

COLOSSIANS: DISCERNING TRUE DOCTRINES
"Part III: God's Wonderful Use Of Church Leaders' Persecutions"
(Colossians 1:24-29 with Revelation 3:14-21)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) During the last "Pastor's Appreciation Week" Sunday, Duane Doot, a long-time former Church Board Chairman, stood in front of our Church's sanctuary and said, "I've known [the Pastor] a long time, and I wouldn't have his job if you *paid* me!"

I know that by this remark Duane was expressing appreciation for my ministry. But in a **larger** sense, someone listening might have wondered upon reflecting on Duane's words, "In view of the challenges of the Pastor's job, **why** hasn't he become involved in some ministry *elsewhere* that would be easier for him?!"

(2) *The job for Board members is not easy, either. I will never forget the scene when our Church Board once had to make a difficult decision regarding a party in our body. After the Board meeting at which the at party disagreement with the board members had attended, I saw the party walk out of the Board room linked arm in arm with one of the Board members with whom he was a good friend! What I have seen our Board Members themselves face for hard decisions they have had to make at times has been very great in terms of personal pain!*

(2) *Bob Salstrom, the former Alumni Placement Officer at Dallas Theological Seminary one day had a stack of letters 18 inches high on his desk. He told my Dad who talked with him that those letters had arrived in the mailbox from DTS grads who had written to ask to be placed in **any** church **other** than the one they were **pastoring!***

(3) *On Thursday I received a call from an area pastor requesting I join him with a few other theologically sound pastors in forming a monthly gathering for purposes of mutual fellowship and edification.*

In this group's monthly gatherings, pastors will be asked to bring a short talk on some aspect of the ministry and have the topic then discussed by the rest of the pastors and their wives at the meeting.

Know what the first meeting's topic is? "Handling Discouragement in the Ministry"!

IF such men are UPRIGHT, gospel-preaching, Bible-teaching men who are committed to doing the Lord's will, WHY are they allowed by GOD to experience such great and painful trials in their CHURCH ministries?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "When I heard a former board member tell our congregation he wouldn't have the Pastor's job 'if you PAID me,' and see repeated trials even other Board leaders face, I wonder, 'Will this suffering ever END?! HOW do they STAND it, and WHAT is going ON?!'"

- I. **When Paul wrote Colossians, he was in his first imprisonment in Rome due to ERRANT RELIGIOUS opposition for preaching the gospel, Col. 4:3b; Acts 28:17-30; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 667.**
- II. **This experience would have cost Paul much human suffering:**
 - A. **Prison for Paul included mental pressures:**
 1. *Though a Jew, Paul was a **Roman** citizen at **birth** (Acts 22:25-28).*
 2. *This citizenship made Paul **legally** immune to scourgings, coercion and extended stays that occurred in Roman prisons, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, ftn. to Acts 16:37; Z.P.E.B., volume Four, page 870.*
 3. *Thus, for Paul, a Roman citizen, often being imprisoned, flogged five times and once stoned and left for dead as he had (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24-25) would have tempted him to **mental frustration** due to the **injustices** of his **civil rights** being **trampled** by **Judaizers!***
 - B. **Prison for Paul involved physical hardship:** the numerous beatings he faced in prison produced lasting scars on his body, cf. Galatians 6:17.
 - C. **Prison for Paul contained spiritual conflicts:** for his exorcising a demon from a girl in Acts 16, Satan arranged for Paul to "pay" with imprisonment, being placed in stocks and a flogging, Acts 16:19-37.
 - D. **Prison for Paul embodied emotional stress:** in mentioning his sufferings for Christ in 2 Corinthians 1:5, Paul noted that at one point he "despaired even of life" (2 Corinthians 1:8), an **emotional battle!**
- III. **Yet, Paul REJOICED in these sufferings as he was granted the OPPORTUNITY to suffer *substitutionally* after the PATTERN of CHRIST'S suffering at the hands of ERRANT RELIGIONISTS so the CHURCH could progress, Ryrie St. Bib., KJV , ftn., Col. 1:24! This way, his sufferings were "*Christ's sufferings as well*", Ibid.**
- IV. **SIMILARLY, the plan of GOD for Church LEADERS TODAY includes the PARALLEL OPPORTUNITY to suffer at the hands of ERRANT EVANGELICAL RELIGIONISTS (as follows):**
 - A. *We before noted from Revelation 3:14-22 that the message to the Laodicean Church addresses God's words to **today's Evangelicals.***
 - B. *In that message, Jesus urged the **messenger (pastor)** to gain by **grace** from **Him** "gold tried in the fire", Revelation 3:18a; Isa. 55:1 & "buy".*

