

**Servant of Christ**  
**Colossians 1:23b-29**  
**January 29, 2012**

## Introduction

We have talked about the supremacy of Christ over everything and how He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Savior. Last week, we studied about the term “mystery” and how the gospel was hidden in ages past but now revealed in Christ. This was Paul’s passion and joy...to reveal what was hidden but now made known. He preached the gospel. In fact, Paul declared himself to be a servant of Christ. Here Paul tells us what a servant of Christ looks like, and his works. Paul also doesn’t mince words when he says that being a servant of Christ and doing His work, we will suffer.

**Colossians 1:23b-29** *of which I, Paul, have become a servant. <sup>24</sup>Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church. <sup>25</sup>I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness- <sup>26</sup>the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. <sup>27</sup>To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. <sup>29</sup>To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me.*

## I. Identification of the Servant

Paul identifies himself as a servant of Christ

- Called to be a servant of God
  - of which I, Paul, was made a minister (NASB)*
    - Minister—Gk, *diakonos*—in English, deacon
    - Same word in Gk is translated servant in **verse 25**
    - Ministers in a Biblical sense always mean servants
    - Paul was called and made to be a servant by God

**Romans 15:15-16** *I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me <sup>16</sup>to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

**1 Timothy 2:7** *And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle-I am telling the truth, I am not lying-and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.*

- How did Paul see himself as a servant?
  - Prisoner of Jesus Christ (not men)

**Ephesians 3:1** *For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles.*

**Philemon 1:1** *Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus*

- See the humility of Paul—he never saw himself as a prisoner of man, but that he was in a place where Jesus wanted him to be. In other words, Paul was obedient to the will of God.

- In chains for the gospel

**Philippians 1:12-14** Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. <sup>13</sup>As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup>Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

**Transition:** If a servant is in service of someone, then what was Paul's work?

## II. Works of the Servant

- What were Paul's labors?
  - Preaching the gospel in its fullness (v 25)
  - Admonitions (warnings) and teaching (v 28)
  - Mystery of the indwelling Christ (v 27)

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

- What was Paul's goal in all his labors?
  - To present everyone perfect in Christ
    - Spiritual adults

**Hebrews 5:14** But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

- Mature, ripened Christians

**Ephesians 4:13** till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

**Note:** Paul never saw his strength as the one that produced his works, but that it was through the Holy Spirit, through Christ that he works. He was under the power of God and trusted that God would use him to proclaim the gospel. (**work on this some more...kinda weak**)

**Transition:** If we are identified as a servant of Christ and we labor as a servant of Christ, we will surely suffer as a servant of Christ.

## III. Suffering of the Servant

- *I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions*
  - What it does not mean
    - Christ's suffering on the cross was not enough
    - The total sum of Christ's suffering had not been met
    - Christians have to suffer to meet that sum

Jesus' suffering on the cross was perfect and nothing more is needed to add to His suffering.

- Parallel meaning

**Philippians 2:25-30** *I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, <sup>26</sup>for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. <sup>27</sup>Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup>I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. <sup>29</sup>So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, <sup>30</sup>for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.*

- Epaphroditus fills up what is lacking in the service of the Philippian church
- What did Epaphroditus do?
  - He delivered the gifts from the Philippian church to Paul (**Phil 4:18**)
- What was lacking in the service of the church? What did Epaphroditus do that filled up that was lacking?
  - The church could not come as a group to give the gifts in person (it was impossible)
  - Epaphroditus did this for the church (he filled up what they could not do)
  - It was a very positive praise—not a negative statement
  - The church received credit also for what Epaphroditus did.
- How does Paul fill up what is lacking in Christ's affliction?
  - Jesus is at the right hand of the Father now
  - He does not show Himself to the world
  - How do we show Jesus' perfect and complete suffering on the cross to the world?
  - Through our suffering
  - The world hates Jesus Christ and if He is in us, they will hate us too because of Christ in us

**John 15:18-20** *If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. <sup>19</sup>If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also.*

**Acts 9:4** *He (Saul) fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?"*

**Acts 9:16** *I will show him how much he must suffer for My name."*

**Philippians 1:29** *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him,*

**2 Corinthians 1:5** *For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.*

- *Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you... for the sake of His body, which is the church*

**Acts 5:41** *The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*

- Why does suffering bring Paul and the saints joy?
  - Suffering brings us closer to Christ

**Philippians 3:10** *I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death,*

- Suffering assures believers that they belong to Christ

**2 Timothy 3:12** *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

- Suffering grows the church (in quality and quantity)

## Conclusion

Christ suffered to accomplish salvation, and we suffer to spread salvation (John Piper).

**Mark 8:35** *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.*

A servant is not greater than his master. To be a servant of Christ, we are to give up our own life for Him. Paul set himself as an example for us to follow. Jesus Christ is all we have and all we need. This is what Paul is saying in the scope of the passage. Christ alone is supreme and Him alone we serve and to Him alone we give our lives.