



Colossians 1:24-29

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ANNOUNCE

BIBLE PASSAGE

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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.

APPLICATION

We started last week by looking at Paul's description of Jesus Christ's person and discussing the essential importance of having an accurate assessment of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. An aberrant Christology is not something to be taken lightly because, as we'll see, if you miss the true Jesus, you miss everything attached to Christ. If you miss Jesus, you miss salvation, forgiveness, eternal life, and a new identity.

We looked at this chart last week, so let's just review it today (**show chart from last week**):

- **Verses 15-19 - The Supremacy and Sovereignty of Jesus. (Who He is and what He rules)**
- **Verses 20-23 - The Sacrifice of Jesus. (what He reconciles)**
- **Verses 23-29 - The Service of Jesus. (Who He uses)**

1 The Supremacy of Jesus (Who He is)

THE EXACT EXPRESSION OF THE INVISIBLE GOD IN HUMAN SKIN AND THE CREATOR AND SUSTAINER OF ALL THINGS (16)

[Col 1:16 NKJV] 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

2 The Sovereignty of Jesus (What He rules)

A. OVER ALL PHYSICAL CREATION (15)

Jesus, being the creator, is also the rightful owner and King of all things.

He is the firstborn OVER creation: a title of position, not order.

B. OVER ALL SPIRITUAL CREATION (16)

Thrones, Dominions, principalities, and powers...

C. OVER THE CHURCH (18)

[Col 1:18 NKJV] 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning...

D. OVER DEATH (18)

the firstborn from the dead that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Firstborn from the dead – Jesus has authority over death. Again, was Jesus the first person to ever be raised from the dead? No, many were raised before Him.

- There are at least 8 people in the OT and NT that were raised from the dead by the power of God.
- But there's only one who raised himself to never die again, displaying ultimate power and authority over the power of death!

He was raised by His power so that he might have **“the preeminence.”**

Preeminence – To hold the highest place of authority.

3 The Sacrifice of Jesus

A. EXTENDS TO ALL CREATION

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[Col 1:20 NKJV] 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Notice that Jesus is the medium through which all things can be reconciled to God.

- And when we talk about all things, Paul says things on earth or things in heaven. Not only does all minakind have the opportunity to be reconciled back to their creator. The Bible teaches us that all creation will be reconciled back to its original state.

B. EXPOSES THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR NATURAL CONDITION

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[Col 1:21-22 NKJV] 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight--

- **Alienated** - belonging to another country or authority
- **Enemies** - Hostile; in opposition

C. IS THE ONGOING SOURCE OF OUR HOPE

C. Is the ongoing source of our hope

[Col 1:23 NKJV] 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.

- What is the big IF? If indeed you live up to a certain standard of good works? If indeed you only sin once but not three times? If indeed you read your Bible at least 4 times a day and attend second Sunday prayer?
- NOPE! If indeed you continue, grounded and steadfast in the faith, which is the hope of the gospel.
 - **Grounded and steadfast**—This speaks of roots and foundations. Colossae was famous for an earthquake that effectively destroyed the whole city. Paul would say, "When the quaking of false doctrine seeks to loosen your moorings, you will be grounded and steadfast because your hope is anchored in the truth of Jesus."

WHICH WAS PREACHED TO EVERY CREATURE UNDER HEAVEN

This is not Paul suggesting that every person on earth has heard the gospel, but that the gospel is for every single living human being. The gospel wasn't merely preached to the Jews but also to the Gentiles.

- Again, the gnostic heresy taught that spiritual truth was not easily accessible to everyone because it was hidden. Paul says that though the mystery of the gospel was hidden for ages, in Jesus, it is not plainly revealed and preached.
- The question is not, "Is the gospel open and available for all?" The question becomes, "Are there those who will make themselves available to preach that gospel to those in need?"

Paul understood that his calling as an apostle, an ambassador for Christ, was to minister this truth to the world.

