

Series: "POSTCARDS from PRISON"

Text: Colossians 1:21-2:3

Title: "Servant Prisoner"

Introduction: GOOD MORNING, BMZ! Glad you're HERE as we CONTINUE our SERIES "**POSTCARDS from PRISON**"! Through this SERIES, we are going to use some LETTERS written by PAUL from PRISON in ROME to DISCOVER HOW to FOLLOW JESUS BETTER!

Here's the PLAN ... THREE THINGS: #1 = **Learn from the PAST and PAUL**. #2 = GREAT things HAPPENED in PAUL'S DAY, so **APPLY what we LEARN FROM PAUL, TODAY**. #3 = **PRAY and PREPARE for REVIVAL and AWAKENING** for the FUTURE. These do NOT JUST HAPPEN. We PLAY a PART. We'll unpack these as we go.

We're studying Paul's LETTER to the COLOSSIANS. It was WRITTEN from a PRISON in ROME to a CHURCH in the CITY of COLOSSAE that PAUL had NEVER BEEN TO. THEY were DEALING with SOME MAJOR PROBLEMS.

REMEMBER ... COLOSSE is 100 MILES INLAND from the AEGEAN SEA and the City of EPHESUS (MAP). So ... Here is WHY PAUL WRITES to Colossae ... The many RELIGIOUS PEOPLE from INSIDE and OUTSIDE the city were attempting to INFLUENCE CHRISTIANS to believe something MORE than the CORE of their FAITH.

SO FAR ... Paul has been so WRAPPED UP in EXPRESSING the SUPERIORITY of JESUS that he kind of FORGOT to INTRODUCE HIMSELF. Remember, PAUL was the ONE who LED their PASTOR, EPAPHRAS, to a saving FAITH in JESUS. And, EPAPHRAS had gone to ROME to CONSULT with PAUL ...and NOT yet RETURNED, as they READ the LETTER. The CHURCH received the letter from PAUL through TYCHICUS and ONESIMUS.

What PAUL KNOWS is: The FALSE TEACHERS in COLOSSE had been DISCREDITING PAUL and causing DOUBTS in the CHURCH'S MINDS. Like, WHY listen to a POLITICAL PRISONER? How can you TRUST HIM? So, PAUL responds...

**PAUL'S THREE MINISTRY CREDENTIALS:**

Think about getting a letter from someone you DON'T KNOW ... A PRISONER and KIND of a TROUBLEMAKER. Would you TRUST HIM? Therefore, PAUL GIVES his RESUME and/or CREDENTIALS for his AUTHORITY in writing to them...

REMEMBER the LEAD up is in VERSE 20 where PAUL says GOD RECONCILED EVERYTHING to HIMSELF and brought PEACE through the BLOOD of CHRIST on the CROSS... PAUL says that RECONCILIATION / RECONNECTION in RELATIONSHIP INCLUDES the GENTILES / NON-JEWS from COLOSSE ... **COLOSSIANS 1:21-23 = <sup>21</sup> This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. <sup>22</sup> Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. <sup>23</sup> But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's servant to proclaim it. <sup>1</sup>**

PAUL'S FIRST CREDENTIAL is his MINISTRY of...

### #1 = **SHARING the GOSPEL**

Even though PAUL did NOT PERSONALLY EVANGELIZE Colossae, it was HIS MINISTRY that LED to the FOUNDING of the COLOSSIAN Church. He EVANGELIZED in EPHESUS and EPAPHRAS came to a SAVING FAITH. Epaphras GREW in his FAITH and SHARED it with OTHERS. That is how FAITH in JESUS SPREADS...

And THAT was PAUL'S MINISTRY. He tells the COLOSSIANS, "**THAT is WHAT I DO! I OFFER JESUS to those who NEED to be RECONCILED to GOD.**" PAUL'S MINISTRY is what CAUSED their OWN EXPERIENCE of JESUS! SO, Paul REVIEWS with them the DETAILS of their FAITH JOURNEY. See if ANY of this is FAMILIAR as you think about YOUR FAITH JOURNEY...

Paul STARTS with the FACT that they were FAR FROM GOD. They were ENEMIES of GOD / at WAR with GOD DUE to their EVIL THOUGHTS and ACTIONS. BEFORE they met JESUS, they WORSHIPPED IDOLS and FALSE GODS ... and they were HURTING because THOSE gods did NOTHING to RELIEVE their HURT, SIN, or GUILT.

IF your ATTITUDE and ACTIONS are OFFENSIVE to GOD, this explains WHY the UNBELIEVER must REPENT / CHANGE his MIND, BEFORE he can be SAVED!

