

Investing

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 January 2012

Preacher: Tom Muir

[0 : 00] Well as I said our focus this morning will be in Colossians chapter 1 and mainly in the section from verse 24 to 29, the last section.

But I want to return to thank you letters first of all briefly. I don't know if your experience was the same as mine, I confess I mostly had to be made to write thank you letters and the main problem I had with thank you letters was what to say, obviously apart from thank you.

I think in thank you letters you're guaranteed three lines, you know, thank you, my Christmas was good, hope yours was too, that kind of thing.

And then if you're anything like me you're struggling because often with thank you letters the issue is that you're writing them to people who you hardly ever see and who you probably have very little connection with, they're maybe a relative but you maybe hardly ever see them, a great aunt in Doncaster, maybe one of you has a great aunt in Doncaster, that would be strange.

But it's, there's not a lot of connection there. The person that you're writing to obviously cares for you, you care for them in some way, you maybe have met them once or twice especially if you're a child and you understand that it's good to say thank you and you want to say, you've given me this thing, thank you very much but I don't really know what else to say.

[1 : 18] I don't spend much of my life with you, I've only ever seen you once so there isn't really a connection there and sometimes that's the way with things like thank you letters or communication that you have with somebody, you know that you don't really know them very well, you know you actually would have very little conversation with them if you were to spend time with them.

I think this letter is very different, obviously this isn't a thank you letter as such but it's a letter from Paul to the believers in Colosse. And as you read this book it's kind of bursting with the message that it contains, it's overflowing out of the pages as you read it.

If you go back home this afternoon and read it you may get a sense of that. It's full, the whole thing is bursting with this sense that Paul is urgently and easily conveying this message to these people, he's not struggling for something to say.

What is it about? Well briefly it's a letter of direction. These believers in quite a new church in many ways potentially isolated, surrounded by people who are not Christians and they could quite easily become thrown off track.

Some teaching could come into their fellowship and it could throw them off track and Paul's agenda really is to make sure that they stay focused on Jesus, remembering their conversion and the path that God has set them on.

[2 : 54] He wants them to remain true and faithful to God's word. For example if you turn to verse 9 chapter 1, for this reason since the day we heard about you we've not stopped praying for you.

He really cares about them and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. So his primary concern is that they remain faithful to Jesus. He really wants them to stay on track. He really doesn't want them to drift and he sees the dangers that face them particularly. But what I want to focus on as I said is this particular section at the end of chapter 1, Paul writes some pretty astounding sentences in this chapter.

I don't know if you picked up on them when we were reading them through but there are some phrases that really come out of the passage here. I want to look at it in two ways.

First of all just to do with the messenger. We get quite a lot about Paul in this section and then to focus on the actual message that he presents to the people at the end of this section.

[3 : 56] So just two basic points of focus this morning. The messenger firstly. Look at the verse 24.

When I first read this I confess I did not know what it meant. 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.

Now a sentence like that can pass you by or it can kind of stop you in your tracks and you think what on earth is Paul mean by that. 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.

This he's saying that what Jesus did on the cross isn't quite enough. Jesus' sufferings when he died on the cross for the sins of the world didn't quite cut it.

He didn't quite suffer enough. And so as a result of that people like Paul and other servants maybe missionaries official ministers have to kind of make up for it by suffering more by being persecuted maybe even by being martyred and because of that because they go through really tough times that kind of works up tops up salvation.

[5 : 17] If he was saying that I would have major implications for the gospel wouldn't it. I would have major implications for our faith in Christ in the work of Jesus the finished work of Jesus and as we look more closely into this verse it becomes clear that he's not saying this at all.

What Paul is saying in this verse is that after Christ suffered and after Christ was crucified and after the way in which he was so brutally killed for our sins those who believe in him those who follow him and who trust in him like Paul like the people that he's speaking to will and it's stated in many places in scripture the scriptures never hide away from this for us will in many cases face persecution or trouble well in many cases face a sense of being laughed at even or cut adrift socially criticized that's a big factor of society nowadays criticizing the Christian community and in many senses those who follow Jesus aren't suffering and topping up as it were Jesus's salvation but they are finding out the effect of following Jesus the effect of following Jesus is to be those who suffer in this life being persecuted being cut adrift because of the fact that we follow Jesus.

But Paul is drawing attention to the fact that he's quite happy to do this the words that he uses right at the start of the sentence 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.

