

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“Man On A Mission”

Colossians 1:24-29

2004

Introduction



Unless you've been camping in Kalalau for the last few days, you probably have already heard the remarkable story of 27-year-old Pat Tillman.

Pat was an undersized, overachieving NFL pro safety with the Arizona Cardinals (in 2000 he set a team record with 224 tackles).

To give you an idea of Pat's character, in 2001 he turned down a \$9 million, five-year contract offer from the Super Bowl champion St. Louis Rams. Why? Out of loyalty to the Arizona Cardinals and his coach who took a chance on him as 226 round draft pick several years earlier. Obviously, Pat's values were rather unique in the money-driven sport of professional football.

And then seven weeks ago, after returning from his honeymoon with his new bride, he informed his coaches that he planned to turn down a three-year, \$3.6 million contract and join the U.S. Army for a pay cut of roughly \$3.54 million dollars over three years. His motivation? Love for his country and a desire to personally respond to the 9/11 attacks.

Despite the fact that every media outlet in the world wanted to write a story on Pat's stunning decision, he refused to give any interviews so as not to draw attention to himself.

He became an elite Army Ranger and was shipped off to Afghanistan where, two day

ago on April 22, 2004, he made the ultimate sacrifice for his country in a firefight with anti-coalition militia forces near the border of Pakistan.

Quote: Seattle Seahawks general manager Bob Ferguson, who was General Manager with the Arizona Cardinals when Tillman was drafted said this:

“In today's world of instant gratification and selfishness, here is a man that was defined by words like loyalty, honor, passion, courage, strength and nobility. He is a modern-day hero!”

Pat Tillman reminds me of another great man of the past, the Apostle Paul who penned this letter to the church in Colosse:

1. Like Pat, Paul walked away from a promising and lucrative career.
2. Like Pat, Paul was a man of deep conviction and courage.
3. Like Pat, Paul made his transition out of the limelight into obscurity without fanfare.
4. Like Pat, Paul was willing to give up his life for a cause he believed in.
5. Like Pat, Paul was a “Man On A Mission!”

I Paul's Attitude In Life

A. He rejoiced in what was **suffered** [Verse 24a]

Three things characterized Paul's suffering:

1. They were a source of joy
2. They were for others
3. They were related to the afflictions of Christ

As you recall, Paul wrote the book of Colossians from a Roman jail.

Undoubtedly, the false teachers in Colosse claimed that Paul's imprisonment and suffering was a clear sign of God's disapproval of his life and ministry.

But Paul, instead of being ashamed of his suffering, rejoiced in it!

Rejoiced = Chairō = “To be cheerful”

Matt 5:11-12 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

1. For the Colossians

“For you” means “in the interest of” and not “in the place of.”

Application:

How does suffering for Christ benefit others?

1. It provides others an example to follow - 1 Cor 11:1
2. It enables us to comfort others with God's comfort - 2 Cor 1:5-6
3. It serves to advance the gospel - Phil. 1:12-14

Phil 1:12-14 “Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.”

B. He **filled up** in his body [Verse 24b]

Fill up = Antanapleroo = “To supplement”

1. What was lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions

Afflictions = Thlipsis = “Pressure, anguish, trouble or persecution”

Is Paul saying that Christ’s death on the cross was somehow deficient for our salvation? Absolutely not!

The word "afflictions" is never used in the scriptures to describe the sacrificial death of Jesus, but it is frequently used to describe the opposition and persecution He faced in life.

John 15:18-21 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.”

And Paul also suffered afflictions in his life and ministry:

1. Physical afflictions: Beatings, stonings, hunger, homelessness, etc.
2. Psychological afflictions: Rejection, persecution, depression
3. Spiritual afflictions: Spiritual warfare with Satan and false brothers

Application:

The truth is, if you choose to live boldly for Christ you will face affliction in this life.

1 Peter 4:12-16 “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”

- a. For Christ's body -- the **church**

Church = Ekklesia = Compound word meaning “The called out ones”

Notice that Paul didn’t suffer for himself the way that an ascetic might.

Instead he suffered for the sake of the body of Christ.

Ascetics focus on *their* holiness, on *their* spiritual growth, and on *their* perfection. But Paul followed in the footsteps of Jesus, and was an others-centered person. Instead, Paul found holiness, spiritual growth, and maturity when he pursued them for others.

2 Tim 2:10 “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”

Application:

Have you ever considered the sufferings and afflictions others have gone through in order for you to know Christ?

Sometimes when I’m reading the Word, I can’t help but think of what it cost others for me to be able to hold a Bible in my hands:

The blood of martyrs, the fears and tears of persecuted people throughout centuries, the sweat and labor of translators, and the effort of teachers to make it plain and clear.

We should never read the Scriptures without remembering what untold millions have sacrificed to make our morning Quiet Time possible.

II Paul's Motivation In Life

- A. To be a **servant** to the church [Verse 25a]

Servant = Diakonos = “An attendant doing menial service”

1. By the commission God gave him

Commission = Oikonomia = “Administration or stewardship”

The key idea here is that of a divine appointment, a high calling from God.

Paul was a servant of the church, but more importantly, he was commissioned by God and accountable to Him.

1 Cor 4:1-2 “So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things [mysteries] of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

Application: One of the marks of a true follower of Jesus Christ is that they have a heart to serve God by serving God’s people.