So, the START of our FAITH JOURNEY is SEPARATION from GOD by our SIN. BUT THEN (V.22) ... we are REMINDED that EVEN when we were STILL in our SIN and we were ENEMIES of GOD, and we COULD DO NOTHING for OURSELVES (Romans 5), JESUS DIED FOR US in the PHYSICAL BODY (False Teachers).

Like we said LAST WEEK, the ONLY way for US, as SINNERS, according to GOD'S LAWS, to be RECONCILED to a HOLY GOD, is for SOMEONE to DIE. SIN = DEATH in GOD'S LAW. We do NOT NEED a PLAN; we NEED a SAVIOR ... JESUS! PAUL reminds the people in COLOSSE that THEY NEEDED a SAVIOR and EPAPHRAS introduced them to JESUS the CHRIST!

And the RESULT of PLACING their FAITH in JESUS and His BODILY DEATH and RESURRECTION? V.22b = *As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.* You are now HOLY and BLAMELESS (when what you deserve is a LOT of BLAME for your ATTITUDES and ACTIONS!)! You get to STAND in the PRESENCE of HOLY GOD as HOLY, NOT because of ANYTHING YOU DID, but BECAUSE of what JESUS DID!

Paul CONTINUES with the JOURNEY ... you were SINNERS and SEPARATED. Then, you BELIEVED and are BLAMELESS ... BUT do NOT STOP THERE! There is MORE ... *COLOSSIANS 1:23 = <sup>23</sup> But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's servant to proclaim it.* <sup>2</sup> Do NOT STOP BELIEVING what you were TAUGHT and EXPERIENCED! Do NOT DRIFT AWAY from the ASSURANCE of being FORGIVEN and made BLAMELESS by the GOOD NEWS of JESUS and His FORGIVENESS! Do NOT DRIFT AWAY from the RECONCILED RELATIONSHIP between you and ALMIGHTY GOD!

The PURPOSE of RECONCILIATION with GOD is PERSONAL HOLINESS ... God does NOT make PEACE with US so WE can CONTINUE to REBEL ... we are RECONCILED so we can be DEVOTED to GOD. We are HOLY / SET APART from the rest of the WORLD so we can LIVE for JESUS and INVITE OTHERS to do the SAME! Do not take it lightly...

Then, PAUL makes his CASE for being TRUSTWORTHY and having AUTHORITY. Paul = ***“IF I had NOT INTRODUCED Epaphras to JESUS and the SALVATION available to HIM, HE would NOT have INTRODUCED YOU to JESUS and the EXPERIENCE of SALVATION. AND, I have been PREACHING The Good News ALL OVER the KNOWN WORLD. You can TRUST ME, and you can TRUST the GOOD NEWS! It’s REAL!”***

Paul invites them to CONTINUE in the FAITH. He is NOT SAYING they can LOSE their SALVATION if the do NOT CONTINUE to BELIEVE. He’s saying IF you are TRULY SAVED, and BUILD on the FOUNDATION of JESUS (Grow), then you WILL CONTINUE in the FAITH, and NOTHING will MOVE YOU OFF the FOUNDATION! It’s NOT an ***“EARNING your KEEP”*** thing ... IT’S an ***“I CAN’T HELP BUT KEEP TRUSTING JESUS!”*** Therefore, we need to TEST our own FAITH and EXAMINE our own HEARTS to be SURE we are TRUE CHILDREN of GOD.

Then, PAUL says something sort of ODD that LEADS into his SECOND MINISTRY CREDENTIAL ... ***COLOSSIANS 1:24 = <sup>24</sup> I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church.<sup>3</sup>***  
**#2 = SUFFERING for the GENTILES**

The FALSE TEACHERS in Colosse likely made a BIG DEAL about PAUL being a PRISONER in ROME. They probably RIDICULED PAUL and tried to use it to DISCREDIT him. BUT PAUL turned it AROUND and used it to BUILD a CLOSER RELATIONSHIP with the CHURCH in Colosse! Paul was GLAD to be COUNTED as WORTHY to suffer SHAME for the NAME of JESUS. PAUL was NOT in PRISON because he was a LAW BREAKER. He’s in PRISON because he was DOING what HE was CALLED to DO by JESUS!

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), JESUS says God BLESSES those who are PERSECUTED for doing what is RIGHT and CHRIST-LIKE. Jesus said to BE HAPPY about that SUFFERING because there will be a GREAT REWARD for you in HEAVEN! Paul is HAPPY to SUFFER for the sake of JESUS!

And he is HAPPY he is SUFFERING for the GENTILES. Jesus had CHOSEN PAUL to take the GOOD NEWS to the GENTILES / NON-JEWS. Remember the REASON PAUL is in PRISON is ULTIMATELY because he CLAIMED that JESUS had CALLED HIM to take the GOOD NEWS to the GENTILES. In Acts 22, PAUL is ARRESTED in JERUSALEM for this CLAIM. He is eventually SHIPPED to ROME for his TRIAL. Have I mentioned that JEWS did NOT LIKE the GENTILES?

