

IV. Colossians
The Preeminence and Prominence of Jesus Christ
“Spoiler Alert! Mystery Revealed!”
Colossians 1:24–2:5
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I am excited and grateful for this opportunity to be with you all. I am going to be using the New American Standard 1995 rather than the ESV translation for this study. Colossians 1:24-2:5 says, [24] *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. [25] Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, [26] that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested (made known) to His saints, [27] to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. [28] We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete (or mature) in Christ. [29] For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.*

[2:1] For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, [2] that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, [3] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. [4] I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. [5] For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

The grass withers and the flower fades, but God's Word abides forever.

It's a very great privilege to bring a word of exhortation to all of you in this study. I'm very excited to bring this text to you. The sermon title is Spoiler Alert, Mystery Revealed and as one of my friends said, 'that's the most Ike Reeder title I could think of.' A spoiler alert has to do with movies and books, when people say, 'don't spoil it, I haven't gotten there yet.' I could probably make a Perry Mason reference right now, but I won't yet it might come up later. If you like mysteries or thrillers like I do, you like to try to figure out what's going to happen, i.e. was it Mrs. Smith in the kitchen with the candle stick, hmmm.' The ones that you don't like are when there's a whole story that's told in a movie or book and at the end they reveal who the perpetrator of the particular crime was, and you think "There's no way I could have figured that out." Those are the ones that are frustrating, right? There were no breadcrumbs, no trail, no clues to lead to that conclusion so you couldn't figure it out.

I have a group of friends that we meet together on Thursday mornings and we have been doing it now for about 13 years or so and when I worked for Covenant College, I told them I could drive up to them any day of the week except for Thursdays because I have a standing breakfast on Thursday with friends. One of the ladies at Covenant said, "Oh, is that like your accountability group?" I said, 'I mean, we go to church together and we're certainly believers. We do talk about spiritual things, but mostly we talk about Star Wars, video games and that kind of thing. She said "Oh, so you mean an accountability of awesomeness?" I said, 'Yeah, that's

about it. That works.’ I told my Thursday group this, and that's now our unofficial name; ‘The Accountability of Awesome.’

In this study we're going to actually take an idea of the spoiler alerts. In my Thursday group one of them is what I call an anti spoiler. He is the person who would say to you “I do not want to know a spoiler, so if you saw the movie or read the book, don't tell me, don't spoil it for me.’ In fact, if it's a movie he wants to see he says “I'm going dark.” He's like, ‘I don't want to watch a trailer on YouTube. I want to go dark before I see anything about it, because I don't want it spoiled for me.’ Here in this text, Paul has a mystery and he wants to spoil it for us. The good news is, it's the greatest spoiler in the history of mankind. The bad news is, that you can't actually figure it out for yourself. I want that to kind of guide us as we go through this text.

I want to take a moment to set the stage a little bit. This is a wonderful book. It's my favorite book in the New Testament and personally, I've loved it since well before I got involved in theological studies all the way back when I was a teacher. It has a lot of complex theological truths. It is the most significant Christological passage in the New Testament, in my opinion. It's a passage that lays out the ontological nature, the Divine nature, the volitional nature, and the relational nature of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. It's the quintessential passage on the Person of Jesus Christ. It's unbelievable. Even though there's some very complex theological components in the book of Colossians, it's tied together by a real sense of urgency and personal nature that Paul has, even though he hasn't actually met the people of the churches that he's writing this to.

In the first study that was done on Colossians we were introduced to the glory of Jesus Christ and the gratitude that produces in the life of the believer. In the second study, we walked through the intercessory prayer life of the Apostle Paul and the need that every believer has of three things – the need for the knowledge of His will, spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding as we walk the Christian faith. In the third study, we unpacked the primary theme of Colossians which is the preeminence and the prominence of the Person and the work of Jesus Christ.

