



MESSAGE GUIDE

For Nov. 2,
2025



Colossians 1:24-2:5
Rick Grover,
LEAD PASTOR

COMPLETE 3: COMPLETE IN SUFFERING

We're in the third week of our series called, "Complete," as we continue our study through the book of Colossians. So, what makes your life complete?

1. **FILL IN THE BLANK, MY LIFE WOULD BE COMPLETE IF**

Did you or do you think many would fill in the blank with this? "My life would be complete if I SUFFER."

Probably not! Suffering goes against our nature. We don't want to suffer. We avoid suffering. Which is why the passage we will dive into sounds so odd to us. It actually insinuates that there can be a sense of completion or wholeness that comes through the path of suffering. But here's how this section of Paul's letter to the church in Colossae begins: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings..." (Colossians 1:24, ESV).

And this isn't the only place we read such a declaration. We see it in the book of James: "Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy." (James 1:2, NLT)

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance." (Romans 5:3, ESV)

Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica, "So you received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit in spite of the severe suffering it brought you." (1 Thessalonians 1:6, NLT)

Peter writes, "Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world." (1 Peter 4:13, NLT)

Paul, James, Peter—they're all saying the same thing—and so it sounds like it must be important. But it might seem a little confusing because suffering and joy don't typically go together. Rather, it seems like they should be two opposite ends on a spectrum—suffering on one end (the lack of joy) and joy on the other end (the lack of suffering). But the biblical declaration is clear, suffering is part of the human experience that can result in greater joy and completeness/wholeness.



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How can this be? Read Colossians 1:24-2:5.

- Now I rejoice in my sufferings...
- In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions...
- The stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
- Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.
- For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.
- For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you...
- ...to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

These underlined words and phrases from the text can provide some answers as to how suffering helps bring completion, wholeness, and—to use James', Paul's, and Peter's word—joy.

First, we have the hard part to get to the good part. This is where the way of Jesus is neither a path of denial or escape from pain, nor is it a path of pursuing pain for the sake of pain. The way of Jesus embraces the reality that we live in a world which includes pain.

2. WHEN HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED PAIN OR SUFFERING IN YOUR LIFE?

We recognize that although we can't always control what causes us suffering, we can discover meaning in our suffering. In the text, Paul gives us 3 ways we can find meaning in suffering:

- For others
- For ourselves
- For God's mission

Now, we might be tempted to say, "Well, I don't want to go through suffering for others, for myself, or for God's mission." We would rather skip the suffering part altogether. But suffering is a universal human experience, and the reality is that you are either getting ready to go through some suffering (small or great), or you're already in the midst of it, or you're coming out of it. So, the question is not, Do I have to go through suffering? The question is, HOW can I go through suffering where there's actually some purpose for it?

Paul says, "Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Colossians 1:24, ESV). Paul was suffering for their sake—for the sake of others—for the sake of Christ's body, the church. His suffering wasn't meaningless. When Paul wrote that he was "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions," this doesn't mean that Jesus' suffering was insufficient; it means that there was still work to be done in applying Christ's afflictions to the body of Christ. Paul is saying, "Look, I'm going through my suffering because you are so loved by Jesus that Jesus wants what has been done (the Cross) to COMPLETE what is undone in your life."



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3. WHO HAS SET AN EXAMPLE FOR YOU? WHO DO YOU KNOW THAT HAS SUFFERED FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS?

Now, it's pretty easy to see how the type of suffering Paul was going through connects to others. Paul was in prison for the sake of the Gospel. But what about my suffering with my little head scalped? Or what about suffering through the loss of a job? Or suffering with cancer? Or suffering through a divorce? How can THAT suffering be FOR OTHERS?

Here is what connects suffering “for others, ourselves, and God’s mission” together—it’s all tied to our character becoming like the character of Christ. My suffering helps others...if I suffer well. If I suffer with grace. If I suffer with selflessness. If I keep my eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of my soul, who for the JOY set before Him endured the cross—He suffered (Heb. 12:2).

Finding meaning in suffering: For others and for ourselves.

Notice what Paul says in vv. 25 & 29: “...of which I BECAME a minister... For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works in me” (Colossians 1:25, 29, ESV). Even after his years of following Jesus and becoming an Apostle and church planter, and eventually writing about half of the New Testament, Paul was still BECOMING! We don’t like to suffer. We don’t want to suffer. But Suffering is going to come, and we have to decide what it will help us “become.”

4. HOW IS YOUR POSTURE WITH OTHER BELIEVERS? IS IT WITH ACCUSATIONS OR WITH GRATITUDE?

Suffering for others and for our own growth is connected through Christ’s suffering for Christ’s mission!

Paul wrote, “...to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:25-27, ESV)

All for the mission. “For this I toil,” Paul said. “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you...to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ” (Colossians 2:1-2).

How much are you willing to be inconvenienced let alone suffer? When you make church all about you and what you like, you’ve lost the mission. Things like music, service times, how people dress, changes in programming—all rather minor trivialities in the grand scheme of heaven and hell, don’t you think?



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When the mission is important enough, we are willing to endure more than enough. More than enough inconvenience, discomfort, change, even...suffering. Why? Because Jesus is worth it, and so is the teenager who has never darkened the door of a church building. So is the single mom who is so weary she just feels like giving up. So is the executive who found out this past week that his company is downsizing, and he's out of job. Are they worth it? When the mission is important enough, we are willing to endure more than enough.

5. WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO GO THROUGH FOR THE SAKE OF THE MISSION OF JESUS - SO THAT OTHERS WILL COME TO KNOW HIM?