

Concern for Christ-Centered Service (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] Well, beloved, I am going to take the next few weeks or so, since we're kind of at a break point between chapters 10 and 11, to do a few messages encouraging you, I hope, I hope you'll find it encouraging.

I intend this to be encouraging. That's challenging. The next few messages are challenging. I think they all are as we come under conviction of the Spirit of God, as we find out that there are things that we think and believe that need to be adjusted or changed or repented of so that we're more in line with the truth of God's Word.

Not my opinion or Greg's opinion, but the truth of God. But I intend these messages to be encouraging as well as instructive. I think that Greg and I have talked about this.

I think we are at a place in our church life where God is morphing us, changing us, as he will continue to do throughout the life of our church, but morphing us maybe to another level in our understanding of service and ministry, the way that God is using us.

And a lot of that is the influx of new faces, new souls coming into our church. We are very excited about that. That's an answer to prayer. So in light of seeing that as a shepherd, we want, Greg and I want to respond to what God is doing in bringing you to this fellowship by offering instruction about what it means to be part of the fellowship.

[1 : 40] And this would be true of any local church, Bible-believing, Bible-teaching, Christ-honoring local assembly of believers.

What I'm going to share with you is not unique to us. All right? It's something that all of us need to think carefully about and be prayerful about as we consider being part of a local body of believers. Okay? Like you, I'm battling all this, I don't know, allergy stuff, so forgive me for that. So maybe expectedly then, I'm going to take you to Colossians chapter 1.

Colossians 1. This helped me too because this is material that I'm familiar with.

It was back in, well, when I came here, what, almost seven years ago? That's unbelievable, right? Back in 2016?

[2 : 48] It'll be seven years this fall. Oh, man. Yeah? Something like that? Anyway, this was the, Colossians was the first book that I preached through when I came here to be a new pastor in Williamsburg.

So hopefully, for some of you, this will be a reminder, but if your memory goes all the way back then, God bless you. I read through this and went, man, I preach this?

That's where my memory is these days. Let me make a number of comments and kind of pull you into this. I want you to have a really strong heart attitude and mindset about the topic or the theme that we're going to be dealing with.

So as we come to this portion of Colossians in chapter 1, Paul is concerned, very concerned, highly concerned. He's away, but he's very concerned that the Colossians do not give in to teaching that adds man-made wisdom and man-made religious ideas to their walk with Jesus.

In other words, the big theme of Colossians is the preeminence of Jesus, the supreme nature of Jesus over all things.

[4 : 10] Paul doesn't want the Colossian Christians to have a Jesus-plus approach to life. That it's Jesus plus these other things I need to add to my belief system or my life to shore up what's lacking in what Jesus brings to my life.

Paul is, no. In Jesus, we get all the wisdom and treasure that we need to live a God-honoring, God-pleasing life.

Okay? That's Paul's concern. Now, we see this throughout Christianity, and this has been an issue for as long as there have been people walking in faith with God.

This issue of adding to our faith what we believe maybe is lacking in what God's given us. That's a horrible way to think about life, isn't it?

But we're guilty of that on practical levels. So I want to challenge you this morning to listen very carefully and to think in terms of how these truths are impacting where you live right now and how those truths are affecting the way you live as it affects the body of Christ here at Grace Church.

[5 : 29] We're going to make this very specific and practical for you. Paul, in chapter 1, stacks truth upon truth upon truth concerning the supremacy and preeminence of Jesus over all things in every way, and then he caps off his concern in verse 23.

Would you look at verse 23 of chapter 1? He says, If indeed you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast and not moved away from, what?

The hope of the gospel. That you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

So what are we dealing with in terms of his concern here? Right off the bat, in chapter 1, 23 verses in, and he's telling us this major concern.

He wants them firmly established, steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel.

Folks, here is the crux of the matter.

[6 : 40] Am I living a life that adds to the gospel? Am I living a life that wants to add human wisdom, human religious ideas, whatever, to my walk with Jesus in faith?

Do I want to add to the truth? Do I believe that human philosophy and human psychology needs to be brought into my faith walk with God to help shore it up and make it even better?

There are plenty of Christians who have a hybrid idea of living the Christian life. I want to bring the best and brightest of the wisdom of the world and marry it to the best and the brightest of the wisdom of Jesus, and that way I can live as high as I can.

That's the best of both worlds. And that's nonsense. That's a lie. And you're going to find out, if you live like that, that that is going to destroy you. And so I'm here to say to you, please, please don't do that.

If you are doing that, I pray you'll listen over the next few weeks and consider very, very carefully and prayerfully in your spirit what the truth of God's word is saying about that.

[7 : 53] Okay? That's my concern as well. Paul then comes to verse 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.