Most Biblical scholars or commentators will give the book of Colossians a pretty simple outline. It's not a long book. In one of our New Testament classes at the Briarwood Theological Seminary, I was substituting for one of our actual New Testament professors and the class was two and a half hours long so I said “Let's start off by just reading the entire book out loud without giving chapters and verses and see if you can start to feel a flow of the Apostle Paul” because some are frustrated with the way the book is structured. Sometimes it seems like he might bounce around from idea to idea, but when you put it together, there's really a simple outline that helps us work through it. One Biblical scholar named Douglas Moo would say that the opening of the book actually ends with the text that we're looking at in this study. Moo is saying that the introduction of Colossians starts at Colossians 1:1 and goes through Colossians 2:5. Then there is the body of the letter that deals with some particular things the church in Colossae has in which Paul gives them wisdom and insight on and then comes the closing of the letter that is Colossians 4:7-18. It's a very simple outline. Every outline of a book of the Bible doesn't have to be particularly complex in order to help us and so hopefully this is a helpful tool.

It does help us to see that we are at a transitional moment in the book of Colossians. No matter which scholar you're looking at in terms of the way they divide up the book of Colossians, all of them cite this either as the end of the opening section or the beginning of the body section. So that means that it's an important time of transition. In this study, what we will cover lays the groundwork for the remainder of the letter as Paul works his way through his words to the

church in the region of Colossi. I like to think about it is it moves from sort of the thanksgiving of Paul, which will certainly be present throughout the entire letter and the theology proper of Paul (looking at it from a systematic perspective) to prescriptive theology. He has already done a little prescription. It's not that he hasn't made any application yet, but once he gets through this, he's really makes a move where you will see all kinds of new language. Therefore, no one is to act as a judge for in him (Colossians 2:16). You also were circumcised when you were dead in your transfer transgressions (Colossians 2:13). You have walked in this way now walk in this way (Colossians 3). You once were like this, now you should be like this. That's where he's taking the theological truths that he's been unpacking for the last the first chapter in first few verses of chapter two and he's telling them, now here's how you apply it to your life.

That's Paul's pattern. It's what he does in pretty much every book he writes. He starts with the proper nature of theology. I think everybody's already knows this by this point in time. My dad, Harry Reeder, preached through the book of Colossians back in 2004. It's on the Briarwood Presbyterian website if you want to go and listen to it. I've been listening to make sure that I knew what he preached through and the way he preached through it before I did this. It's a wonderful sermon series. My dad makes this point in his series that there is this significant heresy that they're having to deal with, and there's sort of two parts to it. There's this heresy of Greek origin, which we really don't know what it is and there's really no use particularly speculating too much on what it is. But then there's also the addition of Jewish legalisms that are added to the church and saying what they should do and be and how things needed to be done in certain ways. Those will be dealt with in more depth in the coming studies but the way Paul addresses it first is not by going immediately to the heresies, but by going first to the truth. He starts by saying, 'This is what you need to know. This is the Jesus that you need to know. This is who He is, what he's done and what it means for you. Now we can start to talk about the way people want to corrupt it, add to it or deal with it in ways that are apart from His Word.'

So we're at a concluding point in this sermon from that and one of those indicator words we get for that is starting right at the beginning of Colossians 1:24. That word is 'now.' Before I unpack that word I want to give you a theme. We have the vision of the book of Colossians – the preeminence and the prominence of Christ. Christ is all and Christ is in all. But the theme I am going to give you gives a little more depth to it that I'm indebted to Greg Beale for, in his commentary on the book of Colossians. I've reworded it a little bit for our purposes but this is the way Beale puts it; 'Christians should strive for maturity, but not by keeping earthly legalistic laws, rather by faithfully seeking the heavenly Christ. This should result in putting off the old, sinful lifestyle and putting on a new creation lifestyle, and to do so with thanksgiving and to do it with a view to the spread of the Gospel.' This theme, I think, will help guide you as we walk our way through the book of Colossians.