- B. To present the **word** of God in its fullness [Verse 25b-26]

Fullness = Pleroma = “To be filled full” or “to level up (a hollow)”

Acts 20:27 “For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.”

Rom 15:19 “I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.”

Application: Expository teaching at CCK

Verse by verse, book by book – the Word of God from cover to cover!

1. The mystery kept **hidden** for ages and generations

Mystery = Musterion = “A secret”

“A divine truth that is unknowable apart from special revelation.”

A few of the Mysteries of the New Testament

1. The mystery of the kingdom of heaven - Matt 13
2. The mystery of Jew and Gentile becoming one body - Eph. 3:1-11; 2:11f; 5:25-32
3. The mystery of the church as the body and bride of Christ - Eph 5:22-33
4. The mystery of the indwelling of Christ - Col 1:26-27; 2:2
5. The mystery of the rapture - 1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 4:13f

The key to unlocking each of these mysteries is the person of Jesus Christ:

Col 2:2-3 “My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

2. The mystery now **disclosed** to the saints

Disclosed = Phaneroo = “To make manifest or render apparent”

It is important to note that all the terms used by Paul to describe this mystery stress God’s initiative in disclosing it and man’s complete helplessness in understanding apart from God’s initiative and grace.

Rom 16:25-27 “Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him -- to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.”

- C. To make known among the Gentiles: **[Verse 27]**

Make known = Gnorizo = “To declare or to give understanding”

1. The glorious **riches** of this mystery:

Riches = Ploutos = “Wealth, abundance, richness”

Eph 3:8-9 “Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which

for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.”

a. Christ in you

The mystery of Christ living in the hearts of mankind in the person of the Holy Spirit was not clearly revealed in the Old Testament. The fullness of this understanding wasn't revealed until the time of Jesus and the apostles.

John 14:23 “Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

b. The **hope** of glory

We hear the word "hope" used frequently. We "hope" for good surf. We "hope" our kids turn out OK. We "hope" for the best. Most of the time we seem to use "hope" as wishful thinking. But that is not the kind of hope that Paul is speaking of here in Colossians.

Hope = Elpis = “To anticipate with pleasure and total confidence”

Specifically, this hope is centered on the glory of God:

1. Our resurrected & glorified body - 1 Cor 15:52-55

2. Our sharing in Christ's future glory - Col 3:4

Col 3:1-4 “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

III Paul's Goal In Life

A. To proclaim Christ: **[Verse 28a]**

Proclaim = Kataggello = “To preach, declare or teach”

2 Cor 4:5 “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.”

1. **Admonishing** everyone with all wisdom

Admonishing = Noutheteo = “To gently reprove or warn”

Admonishing is the negative side of proclamation and carries a moral appeal to straighten out something that is out of order or contrary to the will and purpose of God.

2. **Teaching** everyone with all wisdom

Teaching = Didasko = “To systematically instruct”

Teaching is the positive side of proclamation and emphasizes the impartation of knowledge and truth.

Both admonishing and teaching are critical for spiritual maturity!

2 Tim 3:16-17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for **teaching**, **rebuking**, **correcting** and **training in righteousness**, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

B. To present everyone **perfect** in Christ [Verse 28b]

Perfect = Teleios = “Complete or mature”

That was the goal of Paul’s ministry -- to bring people to spiritual maturity in Christ. And in particular, to warn the Colossian believers against the persuasive speech of the false teachers who were infiltrating the church.

Eph 4:11-13 “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Application:

That’s one of the goals we have as a church – to do whatever we can to help believers become mature, Christ-like Christians. BTW, the way we do this is by simply encouraging men and women to enjoy a growing relationship with God through the Word, prayer, worship and fellowship.

1. To this end he labored: [Verse 29]

Labored = Kopiao = “To work to the point of weariness or fatigue”

1 Cor 15:10 “... I worked harder than all of them -- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

a. **Struggling** with all Christ’s energy:

Struggling = Agonizomai = “To struggle, fight, wrestle”

“To compete for a prize”

“To contend with an adversary”

“To endeavor to accomplish something”

Col 4:12 “Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling [**agonizomai**] in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”

1. Which so **powerfully** worked in him

Powerfully = Dunamis = “Divine or miraculous strength”

Though Paul worked harder than any of the other disciples (1 Cor 15:10), laboring and struggling to bring believers to full maturity

in Christ, he also recognized that the work was ultimately being done through the empowerment of God through the Holy Spirit.
Zech 4:6 “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit ...”

Application: We are in partnership with God
Prov 21:31 “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD.”

Conclusion

While we rightly admire men like Pat Tillman and the Apostle Paul, the greatest hero of all time was and is Jesus Christ. He is the very definition of selflessness, of love and of sacrifice. No one has ever given up so much and descended so low for such a worthy cause as Christ.

After all, true herosim is always measured by two things:

1. What is sacrificed
2. What is achieved

By these standards, no one in all of history comes close:

1. To the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who left His throne in heaven, became a man, and willingly surrendered his life for the sins of the world.
2. To the results achieved by Christ in reconciling sinful man to a holy God and opening up the way to heaven for anyone who would profess Him as Lord and Savior.

Jesus Christ was and is the ultimate definition of a “Man On A Mission!”

And today, He invites you to follow in His steps:

Luke 9:23-24 “Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”

May God give us hearts to respond without hesitation to lay down our lives that others might live!

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