Then PAUL talks about his SUFFERINGS for the CHURCH. There was a TIME when PAUL had PERSECUTED the CHURCH and caused IT to SUFFER ... persecuting Followers. NOW, Paul had DEVOTED his LIFE to CARE for the CHURCH. Paul did NOT ASK, ***“What can I get out of it?”*** Instead, Paul asked, ***“How MUCH will GOD ALLOW me to PUT INTO IT?”*** Paul was a PRISONER ... that did NOT STOP HIM from SERVING the CHURCH.

BTW – IF we SERVE the CHURCH and STAND for our FAITH in a world that NOT ONLY does NOT BELIEVE but WANTS the CHURCH STAMPED OUT ... we TOO will SUFFER. Paul goes on... ***COLOSSIANS 1:25-27 = <sup>25</sup> God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you.<sup>26</sup> This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God’s people.<sup>27</sup> For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are***

<sup>3</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible, New Living Translation* (Col 1:24). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

*for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.* <sup>4</sup>

PAUL pushes BACK at the FALSE TEACHERS “Secret / Special Knowledge” they claim by sharing THE MYSTERY/ The SECRET. It was kept SECRET from the JEWISH nation for THOUSANDS of YEARS! From ABRAHAM up until JESUS MINISTRY, the Hebrew / Jewish people were God’s CHOSEN PEOPLE. They were CHOSEN to reveal GOD to the WORLD. They did NOT do a very GOOD JOB.

So, God sent JESUS to bring a NEW COVENANT of GRACE to SHARE with the WORLD ... NOT just the JEWS. PAUL was RECRUITED by JESUS, after JESUS’ DEATH and RESURRECTION, to HEAD up the MISSION.

Imagine as GENTILES you spent CENTURIES being EXCLUDED and suddenly you are INCLUDED ... IF you BELIEVE (full weight) JESUS’ DEATH and RESURRECTION take away our SINS!

Paul’s credentialling continues ... *COLOSSIANS 1:28-29 = <sup>28</sup> So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. <sup>29</sup> That’s why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.* <sup>5</sup>  
**#3 = STRIVING for the SAINTS**

Kind of SELF-EXPLANATORY CREDENTIAL ... PAUL works HARD so others have OPPORTUNITIES to GROW and MATURE in their FAITH! Paul does NOT take SAVING FAITH LIGHTLY. It’s his LIFE! He will SPEND OUT his LIFE telling others about JESUS. He will STRUGGLE HARD and WEAR himself OUT to WORK for MORE to be PRESENTED to GOD as PERFECT because of their RELATIONSHIP with JESUS! Nothing else matters...

Paul finishes this section at the BEGINNING of CHAPTER 2 ... *COLOSSIANS 2:1-3 = I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. <sup>2</sup> I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God’s mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. <sup>3</sup> In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* <sup>6</sup>

He PRAYS for the CHURCHES in COLOSSE and LAODICEA and for other believers. He wants the CHURCHES to be ENCOURAGED by HIM and BY EACH OTHER and to have STRONG TIES of LOVE (John 13:34)! How will the GOOD NEWS SPREAD ... they will KNOW we are DISCIPLES by our LOVE for one another. “AS I have LOVED YOU...”

YOU may NOT be CALLED to be an APOSTLE like PAUL, but EACH of us can SHARE the GOOD NEWS of JESUS and WIN SOULS to HIM! What ministry has GOD given YOU? Are you FULFILLING it?

Let’s Pray

Next Steps: *Memorize Colossians 1:28  
 Read the Book of Colossians ... again!  
 Start Praying for Revival and Awakening  
 Invite someone to worship with you this summer!*

<sup>4</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Col 1:25–27). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.  
<sup>5</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Col 1:28–29). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.  
<sup>6</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Col 2:1–3). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

## Hosting (Closing)

It's been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been with us! NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**) Drop card in the offering basket.

**IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today ...** We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you. It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS ... **HIT "SEND"** your COMPLETED Connection Card

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Reminder: STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP. We RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!

STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... **COLOSSIANS 1:25 = <sup>25</sup> God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you.** NOT JUST LIP SERVICE ... FULL WEIGHT! FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the 1<sup>st</sup> place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!

God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!

As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.

**MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?!

Next Week: **SOLDIERS in TRAINING.**

"God **whispers** to us in our pleasures, **speaks** in our conscience, but **shouts** in our pains: it is His **megaphone** to rouse a deaf world." — C.S. Lewis    "*Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy).*"  
Special thanks to Andy Stanley, Nelson Searcy, and R.A. Pegram for outlines and ideas for this worship series.