

A Glorious Call, Message & Goal

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Text: Colossians 1:24-29

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[24] Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, [25] of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, [26] the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. [27] 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. [28] Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. [29] For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (ESV)

I. The Glorious Call

- Paul is no stranger to this adversity. In fact, later in the Book of Colossians, we learn that he's currently imprisoned for preaching the gospel.
- But Paul doesn't shrink back. Paul can rejoice in his sufferings because he knows that there's a call on his life. He says he was made a minister by God (verse 25).
- We can't possibly expect to persevere in mission, especially a difficult mission if we aren't under the firm conviction that we've been called to it. Paul knows that he has been called. He was made a minister by God. And he knows that the sufferings that he experiences are a part of that call, and the sufferings aren't just possible, but they are part of completing that mission.
- While on earth, Christ made clear that just as he suffered, so too we would experience hardship and suffering. Jesus made known that following him at times would mean sacrificing house and home. Leaving loved ones giving of our time, giving of our money for the sake of others. And he made clear that persecution would be a reality for those who followed him.

John 15:20 [20] Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (ESV)

- When Paul looks at his imprisonment, he doesn't give up. He hasn't moved to self pity, confusion or anger, but rather he rejoices. He knows that what's happening is not only a necessary part of the Gospel mission, but it's further fulfillment of that specific call that was given on his life.
- Paul knows what is behind this call. And he knows who it is that's calling him and who it is that he's been called to serve, and that is important for us.
- The creator and the sustainer of the universe appeared to him. This God who rules overall, personally approached Paul and enlisted him in his Kingdom services.

- What an energizing reality that should be for us when seeking to live the life that we've been called to or to step out and face in some way or or to plant churches or to go on missions trips.
- We aren't just spinning our wheels. We're doing this because we too have a glorious call from God.
- While Paul's apostolic ministry was specific to him, we've all been called to a life of faithfulness and the life of mission, the Great Commission, applies to us all.
- Paul's faith displayed would have encouraged the Colossians as they sought to live out the call on their lives to be lights in the world. Paul knew that God called him. And Paul knew that God called him for the good of others.
- Paul suffers and Paul labors because Paul longs to see people come to know the great savior who suffered and labored for us.

II. The Glorious Message

- The greater the message that we have to carry, the more carefully and the more urgently we deliver it.
- Paul's delivering a very important message to us. The word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a word which not only saves lives from eternal separation from God, but also restores relationship with God and produces joy inexpressible.
- Paul says that it's the mystery hidden for ages and generations. Paul understood the magnitude of what happened when Jesus came to earth. This was the great mystery that all of history was pointing towards.
- The mystery we're talking about here is what once was hidden, God has now made revealed in the gospel.
- The Apostle was eager for them to see the full extent of the riches of the glory of this mystery, as he puts it in verse 27. That's such illustrative language. There's riches and there's glory in this message.
- For those of us who have been believers for a while, sometimes the riches and the glory can tend to fade in our minds and our hearts, if we're not careful. But there's riches and there's glory because it's not just a message. It's not just hearing words being shared, it's encountering the very God of the universe.
- The mystery that was to come is Jesus Christ himself. The word the gospel message is embodied. Jesus Christ is the living word. And he's the greatest treasure that we can attain here.
- In Jesus Christ, all of reality finds its fulfillment. He's the source of all knowledge and wisdom. When Paul says in all wisdom here he's he's likely contradicting the false teachers of the day who claimed to have some kind of secret, higher knowledge reserved for the elites.
- Paul says 'no.' We can do no better than the wisdom found in Christ.
- People are desperate for wisdom. No tweet, no pithy saying, no scientific discovery can possibly provide what this message can. To those burdened by guilt from their sins, the gospel speaks forgiveness. To those fearful of a recent health diagnosis, the gospel can give eternal hope. To those who feel ugly and unwanted, the gospel bestows worth and dignity. To those who lack relationship, the gospel gives a family. To those tired from their strivings for titles and

success, the gospel invites them to acknowledge their weaknesses and stand in the victory of Jesus Christ.

- There's no other fount of wisdom that we're to drink from for our joy, our hope, our salvation.
- It's a good thing for us to evaluate in our hearts today what are we drinking from?

III. The Glorious Goal

- Paul will stop at nothing less than to see all peoples reach maturity in Jesus Christ.
- He's emphatic when he says warning everyone teaching everyone that we may present everyone mature in Christ.
- God desires that all would reach maturity in him. Paul saying here is that he labors to see believers fully orienting themselves around God. He desires for them to be blameless inasmuch as human beings can be on this side of eternity.
- Paul longed that people would first come to know Christ and then reach maturity in him. That should be our goal as well.
 - That's why we evangelize.
 - It's why we hold Bible studies.
 - That's why we sing songs of praise and why we lead others to the Scriptures.
 - That's why we have accountability partners and read biographies of the saints.
 - That's why we, as a body of churches, are committed to church planting and to missions and doing things in our local communities.
- And this is why we're a body of churches that are committed to being gospel centered. We long to see all people brought to maturity in Jesus Christ.
- Paul knows that as he does this work as he labors, it's not in his own strength, but it's in the strength that God supplies.
- When we think of the cost of things like planting churches or giving generously or fighting sin, we know that we have the power to do so. The power that God supplies with all his energy.

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Re-read the text, Colossians 1:24-29 What initial observations and insights do you have from reading this text?
- Nick made the point that considering our glorious call, the glorious message we proclaim and the goal of the message we proclaim -- can fuel us in our own mission to proclaim Christ. So let's take time to consider these things together.
- Let's consider the Apostle Paul's call and how that relates to us (see point #1, "The Glorious Call"). Paul was called by God to apostolic ministry. We've been called too in the Great Commission. And this Great Commission is not easy. It involves cost and sacrifice. If you, if I, if we together are going to walk faithfully in the call in to proclaim Christ -- what will that require of us? Recognizing that the grace of Christ covers our failures in evangelism, what is one way you would like to change personally in order to be more faithful in reaching out to and proclaiming Christ to the lost?
- There are "riches and glory" in the message we proclaim -- the message of the gospel. What are some of the "riches and glory" that are found in the gospel? Nick made the thoughtful comment,

"For those of us who have been believers for a while, sometimes the riches and the glory can tend to fade in our minds and our hearts, if we're not careful." How do you feel like you've been doing lately in rejoicing in and resting in the glorious work of Christ on our behalf?

- What are some things we can proactively do to keep our hearts and minds regularly focused on and rejoicing in the grace of God in the gospel?
- How can meditating on the gospel fuel our evangelism?
- Consider taking time to pray, asking God to help us to embrace the cost of proclaiming Him. Also ask God to help us to keep our eyes on Christ and the glorious gospel.