

The Proper Heart for Ministry

Colossians 1:24

Open your Bibles with me this morning to Colossians 1 as we continue the first chapter of Colossians.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Colossians 1:24 (NASB)

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

The theme of the first chapter of Colossians has been the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ. In these final verses Paul shifts from the person and work of Jesus Christ to the believer's responsibility for the ministry of the Gospel message.

We defined preeminence last week as something that has **first place**.

From a behavioral standpoint, the activity that is preeminent in your life is something that will occupy the most of your time physically and mentally. But, it goes beyond the amount of time that you spend, it will also be something you will enjoy doing. Even if you have to physically suffer in order to do it, you will willingly pursue it because you realize that it is only through suffering that you can achieve your goal.

ILLUSTRATION:

If you were an avid deer hunter, your ultimate goal would be to shoot a trophy deer. Think of all the things that you are willing to do in order to have a successful hunt. You have to spend many hours working to earn money to purchase a good deer rifle with scope, maybe a crossbow or bow and arrows, a deer stand, deer scent, hunting clothes, ammunition, and a deer tag. You may have to make arrangements with some landowner to hunt on his property. You may have to spend hours off season trying to locate where that perfect deer is staying and searching for the perfect place to put your deer stand. Then you have to use vacation time or personal time away from everything else that you need to do. You may also have to sit outside in below zero weather in a bad storm, waiting for a deer to walk by. You spend all of this time and money in order that you can

hopefully spend about **one minute** of your life to be in the right place at the right time to shoot that trophy deer. You enjoy willingly sacrificing that time, money, and discomfort because you know that it is the only way that you can realize your goal of attaining that perfect trophy buck.

If we could go back in time and ask Paul who or what is preeminent in his life. I have no doubt that he would look in our eyes and answer the question with two words "**JESUS CHRIST**".

You will remember that Paul did not select the ministry, God "**made**" him a minister. When Paul met Christ, his life was changed forever. He was truly thankful for Christ had done for him and **wanted** to serve Him for the rest of his life.

May I suggest that this same condition will be true for every single person today! **That to truly meet the preeminent Christ and be saved by His permanent work of reconciliation, IT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE!** You will **WANT** to make him first in your life!

All of the things that used to be SO IMPORTANT in your life may not totally go away, but they will "**slip down**" in the list of importance and CHRIST AND CHRIST ALONE will be elevated to His rightful position of preeminence in our life. That is what gripped the heart of the apostle Paul.

We see in Paul a pattern for the ministry of the local church, both for the leaders of the church and for the individual believer.. For it is not just Paul that was called for the Gospel ministry. It is not just ministers and elders that are called for the Gospel ministry, but every Christian is called to the work of the Gospel ministry.

You must evaluate the talents that God gave you and seek His will in your life. God will give you opportunities to perform the work that He lays in front of you to do using the talents that He provided for you.

Last message we talked about the **Source of the Ministry** which is God Himself through His Word and the **Power of the Ministry** which is the Holy Spirit working through us to accomplish God's will in our lives. This morning I would like to discuss **one of three aspects** of the ministry: **The Proper Heart of the Ministry**. Next week we will discuss the **Method of Ministry** and the **Aim of Ministry**.

BODY:

I. The Proper Heart for Ministry

Colossians 1:24 (NASB)

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

The appropriate heart for the Gospel ministry is a heart that accepts sacrifice **joyously**. The ministry is a sacrifice. Paul says here that this ministry was for the

Colossians and all of Christ's church. He is speaking of his willingness to endure difficulty, hardship, pain, and suffering because it benefits the church. The ministry is a willing sacrifice for the service of the church.

Note here that Paul says that his sufferings "**fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions**". That is an odd statement, isn't it? Some might read that statement and think that Paul was talking of Christ's atoning suffering. That Christ paid for some of our sin, but now we must pay for the rest.

The scriptures tell us that there is nothing lacking in Christ's atoning suffering. Paul himself has made it clear in Col. 2: 13-14.

Colossians 2:13-14 (NASB)

¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us **ALL our transgressions, ¹⁴ having **canceled out the certificate of debt** consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having **nailed it to the cross**.**

Paul tell us that Jesus has reconciled us back to God and He has paid for **ALL of our sins**. God has forgiven **ALL** of our sins! Christ wiped away every sin and there is nothing left to be paid.

Jesus said, on the cross, "**It is finished**". He did not say it is almost finished, I have done my part, now you must do your part. He said **IT IS FINISHED!**

Hebrews 10:12, 14(NASB)

¹² but He (Jesus), having offered **ONE sacrifice for SINS FOR ALL TIME, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,**

•••

¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

One Offering! Christ has forever perfected the Christian. It is finished!

