

yond men, hence a dynamic is provided which is God's mighty energy in the minister (cf. 1 Thess. 1:5; Phil. 2:13).

Conclusion

The activities of suffering, serving, and preaching are part of the ministry. Paul states three times in the context that he is personally involved (vv. 23, 25, 29). A man called of God for the specific task as Paul must expect these experiences, and when they come not to turn aside from his holy calling! But many who are not in the "ministry" as such (word for ministry is "working servant" and is often translated "deacon") know the experiences which Paul relates here. This is because they have entered into the "work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12), which is God's intention for every child of God. How are you faring in this whole setup? Do you really know what Paul is sharing here?

The grace that full salvation brings
On me, e'en me, has shin'd;
The hope to which my spirit clings
In Thee alone I find.

I look for Thee, for Thee I long,
And Thy appearing bright,
When I shall join the heavenly throng
And shine in cloudless light.

-- Henry Noule, 1862

NOTES:

THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

"The Christian Minister" Colossians 1:24-29

Introduction

1. To be a Christian minister is not a profession, but a holy calling from God. It has specific relations between God and a man touched by the Holy Spirit.
2. Of all the energetic ministers of the Lord whose lives are detailed in the Word of God, none is any more exciting than that of the apostle Paul. From the account recorded in the text, three areas of activity for a minister are noted. Study them!

1. SUFFERING v. 24.

It may sound strange to list this as an area of activity for a minister, but it is part of his lot in the Lord's work. All believers suffer; ministers are singled out in this passage. Their suffering is:



- a. Personal. The best rendering of this verse does not include the "who," but replaces it with "I". It is Paul who rejoices in his sufferings. Acts 9:16 predicted this for Paul. The amazing thing is that he rejoices in them (present tense for "rejoice").
- b. Christological. Paul's sufferings are related to His Lord. The sufferings mentioned here have nothing to do with the expiatory work of Christ's death at Calvary. It is as though a certain total of suffering is to be experienced by Christ and His own in the flesh. Paul was filling up on his part that which was lacking in this unknown total of suffering to be endured by Christ and His own. An amazing viewpoint from which to look at suffering in the life of a believer! Look up these texts: 2 Cor. 1:5; 11:24-28; Gal. 6:17; Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:13.

c. Ecclesiastical. It is not the physical body of our Lord for which Paul suffers, but the spiritual. It is a reference to the invisible church of believers. The Apostles, the Martyrs, the Reformers, and modern day suffers undergo this suffering for His blood-bought church.

2. SERVING vv. 25-27

The big news in these verses is that Paul is serving the Lord along dispensational lines. A dispensation is understood to be a management of God under which He tests man with respect to obedience or rejection of some specific revelation of the will of God. Generally speaking, seven dispensations are recognized in the Bible: innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and kingdom. How does all this fit in with Paul? Consider these features of the truth:



a. The dispensation committed. This truth about the dispensation here recorded was committed to Paul. In so doing this, the Word of God was completed. The whole cycle of the doctrines of the Word of God were "filled up." This is the keystone of the Word of the Lord! There is none greater! What a dramatic statement.

b. The dispensation explained. What Paul received had been hidden, but now was made known. That is the real significance of the term "mystery" in the Bible. It is not something mysterious, but truth which is made known to the initiated, the born again believer! It is truth revealed and not truth withheld.

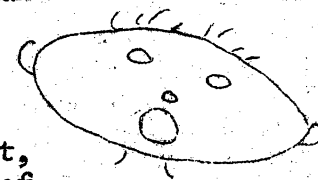
c. The dispensation expounded. The marvelous riches of His moral glory are all seen in the mystery. The particular revelation given is that the Gentiles should be called to share in the blessings of the Jews (cf. Eph. 2:11-22; 3:2-10). Part of this blessed truth also is that Christ

is not only for us and with us, but also IN US. That is the "hope of glory." He Himself is the Pledge of future glory. Hallelujah! What a marvelous unveiling of truth. A brand new thing was given to Paul and what an exciting item it is.

3. PREACHING vv. 28-29.

The concluding activity of Paul is listed as being communication. It is the natural complement to a triad of involvements for any Christian minister.

a. Instructional. Paul preached a Person and not some human scheme of things. It is "whom" we preach that is more important than any "which" we preach! But in the preaching of Christ, there is the involvement of instruction. It is two-fold:



- 1) Warning. This has to do with things that are wrong and need warning. There is a place for the negative approach in preaching the Word.
- 2) Teaching. This verb speaks of providing positive truth. Linked with the former item, it gives the proper balance in ministry.

Note: Preaching is more than proclamation. It comprehends the matters of warning and impartation of truth.

b. Directional. The whole point to preaching is the presentation of believers perfect in Christ Jesus. The word translated "perfect" denotes "complete." Here is a developmental goal to be attained through the minister's use of the Message concerning our Lord. This goal can only be reached through arduous effort. The verbs labour (which means "toil") and striving (which means "contending with fatigue and faintness as in an arena") show that this intent of preaching is no easy concern. The work is be-