The Meaning in the Mess 3.8.09

[24] Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, [25] of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, [26] the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. [27] To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. [28] Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. [29] For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Colossians 1:24-29 ESV

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings" Completely counterintuitive. How can this be?
"for your sake" His suffering has a purpose—for their growth.
"in my flesh" Suffering in his own physical body, prison, hardships etc.
"I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions…" Several possibilities. Most likely that He is continuing the ministry of Jesus which leads to suffering.
"for the sake of his body, that is, the church" Restatement of the purpose of the suffering.

P: We can rejoice in our suffering when we see its significance.

Can I see what God is doing in the midst of my suffering? Am I moving toward rejoicing?

P: The Gospel does not advance without suffering.

Is there any suffering in my life because of the Gospel? If not, why is this the case?

P: When we suffer for Jesus, we suffer with Jesus.

When I suffer, do I know that Jesus suffers with me?

"I became a minister according to the stewardship from God" A calling, a sacred trust.
"that was given to me for you" Who, in particular, the stewardship is for.
"to make the word of God fully known" And also beyond them to the world.

P: The 'Stewardship' of sharing the Gospel is for all of us—not just pastors and missionaries.

Am I playing my part in sharing the Gospel goes in both Louisville and beyond?

P: All of us have been given specific 'stewardships' by God.

Do I know what my 'stewardship' is? Am I carrying it out? If I am working toward it, am I being faithful with what is before me at this moment and doing all I can in the meantime?

"the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints" The Big Story.
"To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles" The inclusion of outsiders.
"are the riches of the glory of this mystery" An inexhaustible storehouse of treasure.

P: The Gospel makes outsiders insiders.

Do I recognize that I was an outsider who has now been made an insider by God's grace?

P: We can never say enough about the goodness of the Gospel.

When is the last time I stopped and thought about how good the Gospel really is?

"which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

P: The content of the mystery is that God now dwells inside of us.

What This Means for Us Practically (Not an Exhaustive List):

1. If the Spirit is within us, we are never truly alone.
2. The Holy Spirit helps us understand the Bible.
3. The Holy Spirit guides us in prayer and in making decisions.
4. The Holy Spirit works within us to empower and encourage our faith.
5. The Holy Spirit works within us to make us holy (like Jesus).

"Him we proclaim" Jesus was Paul's message. It should be the same for us.

P: Our proclamation is a Person—not a religion or set of rules.

Are we proclaiming Jesus or religion when we talk about our faith?

"warning everyone" Warning those who aren't yet following Jesus, gently rebuking.
"and teaching everyone with all wisdom" Carefully teaching those who are following Jesus.

P: "Warning" and "teaching" are part of proclaiming Jesus.

Are both warning and teaching part of our proclamation?

"that we may present everyone mature in Christ" The goal of ministry.

P: The goal of our proclamation should be moving people toward maturity in Christ—including ourselves.

Am I seeking to move myself and others toward maturity in Christ?

"For this I toil" Strong word meaning working to the point of exhaustion.
"struggling" Another strong word showing intense exertion.
"with all his energy that he powerfully works within me" God's power at work within Him.

P: Like Paul, we should strive *in God's strength* to see maturity become reality.

Do I have the proper balance/understanding in place? Am I striving in God's strength?

Works Consulted: *Expositor's Commentary, Life Application Bible, MacArthur Study Bible, ESV Study Bible, Messages by Darrin Patrick, John Piper, Tim Keller*