4 The Service of Jesus

APPLICATION

Next, Paul gives a snapshot of His specific ministry and calling within the mission of Christ to make Himself known.

Paul's calling, giftings, and ministry are now different from yours. Paul had a unique place in God's plan that is not yours. However, you do have a calling, a ministry, and gifts that God has entrusted you for the part He has called you to play in His mission. So, I want to take the passage today from two perspectives: First, we will just do an exegetical look at the text itself and interpret it. Second, I want to look at principles that Paul implemented regarding his calling that I believe will be relevant for us to apply to ours.

BIBLE PASSAGE

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EXEGESIS

[Col 1:24 NKJV] 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,

Part of Paul's calling was the privilege of suffering. Paul chooses a response of joy to the various trials, testing, and sufferings he endured because of his obedience to Jesus and commitment to the church. Notice several things regarding Paul's sufferings:

- He chose joy in suffering
- Suffering identified Him with Christ
- Suffering identified him with the church

Regarding Paul's sufferings, they came in large part to answering the call of the Lord. As he launched out to plant churches, he not only endured the trials of travel, but he had made himself the enemy that he once was set on destroying. The Jews hated the Christians because of the claims that Jesus made about being the divine Son of God. Not only that, but Christianity was bad for Roman business. Idolatry was the main source of income for Roman centers. Bring in Jesus, and the business of idols isn't so profitable anymore.

Regarding Paul's sufferings as a Christian and as an Apostle, he details them in his second letter to the Corinthians:

[2Co 11:23-28 NKJV] 23 Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I [am] more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty [stripes] minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 [in] journeys often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils of [my own] countrymen, [in] perils of the Gentiles, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Most of those items don't seem to inspire the response of rejoicing, but that's what Paul chooses. He rejoices because he knows the larger eternal outcome of his ministry will be worth the temporary pain and sacrifices that came with the call.

[2Co 4:16-18 ESV] 16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things

that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

He also rejoiced because Paul viewed suffering as a way to identify with Christ:

and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

Now, we need to make sure we don't read this passage through a skewed lens. First, what is Paul NOT saying:

- He's not saying that the sufferings Christ endured for our salvation are lacking and that he had to suffer in order to make up for it. The Bible is clear: the work Christ did by enduring the cross and despising the shame was fully sufficient and complete to bring us salvation. The religious notion is that in order for Christ's sufferings to be enough for me, I have to add greater suffering to become worthy, whipping my back, crawling upstairs on my knees, or starving myself, in order to add to the sufferings of Christ. This notion is contrary to the gospel Paul preached.
- What Paul is saying is a message he regularly preached and taught:
 - ***Suffering for what is godly helps us identify with our Savior, who experienced the ultimate suffering for the ultimate good.***
- Paul didn't see suffering as something to be avoided at all costs but rather embraced it as following the example of Jesus. Not only that, but Paul was willing to suffer extra himself if it meant that he could ease the suffering of others.

[Col 1:24 NLT] 24 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.

[Phi 3:10 NKJV] 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

[2Ti 2:9-10 NKJV] 9 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

APPLICATION

[Col 1:25-27 NKJV] 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.

Once again, Paul lays out the reality that the ONLY reason he was an apostle, traveling the world to preach the gospel, was the will of God and His eternal plan to bring salvation to all who believe. Consider the language used:

- Minister - a servant - one who executes the plans of another.
- Stewardship - management of another's property.
- Given to me - not taken from God, but given by God.
- For you - Ministers deliver from God, not receive from others.

This was all because God, in His divine timeline, sovereignly chose Paul to reveal a mystery hidden from all generations until that point.

MYSTERY - that which is concealed in the Old Testament but now revealed in Jesus Christ.

A mystery was a truth that always existed but wasn't fully understood until Jesus was revealed.

