A Life Invested For the Sake of Others

Colossians 1:24-2:1
6/19/2016

INTRODUCTION:

*Let Paul's example of unselfish sacrifice for the sake of others challenge you to invest your life the same way!

How did Paul invest his life for others?

I. He <u>SUFFERED</u> as a Martyr
. . . that others would believe the <u>Gospel message</u> (v. 24, cp. v. 23)

II. He <u>SERVED</u> as a Steward
. . . that others would know God's <u>glorious mystery</u> (v. 25-28)

III. He <u>STRIVED</u> as a Wrestler
. . . that others would grow to <u>full maturity</u> (v. 28b-2:1)

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ILLUS: the expression used by store clerks, bankers, car dealers, salesmen, etc. - "What can I do for you?"

When the world asks that question, what they are really saying is "What can I do for myself?" since helping the customer means money in their wallet.

Paul had the attitude of, "What can I do for you," but not for selfish reasons; rather for the spiritual well-being of those to whom he ministered.

NOTE: The emphasis in Paul's life was not what others could do for him, but what he could do for others! (even people like the Colossians whom he had never met personally - 2:1).

Note the repeated phrase "for you" (v. 24, 25, 2:1). Paul lived for others Christians (cp. this to his desire to depart for heaven, but his burden to remain for God's saints - Phil. 1:21-26).

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I. He <u>SUFFERED</u> as a Martyr
. . . that others would believe the <u>Gospel message</u> (v. 24, cp. v. 23)

"...Fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" - Paul is not saying that Christ's death was incomplete or that His atonement was insufficient, or that His death and suffering was not enough for redemption.

Paul is not saying that he had to add to Christ's sufferings for salvation purposes.

There is no more suffering to be done for one to become a Christian; however, there may be some suffering because you are a Christian.

No one suffers vicariously to pay for the sins of others (except Jesus - I Pet. 3:18).
What Paul is saying is that his afflictions are Christ's afflictions. Because Christ was with Paul - united to Him. Anything someone does against one of Christ's children, they are actually doing against Jesus Himself (EX: Mt. 25:34-46; Acts 9:4-5).

Whatever a Christian suffers, they also suffer it for Jesus Himself.

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ" (II Cor. 1:5).

"The sufferings of Paul were the afflictions of Christ because He suffered in and with Paul" (Reinecker, p. 570).

Paul is simply saying that he is completing the suffering that Jesus told him he would suffer.

From the moment of Paul's conversion, he was told how much he would suffer for the sake of Christ (Acts 9:16).

Paul's suffering:

--Hunted as a criminal at Damascus (Acts 9:23-26)
--Pelted with stones at Lystra (Acts 14:19-20)
--Whippings and imprisonment at Philippi (Acts 16:23-24)
--Bonds and afflictions at Jerusalem (Acts 20:23)
--In prison at Rome (Acts 28)

As Paul writes this letter to the Colossians, he writes from a prison cell in Rome (cp. Col. 1:7 with Philem. 23).

Paul's testimony in the face of suffering: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24)

There was a time (prior to Paul's conversion) that he persecuted the Church (causing the Church to suffer); how, however, he is willing to suffer for the same Church which he once tried to destroy (Acts 9;21; Gal. 1:23).

To suffer for Christ's Body, His Church, is to suffer for Christ.

Paul said: I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17).

Such afflictions are the lot of most true believers -

Phil. 1:29 - "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

Mt. 5:11-12 - "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Acts 14:22 - "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

I Pet. 4:12-13 - "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

I Thes. 3:3-4 - "That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know."

II. He <u>SERVED</u> as a Steward
. . . that others would know God's <u>glorious mystery</u> (v. 25-28)

V. 25

"Whereof" - points to the word "church" (v. 24).

It was on behalf of Christ's Church, that Paul became a servant of Jesus.

"Minister" = "diakonos" - a servant or household slave.

"Dispensation" ("oikonomian") = stewardship (lit. "house rule" - "oikos" - house; "nomos" = rule). The word indicated the responsibility, authority, and obligation given to a household slave (cp. Eph. 1:10). (cp. Reinecker, p. 570).

