

TUESDAY February 24 **God's Eternal Plan**

Colossians 1:24–25 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in / afflictions of Christ, for / sake of His body, which = church, of which I became a minister according to /stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God.

- Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians
 - while under **house arrest in Rome**
 - Not sitting in comfort /freedom = chained to Roman guard
- Same man who once traveled from city to city
 - preaching in synagogues / reasoning in marketplaces
 - visiting homes / planting churches = now confined to one place
- What was his perspective in prison?
 - Might think such confinement = crush his spirit
- Extraordinary statement “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you.”
- Most of us don't rejoice over hardship = how could Paul?
- Paul saw his suffering thru / lens of = God's eternal plan
 - Saw bigger picture
 - His pain had purpose = his suffering was not wasted
 - It was woven into = fabric of God's saving work for others
- Paul understood that following Christ would involve suffering

John 16:33 Jesus said, “In this world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

- Paul also believed = what he wrote to / Romans:

Romans 8:18 The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

- I.E. When you hold your suffering up against eternity
 - fades into perspective
- Glory that awaits us = far outweighs / pain we endure
- So PAUL REJOICED
 - His chains = couldn't silence his message
 - His confinement = couldn't stop / gospel

- Even from prison = he was fulfilling God's plan / and he knew it
- **2 Timothy 2:9** Paul wrote, "The word of God is not bound."
- History proves that true = while Paul was confined
 - Holy Spirit / inspired him = to write letters
 - Letters that would outlive empires / cross continents
 - Shape Christian faith = for centuries
- From his prison cell = Paul wrote
 - **Philippians / Ephesians / Colossians / Philemon**
- The very letters that = continue to encourage believers today
- After his release = wrote **1 Timothy / Titus**
- During his final imprisonment = wrote **2 Timothy**
- Those prison years gave Paul = time / focus to compose much of NT
 - So what looked like **restriction** = was actually **redirection**
 - What seemed like / **setback** = became / **divine setup**
- Never assume that your limitations
 - Mean you've fallen outside of God's plan
- Sometimes = very seasons that feel like confinement
 - Are when God accomplishes His deepest work in you / thru you
- **Colossians 1:25** Paul described his calling
 - as "stewardship from God."
- Greek "oikonomia" = English word "economy"
 - Literally means= management / household order
- One sense = Paul was saying, "God has entrusted me with a sacred responsibility in His household."
- In broader sense = oikonomia refers to
 - God's way of ordering / His entire plan of salvation
- Think of it / like this = from eternity past / God has been orchestrating His everlasting gospel = divine symphony.
 - Each prophet / apostle / believer
 - Plays part in = music of redemption

- God /thru Moses / laid foundation
 - Thru His Prophets / added harmony
- Christ came as / melody = Living Word
 - GOD HIMSELF / made flesh
- Paul = even from prison = played his part / keep song going
 - until day it reaches = its final crescendo in glory
- **Ephesians 3:9** “plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God”
- From before foundation of world
 - God's plan of redemption / already in motion
 - **Revelation 13:8** Lamb slain from foundation of the world
- Paul's life/ministry /suffering = all part of that eternal plan
- **So is yours** = easy to see our own lives in **fragments**
- This job /that problem /this season of waiting = but **God sees/whole**
- When we trust Him / He weaves every thread = Joys / sorrows / triumphs / failures = into larger tapestry of grace
- What feels small / insignificant today
 - May be shaping something eternal tomorrow
- Think of Joseph/ in Egypt = sold by his brothers / thrown into prison
 - Forgotten by men / but never forgotten by God
- Years later= looked back /said, “God meant it for good.”
- Paul could have said same = his chains = advanced / gospel
 - His letters = nourished/ church
 - His suffering = strengthened believers / for generations
- Could it be / choices you're making today
 - Unseen sacrifices/ prayers no one but God hears
 - Faith you hold onto in darkness
 - Are all part of God's eternal plan = to bless someone else?

CLOSING THOUGHT:

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord... plans to give you a future and a hope.”

- You may only see / fragment = but God sees / full picture
- Every step of faith / every season of waiting
 - every moment of obedience
 - is part of His eternal plan
 - And He will complete it in you