

Col 1:24-29

24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Paul said in verses 21-22 that you were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now reconciled.

23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Paul wasn't speaking under the condition of hope.

- He was saying "If" as if to say,
- "I know you will."

Why would someone need encouragement to remain in the hope of the gospel?

- People often lack endurance.

After Jesus fed the 5,000.

The following day some found Him on the other side of the sea

and He said to them,

John 6:26

26 "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

The Jews later began to complain because Jesus told them, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."

John 6:65

65 And (when) He (Jesus) said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

They weren't having any part of that:

Jn 6:66, From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

“time” is not in the original manuscript.

So it would read, From that, many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

One day the anti-Christ will turn many away from the truth.

- I believe the church will be gone by then but it doesn't mean we should sit back and relax.

We are to remain grounded and steadfast.

Col 1:23

23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Obviously at that point in time the gospel had not been preached to the whole world.

Paul prophetically saw as accomplished what had only begun.

Look at verses 5 & 6 for a moment.

Col 1:5-6

5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

He's simply saying that the gospel had reached the Colossian church

- and is the very gospel that is bearing fruit
- and increasing everywhere it goes.

We read in Romans starting in chapter 15 and verse 20,

- Paul wanted to go to Spain
- to preach the gospel since
- it hadn't reached there yet,
- at least to any significant degree.

The gospel message is the word of God

- and it has the power to change lives,
- regardless of culture, nationality or race.

Paul said in verse 6 that the gospel came to them “as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit,”

In verse 23 Paul says the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven.

In the original Greek this would literally read:

“the gospel that you heard, the proclaimed one in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

In other words, it’s the kind of gospel that is proclaimed

- under all creation under heaven.

Paul wanted the Colossians to understand that the same gospel proclaimed to them was the same as that proclaimed in all creation under heaven.

The gospel message we receive today was proclaimed to them as well.

The first quality of true ministry is mentioned in verse 23

and that is, he shares the gospel of Christ.

Listen, the gospel is for everyone who will receive it.

Jesus said that it was His desire that none should perish but that all would come to everlasting life.

Vance Havner once said, the gospel is not a secret to be hoarded, but a story to be heralded.

In another quote he said, Too many Christians are stuffing themselves with gospel blessings while millions have never had a taste.

The second quality of a true minister is that he suffers for the cause of Christ.

Col 1:24

24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

When you’re active, you can expect opposition from the enemy.

The scriptures are very clear

- that Jesus died for the church
- and that the church is His body.

Because of this, participation in a church is essential to

- the spiritual health
- and maturity of each believer.

Paul is rejoicing in his suffering for someone else!

- And it seemed the deeper his troubles,
- the more deeply Paul saw a connection
- with the Lord who had suffered so much for him.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor Paul said he was given a thorn in the flesh.

And he pleaded with the Lord 3 times that it might depart from him. Then the Lord said to him, My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

In Gal 6:17 he writes, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

His afflictions were of no surprise to him. Acts 9:15-16 says that he’d been chosen by the Lord to take the gospel to the Gentiles and to the children of Israel, but he was also chosen to suffer for the Lord as well.

A common belief in Jewish culture

- was that suffering was the result of some great sin.
- We have the story of the man born blind in John 9.

Even the disciples asked Jesus in verse 2, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus responded that the man was born blind so the power of God could be seen in him.

It wasn’t a result of his sin.

When we suffer, sometimes it’s used to teach us

- about faith and to glorify God.

But know this, when we suffer,

- Jesus has the power to help us deal with it.

Think of Daniel thrown into a den of lions,

- he was persecuted because
- he was a follower of God.

The writer of Hebrews spoke of many who had trials of mocking and scourgings,

- and of chains and imprisonments. Heb 11:36
- 

1 Peter 4:15-16

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

James 1:2-3

2 count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

Now, this doesn't mean we should enjoy suffering.

Only days after telling the disciples to pray that they might escape persecution, Jesus Himself asked God to spare Him the agonies of the cross, if that was God's will.

After He prayed an angel appeared to Him from heaven and strengthened Him.

Heb 2:18

18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Jesus knows everything we go through, therefore, He is able to help us during our time of need.

So, we can suffer for Christ and still be willing servants of Christ at the same time.

Jim Irwin was one of the team members who walked on the moon, and On his way back to earth he realized that some would think of him as a celebrity.

- And he thought, well, I am kind of a celebrity,
- I walked on the moon.

Then he said that the presence of God

- and His creation humbled him
- and he said these words:

As I was returning to earth I realized, I'm not a celebrity, I'm a servant.

The Lord uses what we've been thru for His glory.

Paul suffered not only for the gospel,

- but for the people, for the church.

The scriptures tell us that He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

When Job was suffering he said:

Job 14:1

1 Man who is born of woman  
Is of few days and full of trouble.

It would be nice if Christians wouldn't suffer.

- But people would come to Christ for the wrong reasons.

Christians are not exempt from suffering.

Matt 10:16

16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

What a contrast, I'm sending you out as sheep,

But then He said to: be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

There was a person by the name of James Calvert,

- he was a missionary in the Fiji Islands
- in 1838 for about 18 years or so.

As he approached the island

- the captain of the ship reminded him
- that he could die on the island
- to which James Calvert replied, "We died before we came."

Paul spoke of Christian's showing grace to non-believers in:

Col 4:5-6

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside (non-believers), redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

The third mark of a minister is that he is a steward of the mysteries of Christ.

Col 1:24-25

24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

Col 1:25

25 God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you. NLT

Col 1:25

25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—

NIV

Paul was given the responsibility of bringing the word of God to the church.

We know Paul was persecuted and he could have avoided

- most if not all of the persecution

- had he chosen not to minister to the Gentiles.

But he wasn't willing to abandon the calling in his life

- simply for his safety and comfort.

In 1 Cor 4:2 Paul says that stewards are to be found faithful.

Paul was a faithful servant, and he says that we too are to be faithful stewards,

To be faithful means to be worthy of belief, trust or confidence.

There is coming a day when people will not endure sound doctrine and that's closer than we may think.

They won't endure sound doctrine because, according to their own desires, they will have itching ears.

Col 1:26-27

26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

A mystery is something that cannot be known unless God reveals it and He has.

- The mystery was Christ in you, the hope of glory.

You see, God took the Jews and He took the Gentiles

- and He mixed them into one in Christ.

The fourth mark of a minister is verse 28:

Col 1:28

28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Paul warned the unbelievers

- of a coming judgement and of a coming hell.

He warned of false teachers

- and false religions.

We are to simply preach the word!

George Whitfield once said that other men can preach the gospel better than I, but no one can preach a better gospel.

Why do we teach the word? Paul says so that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

He didn't mean perfect in appearance or sinless,

- but to be mature in the Lord.

Col 1:29

To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Labor - to grow weary, to labor with wearisome effort and to the point of exhaustion.

To strive - The straining of an athlete to reach his goal.

Paul is saying to put forth every effort in the gospel.