

Introduction

- "She's a good worker in the church..."
- Ever heard that said of someone? What does it usually imply?
 - term of appreciation, **their contribution is valued...**
 - but **not necessarily anything** about their **relationship with the Lord** of the church!
- Two themes emerge from these verses:
 - **Paul's labour for the church** - and implied importance!
 - **heart of what he was labouring at** - Christ in you, the hope of glory!

Exposition

(1:24) 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.

- Hard verse!!
- Several things are puzzling!!
 - how can you rejoice in suffering?
 - surely Christ's sufferings are sufficient for us - not adding to his pain on the Cross...?
 - certain amount of disagreement amongst the scholars about all this...
- But **most likely explanation goes something like this:**
 - suffering not **necessarily** negative, because it can be a **tool in God's hand to help us grow;**
 - **(cf discipline in learning at school; not necessarily pleasant...)**
 - the reference to filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions **is to Christ's participation in Paul's suffering;**
 - as a Christian, Jesus is always present in Paul, with him wherever he goes, and with him in whatever he experiences;
 - **so when Paul suffers, Christ suffers too.**
- Just notice a couple of things:
 - the **level of commitment Paul displays:** he is willing, even rejoicing to suffer; he's got a "whatever it takes" attitude
 - notice too **what that commitment is to** - the church and her growth!

(1:25) I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness -

- **Servant of the church** - that thought of serving the church, the body of Christ, the people of God, not himself - is present again.
 - his work is for the betterment, the sake of, God's people
- **Commission given by God** - not own idea or authority.
 - **that's why any preacher** - any Christian! - **can dare to speak into someone else's life!!**
- And that commission was to **present God's word**, his authoritative word.
 - while Paul had a special and particular authority as an apostle, which we don't have...
 - **God's word, the Bible, still has that authority today.**
- That means we have to take care to **respond to what we hear** from his word:
 - as we hear it read, in sermons, in our own daily study, etc

(1:26) the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

- In God's word is a great mystery, now revealed to us.
 - **disclosed** - **Spirit's work in us**, quickening us to see that which is plainly there!
 - **"none so blind as will not see..."**
 - the saints are God's people, those made holy (hagios, saints) by God's regenerating work in their lives - on whom the Spirit has come - those who can see...

Colossians 1:24-2:5 Paul's Labour for the Church Fintry, 1/2/2004, pm

(1:27) 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.

- Known.
- Gentiles - ie **everyone**: Pakistani neighbours, atheists, Godless, down-and-outs, ...
- Richness!
- What is it? "**Christ in you!**" - we share **the one who is in our hearts!**
 - church member without Christ in them has nothing to share!
- Christ is **our hope of glory** and the world's

(1:28) We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

- So, **because of that**, Paul wants to present everyone perfect in Christ:
 - implied growth in grace, in knowledge, in love of him, of closeness to him, etc
 - same process as Jesus himself was taking the disciples through on the lake this morning... Paul sees himself as a partner in that process!
- **How does he go about it?**
 - **teaching and admonishing** - by implication from God's word, from what God has revealed.
- Implication is that there is a mutual responsibility to present one another perfect in Christ:
 - **despite our culture's rampant individualism** - I fear this is one area where we have bought into worldly values big-time - **we need to take our corporate responsibilities seriously...**
 - **housegroups; prayer in small groups; mutual accountability; encouraged? share it!!**, etc, etc!!

(1:29) To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

- Not just a passing thought, but a deep seated priority...
 - all **his** energy!
 - he is not meddling in someone else's life; **he is working with the Lord's strength at the Lord's work!**

(2:1) I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.

- For people, concern, heart for them!
 - knowing that people care is a huge boost!

(2:2) My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,

- Encouragement, unity, love, understanding, knowledge of Christ.
 - (always comes back to Christ, doesn't he!!)

(2:3) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

- Right perspective on everything ("**all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**") are in Jesus Christ alone.

(2:4) I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.

- **This was the Colossians danger** - teachers coming and distorting the truth.

(2:5) For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

- Hold on in there, **don't get diverted or swept away by other priorities**:
 - **it is growing in Christ and sharing him that is important**;
 - all the rest is crud, ultimately, and if it comes between us and growing in Christ and sharing him then it must be thrown away.
 - easy enough to say - **very hard to live, day in day out** (why we need one another!)

Conclusion

- Are we making the most important thing our labour?
 - is **Christ first** our fervent desire and discipline for **ourselves**?
 - is **Christ first** our fervent desire and discipline for **our brothers and sisters in Christ in the church**?