

Being a servant of the Gospel (Proverbs 2:1-11 & Colossians 1:24-2:5)

26-August-2018

If you could have your Bibles turned to Colossians chapter 1 beginning at verse 24 and we're going through to chapter 2 verse 5.

There's the usual sermon outline in your bulletin if you like to take notes

Let me pray for God's help and guidance before we start...

Intro

[PowerPoint 1a-Intro]

Last week we finished up saying that Jesus has supremacy [superior in authority in power, authority and status) - He's superior in all things because

1. Jesus is God
2. Jesus is the Creator
3. Jesus is our Savior

[PowerPoint 1b-Response]

And we finished by saying our response, was to be a servant of the Gospel [Good News of Jesus] - just like the Apostle Paul

So we'd better be clear what the word servant means in this context

[PowerPoint 2-Servant definition]

A person who executes the commands of their master

The master being our Lord Jesus!

Being a servant of the Gospel requires a servant-like heart not a boss or master mentality

A question without notice:

If someone was to look at our life would they see a wholehearted Christian servant?

King Jesus displayed that servant-like heart.

He didn't live in a palace, in fact he had no fixed abode.

He washed His disciples' feet.

He laid down His life for the sin of the world!

Many believers today are a bit fuzzy about what it means to be a servant of the Gospel of Jesus. Thankfully the Apostle Paul describes what a servant of the Gospel looks like in our Bible passage today

[PowerPoint 3-1-Suffering]

1. First - being a servant of the Gospel - looks like ***suffering joyfully for the sake of Jesus' church*** - see v24. Now remember Paul is in jail in Rome - as he writes this letter - and he's in jail because of his continuous work of spreading the message throughout Asia Minor and into Rome. Paul sees his suffering - not as a bad thing - but as a joyous thing - and a privilege and honour! Why? Because he sees his work of spreading the Gospel - has established churches - that have grown in their faith in Jesus - and more and more people have become believers in Jesus. Paul sees his suffering as well worth it - if it means people believe in Jesus.

Paul also sees that his suffering adds to the afflictions (literally the persecutions) of Jesus. How can Paul say his suffering is adding to Jesus' suffering?

Didn't Jesus say on the cross - that "It is finished" - Hasn't Jesus already completed our salvation?

Of course He has.

But remember before Paul became Paul - he was Saul - and he persecuted Christians

But one day he met Jesus on the road to Damascus - and Jesus asked Saul (Paul) - 'why are you persecuting me!' - Jesus didn't say 'why are you persecuting my people or my church'? Why did Jesus say "me"?

Because any persecution of a Christian or persecution of Jesus' church - Jesus sees as personally persecuting Him.

So that's why Paul can say - his suffering is adding to Jesus' suffering - because Paul is adding to the suffering of all God's people that must occur - whilst the Gospel is spread - and this suffering will continue until Jesus returns

Challenge for us?

As servants of the Gospel - are we prepared to suffer for the sake of Jesus' body, the church?

We will be attacked in various forms for being followers of Jesus

Are we prepared for that - and will we suffer it joyfully - knowing that this keeps Jesus' body - the church - standing firm and faithful to Him

It may mean standing up against false teaching and against people who are anti-God and anti-Jesus - it may mean going to jail - like the Apostle Paul - are we prepared for that?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 4-Serve according to your calling]

2. Second - being a servant of the Gospel means *servicing according to your calling* - see v25-27. Now you might be thinking - well I know Jesus called His Apostles and He called Paul on the road to Damascus - but I don't remember Him calling me - in fact - I haven't even seen Jesus. So how can I serve according to my calling?

But Jesus has called us in His Word.

In Matthew 4:19 - Jesus calls us and says "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men"

So as believers in Jesus - we have a divine calling.

And we've been given a mystery that has been hidden for ages - Paul says.

And that mystery has been revealed to us - the Lord's people

The mystery of Jesus!

In the OT there are glimpses of Jesus - and the promise of Jesus the Messiah coming one day.

