

The Ministry of Paul the Apostle Part 1

Text: Colossians 1:23-29

Introduction

1. Review of Theme & Background (Key Verses: 2:9-10)
2. This section: Paul describes His service for Christ.
3. Key phrase: “...**I Paul am made a minister...**” (Vs. 23)
4. The frequent references of Paul regarding his call to ministry:
 - A. 1 Tim. 1:12 *“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;”*
 - B. When Paul relayed his conversion to King Agrippa, he outlined the commission he had received from God: Acts 26:15-18 *“And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”*

The Apostle Paul was...

I. A Servant of the Gospel (Vs. 23)

- A. ‘gospel’ = good news
 1. An Assured Gospel – ‘hope’
 2. Received Gospel – ‘heard’
 3. Universal Gospel – ‘every creature’
- B. ‘minister’ = servant (deacon)
 1. *“The highest service that men may attain to on earth is to preach the Word of God.”* John Wycliffe
 2. Rom. 1:1 *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,”*
 3. 1 Cor. 9:16 *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”*

II. A Partaker of Christ’s Afflictions (Vs. 24)

- A. The response to his sufferings (24a)
 1. ‘rejoice’ = to be glad exceedingly!
 2. Paul could write to the Philippian Christians and exhort them to *“rejoice in the Lord”* (3:1)
- B. The nature of his sufferings (24b)

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1. On behalf of Christ
 - a. “fill up” = fill up in the place of
 - b. ‘afflictions’ = troubles, persecutions. Word is translated elsewhere as ‘tribulation’, ‘anguish’, ‘persecution’ and ‘trouble’. It is the same word used to describe the “great tribulation” that will come upon the earth in the last days (Matt. 24:21).
 - i. Note: Paul was not adding to the finished work of Christ in anyway. The word ‘afflictions’ is never used to describe Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross.
 - ii. When Christ met Paul on the road to Damascus he asked him “*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*”
 2. In his body
 - a. ‘flesh’ = Paul suffered in his body
 - b. Acts 9:16 “*For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.*”
 - c. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 “*Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*”
- C. The Blessings of his Sufferings
1. The benefit to the Gentile saints
 - a. “for you” & “for his body’s sake”
 - b. Philippians 1:12-14 “*But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*”
 2. Identification with Christ
 - a. “afflictions **of Christ**”
 - b. Philippians 3:10 – “*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and **the fellowship of his sufferings**, being made conformable unto his death.*”
 - c. Illustration: *Dr. Helen Roseveare – Served for twelve and a half years in Zaire, Africa before being captured by the rebels in 1964. She and her coworkers were thrown into five & a half months of unbelievable brutality and*

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torture. On one occasion she was on the verge of being executed but a 17 year old student defended her and was mercilessly beaten and left for dead. For a moment Helen thought God had forsaken her, even though she did not doubt his reality. God then made His presence known to her in a wonderful way and said something like this: “Twenty years ago you asked me for the privilege of being a missionary, the privilege of being identified with me. These are not your sufferings; they are my sufferings.” Helen Roseveare’s sense of identification with Christ, of union with him, was elevated by her suffering, and she rejoiced. Paul likewise rejoiced in the sublime oneness he sensed as Christ participated with him in his sufferings...Every blow that fell on him fell on his Master, and thus bound them even closer together in mutual suffering. R. Kent Hughs (Commentary on Colossians).

III. A Custodian of Divine Revelation (Vs. 25-27)

A. The Responsibility (Vs. 25)

1. A servant of this truth.
2. A steward of this truth
 - a. οἰκονομίαν = stewardship, to manage, a household
 - b. Compound word made up of ‘oikos’ (house) & ‘nemo’ (manage)

B. The Message (Vs. 26-27)

1. It’s Description – a mystery (Vs. 26)
 - a. Hidden in the past – ‘ages’ (periods of time) & ‘generations’ (people)
 - b. Revealed in the present. Refer Ephesians 3:3-5
2. It’s Explanation – Christ in you (Vs. 27)
 - a. The wealth of this truth – ‘riches’
 - b. The glory of this truth – ‘glory’ (radiance, magnificence)
 - c. The comfort of this truth – ‘Gentiles’ (See Eph. 2:11-16 & 3:1-6)
 - d. The heart of this truth – “Christ in you”
 - i. Rom. 8:9 “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not **the Spirit of Christ**, he is none of his.*”
 - ii. 2 Cor. 13:5 “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, **how that Jesus Christ is in you**, except ye be reprobates?*”
 - iii. Gal. 2:20 “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*”
 - iv. Eph. 3:17 “*That Christ may **dwelt in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*”
 - e. The hope of this truth: From this truth concerning Christ’s indwelling, springs our unshakable hope for our future glory in heaven.

Conclusion: Does Christ indwell you? What is your attitude towards suffering? Are you involved in Gospel service?