So what is Paul talking about when he says that he is "**filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions**"?

I believe that Paul is referring to the **suffering** that is **required** to build Christ's **church** and spread the Gospel.

Keep in mind that the **church** is the body of Christ. We as believers are the body of Christ in this world.

In Acts 9, when Paul was converted and had his Damascus road experience, Jesus appeared to him and said "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?**"

The sufferings that Paul was inflicting on the believers, Jesus said, was sufferings of mine. So when the church or God's people suffer, Christ also suffers.

God has ordained that the growth of His church would be accomplished by the suffering of His people. That there would be sacrifices, difficulties, and toils in building Christ's church.

Acts 14:19-22 (NASB)

¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they **stoned Paul** and dragged him out of the city, **supposing him to be dead.** ²⁰ But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, **“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”**

Just as the Gospel ministry was a sacrifice for Paul, it must be a sacrifice for us as well. Sacrifice will often involve suffering.

- It may be a life of facing persecution by countering the "WISE" of the world.
- It may be a life of hardships from things we might lack or need.
- It may be turning down a better paying job.
- It may be that you sacrificially give to the Lord's work and sacrifice the comfort of worldly things.
- It may be the hardship of fatigue. Hours of work to provide and then hours of service until we are wearied at the end of every week.
- It may be the hardship of heartbreak. Maybe someone that you thought was maturing in Christ, falls back and you realize he is not as faithful as you had thought.

In II Cor. 11: 24-27, Paul lists many of the hardships he had to face.

2 Corinthians 11:24-27 (NASB)

²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned (as we just read in Acts 14), three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. ²⁶ *I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;* ²⁷ *I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.*

Paul lists all of these things that he suffered for Christ. But then he continues in verse 28:

²⁸ *Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.*

So not only did Paul suffer external things, he constantly had a concern that the churches would not be lead astray and would remain the faithful. There was an anxiety in his heart over the spiritual condition of the churches that he was ministering to.

This is the PROPER HEART for the ministry!

Friends, if we are passionate about the ministry of the Gospel, we will find ourselves lying awake at night concerned over people's spiritual condition. There will be nights when we are broken because we were so hopeful that there was real growth and real fruit in someone and something has revealed that that person was

not progressing as much as we had thought. It makes our heart ache! This is the type of suffering that we must endure in the ministry of the Gospel.

While we realize that the ministry of the Gospel is a sacrifice, let us not think that it is dreary, dull, and miserable.

It is much like the deer hunter. He was willing to spend all of that time, money, labor, and uncomfortable weather willingly. He enjoyed it because that was his passion and he had a goal in mind that could only be accomplished by doing those things.

Your ministry should be the same. If Christ is truly first in your life, you are willing to suffer ridicule, weariness, money, time, and even pain to further the Gospel because it will be the passion in your life.

The main difference is that we are a deer hunter to **please ourselves**. We are in the ministry to **serve God and to do His will**.

I Peter 4: 10-11 describes perfectly the proper heart for serving God.

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NASB)

¹⁰ As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

This should be our mindset as we serve the Lord through ministry!

Despite all of the Paul sufferings that Paul went through, he was still able to say...

Colossians 1:24 (NASB)

²⁴ Now I **REJOICE** in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Paul found it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ in his calling of being an apostle proclaiming the Gospel!

It is a privilege to serve Christ in His church. It is a privilege to even suffer and sacrifice for our great Savior. It is a privilege because we know the fruit that results. **The key** is that we must do it through our **love for Christ**, not for ourselves.

As Jesus endured the cross Hebrews 12:2 says He did it with joy! He was despised and shamed, but He looked ahead to what would be accomplished. The pain and suffering were real and it was no doubt very hard to do, but through all the suffering, He was able to do it with joy!

CONCLUSION:

Are you are allowing Christ to be Lord of your life? It is only by giving Him have **first place** in your life and serving Him that you can inherit His promises.

We are told in Matthew how to identify those who are sanctified by Christ. This applies both to people we meet as well as ourselves.

Matthew 7:16-21 (NASB)

¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*.”

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. He died for you, because you loves you and wants you for His own.

If you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior and you are still living like the world and not living a life fully pleasing to God. I urge you to seek the will of God in your life and rededicate your life to him. You are either “**dead to sin**” or you are “**dead in sin**”. There is no in between.

He is Lord, He is Lord.

He has risen from the dead and He is Lord.

Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess,

That Jesus Christ is Lord.