

FEB. 25, 2018

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For This I Toil

Reading Colossians 1:24-29

It is hard for most of us to understand *rejoicing while suffering*. Typically, we “cope” with suffering by complaining. Paul’s attitude should cause us to pause and re-examine the sturdiness of our faith. Paul said, to his brothers and sisters in Colossae: **“Now, I rejoice in my sufferings.”** First, he knew his suffering was temporary (see 2 Cor. 4:17). Second, he submitted to suffering without typical complaining *for the sake of the needs of Christians!*

It is right in verse 24: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake...” For their sake – that is, for the sake of their knowledge and edification, Paul bore suffering with unselfish endurance.

Third, the apostle saw his suffering from this high perspective: **“I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the church.”**

This cannot mean that anything about Christ’s suffering and death was lacking. While the translation may be awkward,



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the only way to understand this (compatible with everything else the New Testament says about the perfect sacrifice of Christ) – is that **Paul, no matter how much he suffered, would always be “lacking.”** He would spend his life “filling up” what was lacking in **his suffering**; his fellowship with Christ in suffering. This was his perspective of suffering “for the sake of His body, that is, the church.”

Paul’s next statement assures his readers of how he viewed his work. He became a minister “according to the stewardship from God, that was given to” him for this purpose: **“...to make the word of God fully known.”**

God gave to Paul this task, and held him accountable, “to make the word of God fully known.”

“The mystery hidden for ages and generations” was now being made known to men like Paul, for faithful transmission to others. “To them, God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

The gospel is not a message that Christ is just a part of. Christ is at the center of the message, with generous offer of blessing to all men. As the message is accepted by the activity of faith, Christ is formed in His people with this outcome: “the hope of glory.”

So Paul rejoiced (though he suffered) to announce “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

The repetitious, “everyone” leaves no doubt of the universal scope of the gospel of Christ. God designed and delivered this message of salvation for “everyone” to hear, believe and obey. This was so important to Paul he said: “For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.”