

Colossians Pt 3.

Col 1:24-2:5

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Announcements: Eric has a new podcast channel where he interviews his parents about their ministry, Journey Companion Ministries. You can access it on Spotify (first episode is posted):

<https://open.spotify.com/show/5UNEovqfYKR1sOomXIzkdq>

An opening story: I (Michael) once lived in San Luis Obispo, CA, about 2 hrs from Salinas where I grew up. I was attending Cal Poly where every dorm had a men's and women's Bible study because of the huge Campus Crusade for Christ ministry on that campus. These Bible studies changed my life in many good ways and eventually, I volunteered to lead a study. I was assigned to lead an off-campus Bible study with Brian, an engineering student from Tucson who was studying abroad inside the US. During our study, Brian became a Christian for the first time in a way that was authentic to him. Then he asked me this question: "Now that I've committed my life to Jesus and know I will have eternal life, why am I alive right now?" I was actually concerned about him; was he depressed? But since then over the years, this question has come up many more times and holds a lot of significance.

So I ask you today:

Why are you still alive?

What are you doing here on this earth?

Quick Review of Colossians:

Greeting: (Col 1:1-4) Paul is excited about the Colossians and is so thankful for them. He is actually flabbergasted and amazed that they know about Jesus!

Prayer: (Col 1:9-14) Paul talks about the things he wants for them.

Place: "Colossians was written to a group of people Paul had never met who made up a church he didn't start" (Bible Project). Word of Jesus got to Colossia through Epaphras who brought the good news to 120 miles from Ephesus to Colossae to a small group of people (maybe 45) and then went to Rome where he was imprisoned with Paul. Maybe he went to see Paul to get more information from him so he could help the Colossian people.

For some context, to walk from Rome to Colossae would take about 9 days with no rest. This includes a few ferry rides. The route from Ephesus to Colossae takes about 2 days with no breaks.

Paul goes on to talk about the **Supremacy of Christ** (Col 1:15-18) & **Reconciliation** (Col 1:19-22).

Jesus is over all; he is the highest authority, like the U.S. Supreme Court or an air fighter jet. He is the head of the body. The executive function of the head in someone's body is to make the body move the way it should move. If the brain cannot tell the body what to do, something has gone wrong.

Jesus is also the tuning fork who gives us the perfect pitch to tune and adjust to. We are the symphony; he is the tuning fork.

We are reconciled to God and Jesus has all authority to make that happen. Once we were alienated and enemies because of our evil behavior but now we are forgiven and made whole because of Christ's blood shed for us. Through his physical body, he died to make us right with God and then brings us into his body, the church. Because of this, we can look to Christ as our **plumbline**. He is the **cornerstone**, the capstone. He holds all things together like gravity and in our faith and hope in Him, we have a straight line to orient our lives around and build upon.

One last piece before we get into today's passage:

Col 1:23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the **gospel**. This is the **gospel** that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

What is the **Gospel**? We need to repeat this over and over: **Story, Identity, and Kingdom**.

Story: The gospel is a story-telling shift from narrating internally about ourselves (using I, me, we) to talking about Jesus as the center of the story. I am taken from my little place, whatever it is, and shift to a narrative about what Jesus is doing, what he has done, and how I fit into the whole of what He is doing.

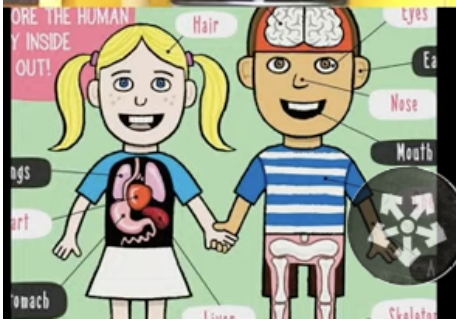
Identity: The gospel is also an identity shift: once I was alone, an orphan, and now I'm a child of God and belong to his family, having all the authority of a son. This is good news! Jesus has opened up this way to tell a different story.

Kingdom: Jesus the king has a kingdom and we are in it. There are things to do in this kingdom: Jesus gives us His spirit which gives us an engine, like an internal combustion that powers us. It empowers us to live the life that Jesus has called us to.

Today, we will read about Paul telling us about his personal kingdom life: his suffering for the church, his labor.

Col 1:24 - 2:5

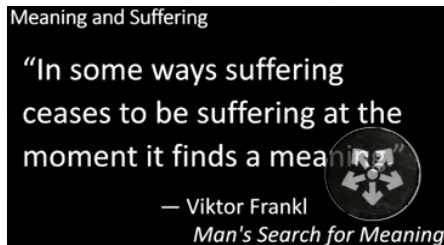
Col. 1:24 Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.



