirm biblical truth in the worship service?

The point is we must all admonish and teach each other. And we must do it with wisdom.

Wisdom simply defined is how to navigate life in a God honoring way. It is how do I put Christ first and how does that impact the choice I make. In other words, this teaching and admonishing is to have practical implications, and that is wisdom.

Now before you make it your goal to admonish everyone in your row and make them fully sanctified by this afternoon, let me reemphasize wisdom.

Wisdom means you will ask more questions than make statements, and it means you will seek to take the log out of your own eye first, and it means you will be committed to love and gentleness and you will look for patterns of concerning behavior rather than jumping to admonish someone on a one time issue that is not very clear.

- The Goal is so that we can present every man complete in Christ. Now we already talked about how being complete in Christ is about being fully mature...being fully devoted to Christ...your life is about something bigger than yourself. You have a mature view of the world, yourself and most importantly God.
 - Mature in that you view everything through the grid of Christ in you.

There is another aspect of wisely teaching and encouraging....and that is again focusing on the diversity of the gospel and the diversity of the body of Christ.

Paul makes it very clear that he cares about every person.

- *admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.*

I don't think he is talking about every person in the universe, Paul's point is every kind of person. No matter your back ground, your ethnicity, your socio economic status...the gospel is for everyone, and growing to maturity in the gospel is for everyone as well.

This would again be in contrast to "false teachers" who withhold their wisdom only for select individuals.

So a really good application question is...is there anyone in your life that you are allowing to admonish and teach you...and also is there anyone in your life that you are seeking to teach and admonish?

- Is anyone reminding you in the midst of your suffering the hope of Glory
- Is there anyone you are seeking to share the gospel with currently? How are you Proclaiming Christ...what activities this past week would fit under the category of proclaiming Christ.
- You are not going to be pursuing Christ like maturity unless you are proclaiming Christ in some way.

b. Striving according to His power

One of the things that is often evident of maturity is a good work ethic. A willingness to work hard without anyone telling you to.

Paul says this is why He labors...he wants to help others mature and grow, and as that happens the gospel will continue to spread even through suffering.

One of the things Paul ends with is that he works hard, but he works hard under the conviction that God is mightily working within Him.

Remember, Christ in you, the hope of Glory. This is not a passive hope...it is an active hope working inside of you directing you toward the glory of heaven.

Growing in maturity also means you are ok with some tensions.

*Kids are often hyper literal. As we try to train our kids to be wise with strangers one of the things we say, There are no secrets in our family...well we were trying to do a surprise for someone, and we tried to say it was a secret and my daughter said there are no secrets in our family.

- so as you mature you understand there are tensions between two things that are true.

One that we are to work hard, but also that God is working to enable us to grow and honor Him.

- As you mature you understand, I am supposed to work hard for the Lord, but I know that does not save me, and I know my efforts alone can't do anything,

- but that does not mean I can be lazy, maturity says, I am going to work really hard, knowing I need to trust that God is going to work in and through me.

So here are some take always to pursue Christ like maturity

1. Expect suffering if the word of God is going to spread.
2. Focus on Christ being your only hope, what you are ultimately looking forward to.
3. Proclaim Him. – don't be ashamed of the Gospel. If there someone that speaks the truth in love into your life regularly and is there anyone you are trying to speak the truth in love to.

Lets pray.