He comes to verse 24, and Paul uses his own life as an example of single-minded focus in his service to Jesus and to his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul doesn't want anything watering down or diluting or distracting from this single-minded focus on serving Jesus by serving the body of Christ on earth.

One day, Paul will be taken to glory, and that service to the body of Christ will be over. He will be in heaven with Jesus, and it'll be an exclusive relationship and connection with just Jesus.

He'll be awaiting the rest of the body of Christ to join him in that very service to Jesus. But while he's on the earth, Paul is willing to give all that he is to serving Jesus by serving the body of Christ.

[9 : 11] That's the point. That's the point. And that's what we need to be concerned about. Serving Christ means that you end up saying no to the life you thought you would have and yes to a life you never even considered before you were born again.

Now, some of you can understand what I just said, and you can go, yeah, as I look back, my life dramatically changed when I trusted Christ and was born again.

When I was saved and forgiven for my sins through faith in Jesus, there was a dramatic change in my life, even if it was a dramatic change over the course of the next months or year or years.

And I ended up, I'm living a life now I never thought I'd live. It looks very different especially if you were saved as an adult. Right? This is Paul's experience.

I say again, when you are saved and come to serve Jesus, you end up saying no to a life you thought you would live and yes to a life you never even knew existed.

[10 : 21] And that's salvation. This is exactly what Paul is putting across by saying that God made him responsible to suffer and to serve the Colossians.

Notice in verse 24 for their sake. And then look at verse 25 of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit.

For your benefit. In verse 24 for their sake verse 25 for their benefit. Folks, God saved the Apostle Paul to serve.

He did not save the Apostle Paul to live a happy clappy life. He saved him to serve Christ and the Church.

Now you're going to think you might think we're tempted to think that's fine. I read a lot of this kind of thing throughout the New Testament about the Apostles and the Disciples. They were Apostles and Disciples.

[11 : 30] I'm just regular old me. How does any of this apply to me? I'm not Paul. I'm not the greatest missionary who ever lived. I didn't write Scripture.

What does this have to do with little old bitty me? Well, that's what we're going to see. I want you to think of it this way if you would, beloved. Jesus Christ said of Himself, for even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

Jesus said, I didn't even come to be served. I came to serve to the point of giving my life for those whom I serve. I wasn't just willing to die.

I died. That's Mark 10.45. So here is a man, Paul, who formerly had Christians put to death and had them put in prison just for being Christians and now he himself is in prison willing to lay down his life for their sake and for their benefit.

The question is why? Why? The answer, God made Paul a servant of Jesus. And so, as a result, as an outworking of making Paul a servant of Jesus, he made Paul a servant of Jesus' people, the church.

[13 : 03] church. It's just as clear as it can be. Paul didn't choose this life any more than I chose the life I'm living before you.

I didn't choose it. It chose me. You can ask her. I've shared this testimony with a couple of my friends. Man, I ran from God. Now, I'm not proud of that. As I say it, I can laugh now and think, thank you, God, for your grace and mercy.

I was a coward. I ran from Jesus in my calling because it scared me out of my mind. Even when I went into the ministry, I thought, I'm going to be a behind-the-scenes guy.

I'll be the counselor. I'll be the guy who cries with everybody in the trenches and helps pick them up and build them up. The pulpit scared the life out of me. I could never see myself behind a pulpit. My knees shook just thinking about it. I had such a high view of this ministry behind the pulpit. I could never think of myself doing it. That's why I can say to you, we get saved and we serve the Lord and we turn our lives over to serving the body of Christ and there's no telling where that's going to take us.

[14 : 16] Greg, did you ever conceive years ago that you'd be an elder in a church, pastoring and working a full-time job and giving yourself, did y'all ever think of, Marivy might have been saying one day he will be.

Because she was thinking things like that about me. But we don't see ourselves in that kind of light. Paul didn't choose the life. He had this particular life mapped out for him by the Lord.

Now what did he have mapped out? Well listen to this. Paul had his life mapped out as a Pharisee, a shining star in the ranks of the religious elite of Israel.

So God made this life for him by way of Paul's salvation and calling in Jesus. Now I want to just show you a few more things because as I move through this I really want to burn into your heart the radical, radical nature of this service that Paul is offering.

We tend to read the New Testament and read these things about Paul and we just kind of take for granted that Paul was supposed to do these things. I mean this is just what he's supposed to do.

[15 : 25] And we don't think about what we're reading in scripture in this man's life is the normal Christian life. It's not the radical Christian life, it's the normal Christian life.

Giving your life away on behalf of serving Jesus and serving Christ's people is the normal Christian life, whatever it costs. Say what if it costs me my life?