This is an analogy comparing the church to a physical body. Paul is a servant of this body and suffers for it in ways that Christ hasn't yet suffered. This opens up reconciliation: the good news goes beyond Christ's physical body because it keeps going, resulting in suffering. Read the book of Acts where Paul has afflictions and trials for the sake of the church.

This body is amazing: A physical body has different parts. Paul is amazed by how all these parts fit together locally and with all the other believing Christians coming together for the first time in world history.

Paul rejoices (like we read about in Philippians) despite his suffering. This makes me think of Victor Frankel, an up-and-coming famous psychologist in pre-WWII Vienna, Austria. Frankel tried to help his fellow Jews but was sent to multiple concentration camps. His wife, parents, and friends didn't survive the war. Later, Frankel wrote *Man's Search for Meaning* about suffering and this quote popped into my mind:



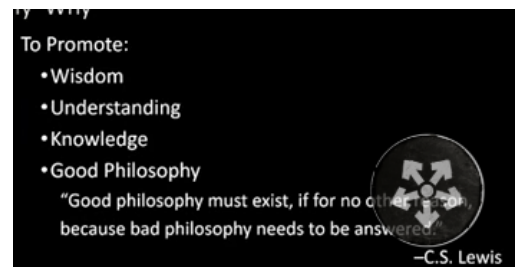
His observations were that the survivors from the concentrations camps had a **purpose** or **meaningful** story about why they were there. They had a sense of what it all meant.

"Those who have a **'why'** to live can bear with any **'how'**" is another quote by Frankel. This also describes Paul:

Col 1: 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—

Paul's mission, commission, is what God's will tells him to do. Even though on the road to Damascus Paul hears that he will suffer for Jesus, he thinks about this mission as going beyond suffering. He needs to tell the world about this good news.

Michael's Personal 'Why' is to promote the following:



- To promote **wisdom** (Jesus is the personification of wisdom from Col 1). This is to those who don't yet understand but also to those who are believers.
- I also want to promote **understanding** wisdom, Jesus, about petty intellectual things: *I love it when people have an AHA moment.*
- I want to promote **knowledge** (true belief) in people, who Jesus is, and what he offers.
- I also want to promote **good philosophy**. CS Lewis quote: "Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason because bad philosophy needs to be answered."

To find your "why," I suggest you start with **God's will**. If your mission is to be a rock and roll star, I would ask you if that is God's will. So anything sinful is ruled out, anything contrary to the Word of God. Certainly your purpose will have something to do with God's will.

Worshiping God is also a key: "*When I run I feel God's pleasure*" (Chariots of Fire). I think whenever you feel like this, it's an act of worship. What kinds of things in your life bring honor and worship to God?

I think your "why" is going to involve **loving God and loving others**. (I Cor 13) Without love, it's a noisy cymbal: You don't want to just make a bunch of noise. You need to be loving others.

I suspect your "why" will have to do with **creating order and beauty** in the world. Do you make or create beautiful things? What are ways you could do this? This is a good place to find your "why."

Col 1:26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. **27** To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

There is a lot of talk about mystery here, something that once was not fully understood. This mystery is Christ in you.

The Jewish Messiah is the savior and Lord of the entire world. This is the stuff that knocked Paul off his donkey: he was a Pharisee who followed the Law and memorized it, he had hope in the messiah but it had a different focus only on Israel as he understood it. They didn't understand their messiah was EVERYONE's messiah. Jesus is that messiah. The Jewish mind couldn't understand that Jesus holds everything together and offers everyone eternal life. All of us here are most likely are Gentiles; therefore, all of us are The Mystery! You will be resurrected at the end of time!



28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

29 To this end I strenuously contend (Suffer) with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Col 2:1 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.

Paul was suffering for those he never met: he prayed all the time for these people from his prison: That they would know more fully, have maturity, have peace.

He says he's doing so that they might be fully mature in Christ, to love powerfully even despite suffering. He wants:

Col 2:2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, **3** in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

He wants them to be mature: these are the things that contribute to maturity. His **WHY** is to bring understand, knowledge, and wisdom to these people

Here is another part of his "**WHY**:"

4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. **5** For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

He wants good things for them: he doesn't want them pulled away from the Gospel. We will get into this more next week.

Jesus PLUS: Paul is concerned that they won't know that Jesus is enough.

Let's go back to questions I asked 3 weeks ago which comprise the core of our life:

- Where do you feel like a slave?
- Where are you suffering?
- How are you suffering?
- Is Jesus enough?

Your assignment:

- Consider your WHY and ask Brian's question, "Why am I still alive?" to yourself.
- What is God's will for you? (another way to ask this question).
- What is your purpose?

If you aren't yet suffering, you will be. I hope this suffering is meaningful because you have a deeper knowledge and understanding of why you're alive.