

Subversive Love

Intro: This is one of the most personal parts of the letter, in which Paul, though he has never met the Colossians, expounds on his desperate desire to suffer for the sake of Christ's beloved hope of the world, the Church. Paul encourages the Colossians to be confident in his own love for the Church, acknowledging that he himself is struggling with all Christ's energy for the building up of the body.

Warm Up Question: What are some attitudes towards the Church you have observed, or personally encountered, in our society today?

READ Colossians 1:24-2:5

Q. Paul writes in verse 25 "I have become its servant". What does Paul's *serving the church* look like in this passage? (i.e. suffering, presenting the word in its fullness)

Q. Think about your perspective of the Church as a whole right now. How does your current perspective of the church affect your *love* for it and your desire to *serve* it?

Q. On Sunday we reflected on three ways that Christians today are responding to the church's flaws:

- "no church" (i.e. wanting nothing to do with the church);
- "intangible church" (i.e. defining the church just as "God's people" without any tangible form); and
- "true church" (i.e. separating from other parts of the church until only "my church"/"my small group"/"me" is left).

Do you recognise any of these responses in yourself? How would you respond biblically to each of these responses? (see Eph 5:25-30, Eph 4:11-16, 1 Cor 12:21-26)

Q. Paul's mission was to "present the word of God in its fullness" (v25)... "so that we may present everyone fully mature" (v28)... "so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ" (v2). In what practical ways can you (or do you already) share in this mission?

Bring It Home:

Think again about the attitudes towards the Church held in our society today. How would embracing the same kind of love Paul had for the church contribute to you being *subversive* to our current culture? How do you think people will respond to you if you do?