Well then you get to go be with Jesus and you're done with all this nonsense. I don't mean to be flippant, I mean to be eternally minded.

I mean to have and to model a heavenly perspective on the issues of life. If you'll turn back just one book, Philippians 3, it's right there next to Colossians.

Philippians 3, look with me, Paul is going to begin to talk about his goal, his ultimate goal in life. And here, he's speaking to the Philippians about what his life was like and what his goals were before

the Lord Jesus and then he comes in to tell what happened to him.

[16:34] In verse 4, we pick it up. Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh, Paul's saying, you know, if there's anybody on the earth that's going to be prideful and boast about his accomplishments, I could be that guy.

I could be that guy. That's what he's saying. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence, pride in the flesh, that is in my human accomplishments, I far more.

Why, Paul? Ah, listen to this. I was circumcised on the eighth day. I'm of the nation of Israel. I'm of the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew of Hebrews.

And as to the law, you can't go any higher. I was a Pharisee. Verse 6, Oh, and as to zeal, zeal, I was a persecutor of the church.

As to the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Now, this guy was a rule keeper. Jot and tittle dude.

[17:38] Now, verse 7, everything changed. But whatever things were gained to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

More than that, how can you get more than that? I count all things to be lost in the view of the surpassing value, there's the supremacy, of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered.

What? What have you suffered for Jesus, Paul? The loss of all things and in losing them, count them but garbage, dung, rubbish, so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own anymore, derived from the law that I was so intent to keep, but that which is through faith in Christ.

See, Paul's saying, I realize in humility now that what I have in Christ is a gift. I couldn't earn it. I couldn't be good enough. I couldn't do enough. That is the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that gift from the Lord.

Verse 10, that I may know Him. There it is. That's the goal of Paul's life, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His what, church?

[19:13] Paul finds fellowship with Jesus in suffering for Jesus, for His sake. Being conformed to His death in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

And we can go on and on. Now, if you would, hold your finger in Colossians and go quickly to Acts. Acts. Let's look at Paul's, the latter part of Paul's conversion experience.

Acts chapter 9, picking it up in verse 10. Now, let me just tell you real quickly, Paul is on his way to persecute more Christians, to imprison them and to have them murdered for being Christians, okay?

And so, on his way to do more of this damage to the church, God saves him. Christ appears to him and speaks to him and asks him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And Saul said, he recognized, oh Lord, I mean, there's this experience happening. He recognizes this is a heavenly thing. And he says, when did I do that? And he says, as you persecute my people, you are persecuting me.

[20:35] It's personal, Paul. You hurt them, you hurt me. That's my body. Right? Now he comes to verse 10 in the account.

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. And the Lord said to Ananias in a vision, Ananias, and he said, here I am, Lord.

That's exactly what Paul said. Right? Verse 11. And the Lord said to him, get up and go to the street called Straight and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul.

Listen now, for he is praying. God made Saul, who would become Paul, blind through this experience. He's blind as a bat. He has to be led around like a little baby.

Proud Paul going to kill everybody and be the Pharisee of Pharisees. And now he's like a little baby. Well, he's in this house and he's praying. And look what it says in verse 12.

[21:36] He has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight. Verse 13. But Ananias answered, and this is, I understand this, Lord, I've heard from many about this man how much harm he did to your saints of Jerusalem.

And here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all and prison all who call on your name. You see that? You see how he's praying? That's a real prayer. Wouldn't you pray like that?

Lord, whoa, what kind of ammunition are you giving me going into this thing or whatever? No, you just go do what I tell you. Verse 15. But the Lord said, go.

Now notice, folks, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. And then verse 16 is the kicker.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake. Wow.

[22 : 40] Now, would you want to sign up for that party? Me neither. Do you know what I told the Lord as I was in prideful rebellion against him knowing that I was being called into ministry?

You've got the wrong man, I said. You know why I said that to God? I don't want to pay that kind of price. And I'm afraid that when I start doing it, knowing who I am, I'm going to let you down. I'll let you down.

I don't want to give my life away to these people. I don't want to be that guy. I want to do what I want to do. That's what I said. You know what I did?

Now, you military men, forgive me. I joined the army. Do you know what I joined the army for? I told this, I said this to God. I'm going to be an army ranger and I'm going to be a killer and I'm going to show you, God, that I am not the man you want me to be.

I'm not a lover, I'm a fighter. I don't want to go love like that. I lasted 11 months. I got a medical discharge out of the army related to my wife's health condition.

[23 : 52] I was a broken man. I was humiliated. Everything I planned fell, failed. I did really well in what I did, but I failed.

