

# Blessings and Burdens of Spiritual Leadership

## Colossians 1:23-26

**BGT** <sup>23</sup> εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἐδραῖοι καὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε, τοῦ κηρυχθέντος ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν, οὗ ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος διάκονος. <sup>24</sup> Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐκκλησία, <sup>25</sup> ἧς ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεισάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, <sup>26</sup> τὸ μυστήριον τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν- νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ,

**NKJ** <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. <sup>24</sup> I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, <sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, <sup>26</sup> the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

My Identity as an INDIVIDUAL (Colossians 1:1)

My Identity as Part of a GROUP (Colossians 1:2)

Three Realms of a Believer's Walk (Colossians 1:3-8) – Ongoing Belief, Active Care, Forward Focus

Three Areas of Prayer for Spiritual Growth (Colossians 1:9-11) – Worthy Walking, Fruitful Working, Empowered Doing

Four Reasons to Thank God (1:12-14) – Our Qualification, Extrication, Translation, Redemption (He made us fit, free, followers, forgiven)

Serve the Savior as the Creator (1:15-17) – He is God of All, Firstborn of All, Creator of All

Who Is First in Your Life? (1:18) Christ is first in the Church, in Existence, in the Resurrection, in All Things

Why Should Christ Be First? (1:19-20) Because of Who He Is (Fully God) and What He Has Done (Reclaimed All Things)

God's Plan, Our Participation (1:21-23) Our Past, Our Present, God's Plan, Our Participation

### I. Spiritual Leadership Involves Sufferings that Bring Joy

<sup>24</sup> I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, (Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν)

#### A. Leading others for Christ brings suffering

#### B. Suffering is accepted with joy as a temporary trouble for eternal gain

*Salvation, Saints, Suffering, and Sanctification go together! Here are a few truths on suffering:*

##### 1. Sufferings Are Temporal and Tiny Compared to Eternity (Rom 8:18)

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

##### 2. Sufferings Are Avenues to Knowing God's Comfort (2 Cor 1:5-7)

*For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, [it is] for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, [it is] for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you [is] steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also [you will partake] of the consolation.*

##### 3. Sufferings Are a Means to Knowing Jesus Intimately (Phil 3:10)

*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*

##### 4. Sufferings Are an Opportunity to Experience God's Deliverance (2 Tim 3:11)

*persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra -- what persecutions I endured. And out of [them] all the Lord delivered me.*

##### 5. Sufferings Are a Necessity to Bring Us to Full Spiritual Maturity, as Illustrated by Jesus (Heb 2:10)

*For it was fitting for Him, for whom [are] all things and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

##### 6. Sufferings Are a Means of Relating to Christ Through Experience (1 Pet 4:13)

*but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.*

##### 7. Sufferings Are a Common Experience of All Believers (1 Pet 5:9)

*Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*

## II. Spiritual Leadership Involves Shortcomings that Need Filled

and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,  
**1 Thes 3:10** night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?  
**Salvation is purchased and permanent; sanctification is costly and conditional. Leaders make the difference!**

### A. Filling Shortcomings Requires a High Price

1. A Price that is Personal (I, my)
2. A Price that is Physical (in my flesh)

### B. Filling Shortcomings is Done for the Benefit of the Body

1. Affliction is normal every believer who follows Christ

**John 16:33** "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

**Acts 14:22** strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting [them] to continue in the faith, and [saying], "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

**1 Thes 3:3** that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

2. Additional affliction comes with spiritual leaders, as they care for the Body

**2 Cor 1:8** For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

**2 Cor 2:4** For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

**2 Cor 7:4** Great [is] my boldness of speech toward you, great [is] my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.

**Eph 3:13** Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

3. God Responses to and Rewards Those that Endure Affliction

**Rom 5:3** And not only [that], but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

**2 Cor 1:4** who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

**2 Cor 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,

## III. Spiritual Leadership Involves Service that Needs Rendered

<sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister (ἦς ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ δούλος)

**Spiritual greatness measured by servicing, not lording**

**Matt 20:26** Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. (cf Matt 23:11; Mark 10:43)

**Mark 9:35** And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

**John 12:26c** If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

## IV. Spiritual Leadership Involves Stewardship that Dictates Responsibility

according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

- A. Stewardship is assigned by God (cp Eph 4:11)
- B. Stewardship is for the benefit of others (cp 1 Peter 4:10-11)
- C. One part of Paul's stewardship involved completing the Word of God

## V. Spiritual Leadership Involves a Secret that Needs Shared

<sup>26</sup> the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

- A. Sharing the Secret Hidden From Ages – The Mystery was Unknown in Times Past
- B. Sharing the Secret Hidden From Generations – The Mystery was Unknown to Peoples Past
- C. Sharing the Secret to His Saints

*Leadership is a privilege given by God to serve Him by benefiting His people by suffering, serving, and sharing. Will you lead?*