The first thing that Paul is saying about himself here is that his life isn't easy you know he's writing from jail but he's quite happy he rejoices in what was already suffered for them in the work of Jesus and he himself is more than content for the pattern of his life to be one of suffering for the people that he's concerned about for the people that he prays about for the people that he ministers to his life of one is his life is one of suffering.

So his life is one of suffering look at another way in which he describes himself verse 25 I have become at seven by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God he uses this again at the end of verse 23 if you look there of which I Paul have become a servant he's a servant of the message he's a servant of the word this message that is bubbling out of this book and he's trying to convey to all the people that he's speaking to you may hear about Paul often in the terms very different in terms very different to this Paul is often called a bully a harsh person who stands above people and who kind of slams them and yet he describes himself here as a servant somebody who whose whole mission is for the benefit of other peoples he's his whole life is focused on as we read him right into the Colossians here and as we look at all the other letters his concern is for for the other for the other people he's in jail yet he's writing to the other people he wants to reach out and to help them to keep them on track and to to bring their focus back again to Jesus and you know also if you turn to verse 7 in chapter 1 he refers to their I suppose you to their minister Apaphras look at verse 7 you learned it from he's talking about this gospel that he's referring to this gospel that is born fruit in them and is kind of reaching across the whole world you learned it from Apaphras our dear fellow servant who's a faithful minister of Christ on our excuse me on our behalf and who also told us of your love and the spirit our dear fellow servant he's quite happy to call he's not kind of trying to humiliate Apaphras here he's not putting him down I don't know how you feel about being called a servant of somebody maybe in the context here it would be quite a striking thing to call somebody maybe demeaning but he refers to himself quite happily and to

[9 : 54] Apaphras as a servant of the gospel and so the message the content of the message that they believe in is what they're all about is what their lives are all about conveying safely that message and truthfully that message is what their lives are all about though it brings suffering though it brings persecution jail terms house arrest and possibly probably death so it's an interesting way to characterize yourself he's speaking about himself in this letter but in very interesting ways ways that are not you know he's not just giving us incidental details of his life why

does he emphasize this why does he write about himself as somebody who's so pleased to suffer is he kind of trying to show off look how tough I am look how much I can go through for your behalf or is he kind of saying yeah you really owe me one I've had it hard for you you've got to send me some real good support here

I need some presence he's wrapped up in the message of Jesus Christ because he knows how much Jesus Christ has done for him this isn't you know what we're not talking about here is some kind of abstract academic idea or somebody of wisdom that you know if we store enough up it can make us better people Paul has been completely transformed in his life you remember the absolute transformation that Paul went through by Jesus socially you could say it was a disaster he went from being very high up very prominent possibly quite wealthy well to do anyway to being somebody who was a complete outcast amongst his own people how do you feel being a complete outcast amongst your own people you probably don't like it and it was probably the same for Paul it was in a personal sense a difficult thing and yet it's changed him so much and he has such regard for Jesus Christ who met with him on the Damascus Road and who changed his life who stopped him in his tracks and he said the way that you're following is is a mistake it's an illusion and having put his faith in Jesus all he wants is for other people to do the same if we see in verse 27 Paul recognizes the wonder of the gospel 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 God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery he's bringing to them this new news and to this particular church in Colisey he's reminding them again don't depart from the gospel don't don't stray from it don't let anybody come in amongst you and teach you otherwise don't go anywhere remember how much your life has changed because your faith is now in Jesus and your hope is secure in him and so the message of the glorious riches of this mystery is the reason that Paul is disclosing this the reason that Paul is is is happy to say this about himself and this is a very different self disclosure as it were to many of the interviews we read nowadays it's it's it fascinates me the way that if you read of somebody famous very often you get an enormous amount of useless biographical information I was reading about in a newspaper this week of a politician an ambitious politician and they gave all kinds of details about her personal life that were seen completely irrelevant to who she was and all that she was about and just actually this morning I was reading and I came across this quote on a website newspaper website this was the kind of headline interview of the day and the interview starts like this we first meet in a private members club in Covent Garden I've been assigned use of the fourth floor library seated on our orange plastic chair he's tall thin and handsome and an angular sort of way it goes on handshake is firm the dress sense preppy with his eatin education he seems quintessentially English so this is the interviewer describing the interview and you know it goes on all about where he's from what clothes he's wearing and what you know complete seems completely irrelevant because our culture seems fixated on celebrity details details of people's lives what they like to do where they live what our houses are like what our clothes are like Paul is willing to speak a little about himself but he cares nothing for details like that because he wants it all to be back into what the message is what is the purpose of Paul writing this message what is the purpose from Paul's point of view of him even being there it's not so that people talk about him it's not so that people will praise him it's not so that people can say what an interesting life he's led or even what a brave person he is it's so that he can turn them back and say I'm doing all of this I'm suffering all of this I'm going through all of this because I want you to understand the gospel because I want you to be secure in the message of Jesus so having looked briefly at the message we look at the messenger we look at the message in the second half of this short passage now in verse 28 he kind of sums up his ministry if you look at verse 28 with me just now we proclaim him admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ this is Paul's goal if you wanted to sum up his ministry if he was to write a one sentence to the people in Colisea about what he wanted for them and probably for the people in Galatia and Ephesus and Rome and everywhere else and Edinburgh he would say the message given to him by God for him to preach is that we would be found we may present everyone perfect in Christ these words in Christ or maybe the most important ones that we can know aren't they because what they help us to understand is that in a life of uncertainty which teaches us that we have to make things work for ourselves that we have to be the best we have to succeed by ourselves we have to impress people and succeed in life this teaches us is that our greatest and only security really our only security in

