

**[1]**  
**Passion for Christ**  
**Colossians 1:24-2:5**  
**June 4, 2017, Jeff Germo**

Jon Krakauer wrote a book called, ***Into Thin Air***<sup>1</sup> about the failed Mount Everest summit attempt in 1991, of which he was a part. Several people lost their lives on this climb. I read the book quite a few years ago, and the entire time I was reading it I kept asking myself one question: Why? Why would they put themselves through all this pain just to climb a mountain?

First of all, each climber had to put up about \$65,000 USD for a guide and expenses. That would be about \$170,000 Canadian today. They had to give up two months for the climb, after making sure that they were physically fit for the excursion. It took that long because of a strict program of acclimatization. For anyone going to high altitude, a slow adjustment is essential.

**[2]**

At Everest Base Camp you breathe only half the oxygen that is available at sea level. At the summit, it's just one-third. The process of allowing your body time to adjust to low oxygen levels is essential to surviving at high altitudes. If acclimatization is rushed, you begin to suffer from altitude sickness, which can be fatal.

One of the most serious complications of climbing to extreme elevations is High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE). HAPE can happen if a climber doesn't take the necessary steps to help his body adjust to the change in altitude. What happens is that because of the change in oxygen levels at higher altitudes the lungs can fill up with fluid so climbers essentially drown in their own fluids.

They would hike up to base camp at 17,000 feet. And from there they would make daily treks up the mountain. For the first week or so they would climb from Base Camp to Camp One and then back down to Base Camp again. They would do this for several days. When their bodies were ready to go higher, they would go to Camp Two, and so on until they were ready to make their final summit attempt of 29,028 feet. That whole process would take up to two months.

Another risk is frostbite, which almost everyone experiences to a lesser or greater degree, with some people losing their noses and ears and other extremities. The winds on Everest can be to hurricane levels. There are rock slides, avalanches, crevasses that can open up and swallow you alive. And on top of all of that, the living conditions at Base Camp are disgusting. During climbing season there are hundreds of people on any given day at the camp without proper sanitation. Human faeces are everywhere. And apparently, along the way you can still see dead bodies of people lying along the path who have given up on a previous trek. The risk to climb Everest is huge.

And I ask myself, why would someone put themselves through that to climb a mountain? And I guess the reason is, as Gregory Leigh Mallory said, "because it's there." There's a part of me that can relate to that because I love backpacking and doing those kinds of outdoor pursuits, but there's also a part of that looks at it realistically and says, is summiting Everest worth the risk of losing my fingers or ears to frostbite or even

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.amazon.ca/Into-Thin-Air-Personal-Disaster/dp/0385494785/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1236895741&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.ca/Into-Thin-Air-Personal-Disaster/dp/0385494785/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1236895741&sr=1-1)

dying? These people risk their lives to summit Everest. I suppose it's what they would deem their highest calling.

The Apostle Paul had a much higher calling than sumitting Everest and he suffered immensely for that calling. Before we look at Colossians let's turn to 2 Corinthians 11 and see what Paul went through for the cause of Christ.

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### **2 Corinthians 11:23-29 (NLT)**

***<sup>23</sup> ...I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. <sup>24</sup> Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes.***

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***<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. <sup>26</sup> I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not.***

[5]

***<sup>27</sup> I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. <sup>28</sup> Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup> Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger?***

Again, we could ask, **Why would someone go through all that pain and suffering for the church?** What was Paul's motivation?

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That is a very important question because whatever that motivation was should be our motivation and goal for what we do in Christ's church as well.

Let's read our main text.

[7]

### **Colossians 1:24-2:5 (NLT)**

***<sup>24</sup> I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church. <sup>25</sup> God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you. <sup>26</sup> This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people.***

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***<sup>27</sup> For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory. <sup>28</sup> So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ.***

[9]

***<sup>29</sup> That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me. <sup>1</sup> I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many***

***other believers who have never met me personally. <sup>2</sup> I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself.***

**[10]**

***<sup>3</sup> In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup> I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. <sup>5</sup> For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.***

In the previous verses that we looked at last week, Paul reminded the believers at Colosse of some truths about Jesus. He said that Christ is all and in all. He is supreme over all creation. All things were created by him and for him. And all the fullness of God dwells in him. He is God. He is supreme. This is who Jesus was and is. If these things are not true – we're all wasting our time here this morning.

