

- I) V24-29 INTRO: I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh *what is lacking* in the
 - a) IN V23: Paul spoke of the gospel, which he preached as *a minister of the Lord*
 - 1) TWO THINGS: In saying this *he exalted the gospel* and reinforced his *apostolic authority*

- II) FIRST: He exalts the gospel because it is God's message of salvation
 - a) 1 Co 1:18 The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God
 - b) 1 Co 2:4-5 My speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

- III) SECOND: He establishes his credentials because the *false teachers* said he was just giving opinions
 - a) KEY: This is a common tactic of false teachers: just challenge the biblical authority of the minister

- IV) THIS HAPPENED: In the church in Corinth
 - a) Infiltrators entered the church presenting themselves as super apostles, undermining Paul
 - 1) In 2nd Corinthians, Paul actually defended himself from no less than 21 charges against him

- V) ONE OF THE CHARGES WAS: That he was self-appointed
 - a) PAUL: Made it clear that this was not true, but God had granted him spiritual authority
 - 1) 2 Co 1:21 He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God

- VI) FACT: His detractors said he was not equal to the spiritually elite infiltrators, super apostles
 - a) They said he was not a very *eloquent speaker* and an intellectual inferior to these men
 - 1) 2 Co 11:5-6 I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge.

- VII) PAUL REJOICED: In the fact that he had been saved, and called by God in to ministry
 - a) YET: Being a minister was not as easy a life as it might appear to be
 - 1) In his life, ministry came with great trials and much suffering
 - 2) Ac 9:15-16 (Paul) is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things *he must suffer* for My name's sake
 - 3) PAUL SUFFERED: But now we see the attitude he had was one of joy, and not sorrow

- VIII) V24 I NOW: *Rejoice in my sufferings* for you and *fill up in my flesh* what is lacking in the afflictions
 - a) IMPORTANT: Serving God and others did not cause Paul to lose heart and to give up
 - 1) He did not allow his connection to Jesus to be broken, but stayed in fellowship with Him

- IX) ALSO: He did not fall into the trap of thinking that God somehow *owed him something*
 - a) Serving with the expectation of compensation is a job, not a ministry
 - 1) That attitude lends itself to feeling entitled
 - 2) Lu 17:7-10 Which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was *our duty to do*
 - l) TO EMPHASIZE: The joy of serving, Paul actually speaks of the sufferings he was enduring

- a) Paul was in prison, but endured it because he knew he was a prisoner of Jesus, and not Rome
 - 1) Eph 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner *of the Lord*
 - 2) Philemon 1 Paul, a prisoner of *Christ Jesus*

- II) ROME PUT HIM BEHIND BARS: But could not touch his freedom
 - a) He was free in Jesus and just spending time in Rome, giving him opportunity to write to believers
 - 1) 2 Ti 2:9 I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.

- III) V24 NOTICE: Paul said Now I rejoice in *my sufferings for you* (What is he not saying?)
 - a) He is not saying that Jesus' suffering on the cross was insufficient, so he had to
 - 1) Heb 10:11-14 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest (Jesus) had offered *for all time one sacrifice* for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because *by one sacrifice* he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

- IV) POINT: Jesus' suffering *alone* provided salvation for us
 - a) SO: If Paul is not referring to Christ's suffering on the cross for us: What is he saying
 - 1) I am in prison and enduring suffering, but I rejoice in it because I am here on behalf of Jesus

- V) HIS ATTITUDE CONCERNING THIS: Suffering is part of the privilege of following Jesus
 - a) Men will never become great in theology until they become great in suffering.
 - b) Luther: Affliction is the best book in my library.

- VI) WHAT GOOD IS SUFFERING: Through it, lessons are learned
 - a) We actually draw closer to Jesus and deepen by the fellowship of *His sufferings*
 - b) Our salvation is evidenced as those who reject Jesus *also reject us*
 - c) It prepares us for heaven and the reward for faithful service to Him; and it undermines Satan's attempt to destroy the work of God in our lives
 - 1) Phil. 1:29 To you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake

- VII) V24 *AFFLICTIONS*: Distress, pressure, or trouble
 - a) This often refers to the *trials* that come to believers, the ordinary pressures of life
 - 1) POINT: Jesus died, but the world still pours out hate towards Him by hurting His followers
 - 2) Jn 15:18 If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you.

- VIII) WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER: Salvation isn't just intended to secure us personal comfort
 - a) It actually deepens us in our walks with the Lord, giving us experience to draw from
 - 1) Ro 5:3-5 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us
 - 2) 1 Pe. 5:6-9 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

- I) V25-26 OF WHICH: I became *a minister* according to the stewardship from God which was given me

- a) Paul's attitude was one of humility: though he was an apostle, he saw himself as a minister
 - 1) Minister: table waiter, servant: He was not as some great one in the church
 - 2) Mk 10:44-45 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

- II) V25 ACCORDING: To the stewardship from God which was given to me for you
 - a) STEWARDSHIP: (Dispensation) Stewardship over another's goods
 - 1) Paul knew that God had given him stewardship over the gospel of Christ
 - 2) 1 Co. 9:17 If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

- III) REMEMBER: *False teachers* were infiltrating Colosse, bringing in error clothed as Christian doctrine
 - a) As a minister of the gospel, Paul gave the word of God *accurately*, without personal gain
 - 1) 2 Co 2:17 We are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.
 - 2) 2 Co 4:2 We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

- IV) V26 HE WAS STEWARDING: The mystery which has been hidden from ages and generations but now
 - a) MYSTERY: A secret once concealed but now revealed

- V) V27 THE MYSTERY: Here, that Gentiles would be fellow heirs with believing Jews
 - a) Jews did not know that Gentiles would be given an equal place in God's kingdom
 - 1) The birth of the church revealed God's plan and the depth of His love for all people
 - 2) Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- VI) V27 NOTICE: Christ in you *the hope of glory*
 - a) In the gospel, we have not only present hope but also a future and a hope of glory with Him
 - 1) 2 Co 4:17 For our *light affliction*, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,

- VII) V28 HIM: We preach warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present
 - a) WARNING: Admonish, exhort, counsel: Attempting to awaken people to their need for Him
 - b) TEACHING: Referring to new converts as well as the maturing process of believers
 - 1) Solid teaching prepares people to see Jesus

- VIII) V29 TO THIS END: *I also labor*, striving *according to His working* which works in me mightily
 - a) All of my labor would be without fruit, if God did not empower me to preach and warn
 - 1) False teachers labor in human effort and ability, but Paul labored in God's power