

"Serving Jesus Christ in a Fallen World"

Part 1

Colossians 1:23-29

Introduction: This evening in our study of Colossians we have come to 7 verses in which Paul will give some details about himself to his readers. Let us keep in mind that these people had not met Paul. What they knew about him was that he had been a terrorist to the early church. They knew that he was now in prison because he had been arrested. So here is this letter from a man who was once a troublemaker and is now in prison so how can they know if they should heed what he has written in this letter. Well, what he writes in these last verses of chapter 1 gives them some needed insight into who he is. Now while we can look at how Paul presents himself to these people, from his words we can also learn what is to be expected for the person who is committed to living for Jesus Christ. We are all called to a life of commitment.

Romans 12:1-2

*I beseech you **therefore**, brethren, by the mercies of God, that **ye present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

² *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

I. Paul's Service

Notice Colossians 1:23

Here in this verse Paul tells his readers that he was MADE a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was not a self-made minister as many people are today and were in his day, but he was a made a minister by God to carry the Gospel into the world.

Acts 9:11-15

¹¹ *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,*

¹² *And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.*

¹³ *Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:*

¹⁴ And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

¹⁵ But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Notice Colossians 1:23 again.

The word "minister" here means "servant," so we can understand that Paul was made a servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as well as a servant to others. This is what Paul told the believers at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 3:5

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

Jesus used the very same word to describe Himself.

Mark 10:45

⁴⁵ For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

In all of this Paul was following Jesus Christ and the example He had set for all of us.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

II. Paul's Insight

Notice Colossians 1:24

First of all, we need to notice that Paul rejoiced in his sufferings. This is not what we normally hear from people. How could Paul rejoice in suffering? There was much that he knew that many are ignorant of. I came across a list of quotes from unknown writers that I want you to see.

- *Affliction, like the iron-smith, shapes as it smites.*
- *Afflictions are often God's best blessings sent in disguise.*
- *Crosses are ladders that lead to heaven.*
- *Fire is the test of gold, adversity of strong men.*
- *Our great Teacher writes many a bright lesson on the blackboard of affliction.*
- *Some hearts, like evening primroses, open more beautifully in the shadows of life.*

- *The Christian justifies tribulation. Ten thousand times ten thousand saints ... are ready to witness that their most manifest and rapid spiritual growth is traceable to their periods of trial.*
- *The darker the night, the brighter the stars; the hotter the fire, the purer the gold.*
- *The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.*
- *The hammer shatters glass, but forges steel.*
- *The more a tree of righteousness is shaken by the wind, the more it is rooted in Christ.*
- *The water that dashes against the wheel keeps the mill going; so trial keeps grace in use and motion.*
- *Trial is the school of trust.*
- *God allows (sends) tests not to break us but to make us.*
- *Where there are no trials in life, there are no triumphs.*

Let me remind you of what God said when speaking of Cyrus.

Isaiah 45:1-3

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

² I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

*³ And **I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places,** that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.*

Notice Colossians 1:24 again.

Paul tells these people that his suffering was filling up that which was behind of afflictions of Jesus Christ. Let us first of all understand that this does not mean that Jesus suffering on the cross was not sufficient.

John 19:30

*³⁰ When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished:** and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

Jesus' suffering on the cross was the propitiation/satisfaction for our sins completely.

1 John 2:1-2

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

² *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Paul was not saying that he was adding to the work of Jesus Christ because Christ's sacrificial suffering on the Cross paid the price of redemption in full. So, what was Paul referring to here? Paul saw his connection and relationship with Jesus as being so close that when he was attacked it was as though Jesus was being attacked. He learned this on the Damascus Road.

Acts 9:3-5

³ *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:*

⁴ *And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*

⁵ *And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

Paul learned here on the Damascus Road that when the body suffers the Head feels the pain. He remembered this and so he knew that the suffering he was going through was the suffering of Jesus Christ. Paul was part of the body and the Head/Jesus Christ was feeling the pain. I want to take this thought a little further if I could. What was the point of Jesus' sufferings as He walked on the earth?

Hebrews 2:9-10

⁹ *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

¹⁰ *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

Jesus became perfect in experience through His earthly suffering. Now He can identify with what we go through in our sufferings. Getting back to Paul, he rejoiced in his

sufferings and he was filling up the afflictions of Jesus for the sake of the body/church. Possibly Paul had in mind that because of his suffering he too could relate better to those to whom he would minister.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

³ *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;*

⁴ *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

⁵ *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

We learn of God's comfort in our afflictions and we can then better minister to other who are going through suffering in their lives.

Conclusion:

When Paul speaks of suffering, he is referring to suffering because of doing the will of God, or suffering for righteousness sake. As believers there is no honor in suffering for doing wrong.

1 Peter 2:18-23

¹⁸ *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.*

¹⁹ *For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*

²⁰ *For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

²¹ *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

²² *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:*

²³ *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:*