"Which is given to me" - Paul was not a self-appointed apostle. He did not make Himself a messenger for God. God gave him his stewardship.

"To fulfill the word" - to carry out and complete God's task of spreading the Gospel message, to all nations.

As a steward, Paul had to be faithful (I Cor. 4:2).

"He could not abandon his calling just for personal safety and comfort" (Wiersbe, p. 65).

Paul, as an apostle, was an official steward of the Gospel message. Every believer is also a steward of this message, and an ambassador for Christ (II Cor. 5:19-21).

V. 26

"Mystery" = that which is undiscoverable by human means (cp. Eph. 3:3).

"Hid" = concealed, veiled, kept secret.

"Manifest" = to cause to appear; to make clear.

NOTE: God's mystery is only manifested to "His saints." Unbelievers are blind to it (II Cor. 4:4).
V. 27

"To whom" - to the saints (v. 26).

"God would" = God desired, wished. It was and is God's will to make known His riches.

What is the "mystery"?

1.The unity (oneness) that believers have with Christ (v. 27b) (cp. Eph. 5:32; cp. Rom. 6:1ff).

2.The unity (oneness) that Jews and Gentiles have in the Body of Christ (via our union to Christ (Eph. 3:1-8).

"Christ in you" means:

You now share His presence (Mt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5)
You now share His purity (Rom. 6:3-4, 11)
You now share His resurrection (Rom. 6:5; 8:10-11)
You now share His life (Rom. 6:8)
You now share His fellowship (Rev. 3:20)
You now share His inheritance (Rom. 8:17)

God's mystery is:

1."Rich" -It's something with joys and life that never end (the word "riches" refers to God's plenteous blessings in Christ - cp. Eph. 1:3)

2."Glorious"-It's something to look forward to in the future. The "glory" refers to our future "hope of glory" (i.e. the Resurrection -
I Cor. 15:51ff - "Behold I show you a mystery")

3.For the "Gentiles" - lit. "the nations" - It's something for all nations

4."Certain"-It's something that God guarantees. "Christ in you, the hope (confidence) of glory"
V. 28

"Whom we preach" - the message Paul proclaimed (announced) was singular: "Christ!" (I Cor. 2:2)

"Warning" = "noutheteo" - to put into the mind; to confront one's thinking and to correct one's thoughts.

"Teaching" = indoctrinating

To teach in "all wisdom" is to teach about Christ, because it is in Christ that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" reside (Col. 2:3).

Paul's purpose (his motive, his goal) = "That we might present (as an offering to God) every man perfect (complete; mature) in Christ"
Paul's whole life and ministry was wrapped up in this goal: mature believers.

Are you burdened that others grow in Christ? . . . That they become stable, secure, and solid?

III. He <u>STRIVED</u> as a Wrestler
. . . that others would grow to <u>full maturity</u> (v. 28b-2:1)

v. 29
"Whereunto" = unto which goal of seeing spiritually mature disciples... "I also labor"

The words "striving" (1:29) and "conflict" (2:1) are athletic terms. They refer tot he strenuous effort put forth by an athlete to win a contest (cp. Wiersbe, p. 68).

"Labor" = to toil to the point of sweating; to the point of exhaustion.

"Striving" = Paul's labor involved "striving" or intense struggling against the host of evil (cp. Eph. 6:12).

We derive our English word "agony" from the Gk. word "agonizomai" translated "striving."

Paul's struggle for the Colossians was no doubt in the matter of prayer.

Prayer is the most intense practice you will ever do.

ILLUS: Jacob's wrestling with God (Gen. 32:24-30).

So much of our prayer is so calm and comfortable, sweet cliches, etc. But little agonizing. Little fasting. Little time spent.

Paul, by example, taught Epaphras to pray with the same intensity (SEE: Col. 4:12).

Paul, however, did not put forth striving labor by his own strength (by the flesh), but in accordance with the effective energy of God that infused him daily.

2:1
Paul loved Christ so much that he loved even Christians whom he had never met before.

Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said that he agonized greatly over the Colossians, the believers at Laodicea, and everyone else in Christ whom he never met personally.

CONCLUSION: Paul was willing to spend and be spent for the sake of others.

Are you?