Now, I want to give you a specific theme particular to this transitional section we will be looking at in this study. The theme is that Paul takes joy in his struggle to proclaim the Person and work of Jesus Christ. We could leave out the word struggle for I haven't found anyone who wants to preach the Word of God who would say, 'I do not take joy in proclaiming the person in the work of Jesus Christ' but that's not actually what happens in this text. It's part of what happens in this text but it's not all that happens in the text. The other part that happens in the text is Paul says, "I rejoice in my sufferings. I take joy in the struggle that I have to proclaim the Person and work of Christ." Why does he take joy in it? It is because he says he knows that it is for the benefit of the Christian, the local church and because the nonbeliever needs to hear it. Paul will talk about the Gentile in this text which will be part of the mystery that's revealed.

Let's look at this word 'now.' The word now is a specific term that's used there. Here some may be confused between the word 'now' and the word 'therefore' because dad, Pastor Reeder loved to talk about the word 'therefore' and he always said when you see the word 'therefore' you always ask 'what is it therefore?' Now' is different than 'therefore.' It might sound like they're synonyms with one another because both indicate a transition one from the other, but they're not the same word and they don't mean the same thing. "Therefore" is a logical transition. It's a transition of thought. It's saying that I have laid out certain principles and precepts and from those principles and precepts, I want to build a system of thought moving forward from that. And if you don't know those originating principles and precepts, then you won't understand the following thought that comes after it.

'Now' is a temporal term. That means now is a time transition, not a logical transition. You can have a 'therefore' that also has a 'now' and you can have a 'now' that also has a 'therefore' for both can be combined in different ways. Here in this text Paul uses only one. He certainly depends that you remember what he said about Jesus as one moves forward in Colossians. He's not expecting one to forget about the preeminence of Christ and then move to a whole other thing. No, he's making a temporal transition because he's trying to hone in on the urgency of what it is that he's talking about. I tried to think of examples of this, and I could only think of two. So obviously there's a strong chance that if I use examples from my father, who recently passed away or my family, I might break down in tears, just bear with me if I do. My dad used the word 'now' in our family a lot.

When I was a kid, one of my jobs was cutting the grass. I was so excited when I got married because then I gained a wonderful stepson where I could say to him "your job is to cut the grass." So, when I was a kid I'd be sitting around, or kicking around a soccer ball or in my bedroom reading a book and my dad would say "Your job is to cut the grass" and I'd say 'Sure dad' and then go back to whatever I was doing. A little later I'd hear a knock on the door and it would be my dad who would then say "I meant now" which meant I better stop what I was doing and go cut the grass.

The other example that I had, and this is probably a better example of the two. Both of my sisters were runners. If it wasn't a parent telling me I had to do something I was not a runner ever in my life. I played goalkeeper on the soccer team because it was the one position where you didn't have to run. Both of my sisters were medium distance runners. They weren't 100 meter runners or really 200 but it was 400, 800, 1500 meters or longer races. They would be running on the track with my dad on the sidelines. A runner always wants the next lap to be faster than the previous but the real time came when you came toward the end of the race because you had to save up enough energy to be able to have a kick at the end – where you dug down deep to go faster but you didn't want to save too much or you would be too far behind by the time you neared the end. So it's all about timing. My dad and my sisters would sit there around the track and would plan it down to the meter on the track where the kick could should start. When we would be at their races, they'd be running around that track, going as hard as they could and as they entered the last lap they would hear a shout (from my dad), "Now!" When my sisters heard that voice, they took off. It was a moment. It was a command. It was a necessity. They had to do it.

Right here in Colossians, Paul is shifting gears as he says to his readers, "Now! I have something to tell you." Why this 'now' at this moment? I've divided it into three primary words. There's a primary word and then an implication of that word. The first primary word is the word rejoice and the implication for that word is comfort. The second word is the word proclaim or

proclamation and the implication for that word is mystery. The third word is the word struggle and the implication for that word is unity.

Let's look at the first word, rejoice. Colossians 1:24a says *[24a] Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake...* There are two places in this passage that we see the word rejoice and they bracket the passage. In the Greek we would call this a chiasmic structure, which means that there's sort of a mirror or a parallel between certain elements of the text that helps with our understanding of what's in the text. The first time it's used is in the verse above and the second time is in Colossians 2:5 which says *[5] For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.* Therefore, we have two causes of Paul's rejoicing. The first is that he is experiencing suffering, and so he is rejoicing in his suffering and the second one is his witness as what he hears from Epaphras and others that they are living their Christian lives in good order and firmness of spirit.

