

I have been in trials where I thought I was all alone, I was the only person in the world suffering, and my situation was the worst. When life-things go poorly, I am prone to shutdown, withdraw and pout, hardly the attitude of a follower of Christ. But then in conversation with others, I quietly repent of my whining attitude as I listened to others who are TRULY suffering through disease, loss, and even worse...all while praising God and being thankful and productive in the midst of their suffering.

I mention the theme of suffering because Paul wrote Colossians...while in PRISON, awaiting his trial before Caesar. Search Google for "Paul prison" to see pictures of the horrible conditions he was living in. Prisons here are 5 star hotels in comparison, no joke. While in prison he was writing letters, ministering and praying...for others.

Sometime before prison, while in Ephesus, Paul had worked with a guy named Epaphras. Epaphras was originally from Colossae and Paul tasked him with bringing the good news of Christ to his home town along with two neighboring cities, Laodicea and Hierapolis. Epaphras was later arrested and Paul was able to learn from him as to how the mission to these three cities was progressing.

Paul never had the opportunity to meet people from these churches but felt a call to encourage and pray for them. What an encouraging thing for a congregation to discover that there are people who are interested in the goings-on of their church body! Themes within this letter include: Christ's Supremacy Over All, Paul's Labor for the Church, Freedom from Human Rules, Living As Those Made Alive in Christ, and Instructions for Christian Households.

Colossians 3:18 includes the classic command that flies in the face of the 21st century mindset, "Wives submit to your husbands". But verse 19 then says, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." Ephesians 5:25 goes even further for husbands, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her". In my humble opinion, any man who loves his wife as Christ loves the church will be very easy to submit to.

May all of us when we read Colossians allow the words of God to penetrate into the deepest part of us and change us, all for God's glory and blessing. Amen.