God waited until His perfect timing to send His Son Jesus to this Earth

He waited until - the period 2000 years ago.

When Jesus came - the Roman Empire occupied a vast area

The Apostle Paul - although a Jew - because he was born in Tarsus - he was also a Roman Citizen - and his citizenship was used to advance the

Gospel message of Jesus all the way to Rome - and to reveal this mystery not only to the Jews but to non-Jews - the Gentiles

All part of God's plan and God's perfect timing

And Paul's calling is to reveal the mystery that Jesus is alive - His spirit lives inside each believer - and because of Jesus - we have the hope of glory in Heaven

That calling is not just Paul's calling

It's our calling as servants of the Gospel - to reveal that mystery of Jesus and that hope to all we come across - that's our calling

Challenge for us - are we aware we have this calling?

Are we presenting God's word in fullness, as Paul says?

Are we telling people the hope of the glory in Heaven that is available to all in Heaven?

In Colosse at the time - there were a bunch of people called *Gnostics* - who thought they had this secret deeper knowledge of God and Jesus - and they looked down on the rest of the people in Colosse as not being proper Christians. That's why Paul is writing this letter - to say - that's a load of rubbish - and that Jesus is available to everyone - not just some secret squirrel club.

I wonder if we're in danger of being like the Gnostics - if we keep Jesus a secret - to our own little secret club here - rather than sharing it?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 5-Present people mature]

3. Third - being a servant of the Gospel means - **presenting people fully mature in Christ Jesus** - see v28.

A better translation here would be

Presenting people - complete or finished or perfect and lacking nothing

So the idea is that each believer should be growing more and more like Jesus

Now this doesn't just happen by osmosis

If we want to learn the piano - it takes many hours of practice

If we want to play cricket or football - it takes many hours of training and practicing ball skills.

We need to schedule time for practice and training and be committed

And it's the same with growing in our love and knowledge of Jesus

We have to schedule in time to do this - and be diligent in doing this

The Apostle Paul does a couple of things in all his letters - He teaches and He encourages.

He teaches people about God - and about Jesus - and how to pray

He encourages people not to give up and stand firm.

If we never read his letters - how will we learn this?

If we never pray - how will we have a close relationship with God?

Challenge for us - according to Paul our job as a servant of the Gospel is to present others as a complete and finished product in Jesus

So it's up to all of us - to help this happen

Some practical ways to do this - is to have as many people as possible in Growth Groups - learning and studying the Bible together - learning from each other and encouraging each other

Now there are some people who can't get to Bible study - so how about we bring Bible study to them - arrange a visit to read and study the Bible together - no one needs to miss out

We also have a regular prayer meeting on Thursday's at 9am - we only have a few regular attenders - and I understand Thursday might not suit - but maybe some of us can reschedule our calendar to get there.

For those who can't be there physically - we can pray at that time at home each Thursday - as well as other times of course

The prayer sheet we use on Thursday can be emailed to whoever would like to receive it - currently half a dozen people who receive the prayer sheet like this - just let me know if you'd like to receive it

Then there's the prayer chain - it's easy for anyone to be added to the prayer chain as a recipient of the prayer requests - just let Esma know

The bottom line is that the Bible is like a seam of gold in a gold mine - you tap into the seam of gold - and it just keeps going and going. Our OT reading from Proverbs 2 - tells us to search God's Word - that it's like searching for hidden treasure - and once we find it - we'll understand the fear of God and find the knowledge of God - and receive the Lord's wisdom.

I don't know about you - but sometimes when I buy something that needs to be assembled - I don't usually read the instructions. It's only when I assemble it and have one piece left over - then - I look at the instructions?

We need to look at and study God's instruction manual - the Bible - so we are assembled correctly.

[PowerPoint 6-Energy]

4. Fourth - being a servant of the Gospel means **working wholeheartedly with His energy** - see 1:29-2:1. It's so easy to rely on our own strength and not realize that we have the power of Jesus with us.