I left with my tail between my legs and you know what I said to God? I'm listening. I'm listening. And I tell people in my testimony, that's like Jonah and the big whale, only my whale was green.

And when that green army whale spit me out and I hit the beach, I worked very, very hard for one year saving money. And as soon as we had enough money, we sold everything that we had and took that money and went to Fort Worth, Texas and I got into seminary and I never looked back.

Has it been easy? No, it hasn't been easy. And you know what? Beyond what I was worried about has come true in my life. Now I'm going to tell you something and my God has kept us faithful through every single bit of it.

I can't imagine that anything I would have gone through in the army would have been ten times as hard as what I've been through in ministry. You know why? Because the weapons of the warfare and ministry aren't rifles and bullets and tanks and guns and combat gear.

[25 : 12] The weapons of warfare and spiritual warfare are the truth of the word of God. Faith. The gospel. A humble heart and a willingness to suffer on behalf of Jesus.

Even when you don't see the results you want to see. That's what you're called to. Say, Jeff, that's fine for you and for Greg, you guys are pastors.

I'm telling you this is the normal Christian life. Never in a million years would I have seen myself doing what I'm doing today. And what I do today, if there's any good in it at all, it's by the grace of Almighty God.

Is that not true in your life? The good that you see in me is the good of Christ. over a lifetime, an adult lifetime of walking with the Lord.

Let me give you one other passage before we move on. 2 Corinthians 12.15. This is the kind of work that God does to change a person's heart and make them willing to serve no matter what the cost.

[26 : 25] This is an amazing reality if you'll keep in mind. Now, I just gave you a little of my testimony to help you see the difference Jesus makes that he is in the life of people.

Now, I'm just a little nothing. The Apostle Paul was killing Christians, going to these different cities and rounding up these very people to imprison them and have them murdered. And in 2 Corinthians 12.15, here's his testimony now.

I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. Isn't that beautiful? That's what he told the Corinthians. I will gladly spend and be expended.

That means I will gladly give and then give until I don't have anything else to give on behalf of your souls. Now, who does that remind you of? Does that remind you of anybody that Paul might be looking to?

Jesus. Absolutely. I didn't come to be served but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many. Paul has adopted that very attitude in following Jesus.

[27 : 33] That's what he wants for his life. I want to put this first slide up here because I want you to see this in writing. Being a Christian is living for Christ.

And if I had time, I'd break down each one of these phrases, these clauses. It's following Jesus' example as a servant. By serving God's truth and God's people.

Now I think we're ready to read Colossians 1, 24 down through the end of the chapter. 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.

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. That is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations but has now been manifested to his saints 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.

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

[28 : 58] For this purpose also I labor striving according to his power which mightily works within me. And I can just say that's that's my testimony.

That's the testimony of any Christian who's come out of a life of sin to serve the risen Lord. To give their life away in service to Jesus by serving Jesus' people.

I've never known such joy while suffering. I've never known such peace while suffering. And I've never known such power while suffering.

the only way I can explain it is Jesus. That's it. If you ask me do you have any regrets about the failures in your life I'd say absolutely not.

God used and ordained every single one of them to break me and form me and he's still working in me I'm not there. Is he doing that to you? Now if you say yes do you understand and know and recognize the evidence of God working to break you and make you humble and willing and joyful so that you're not copying an attitude about what it means to serve him?

[30 : 17] See? Well I've outlined this passage with what I'm going to call and I'm going to put it up here for you to see four marks or four features of Christ centered service in the church and these four marks kind of they grow out of Paul's own emphasis of serving the church as Christ has served you kind of thing.

I'm serving I'm serving the church I'm freely giving myself away for the church because how of how Christ serves me and gives himself away for me.

And so the first point that I wanted to and look I've got several weeks I'm going to work on this so we'll just go as far as we can go and we'll call time okay? So don't worry you're only going to get one point today and you might not get all of point one.

Look I could preach a sermon on the first word in verse 24 now. We could just stop right there it's so pregnant so good. The character of Christ centered service we won't make it to verse 25 today we're going to talk about suffering as the character of Jesus service.

You know isn't it a disservice that we do to young Christians when they come to know the Lord we don't want to lick the red off the candy for them right away and tell them now Jesus saved you and this is all wonderful however you need to know that you're going to suffer a lot serving the Lord Jesus.

[31 : 45] This is not a calling to a cakewalk this is a war you've just entered the battle as a new soldier and you need to be trained and equipped because this is going to really be something hard.

That just doesn't sound like the first conversation you want to have with a baby Christian does it? But eventually we need to help them understand when things start going south for them as it were quickly as they try to be faithful and find out that not everybody is going to hug them and pat them on the back and be congratulatory what do they do with that?