Let's deal with the first one, his rejoicing in suffering. Suffering is a major theme that runs throughout the life of Paul and throughout Paul's teaching. Unique to the Christian life and unique to the Christian world and life view is a believe that suffering is going to be part of your life, but even more than that, it's a call to rejoice in your suffering. That is not a common view for most world religions or philosophies. The ones that Paul would be dealing with specifically would of course, be the ones that originate out of Greek thought.

In Greek thought, you're going to have two specific ways that they would approach the concept of suffering. The first one would be the hedonistic perspective. Hedonism is a worldview or philosophy that says we need to seek out pleasure. We need to maximize pleasure in our lives. Therefore, anything that causes suffering, or any kind of harm, or makes us sad, whether that suffering is physical or emotional, the job of the human being in life is to avoid it at all costs or to do everything they can to eradicate it from their lives. The other side of that coin would have been the stoic – the one who would say that true happiness comes in oneness of knowledge and spirit. Therefore, I can respond with equanimity or indifference to either pleasure or suffering in the life around me – have a stoic bearing or a stoic demeanor. So, the stoic may not try to avoid suffering, but the stoic would bear suffering with indifference. Both of those are obviously distinctly different to the point that Paul is trying to make right here.

Paul makes a point that he rejoices in his suffering. He didn't go out of his way to avoid suffering. He is sitting in a prison writing these four epistles, not trying to plan his breakout with the Apostles. Paul knows this is where God has placed him right now. So, Paul is choosing to rejoice in it and utilize it. He is going to use it for His glory. We know throughout the Book of Acts story upon story of jailors that were brought to Christ, and we know that somewhere around 60% of the New Testament was written from inside a prison. So we know that there is the immediate suffering of Paul within his prison, but we also know that this general understanding of suffering as Christians is that suffering is inevitable. Not only is it inevitable, it's ordained for you.

One of the secrets of the Christian life is that the Christian life does not grow easier the more you grow older, it actually gets harder. Now, I don't mean it gets harder to believe in Jesus or harder to understand the Bible or harder to see the truth. It means Satan comes after you harder because he doesn't have access to the book of life. He doesn't get to look down that list of the elect and say "Oh, that one is saved so I'll just leave them alone." Satan doesn't know if you are a seed planted in fertile soil or rocky soil. So, he wants the weeds to grow up and try to choke you out. The closer you get to home (heaven), the more desperate he is to knock you off the pathway. Satan wants to find out whether you're saved.

When you are saved, you're saved, you're bought, you're paid for and walking that pathway is not the thing that makes you saved. But as a Christian, you should want with all your heart to stay in the middle of the path. I don't want to get on the sides. I don't want to get over here where Satan's got a shot at knocking me off. I want to be right here in the middle, in His will, following His Word, trusting in Him so that when the blows of life start coming harder and harder and the waves start getting bigger and bigger and the storm gets fiercer and fiercer, I know my Anchor holds and I hold fast to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We know the suffering is going to come for Jesus in Matthew 5 at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount starts with suffering. *Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are you when others persecute you and revile you.* Suffering is at the bedrock of our entire New Testament ethic. Jesus says in John 16:33, [33] *These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.* Peter and James, both talk about the trials and the suffering of the Christian life.

This is what Paul says to the church in Rome. Romans 5:1-5, and 11 says [1] *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2] through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult (rejoice) in hope of the glory of God. [3] And not only this, but we also exult (rejoice) in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; [4] and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; [5] and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

[11] *And not only this, but we also exult (rejoice) in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.* Our first rejoicing is not in the suffering. Our first rejoicing is in the hope of the glory of God. It's in the good news of Jesus Christ, the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. Then when we can rejoice in Christ, we rejoice in our sufferings. We have this knowledge of general Christian suffering and then we have the relational effect of Christian suffering. What a blessing it is to suffer together as the body of Christ. II Corinthians 1 is also a great passage of Paul articulating the comfort, the suffering that he has, so that he is able to comfort others.