Illustration: A man brought a chainsaw and the guy at the hardware store told him he would have no problem cutting down 6 trees in his backyard. But the man got through two trees and couldn't do anymore. So he brought the chainsaw back to the shop and the hardware guy said - you have to sharpen it. So he got it sharpened and off he went. But again, he only got through one more tree - so back to the hardware store he went.

So the hardware guy took a look at the chain-saw - and pulled the starter chain on it - brrrrrrrrrh

The man who bought the chain-saw asked - what's that noise?

(pause)

Friends, we need to start the chain-saw!

And use Jesus' energy

If we're doing Jesus' work - won't He supply the energy to do it?

I've noticed something quite remarkable - that when I have a lot to do in a day and feeling under the pump and doubting I can get it all done.

If I pray and remember what Paul says in Phil 4:13 - *that I can do all things through Him who strengthens me* - it's like time slows down and I get it all done with the Lord's help

And notice Paul's servant like heart - he's using that energy for the Colossians and the Laodiceans and even those he hasn't personally met.

Paul is wholeheartedly focused on making sure Jesus' church is not deceived by false teachers

[PowerPoint 7-Enrich]

5. Fifth - being a servant of the Gospel means *enriching the lives of others*- see 2:2-3. The Apostle Paul has a goal for the people he's writing to:

- a. That they be encouraged
- b. That they be united in love
- c. That they have a complete understanding of the Gospel of Jesus
- d. That they realize that this mystery of Jesus is not a mystery any more - it's been shown and revealed to them. They are no longer in the dark - but in the light of Jesus

All these goals of Paul - will enrich the Colossians lives

Challenge for us - are these goals of Paul's - our goals?

Are we encouraging others - or are our words harsh and critical and discouraging - do we find it easier to discourage than encourage? How will that enrich a person's life?

What unites us at St. David's - is it our love for Jesus and for others?

Does everyone have a complete understanding of Jesus? Have we identified someone we could help understand the Bible better?

It's fair to say, we have a number of people in our church family:

- a. Who can't get to church (housebound or aged care) - have we thought of phoning them or visiting?
- b. Who are lonely - have we thought of a visit or phone call?
- c. Who are grieving - have we thought of spending time talking to them and praying with them?
- d. Who are struggling and need practical help - have we thought of seeing how we can help them?
- e. Who are lost or shy or keep to themselves or lack confidence - have we thought of getting beside them and encouraging and discipling them

All these things would **enrich those people's lives** - and they are part of being a servant of the Gospel?

Our knowledge of the Bible should not just be head knowledge - but head, heart and hands...

[PowerPoint 8-Delighting]

6. Finally - being a servant of the *Gospel* means ***delighting in obedience and discipline*** see 2:4-5. Paul's whole reason for writing to the Colossians is to protect them from being deceived by false teaching. And he is delighted that they have not fallen for this false teaching but have remained obedient to the teaching in God's Word and have been disciplined and remained firm in their faith in Jesus.

Challenge for us - We too need to be diligent and checking that we don't get deceived by false teaching - and also protecting others from false teaching. For example - if we were to hear that a believer in our church is not sure if they are good enough to get to Heaven - then we can gently and lovingly correct that false thinking - and assure them that they are good enough - because Jesus has bought their ticket to Heaven. That's part of us being disciplined in our faith and lovingly protecting our brothers and sisters in Christ. That's being a servant of the *Gospel*

Do we get excited and rejoice when we see a fellow believer standing firm in adversity and standing firm in their faith - or when we see a fellow believer being obedient to God's word?

Conclusion

So to conclude - as servants of the *Gospel* - let's take stock of these 6 things

[PowerPoint 9-Conclusion]

1. Suffering joyfully for Jesus' church

2. Serving according to our calling
3. Presenting everyone fully mature in Christ
4. Working whole heartedly with His (Jesus') energy
5. Enriching the lives of others
6. Delighting in obedience and discipline

As we work as servants of the Gospel...

Our Servant King:

⁴⁰ "King [Jesus] will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:40)

Let's pray...