Well as we look at verse 24 the first word is now in the New American Standard translation that's how the verse begins now is a reference to time that Paul uses to point to current suffering Paul Paul wants the people to know that he's writing to I'm in a current situation right now as I write this letter to you that I want you to understand the context of because it has a bearing on why I want to encourage you Paul wrote Colossians while he was in prison this is a prison epistle there are several of them in the New Testament Philippians is also a prison epistle he is chained to a guard so he isn't just in prison he's also in prison literally tethered to a Roman guard we have that reference in Acts 28 16 and 30 if you do

Acts 28 and you do the timing on Colossians Acts gives us our time references for many of the different epistles that Paul wrote over the course of his life now Paul says now even with my current

circumstances of imprisonment being what they are this is incredible look at verse 24 I rejoice in my sufferings I rejoice in my sufferings that is so otherworldly and unnatural alright here's the thing Paul's been faithful to invest himself himself in service to Christ in service to Christ truth and in service to Christ people and it has landed him in prison he's battered bruised and all busted up in prison for being faithful and doing what is right in his service to Jesus and the church but I want to ask you do we see in this passage

I just read to you do we see him pouting do we see him in the depths of depression so that he's basically not able to function in life anymore do we see him raving a red flag and demanding to see the prison chaplain or the town psychologist I'm not being cheeky I'm asking you what do we see in this man is he copping the attitude you know why don't people appreciate me I'm doing all of this for these people and most of these people that I'm doing this for they don't even know I'm suffering like this I mean what do I get out of it I don't even get kudos no pats on the nobody even knows I'm here unless I tell them he's not doing that I'm trying to do us maybe I'm not doing you I'll just do me that's me without the Lord without an eternal perspective on life is he just too tired and distracted by his own stuff in life to serve God's people anymore or to stay faithful

[35 : 28] I don't even see Paul saying this you know I just need some me time I just need some me time man you know I'm not saying that Paul worked himself into the ground I think the man knew when to pull back I think that's okay right we all need time to pull back we're not divine beings we're human we're weak we need to recharge that's okay that's okay just don't quit don't check out soldiers don't check out when the battle gets hottest soldiers need to step up so here's what he does he rejoices in his suffering because it is from God and for them that's his perspective in other words it's not Paul Paul Paul Paul it's God and them so far from giving in to self-pity or excuses Paul actually gives more of himself now I'm going to go out on a limb here and I'm going to guess that some of the men in this room who've been trained in the military have been trained in a way where they are taken to their limits and then they're told now we want more am I right now we want more and they find out they can give more this is exactly what

God does with us in our service to him do you realize that what's at stake as we serve the Lord are eternal souls and the glory of almighty God it's not the glory of a nation it's the glory of God it's eternal souls Paul Paul actually steps up in the heat of battle and gives more of himself as he writes to exhort God's holy ones in Colossae to faith in Christ and exhort them to faithfulness to greater faithfulness in service to Jesus Paul doesn't want them to hear about his imprisonment and become discouraged and feel like Paul's imprisonment is a setback oh no we're losing Christians are losing the battle here because now our leader is in prison and Paul's saying nothing could be further from the truth this is the Lord I'm in prison because of God not because of the Romans you think the Romans could put me in prison if

God didn't want that that's Paul isn't that awesome Mike you could follow a guy like that couldn't you if Paul said charge you'd say which I want to fight for that cause I want to pour my life out for that cause that's worth fighting for I want to point out to you again and make it very clear what Paul is saying here he's saying that this suffering that he's doing is connected to the context of the church he's not suffering in a vacuum and he's not suffering for his own self or his own sake he's suffering for others and those others are specific it's the church in other words there's a reality to suffering connected with faithfully serving God's people Paul says that he rejoices in suffering for your sake he's not just suffering for the people in

Colossae or Corinth at the time you know what the apostle Paul is suffering for you never even met you all these years later Paul is suffering for you because he wants to hand down the gospel to you he's giving his life away for you here's what I'm trying to point out to you Paul didn't even understand fully the measure of that sacrifice that he was making and the impact that it would have for Christ and neither will you you suffer you'll give and you'll sacrifice and sometimes you'll see the immediate consequences of what you're doing and sometimes God will keep it from you and you may die and never know the full impact of what your suffering is going to do for the glory of God on this earth right now all of that is just a longer way of saying this you're not in it for you this goes beyond you and beyond me this is a bigger calling than just us and what we have going on in our life and yet at the same time beloved

God calls you to do it he condescends and makes you part it may not be all about you but he chooses to use you in it do you understand that's a that's crazy I'm not calling God crazy I'm saying that's just craziness wow that God would use me in that way so Paul willingly suffers in his body by

doing his share on behalf of his body whose body Jesus body how does Paul serve Jesus body by serving the church notice what he says look again I do my share on behalf of what does the text say his body thank you I do my share on behalf of his body and now we need someone to define for us what his body means now