life is found in somebody else not found in ourselves is found in Christ it's found in Jesus Christ who gave his life for us Paul says to the people in Colisea at the end of my life if I knew if I could be sure that you were safe in Jesus Christ that is what I want that is what would make me happy how do you think people would react to these how do you react to these words I think a lot of people would would reject them they would be very angry at them if you took a straw pole of this sentence of Paul this morning you went out onto the street and asked people what do you think about this this man says that he proclaims Jesus admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so they may present everyone perfect in Christ imagine you might get some responses like that's the most arrogant thing I've ever heard in my life or like who does he think he is what right does he have to admonish and teach everybody and tell them what direction they should go in their lives because one of the greatest well the things held most highly in our society is the right individual freedom and to decide exactly what you want to do where you want to go and who you're going to listen to and this man is saying he even admonishes as well as teaches people to follow Jesus it's that important to him it's that big a deal and at the end of his life what he wants is for them to be found perfect in Christ so as they stand before God the perfect God who will judge judge the world judge all who have lived in the world they will say that their security is not finding themselves they're not going to try and impress God based on the accumulation of good deeds done over their life but they're going to stand before God and say I stand before you in the righteousness of Jesus and yet so many today would find that a kind of almost a derogatory thing that you you rely on somebody else and that this man Paul is actually saying that he's admonishing somebody and again this would cause people to say that Paul was like a bully you know telling people what to do all the time you've got to follow Jesus who says you've got to follow Jesus and what right have you got to say that you've got to follow Jesus does this mean that he went about shouting at people screaming at them to do what he says to follow Jesus from

a big high pulpit one of the commentators I was reading was interesting because he looked at the actual words and he showed us that this isn't in any way to do with Paul bullying but if you look at the word admonishing here and look at the usage elsewhere he says that Paul's words you can describe them as to warn or to stimulate or to encourage and he even makes a connection with other parts where Paul pleads with the people that he's speaking to so we're not talking about a man here bullying people screaming at them into submission but we're talking about a man who used to command the death of Christians pleading with people to become Christians that's kind of humiliating for a strong man to do that right to plead with somebody to say would you please put your faith in your trust in Jesus Christ because he's changed my life he's all that I put my trust in and that's what you need to that's what you need for your life also the message is so strong the message is so vital for the people that he's willing as well as teaching them and helping them to learn the way that they should go as well as admonishing them so he's advising them he's correcting them he's also prepared in places to plead with them that they would be people who understand the message of the gospel this isn't again about accumulating wisdom this isn't about understanding wise sayings from an ancient seer and being able to quote them to be able to memorise them being able to impress other people with our our knowledge of ancient history it's about putting our security in somebody else and