Let's look at II Corinthians 4:7-12 and 16-18 which says [7] *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; [8] we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. [11] For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. [12] So death works in us, but life in you.*

[16] *Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. [17] For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, [18] while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* We suffer generally as those who walk in the Christian life. We suffer relationally so that we might comfort others and then we also suffer for the witness of the Christian so that the eternal weight of glory will be revealed. Paul suffers those things, and so he rejoices.

There is a complex section right here with Colossians 1:24 so if you want more information on what Paul means when he says he is filling up the afflictions of Christ, I encourage you to look at Greg Beale's commentary on this, it's wonderful. Let's look back at Colossians 1:24 which says *[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.* It does not mean that any work that Jesus Christ did was incomplete. The work that Christ did was complete. He said on the cross, 'it is finished' and He meant it. It wasn't an ironic statement or a hopeful statement. It was a declarative statement. It was truth. It was done and salvation has been won. It's affirmed by the empty tomb. There's nothing else needed.

So what does Paul mean? The reason that I chose the NAS is because it takes the part about the body and moves it up in the verse where it is in the original and it basically says to us that Paul has this responsibility. The word filling up is a very complex Greek word. It's only used 12 times in the entirety of Greek classical literature so it is not a common word. It means like a container that is being filled up that has been started by one person or one entity, and they have done their complete work. There is nothing more they have to add to the container, but the container is not yet full and that someone else comes and fills up more of it. It is an incredibly specific word that Paul is using there. Paul's not telling us that Jesus did not do all the work that He needed to do or suffer what He needed to suffer. In His body, the church, which is established when He ascends to the heavens, there is more suffering yet to come and Paul is doing his part in the filling up of it.

Paul has a very specific part to do because God's given him a very specific role. The specific role that God has given to Paul is to do this thing to the Gentiles. In Acts 9 we have Paul's conversion and God says to Ananias "I have given Paul a special calling to be My messenger to the Gentiles." So the rejoicing that Paul does is in his suffering and he does so because it brings comfort to the body. It fills up what is necessary in the body and in bringing that comfort, it allows the body to comfort one another.

Secondly, is the word proclamation. The word proclamation could have been used three different times in the passages that we have and the passage right above. We see proclamation used in three different words. Colossians 1:23 says *[23] if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was **proclaimed** in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.* Here is the first use and that use of the word is the Greek word that would be translated from the Hebrew to mean a royal proclamation i.e. "Here is David the King!" or 'this is what I decree unto you.' In the Book of Esther, for instance, when the royal decree goes forth about the Jews, that would be this kind of proclamation.

The second kind of proclamation is the one that's used in Colossians 1:25 which says *[25] Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the **preaching** of the word of God.* Here it's used as an action of the logos. It's used as the Word or the prophetic Word – the law of God that's given. Paul is saying that part of his job is to preach the Word to you and in the preaching of the Word, he does what?

This is where we get the third use of proclamation, which is in Colossians 1:28 that says *[28] We **proclaim** Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete (or mature) in Christ.* This is the proclamation that's used almost exclusively to say, 'I proclaim Christ, I proclaim the Messiah, I proclaim Him.' I'm not proclaiming that He might be Him or that I think it's Him. It is the Old Testament and the New

Testament word that says 'the Messiah' has been proclaimed. So Paul is full of proclamation. The question then is what is that proclamation? All three of those uses are pointing to the same thing, just different ways that Paul does it. It's the mystery of God.