Up until now, Paul has been laying a strong foundation for our beliefs because he knows that ...

**[11]**

**...our beliefs shape our values and our values drive our behaviour.**

In this next section he'll show us the impact these core beliefs have on real life.

**[12]**

**How do we make real what we already know?**

So, let's dig into Colossians 1:24-2:5.

**[13]**

**Colossians 1:24 (NLT)**

***<sup>24</sup> I am glad when I suffer for you in my body,***

Are you kidding me? Did you hear that list of what Paul suffered, and he says he's glad? Wow! Talk about commitment to the mission of Jesus. "All that pain I went through for you was worth it. And I would do it again if I had to." That's quite remarkable isn't it! He had been flogged, whipped, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, starved and naked, and he says he rejoices for the privilege of being able to suffer for them like that. Sometimes when we go through difficult things we wonder if God is punishing us. Can anyone relate to that?

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I'm not going to say that doesn't ever happen, but **there certainly is not a one to one correlation between suffering and the discipline of God.** I would say it usually is not the case. Paul suffered all of these things, not because God was punishing him, but because he was faithful to the Gospel. He suffered because he did the right thing. And...he says "it was well worth the pain."

The question then is, what did he go through all that for? What was worth that much pain? Let's carry on.

**[15]**

This next part of verse 24 has some problems that we need to clear up before we go on.

**Colossians 1:24 (NLT)**

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

It's not confusing when you read the NLT, but when you read many other translations it is. This is the NIV.

**[16]**

***24 Now I rejoice in what was suffered 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. (NIV)***

The ESV and other translations are similar. What this sounds like, at first glance, is that Christ didn't finish his job on the cross, so Paul had to come to his rescue and do some suffering of his own to finish the atoning work of Christ. This is obviously not what it means because Paul has just finished going into great detail about how Christ is completely sufficient and supreme and that his work on the cross reconciled us to God. We don't have time to go into this in great detail, but let me just say that ...

**[17]**

**...what is lacking is not Christ's atoning work on the cross, but Christ's work in Paul and the church here on earth.** The atonement has been completed. Our sins have been completely atoned for by Christ's death.

So, it's not the sufferings of Christ in regard to his atoning work on the cross that were lacking, but simply that as Christ's body on earth, the church is going to continue to suffer, and Paul says he is happy to share in that suffering. We, as individuals, and as a church, are being refined by Christ. And just like gold or silver needs extreme heat to have the dross extracted, things need to get hot for us to have our character refined. So, with that end in mind, Paul says it's a privilege for him to suffer for the sake of Christ's Body, the church. There are all kinds of reasons we suffer. We have opposition from Satan. We live in a broken world. Being involved in bringing the Good News of Jesus to people takes hard work. There are obstacles, and pain, and opposition and through all of those trials we have opportunity to grow.

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I want you to notice the tone of this section. Paul starts off by saying that he has suffered for the Colossian church.

In **verse 25** he says he has **become a servant** of the church.

***25 God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you.***

**[19]**

In **1:29** he says, ***"That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me."***

In **chapter 2:1** he says, ***"I want you to know how much I have agonized for you."***

Notice how intense the language is. There is something he really wants to communicate to them. He wants them to know he means business. There is something he has deemed worth suffering and struggling for. So, let's go right to the middle of this passage for the answer to that and then we'll go back and walk through the rest of it together.

**[20]**

***28 So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ.***

[21]

***29 That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.***

In verse 29 he reveals his motivation for everything he does. He says, "this is what I am willing to suffer for. This is what I am prepared to struggle for, so that... we can present the church perfect in Christ." The word "perfect" here actually means "mature". Paul is all about the maturity of the church. Everything he does flows from that purpose, to build the church up and bring its members towards maturity in Christ. Simply put, he helps them to get what they already know from their head to their heart so it will translate into Christ-like behaviour, full of the Holy Spirit.

There are four specific ways Paul says he does this and which we as a church should do as well.

[22]

### **I. Present the complete Word of God (v. 25-27)**

***25 God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you.***

We live in an age in which it is not cool to believe in moral absolutes and where if you say you live your life according to the Bible people think you are old fashioned and weak minded. And it's not only unchurched people who think this way. There are many people who attend church every Sunday who think the Bible is full of nice stories with good morals, but not the inspired Word of God.

There are even pastors who believe these things. One moderator for a very large denomination has rejected the Christian doctrine that Jesus rose from the dead. This is not new with our era.