[41 : 07] I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of his body now which is the church which is the church no guessing Paul tells us what that means so what he's doing he does as a servant of the church we know that because he says I'm doing all of this for his body which is the church for your benefit I'm not doing it for my I'm doing it for your benefit your benefit this is such a other worldly heavenly way of thinking and acting on this earth I'm just pointing out that Paul is willing to suffer and he even rejoices in his opportunities to suffer on behalf of Christ centered service to God's people so Paul isn't this martyr complex person who says yeah the more I suffer the more I look good it's not pride it's nothing like that

Paul understands that he's been called to a life of investing in others and it's going to cost him and Jesus has made that clear to him and Paul stepping up out of love for Christ and saying I'll pay that price by grace through faith I'll strive in holiness to pay that price Christian service to and for the local church in this case Colossi is what Paul is emphasizing Christian service to and for the local church now this kind of serving as I've alluded to it isn't natural it isn't easy or convenient now we're going to just get real practical here okay maybe I've been doing that but to me this is like I'm going to kick it into another gear here folks listen it isn't natural for any one of us to serve someone else without an agenda you with me before

Jesus because of the deceitfulness of our hearts which we don't even know we could do things for people and there was there was always something attached to doing that for other people now you just think about that for your own life I'm not going to camp out there I'm just trying to say it isn't natural for any of us to sacrificially serve other people even in our families if it was more natural to you and it came more natural to you to serve people me too in my marriage and in my family I would never sin against my wife but I do you know why because it isn't natural for me to sacrificially serve my wife it's not I can't take credit for sacrificial service to my wife I can't that's something foreign to me that has to be I have to be given that and then work it out that's why I prayed earlier through the prayer that Jesus offered we are working out what he's working in what's he working in well according to

Ephesians 5 as a Christian husband I'm called to sacrificially serve my wife that ability that God has given me that he's working in me and now I'm working it out I look for opportunities Mike to work it out in the life of I look I try to be proactive I try to learn and grow and understand our needs it doesn't just happen by osmosis but the ability to do that is all the glory given to God all the praise right and that goes for a wife doesn't it going the other way a wife who respects her husband and submits to her husband how many of you wives say oh yeah I came out of the womb naturally knowing how to submit and wanting to do it absolutely submission I'm all about submission my middle name is submission Mary submission Jones no no no no me neither it's not like that I'm just saying in our nature apart from

Christ what we expect is to be served we expect to be served it isn't easy it isn't easy to serve in any church body it's pure work it's effort to serve in this church family but it's a good worthwhile and commanded work for Jesus sake that's what I'm trying to put across to us saying yes to serving in this church family means saying no to something else it might even mean saying no to someone else that's true it might mean saying no to something you like it might mean saying no to good things right you're going to sacrificially serve the Lord Jesus Christ and sacrificially serve the church as you serve the

[46 : 24] Lord Jesus Christ that means it's going to cost you something if it's not costing you something to be a part of this church and to serve in this church we need to talk about sacrificial service if the only service you render is convenient to you it's not sacrificial it's not bearing the marks of biblical service you know what the interesting thing is Paul says I rejoice in that I have joy in that my joy in this service even though it's costing me everything it's costing me my freedom etc you know what I find joy you know why because I'm not looking at the circumstances I'm not measuring my value in life against circumstances if I did that how many days have I spent in prison I've spent years of my life in prison years years before the man's going to be discharged and let go finally in his what was it

Rico third imprisonment I don't remember they finally lopped off his head serving Jesus he was faithful the man didn't break any laws he didn't do anything wrong they still killed him I rejoice in my suffering because I know it's for Christ and for your sake it's got a higher purpose goes beyond me a simple point of fact and I belabor the point a bit beloved it's unnatural difficult and even inconvenient to take the time and exert the effort to be faithful and taking up a place of service in this church family it's just true but now hear my heart in this excuses distractions misconceptions stand in the way of Christ centered service for each of us joined to this church family why well we need to heed the truth about ministry we need to heed God's truth about ministry and what is that okay hear me straight up to serve is to suffer it's just not convenient you're just not going to find it it's not going to happen because here's what we do we have an attitude of this we want to we well we need to heed the truth to serve is to suffer

