

The Ministry Laid Bear Colossians 1:24-29

INTRO: At this point in his letter to the Colossians, Paul turns to a topic dear to his heart, a topic he never tired of talking about– the ministry. Like most of us who are in the ministry, Paul was ever amazed that God would call him to the ministry. To Timothy, he wrote: “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy....” (I Tim 1:12-13).

Here in Colossians, Paul emphasizes his call in order to add credibility to the Gospel message that he sent to Colossae. Paul, with authority from God and the church at Antioch, spoke for God. The false teachers had no such authority!

With authority, Paul lays bear the call, the joy, the sufferings, the strength, and more of the ministry.

I. VS 24a, THE JOY AND DELIGHT OF THE MINISTRY

- A. The ministry is not easy; it is hard; life is hard. The ministry is demanding and challenging, but it is not to be unbearable.
 - 1. Preachers and Christians are to serve the Lord with rejoicing. We are not to grudgingly carry out our tasks for God.
 - 2. We are not to grow weary in well doing; we are not to faint (Heb 12:2-3).
 - a. Jesus never lost the joy of His ministry.
 - b. A Christian who has no joy of ministry does not have bad circumstances; he has bad connections. He is not hooked up right; he is not abiding in the vine. Christians do not lose the joy of serving Christ unless their communion with Him breaks down.
- B. Joy is internal. Like Paul, we sometimes get discouraged by our circumstances. We get frustrated with our problems, but the true believer, in sweet communion with Christ, maintains his joy. Paul described this in II Cor 4:8-9. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed [pinned].*
- C. The reason that so many folks have lost their joy is that they are too self-centered. Self-centered folks think they deserve more and better than what they have. They are always wanting better

treatment.

1. The Apostle Paul considered himself the least of all believers.
 - a. When Paul was in prison in Rome, other preachers got the glory; but Paul praised God that, "...Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."
 - b. When Paul faced death, he wrote: "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Phil 2:17).
 - c. When beaten and jailed in Philippi, he sang hymns and praised God: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25).
2. Because Paul realized that he did not deserve salvation or anything else and because he believed in Master control, nothing could shake his joy. "Circumstances, people, and worry are the thieves that are eager to steal the joy of the ministry. Humility, devotion to Christ, and trust in god, protect the joy that is Christ's legacy to every Christian (Jn 15:11; 17:13)" (MacArthur 74).

II. VS 24b, THE DISCIPLINE OF THE MINISTRY

- A. The early church considered it a real privilege to suffer for the cause of Christ. Acts 5:41 says: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." True believers need to realize that suffering is part of our calling (Phil 1:29).
- B. Suffering does several things for the believer that cause joy:
 1. Suffering brings believers closer to Christ (Phil 3:10).
 2. Suffering assures the believer that he belongs to Christ: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (Jn 15:18). II Tim 3:12 says: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Christians are blessed when they suffer for Christ's sake (I Pet 4:14).
 3. Suffering is assurance of future rewards (Rom 8:17-18; II Cor 4:17).
- C. Because the enemies of Christ had not filled up all the injuries they wanted to inflict on Him, they turned their hatred on those who preached the Gospel. He suffered for the sake of the

church.

III. VS 25, THE SOURCE AND SCOPE OF THE MINISTRY

A. The source of the ministry.

1. Paul did not volunteer to preach the Gospel; he was appointed by the Lord. This he often stressed (Gal 1:15-16; I Tim 1:12). His call to the ministry was a sovereign one.
2. "According to the dispensation of God...." The Greek word for "dispensation" is *ockonomia*- a compound word- *ockos* "house" and *nemo* "manage." It means to manage a household as a steward of someone else's possessions.
 - a. Paul regarded himself as the Lord's servant (I Cor 4:1-2).
 - b. He was given a task by God, a task he was to fulfill (I Cor 9:16-17). All who are called to preach should feel the compulsion and the stewardship that Paul felt.

B. The surrender of the ministry. Christians are to manage the gifts that God has given them. Surrender them to His purpose. Our spiritual gifts are not for our own edification. They are for the purpose of building up the church, helping others.

IV. VS 26-28a, THE MESSAGE OF THE MINISTRY

A. Vs 26, There are some things that God reveals to no one (Deut 29:29). God reveals certain things to certain people: only those who fear Him (Psa 25:14).

1. Some things were hidden in the Old Testament that are now revealed in the New. The New Testament calls these things mysteries.
2. This mystery is truth revealed to all believers, the Gospel. Yes, the virgin birth, resurrection, etc. were mysteries; but it was the Gospel that men who believe now see more clearly.

B. Vs 27a, "to whom God would make known....." This means that these truths are revealed to those "whom God willed to make them known to."

1. They were not discovered by the genius of man, but revealed by the purpose of God.
2. It is God's will that His people know the truths of the Word.

C. Vs 27b, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

1. Christ, by the Holy Spirit, has permanent residence in all

believers (Rm 8:9).

2. Because Christ dwells in the believer, he has the “hope of glory.” The presence of the Lord is the anchor of the promise of heaven (Eph 1:13-14).

V. VS 28a, THE PROCLAMATION OF THE MINISTRY

- A. “Preach”– *katangelo*– means to publicly declare a completed truth in this case, the Gospel.
- B. “Warning every man.” This means to admonish, to encourage in view of sin and punishment. Acts 20:31.
- C. “Teaching.” Imparting positive truth. This is what the great commission is all about (Mt 28:20). This is especially true of church leadership (I Tim 3:2).

VI. VS 28b, THE APPLICATION OF THE MESSAGE

- A. The goal of the ministry is the maturity of the saints (Eph 4:11-13).
- B. “Perfect”– this means mature. When we feed on the Word, we move toward maturity. II Tim 3:16-17.

VII. VS 29, THE STRENGTH OF THE MINISTRY

- A. “Labor”– work to the point of exhaustion. There are no easy pastorates.
- B. “Striving” from the Greek *agonizomai*– referring to competing in an athletic event. We get our English word agonize from it. Success in serving the Lord, like success in sports, demands maximum effort. The minister of God has God’s power to accomplish God’s work.

CONCLUSION: Let us minister together in love and endurance.

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