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**Thomas Jefferson**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> president of the United States, was famous for his "cut and paste Bible". He literally cut out everything in the New Testament that he didn't like and made his own version. He took out everything that could not be explained rationally and was left with 46 pages. He took out the miracles of Jesus, and anything he thought was inconsistent with rational thought. He said it was like ***"finding diamonds in a dung hill."***

[24]

Paul said he suffered and struggled to present the complete Word of God because he knew, as he said in 2 Timothy 3:16, that ***"All Scripture is inspired by God..."*** not just some of it. And we can't just pick and choose which parts we like and which we don't. The Bible teaches some hard things.

It's not easy to love your enemies. It's not easy to turn the other cheek. There are lots of things Jesus taught that are not natural for us. But, we will not mature, we will not become the people God created us to be, if we pick and choose just the parts of that seem palatable to us.

The next building block of maturity is:

[25]

### **II. Proclaim Christ (a person not a religion) (v. 27-28)**

Look at verse 26 – 28.

[26]

***<sup>26</sup> This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people. <sup>27</sup> For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory. <sup>28</sup> So we tell others about Christ...***

Jesus did not die on the cross for a system of belief. Paul did not suffer or struggle to preserve a religion. The Gnostics were trying to tell these Colossian Christians that they had a mystery knowledge that the Colossians couldn't have. Paul says here that God was pleased to reveal the secret, and it is ***"Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory. So we tell others about Christ..."***

The Christian faith is not about religion. It is not a system of belief. It is about a Person. We tell others about Christ, not Christianity, or a system of belief. It's about a real relationship with the risen Christ who lives in us. Religion tells you to attempt by your own effort to be good, or whatever, in order to appease God's anger. The problem is that we are damaged goods. We need to be changed on the inside. We need Jesus to fix our broken hearts.

Religion is about sin management - trying to control those things we do on the outside. The Christian faith, following Jesus, is about allowing the Holy Spirit to change us on the inside so we can become the kinds of people who can live the life he has called us to. We don't tell others about "Christianity". Christianity never saved anyone. We tell them about Jesus Christ. There is a big difference.

The third building block for maturity is:

**[27]**

### **III. Produce a People United in Love (vs. 2:2-5)**

#### **Colossians 2:2-5 (NLT)**

***<sup>2</sup> I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself.***

Love is the glue that holds the church together. We are all different. We have different personalities. We are at different places in our spiritual maturity. We come from different backgrounds, and it takes a tremendous amount of patience and grace for the Body of Christ to work well together. Without this understanding we will not mature in our faith. Each one of us is in process. Each one of us can learn from others in the church. There is no such thing as a lone ranger in God's church, or someone who has it all together, which is why the Growth Groups are so important.

Almost every day I hear stories from different people in our Growth Groups about how they are being encouraged to grow in their faith through what is happening in their lives, as they cooperate with Jesus in community. We need each other. And we need to struggle hard for unity so...

**[28]**

...as Paul says, we may ***"have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself."***

The final building block for building maturity Paul says is:

**[29]**

#### IV. Perpetuate the Good News Outside Our Walls (vs. 27-28)

***27 For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory. 28 So we tell others about Christ..."***

Most of Paul's opposition was from his own people, the Jews. Even the Jewish Christians, in the beginning had a very difficult time accepting the Gentiles. One of the mysteries of God that Paul writes about in some of his other letters is the fact that the gospel does not have barriers. It is wide open to anyone who will humbly surrender to Christ. Salvation is not just for a select few. ***"For God so loved the world."*** The whole world is loved by God, not just the Jews, not just people inside these walls, at CRBC.

Jesus commissioned us to make mature disciples who reproduce other mature disciples. This is the final building block in the process of maturity. All the work that God is doing in our hearts is not just to make us feel good about ourselves. All those rough edges that God's Spirit is chipping away from our character are not simply so we will be masterpieces of God by ourselves. All the discipline and cooperation with God's Spirit to make us a people who love him and others is so we will reach out to those outside our doors.

When we leave this building, we are entering into the mission field. Notice the verse above the main doors in the foyer when you leave today.

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**Psalm 107:1-2 (NIV)**

***1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. 2 Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story...***

God is so good. Look at what he has done for us. He saved us. He redeemed us. He has given us hope, joy, peace, and love. He has put our broken pieces back together and continues to do so. Every time we walk out the doors of this church we should recognize that we are heading into the mission field. We have a story to tell. Our lives tell that story.