I rejoice in my sufferings Paul didn't say this he didn't say I rejoice in the outcomes when I can see a good outcome I'll rejoice he's in prison he's chained to a guard he's writing to the Colossian Christians he doesn't know if he'll be released if he'll be killed if he'll be kept there what's going to happen and he says I rejoice in my sufferings look I see all this is God's will for your benefit everything I'm suffering right now is for you and I don't begrudge one single stitch of it that's a man with an eternal mindset that's a warrior for Jesus wow make us more like that Lord get us out of our pity parties get us out of ourselves get us out of the distractions of this world that we build these little kingdoms and know it's all going to burn help me invest my life in something that isn't going to burn but will stand the test of eternity it's so interesting to me he turns this entire discussion on its head and he challenges us with the why of his own joyful service to

God's people and here's he does it without candy coating the reality that it's oftentimes very very difficult and demanding to serve one another but is rejoicing and suffering really what God expects of each of us am I supposed to have that kind of an attitude are we really supposed to have a joyful attitude about how difficult and demanding serving Jesus the truth and the church can sometimes be well here's where we get in trouble we kind of take this attitude we fall into this and I'm going to tell you why because I've already said we have this attitude in us where it isn't natural for us to serve like this so we need the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to do this to offer this to other people and to get the bigger picture of what God's doing through the local church in the world what we do is we live our life over here is your life and what we do is we live our life and then we run over here every once in a while and we add church to it now that's the problem

I'm not accusing anybody I'm telling you that this is what I just confess to you I have been guilty of this as well so church becomes an addition to my otherwise busy life my my other life and then I have what I do at church that's exactly tails up that's living exactly backwards from what scripture tells you there are two things in this world most precious to Jesus you the local church his blood bought people and his truth both are going to stand for eternity everything else is going to burn everything now what we need to ask at this point is how much of my life is being invested in what's valuable to God now you might look at me and say well Jeff this is kind of easier for you because you're a pastor and you get paid to do this and I got my yeah well that's true but I'm a

[52 : 10] Christian and as a Christian I'm called to serve the church whether I was getting paid for it or not so we're all called to serve the church because we're all called to salvation in Jesus and this is what's most valuable to Jesus so does that mean Jeff let's be practical again does that mean that what I have over here as I live my life is not as important as what I do do in the church that's not what I'm saying I'm saying what you have over here in your life should be defined by who you are the church not what you do in the church who you are you are the church you are the body of Christ on this earth you are the visible expression of the body of Jesus on this earth and so that should define how we think about living life we live out of who we are in Christ and so as we come over here and invest ourselves in what's valuable to Jesus it means that when I'm living as a husband I'm living for Christ because

I'm part of him his body you see as I do my job and I have worked secular jobs many of them many hours I get it guys I understand what that's like and working full time as a pastor just like Greg does I get it it's hard as I do my job in the secular world I do it for Christ as I provide for my family and work in my job I'm honoring Christ what we do is we separate those we think of what we do through the week as being different from what we come and do at church on Sunday so church gets added do you see what I'm saying church gets added to my otherwise busy involved life now I'm going to tell you if you live like that you know who loses the church every time the church is going to lose it's

going to it's going to come in backseat that's not what you want I told you this was going to be challenging I've preached this before didn't go so well nobody we are called to serve the Lord the attitude that

I've been talking about towards Christian living can't be supported by scripture it can't be supported in this passage in the previous verses that Paul deals with he talks about the cross life is our life and not simply an addition to our life living the cross life living a life of suffering what is the cross life Jesus said if you want to follow me you need to deny your that's the cross life it's self denial it's a willingness to suffer Jesus suffered on the cross you're going to take up your cross see I'm not making this up all I'm doing is putting it out there in a plain language way and saying this is the life we've been called to do you know why you're not hearing more of this in pulpits around America because this is exactly what runs people out of the church and I say this I say if you get run out of the church because you hear things like this you need to think about whether or not you're in Christ because this matters to hold to people who are holy people who care about what's being preached right now are holy people who care about being holy they care about living a holy life or this doesn't matter to them because of Jesus we have life we owe that life to him in all ways and in all things we live 24 7 or we're missing the point 24 7 for Jesus or we're missing the point so don't separate church life and make church an added feature church is just something we do on Sunday we are the church all the time we're living out being the body of Christ when we gather together as the family of God all we're doing is this we're reminding ourselves that we're to invest in one another in love and good deeds spurring one another encouraging one another in those love and good deeds because one day we'll all be the family in heaven this is a reminder of what heaven what's coming in heaven the togetherness the oneness that's why we prayed that this morning unity unity in Christ I fail at this you fail at this we all fail at this we all need to come to Christ for grace to live this out living here here it is living the gospel is not Jesus plus anything it isn't Jesus plus your life your life he is your life so I'm just challenging you to live to live for him and to invest yourself in what's most valuable to him for their sake just like Paul for their benefit remember this passage will you throw that up there for me brother is it already up there the passage from Galatians 2 20 you remember this one I've been crucified with Christ it's no longer I who live but Christ lives in me in the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me so life lived as his people is all for him to him through him and by him with all things being summed up and held together in him so that he might come to have first place in everything if you'll look at chapter 1 verse 18 you'll see all that written there he is also the head of the body the church and he is the beginning the firstborn from the dead so that he himself will come to have first place in everything especially in your life so here's how you learn to strike a godly balance and perspective on going out there and living your life and being a part of the fuller life of the body of