- Mystery of Godliness - the incarnation, that God was manifested in the flesh.
- Mystery of the Rapture - That Jesus will return to gather and transform His bride to be with Him forever.
- Mystery of Marriage - That marriage exists to show a picture of the relationship between Jesus and His bride, the church.
- The Mystery of the Gentiles - that God, through the cross of Christ, would bridge the separation between Jew and Gentile and invite Gentiles into the family of God through Christ. This is what Paul refers to in Colossians:

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.

God willed to make known - We don't know God because we willed it into action. We know God because He willed to reveal the mystery of the gospel to us. It's not as if mankind had a bright idea and, through their ingenuity and creativity, discovered a way back to God. God chose the foolishness of the gospel to be the light that shined into our darkness.

Then he tells us the nature of the mystery: Christ in you, the hope of glory.

- The first incredible revelation is that Christ Jesus, the Savior, now dwells within the believer. We talk about the importance of us being in Christ, but how we really know that we belong to Jesus is that He dwells in us. Jesus dwells in us by the person of the Holy Spirit:

- **[Rom 8:15-16 NKJV] 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,**
- The second part of the mystery is that Christ in us is the security deposit that reminds us of the ultimate promise, which is eternal glory. The "hope" of glory is not a hope of uncertainty, but it's a hope of assurance. When we experience Jesus dwelling in us, transforming our minds, and working in our hearts, it is a reminder that He is alive, and because He is alive, He has secured an eternal promise for us in heaven.
- **Glory is the appropriate word for our eternal reality** - exalted; splendor. Everything good we can experience here and now is nothing more than a fading shadow of a greater, glorious reality that will be ours forever!

APPLICATION

[Col 1:28-29 NKJV] 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 closes by expressing the focal point of His ministry: Him we preach.

- If Jesus is the fullness of God in human flesh, and He is the only source of reconciliation to God, and He alone is the hope of eternal glory, we are going to preach HIM.
- **[2Co 4:5 NKJV] 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.**

Paul's aim - I love Paul's ultimate goal. He wasn't striving to build a big church organization. He wasn't laboring to establish a ministry brand. He wasn't sacrificing and giving of his own life to gain power or reputation. His goal? Present all people complete and mature in Christ.

Methods:

- **Warning every man**
- **Teaching every man in all wisdom**

The more people distance themselves from sound doctrine, the more they will want their ears tickled rather than their consciences convicted.

- Paul was not afraid to issue warnings because he knew there were countless enemies of the faith seeking to steal the affection and worship of the believer. People don't want to go to church these days, so be warned. They want to be entertained. They want to laugh. They want to be inspired and encouraged... and there's a place for all of that. But Paul jumps right into "warning and teaching." It reminds me of Paul's exhortation to young Pastor Timothy:
 - **[2Ti 4:2-4 NKJV] 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season [and] out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, [because] they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn [their] ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**
- But warning is loving when there is real danger present. When I issue a warning to my children, it's not to burden them with more rules; it's to ensure they don't become ensnared by an unseen danger.

So that's Paul's ministry, but what about yours? I see some overarching principles that we should consider as we seek to serve Christ and be part of His plan on earth.

A Our ministry will not always be easy (24)

APPLICATION

Jesus suffered, Paul suffered, and all the disciples suffered, but you want to serve a God that exists for your temporal pleasures and physical blessings? Jesus hung on a cross, but we want to sit on a throne?

Many will "follow Jesus" and "serve the Lord" inasmuch as they enjoy what they are doing. But the secret Paul had to rejoice in suffering is that he wasn't serving the Lord because he loved the task, but because he loved the Lord.

QUOTE

“ You can joyfully serve and suffer in ministry when you love the master more than you love the ministry.