- C. This "gold tried in the fire" phrase alludes to 1 Peter 1:7 where the recipients of Peter's letter were being **persecuted** for their Christian **faith** (1 Pet. 4:12, 19), cf. Bible Knowledge Com., N.T., p. 838.
 - D. The call was for such leaders to overcome as **Christ** had (Rev. 3:21b), implying with the "gold tried in the fire" phrase their need to handle **religiously errant** persecutors as both Jesus (and later Paul) did!
 - E. Applying this to **today's** setting, God **graciously CALLS Church leaders** to face **standing** for the **truth** that **enrages** sin-exposed fellow **Evangelical religionists**, leading to such leaders being **persecuted** in turn as was **Jesus!** This way, such leaders **substitutionally suffer FOR** the welfare of God's **true flock IN** the **Church** in the **pattern** of **Christ's** sufferings (cf. Rev. 3:21b). That brings them **eternal** reward and **joy** if they **know** and **face** such trials, Col. 1:24; Matthew 5:12.
- V. **Thus, Paul GREATLY VALUED his ministry, Colossians 1:25-29:**
- A. He stated his work fulfilled God's plan for the Church, Col. 1:25-26.
 - B. The **result** of this ministry of such a **high** personal cost in **suffering** was that true believer would be properly disciplined, Col. 1:27-28.
 - C. Paul noted that **God's power** worked **mightily THROUGH** him to produce in the Colossian believers this discipling **result**, Col. 1:29!

Application: (1) If wondering **WHY** and **HOW** some Church leaders suffer a lot, believe on Christ to be saved and become part of the **true** body of Christ, Jn. 3:16. (3) Then, as God gives opportunity, **STAND** for righteousness though persecuted for it, and **STAY** standing by depending upon the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 1:8) as did the Early Church, and shoulder the role of substitutional suffering for the advance of God's true flock **WITHIN** the Church! (Acts 5:29-42) (4) If we are put into leadership, (a) embrace the opportunity to **STAND** for the truth against **PERSECUTION** notwithstanding as our **HIGHEST** calling, and (b) encourage **OTHERS** to enter Church leadership too!

Lesson: **TODAY'S** leaders in their Evangelical church settings **CAN STEADFASTLY** face **PERSECUTION** for standing for the truth. As it once was in **CHRIST'S** and also **PAUL'S** eras, they can **DO** so (1) **IF** they **KNOW** **GOD** has **ARRANGED** for them a **GREAT OPPORTUNITY** to **SUFFER** at the hands of angry-at-being-exposed-as-errant, religious parties **IN** the Church! This program (a) offers them great eternal reward (b) and **VALUE** to their **STANDS** as they must shoulder great unjust pain for the discipling welfare of God's **TRUE** flock. Such leaders can **BEAR** this suffering by (2) relying on **GOD'S** power by **FAITH!**

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

After last Sunday's sermon, someone handed me a note, saying, "Pastor, please read this when you have time to reflect on it. It ought to be an encouragement to you!"

As you recall, last Sunday's sermon was addressing the question as to "**Why be encouraged in the ministry if our Church's building or program is not as advanced as some other church's?!**"

Though I won't read the entire note, I do want to share this part with you: the note revealed that a teen is now attending our Church in preference to another church he **could** attend, a church that added on a gym. Though this teen plays basketball, and the other church has a gym that we **don't** have, he has chosen to come to Nepaug instead. Why? The note reads: "He [the teen] said they [of the other church] had to stop having a basketball team because there was an attitude problem with the players . . . He said that the kids that go to Nepaug -- what you see in youth group and on Sunday, that's how they really are . . . [This is in contrast to the hypocrisy he's seen **elsewhere!**]"

So when I see **TEENS** coming to Nepaug Church with the desire to belong to an **UNHYPOCRITICAL** group that puts a premium on the **TRUTH**, and know of the **COST** involved for **THEM** to **DO** so, and of the **PAIN** some of them bear from **THEIR** backgrounds, I can take persecution involved in making bold, **UNHYPOCRITICAL** stands for the **TRUTH!** The short-term price may be high for us leaders, but the rewards of **HELPING** such people in **NEED** of what help our **STANDS** will give them in the **LONG-TERM** are **ENORMOUS!**

As Church leaders **OR** those who sit in the pew -- and I believe God wants to direct this charge to **MYSELF** as well -- let us **STAND** at **ALL COSTS** for what is **RIGHT** -- (1) the opportunity for personal eternal rewards in suffering retaliation for doing so is available, (2) God's **PEOPLE** need us to **STAND** that way for **THEIR** genuine discipleship and (3) the Spirit of God is there to equip us to suffer well for taking such stands with **HIS** infinite, divine **POWER!** Go for the gold!