

Rejoicing in Suffering, Colossians 1:24-29 – June 2nd, 2019

- Today, I want to talk with you about suffering and how that it's possible for us to rejoice during those times of trial and affliction.
- This because, the Apostle Paul makes what I would argue is a rather stunning statement concerning what he did for them.
- Namely, that of the suffering and affliction he endured for the sake of the body of Christ, which is what God called him to do.

- I would suggest that the suffering and affliction are somewhat of a given, but it's entirely different to actually rejoice in suffering.
- This begs the question of why it is and how it is that Paul could say in verse twenty-four, that he rejoices in suffering for them.
- Thankfully, he answers this for us in verses twenty-five through twenty-nine, which is what I would like for us to look closer at.

- First, notice in verse twenty-five where Paul says he's a servant by the commission God gave him to present God's Word fully.
- He goes on in verses twenty-six through twenty-eight saying that the mystery that had been hidden, has now been revealed.
- Specifically, that the Gentiles would have the same privileges with the Jews, making them God's people in addition to the Jews.

Ephesians 3:1-6 - 1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

- Notice verse twenty-nine where he says to this end he strenuously contends with all energy Christ so powerfully worked in him.
- The reason I point this out is because this is the secret, if you will, to how Paul was able to rejoice in all his sufferings for them.
- In other words God first had to do that work in him before He would be able to do that work through him to which He called him.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the biggest reasons we as Christians misunderstand suffering, this would be it.
- By that I mean, we're often times prone to misinterpret hardships and sufferings in the Christian life, of which there are many.
- We think that we must be out of God's will or even worse yet we think that God is angry with us and that He wants to punish us.

- Truth be made known, the Lord allows the hardships and uses the suffering to prepare us for that which He's preparing for us.
- One of the things I'm learning in my walk with the Lord is that I make it harder than it needs to be when I fight the Lord on this.
- When I look back on times of hardship and suffering and see what the Lord was doing, I realize I could have rejoiced instead.

James 1:2-4 - 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Romans 5:3-5 - 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 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.

- I'll bring it to a close with a twofold question I think we would all do well to consider, as it relates to our hardship and suffering.
- First, could it be that God desires to do a deep work of preparation in you in order that he might do a mighty work through you?
- Second, could it be what you're going through isn't chiefly about you or even for you but instead is for someone else you love?