We know this idea of mystery for number one, there's a mystery you can figure out. Number two, there's the mystery that's revealed unto you. Paul says he has been given the job of revealing the mystery of God. The mystery is this; It is Christ and Him crucified. Where do we hear that? In Matthew 16 Jesus asks the Disciples the question, "Who do people say that I am?" They respond, "Some say You're Elijah. Some say You're one of the prophets." Jesus says, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Peter stands up and he says, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus says to him "Blessed are you, Simon bar Jonah for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you. But My Father, who is in heaven." That's why this Word is so important. That's why we have to cling to this Word. That's why we have to make sure that we fight for the truth of this Word, for its sufficiency, for its infallibility, so that the world knows it, because it is only in this Word that Jesus Christ is revealed.

The final point is the revealing of the mystery of God and the word struggle. Colossians 2:2-3 says [2] *that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, [3] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* The mystery that's hidden is the mystery of Christ Himself. Matthew Henry says this about this passage; "The mysteries of God are not hidden from you. They're hidden for you. They're hidden in the Person and the work of Jesus Christ." We have the map that leads us there, but most of us don't access the riches of the fullness of assurance because we don't open the map.

I want to go back to the struggle. Paul is struggling and in Colossians 1:29-2:1 he says, [29] *For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. [2:1] For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea...* Here we see back to back struggles. The Greek word for struggle here is *agōnistēs*. Who's he struggling for? He's struggling for these people that he's never even seen or met. Remember, he's sitting in prison. He probably won't meet them, but he struggles for them with deliberateness, with all his might, with all his will. Paul says "I'm struggling with everything I have." Why? Because in the previous verse it says that it is not my will and for this purpose, I am laboring, I am striving, but I'm doing it according to His power, which He works out mightily within me."

Why and how can Paul do that? It is because his commitment isn't to the people in Colossae. His commitment is to Christ. When our commitment is to a certain group of people or certain people you will naturally start to exclude struggling for other people, but when your commitment is not to the individuals, but your commitment is to Christ, then your struggle will be for the whole body of Christ, for those that are called, for those that have come, and for those that have not come. We see Paul do this knowing that it is not his work, but it's Christ's work that is working through him.

The best example I can give you of this shockingly enough, is my dad. Briarwood has a history of men and women who have struggled, who have labored mightily because of their commitment to Christ, and obviously, Dr. Barker is another one, along with the staff, the pastors, etc. But the one I have watched for 48 years was my dad. He loved Briarwood Presbyterian Church but he loved the church of Jesus Christ first and foremost because he loved his Savior.

First and foremost, he loved Jesus and when you love Jesus, you're going to love His body. My dad was poured out, that's what he was. He was a drink offering and there wasn't a drop left.

I hope you understand what I'm about to say. My dad didn't love you. He loved Christ in you. Now because he loved Christ in you, he loved you. But like Paul, he said, 'I toil mightily that the mystery of God will be revealed.' Paul toiled mightily that the mystery would be revealed to the Gentiles and to the saints forevermore – Christ in you the hope of glory, and that the Gentiles were co heirs with the Jews. There was only one kind of Christian. It was the Christian that followed Jesus. There's no distinctions, no matter where you come from, no matter what your background is. You can't preach that message if you don't first believe in that Christ. So if you're reading this today and you don't know Him, you're going to struggle for all kinds of things in your life. You're going to toil mightily, and it will be vanity – vanity of vanities, all is vanity. But if you toil for Jesus, you will run as those who do not grow weary and you will walk as those who do not faint. You will mount up with wings like eagles and pour yourself out for the body of Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer;

Father, thank You for the time You've given us in this study. Lord, please excuse the speaker of this word who's opened the Word. Father, I know that there's so much more to this passage that we could study and learn. Father, I pray that these words will be used to Your glory. That they will be an encouragement to the body. Father, I pray that You will use them to build up Your Kingdom and to build up the church. Lord, for those that do not know You may they hear of the glory of a risen Savior who doesn't promise that things will be easy, but He promises that they are true and He promises that He comes again. And He promises that He will fulfill all His promises with yes and amen in Christ. So, Lord, let them know You. For those that know You, may we walk in You, struggling mightily with what You work out in and through us so that our hearts may be encouraged, we may be knit together in unity and we may, as a church, love powerfully in the Name of Jesus we pray, Amen.