

COLOSSIANS: JESUS+

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF COLOSSE

Part 3: A Complete 180

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When Paul Was Saul (Acts 8:1-3)

- He hated Jesus Christ
- He made the followers of Jesus suffer intensely
- His purpose was to destroy the church

Then he has an encounter with the resurrected Jesus:

¹Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." - *Acts 9:1-6*

Paul does a complete 180:

^{19b}Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" ²²Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah. - *Acts 9:19b-22*

Because of Jesus, Paul (a man who once hated, killed, and inflicted pain) now says:

²⁴Now 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. ²⁵I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—²⁶the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷To 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.

²⁸He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

- *Colossians 1:24-29*

Paul is saying:

- The most important message I preach is the message I live out when it hurts (verse 24a)
- The church I once tried to destroy, I now love (verses 24b-25)
- My message is plain: Christ in you, the hope of glory! (verse 27)
- I have only one message: Jesus. (verse 28)
- I have only one purpose: to help you be mature in Jesus. (verse 28)
- I have only one passion: Jesus plus nothing. (verse 29)

Next Steps

THE COLOSSIANS CHALLENGE: Continue to read through the book of Colossians this week, out loud, with someone. If you haven't gotten started, it's never too late! Don't get stuck in the "should" and "ought to," consider it a "get to!"

THE EPAPHRAS CHALLENGE: Verbally invite five people who do not know Jesus to come to Easter weekend with you. Invitations are available in the Commons today.

BAPTISM: Water baptism is a simple act of obedience to show others that you have chosen to follow Jesus. If you are a follower of Jesus but have never been baptized, make that choice too and **register today at the Connection Point for the next baptism class, offered after services on April 6 & 7.** See details at www.ctkbellingham.com/baptism or in the Spring Classes flyer, available next weekend.

Small Group Questions

- 1) What are your plans for Easter this year?
- 2) What is the most dramatic personal change you have ever experienced?
- 3) If you had been witness to the change in Saul/Paul (see Acts 9), do you think you would have been skeptical, embracing, fearful, or judging? How do you most often view people who are trying to change in ways like Paul changed?
- 4) In Colossians 1, Paul is singing a very different tune than Saul would have sung. What does he mean by "Christ in you, the hope of glory?"
- 5) How do you know when someone is mature in Christ? How do they speak? How do they act? What makes them different from someone who is immature?
- 6) How can we pray for you right now?

OUR MISSION | To create an authentic Christian community that effectively reaches out to unchurched people in love, acceptance and forgiveness so that they may experience the joy of salvation and a purposeful life of discipleship.