APPLICATION

I want you to say a few statements with me because sometimes I don't think we believe these things even though they are true

- **God will lead me to do what my flesh wants to avoid.**
- **God will ask me to resist what my flesh naturally wants to consume.**
- **God will ask me to give up that which I want to hold on to.**
- **God will allow me to experience temporary suffering for the sake of the eternal good.**
- **God will ask me to love people I want to hate.**
- **God will ask me to go places that make me uncomfortable.**

The list could go on and on, and I don't say that to scare anyone... if that scares you, you need to be reminded of the bigger picture:

- **God will give me joy unspeakable and full of glory.**
 - **God will provide supernatural resources beyond my natural ability.**
 - **God will supply faith that conquers my fears.**
 - **God will provide spiritual and physical blessings that I could have never produced on my own.**
 - **God will allow us to be part of things that will last forever.**
-

B Our ministry is given as a stewardship (25)

APPLICATION

Paul said that his ministry was a stewardship from God for the church.

It can be fairly easy at times to start to see a ministry as belonging to you. After all, you're the one who can play, sing, preach, organize, serve well, build things, lead, etc. This is my ministry... The biggest problem with that attitude is that it breeds an attitude of entitlement. After all, if this is MY ministry, I deserve, I call the shots, I want recognition, etc.

A stewardship implies management over things that don't belong to you. Stewardship is a privilege, not a right.

- If God has entrusted you with gifts, talents, or resources, he will hold you to account for how you used them for His glory.

[1Co 4:2 NKJV] 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

When you stand before Christ, you will not be judged on how successful you were doing what you wanted, but how faithful you were doing what God wanted.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Heb 6:10 NKJV] 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

C

Our ministry must stay centered on Jesus (27-28)

APPLICATION

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, this is incredibly crucial in a day and age where peripheral activities seek to take center stage to the gospel in the church.

- For so many, things like social justice, racial reconciliation, power structures and social classes have become the main thrust of what is preached and practiced, taking the focus off Jesus and the centrality of the gospel.
- Paul said, "Him we preach." This shows us two essentials for the church: That the church must continue to preach, and that the central thrust of its message is Jesus Christ. Jesus is God, His sacrifice is sufficient, He's risen from the dead, He's coming back again, and He is the single greatest and only hope for mankind to experience eternal glory with their God.
- If your ministry is to feed the homeless, do it while you preach Jesus. If your ministry is to build ramps or get groceries for shut-ins, do it while you preach Jesus. If your service is lead worship or serve children, do it while preaching Jesus.
- Our end goal is not simply that we did good things, but that we worked to see people become complete in knowing Jesus.

D Our ministry requires responsive labor (29)

APPLICATION

Regarding his ministry, Paul uses words like "labor," "strive," and "suffer."

- Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 to ***"do the WORK of an evangelist."*** To the church in Ephesus, he states that pastors and teachers are given for the "work of the ministry."
- Please make no mistake: ministry is a joy and a privilege, but it's also hard work!
- Paul was not the kind of guy to float through his service to the Lord. For Paul, it wasn't, "When it's convenient and works into my schedule, I'll serve the Lord." No, His calling was prioritized and intentionally pursued.

I believe that it becomes evident when someone pursues their calling with effort, labor, excellence, and intentionality.

[1Ti 4:14-15 NKJV] 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

This can be said for every believer. What has God given you to do, do it with all your might! Sometimes, I think people see a disconnect between the ministry and themselves. The ministry is for professional pastors to do. Actually, the ministry is each part doing its share. The pastor's job is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

[Eph 4:15-16 NKJV] 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Before you get overwhelmed and start to feel tired before you've done anything, Paul adds, "According to His working which He works in me mightily."

- Jesus doesn't call us without equipping us with everything we will need to accomplish His will. He will work in us both the desire and the drive to respond to the purposes He created for us to accomplish.
- **[1Co 15:10 NKJV] 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**

CONCLUSION

Today, if you are in Christ, Christ is in you. He is the security of your eternal hope of glory. But that means He also wants to work through you to bring that same hope to those who have yet to believe. Not only that, but he wants to use each one of us as an essential part of the body to see the church grow, expand, and take ground in this world that is saturated with darkness.

Yes, it may require great sacrifice. Yes, it may involve great suffering. Yes, it will require significant effort and labor. But what joy will follow as you watch the living powerful Jesus work in and through you to accomplish His glorious plans!