Christ here's how you strike that you say Jeff how in the world do we measure that well that's a lifetime process of learning that it's it's not a one and done I got it it's a commitment that you live out and learn and grow in over the course of time by bringing around Christians and sharing in their suffering together here's how you do it keep Jesus first place in everything and you'll learn learn how to live a life focused on him in a life devoted to serving him keep Jesus first in everything well we come to how Paul says his own life bows to the sovereignty of Jesus having first place he says so that all things in Paul's own life are for Jesus to to Jesus through Jesus by Jesus in Jesus here's what he said in Galatians 6 14 we'll put this up here for you to read but may it never be that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world all the fear that I had prior to entering into ministry and the fears that I've battled since being in the ministry they all began to dissipate and become clear for what they are as I learned to boast in Jesus and realize what I was scared of in terms of my failure was a prideful self-centeredness where I only thought about my ability to do what needed to be done I didn't understand the power of Jesus working in my life to bless other people it takes surrender and humility and patience it takes a single-minded devotion and focus all of those things are things I'm learning as I pastor and shepherd and husband and father and I have my share of failures but the grace of God is proof sufficient and Paul said this in my weaknesses he's seen as strong so I'll boast about my weaknesses so that he can be seen for who he is he didn't wear his suffering from serving Jesus in the church like a badge for people to see his suffering in service to Jesus in the church were a privilege of his salvation and a proof of it

[61 : 37] I think that's the secret to joyful Christ-centered service can we put that one up here do I have a slide for that I think I do ah here we go I'll end here the secret to joyful Christ-centered service to see it as your privilege and not as a burden so Paul leaves us the example do not neglect serving in this church because it is the same as neglecting to serve Jesus and all that he is and does for you all that he is and does I don't have time to to finish the rest I'll just carry this over into the next message the next thing that I want to point out to you God willing next week is this Paul says I do my share now here's what I like about that I won't preach it I'll just mention it okay hold me to it Rico don't let me start preaching again Paul says I do my share even the apostle Paul said I just do my share I just show up and run my lap and then I hand the baton and the next guy runs his lap

I don't do it all I don't win the whole race I just run my part of it isn't that great that's Paul Mr. Imprisonment Mr. Take Beatings and Lashes I just do my share I'm not out to be anybody's hero just do my part please beloved just do your part and if you're doing your part keep doing it for the glory of God for the service to your brothers and sisters to build them up in the face say Jeff why do we come to church to build one another up in the faith as we rejoice together as a spiritual family and glorifying the Lord we don't come primarily to get and yet we get by giving by giving Jesus said if you want to save your life you'll lose it we lose our lives to save it we give and we get because that's the way God's set it up to be that wonderful thank you for listening thank you for being prayerful and humble in receiving this you say

Jeff what's the next step join the church y'all you visitors thank you for being here join the church pull the trigger come talk to Greg and I find out what you need to do if you're if you're having doubts come talk to us we'll help you out if this isn't the place for you here's what we pray if this isn't the place for you we want you to be where the place is we don't want you to flounder we want you to come plug in serve the Lord that's our prayer for you so yeah let's pray father God in heaven we thank you for your goodness and your glory we thank you that you call us to a life of service because Lord the truth is and we're going to confess it I'm going to confess it for us as I lead this pastoral prayer father I know from my own life if you didn't call me to service I wouldn't do it I'd serve me so thank you for putting me into service like you did Paul thank you for putting my brothers and sisters into service thank you for calling us into salvation thank you for challenging us through the scriptures to be faithful people who serve the church for the sake of Jesus Christ thank you for our church here in Williamsburg

Lord you know what we've weathered you know what we've done you know where we've been what we've asked for and what we've tried to do we lay it all before you and ask you to help us just to stay faithful and to continue to soldier on with joy and to serve one another in the joy of Jesus I pray for my brothers and sisters to take this message to heart as they go out into the work of day world and remember that church isn't something that we add to our lives it's who we are and we take that identity with us as we go out into the world so that they can see that Jesus lives in us and offers hope and forgiveness for sins and for a purposeful life as in Ecclesiastes we thank you for all these blessings in Jesus name amen