[21 : 41] I think that's a very important message now again we all come to church with different experiences and different you've had a different week you've got a different work situation there's a lot of uncertainty at the moment in the world there's a lot of fear I was thinking has there ever been a more nervy start to a year I've I've seen quite a few posts on Facebook about Nostradamus you know 2012 what's gonna happen some take it seriously and some don't there's a worry about ecological meltdown or financial meltdown you know we have a the number of newspaper articles that summed up 2011 as the most kind of scarce year disasters happening all over the place people not knowing whether or not their firm is gonna make it through the year and there are loads and loads and loads of different reasons why many years are full of trouble for lots of different people and so it's very easy for us at any point in time really to feel a sense of worry and the question we have to ask ourselves is in any given circumstance how are we going to deal with this year what are the things that face us what are the uncertainties there are many ways in which we don't have a clue what this year holds for us and we don't know how things are gonna go nationally and personally you know on a great big level there's loads of different things to worry about but even personally we all come with different fears and the question is what are we investing in what is it that we think that will make this year or this week good for us what will change our lives what will

give us security what will make us happy what is it that will make us feel loved what is it that will make us feel at peace with who we are with the world around about us there are many different things that we can invest in there are many different things that we even subconsciously think if I had that if this thing was a part of my life I would be I would be complete I would be okay I would be able to deal with the things that are going on around in my life and many of these things are true there are many things that we do need and that are good for us but the message of this chapter is that if we have all of those things and yet we don't find ourselves in Jesus ultimately then we're grasping at nothing because we're looking after things to do with this life and we're we're missing we're not looking at the bigger picture we're not looking at the fact that we will stand before Jesus stand before God at the end of time and have to give an account for our lives and what we're being told in this message here is that what God wants for us is not for us to have to stand isolated on our own before him and quake because our life just doesn't add up because though he's tried so hard and we were successful and we were good to people it just doesn't add up

God doesn't want us to stand in front of him quaking isolated he wants us to stand before him secure in Jesus his son who he gave for us willingly it says he was pleased to do this he was pleased for God to provide this path for us that we might know even now while we sit here that we're secure in Christ and as we stand before God we do so investing in Jesus is love for us covered by his righteousness not not working at all out by ourselves we see that in verse 19 that was the verse that was meaning to go to in verse 19 for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood shed on the cross and so as we look down the calendar at the year ahead the biggest question that we can ask ourselves is what do the words in Christ mean for me what does it do I understand what it means for me personally to be in Jesus safe in the arms of Jesus two verses to think about as we finish off if we think about the idea of investing and the uncertainty that surrounds us nowadays one of the biggest fears that you can have if you go say to get a mortgage or to invest in something is that you'll be rejected that you'll be shown to be personally to that you come up short that you don't have a capital or that you're not the kind of person that this firm or this investment group is looking for it's really important for us to understand that God wants us to know if we come to him in need we won't be rejected we will not be rejected by him John 6 37 all that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I'll never drive away so we're given this gospel message of hope in Christ and we're told that if we come saying I need this I need this Jesus we won't be pushed away we won't be told now you don't you don't meet the mark and the second thing is that Jesus won't prove unsatisfactory isn't that another great fear about investing that the thing you invest in will come up short that it will go into liquidation that it will be but it won't meet the needs that it won't last it will just fail in Hebrews chapter 10 we read this verse but when this priest Jesus had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins he sat down at the right hand of God because his work was finished because

Jesus had completed the work given to him to do he'd paid the price for sin and was able to sit down symbolically showing that his work was done and so the work needing doing to make us right with God to make us able to feel at peace with God secure has been done for us today and what we need to do is take hold of that we're given it by God and we come to God and say I need that I need to be secure in you because I can't do it myself and I want Jesus to be my savior and so we understand today that in some sense is God has done the investment hasn't he he has paid the price where people Christians are known as people bought at a price by God God has done the work and then our lives become like thank you notes we become people who understand how much has been done for us understand how much God reached out for us so that our lives could be secure we live lives of thankfulness in response to all that God has done for us let's pray father God we pray this morning that you'd help us understand how much you have done for us we thank you for the message that Paul was so eager to convey to others that he wanted them not to stray from the message that their security was to be found in Christ help us to understand this morning that our security is found in Christ before you Lord help us to know that you want us you you call for us to come and and claim the salvation that you offer for us help us not to make the mistake of going into this year thinking that we can buy happiness or achieve happiness through relationship or anything else these things Lord can be good for us and they're important for us but the most important thing for us is to be known and loved by you so bless us and help us in Jesus name Amen.