***1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. 2 Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story...***

Our vision at CRBC should be **that every person in Campbell River would have a chance to meet Jesus.**

**[31]**

This, Paul said, is worth suffering for. It is worth struggling for. It is worth giving our time, energy and financial resources for. It is the purpose for which God created us and called us, to be people who are all about fulfilling the mission of Jesus.

Satan thinks he wins if he can get us to suffer. He thinks if he throws obstacles in our way he can slow the progress of the gospel. He thinks that cancer, financial difficulties, and other kinds of opposition will discourage us and make us want to get out of the game.

The truth is that nothing will impede the advance of the gospel, and God is big enough to use our struggles here on earth for his victories.

Jesus said, he will build his church and it will push back the gates of hell. (Matthew 16:18) He said his Good News is unstoppable.

We are all in process, and God's Spirit is taking us from where we are to where he wants us to be. And it's going to take a lifetime. In the meantime, what he wants is for you to enter into a relationship with him.

He wants you to enjoy him. He wants you to spend time with him and give him permission to make some changes in your character that may hurt a little. The pain of those changes is so worth it if the Gospel is advanced. He wants us to partner with him in projects that might be hard, and have some accompanying pain as we bring Jesus' love to Campbell River.

I want to read a letter that was written by a Southern Baptist Missionary to Iraq, Karen Watson, prior to leaving for the Middle East. The letter was dated March 7, 2003. She was killed, along with four other missionaries, on March 15, 2004, about a year later. She was thirty-eight years old.

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**"Dear Pastor Phil and Pastor Roger:**

**You should only be opening this letter in the event of my death. When God calls there are no regrets. I tried to share my heart with you as much as possible, my heart for the nations. I wasn't called to a place. I was called to him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, his glory my reward.**

**[33]**

**One of the most important things to remember right now is to preserve the work....I am writing this as if I am still working with my people group. I thank you all so much for your prayers and support. Surely your reward in heaven will be great. Thank you for investing in my life and spiritual well-being. Keep sending missionaries out. Keep raising up fine young pastors.**

**[34]**

**In regards to any service, keep it small and simple. Yes, simply, just preach the gospel....Be bold and preach the life-saving, life-changing, forever-eternal gospel. Give glory and honor to our Father.**

**[35]**

**The Missionary Heart:**

**Care more than some think is wise.**

**Risk more than some think is safe.**

**Dream more than some think is practical.**

**Expect more than some think is possible.**

**[36]**

**I was called not to comfort or success but to obedience....There is no joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving him. I love you two and my church family.**

**In his care,**

**Salaam,**

**Karen"**

**[37]**

We are going to celebrate communion together now. Take a few minutes to contemplate what Jesus accomplished on the cross for you. What is his hope, his call, and his mission for you? Ask yourself, "Am I passionate for the Gospel of Jesus?" If not, "Where am I stuck?"





## Growing in Grace: Making Real What We Already Know

*Passion for Christ*

**Colossians 1:24-2:5**

**Week of June 4, 2017**

**Objective of this study:** To develop our life purpose so it's in line with God's purposes for us.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

### **Worship (5 - 10 minutes)**

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 107:1-9** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything jump out at you?**

### **Welcome**

What is a goal you have suffered to achieve?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your heart*.]

### **Word**

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-29
  1. Take a close look at all the ways Paul suffered. Which of these would you hate the most?
3. Read Colossians 1:24-2:5
  1. Why is Paul glad to suffer?
  2. What motivates Paul? Look closely at the entire passage. There is more there than you think.
  3. Summarize Paul's life purpose statement in your own words.

### **Work**

**Sermon Quote:** "God is so good. Look at what he has done for us. He saved us. He redeemed us. He has given us hope, joy, peace, and love. He has put our broken pieces back together and continues to do so. Every time we walk out the doors of this church we should recognize that we are heading into the mission field. We have a story to tell.

**<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. <sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story... (Psalm 107:1-2, NIV)**

Our vision at CRBC should be **that every person in Campbell River would have a chance to meet Jesus."**

1. Take a few minutes of silent reflection to think about your life purpose, your motivations, how you spend your time, energy, and resources. Do they line up with what Paul said is his motivation? Write your own life purpose statement so it lines up with God's heart for you.
2. Share your thoughts with each other. Are there ways you would like to change?