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Main Idea: We are called to be servants of the Gospel by knowing who we are in Christ, His gift of magnificent grace, and His empowerment. We work in our faith by His power; yet, we do so in humility and with the knowledge that Jesus rescued us, we who are undeserving of it. Why? To know Him wholeheartedly. To make Him known to those around us with passion and purpose. Paul realized all of this; he even suffered for this, and he held a very humble view of his leadership and role in Christ and in the Church. His example, we must follow. For what the Prophets of old, what Moses desperately wanted, what the entirety of the law and Levites, and priest, we now know and live in. Now, we can carry that knowledge to others. We can share who Jesus is and what He accomplished on our behalf. Now, we have a deep, meaningful relationship with God, and we can even approach Him directly without the mediation of sacrifice or priesthood. We have an empowered faith that is real. We can have confidence and never be discouraged in our relationship with God (and others) all for God's glory!

Contexts and Background:

In the Old Testament, God did empower His servants for specific tasks: A prophet on a mission, an artist to build the Tabernacle, or the oath of purity, the strength to fulfill God's call and mission. Now, God empowers all of His children with the Holy Spirit. Paul uses these as illustrations that as he overcame suffering and harsh times, so can we (Ex. 15:2; Psalm 18:1-2; 27:1; 59:17 119:11, 28; Jer. 16:19).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Servant /minister of the gospel.* This is a call to serve as a worker for Christ. With all Paul's accomplishments and positions, he calls himself a "servant" to Christ, at His disposal. This gives us a picture of his total surrender and complete devotion. Paul is a disciple of the Lord with a will that has been sacrificed to God's Will and is totally at the disposal of our Lord! Paul's motivation was not just his passion and character, but his realization of the debt he owed Christ and his response of overwhelming gratitude. This should be our central purpose in our relationship to Christ. If we focus only upon ourselves, we will fail badly (Acts 9:1; 1 Cor. 15:9; Rom. 1:1; 9:3; 11:13-14; Gal. 1:15; 2:20; Eph. 3:1-8; Philp. 1:1; 3:4-14; Col. 4:18; 1 Tim. 3:8-12; 2 Tim. 1:15-16)!
- *God's grace.* This is how God gives us unmerited favor, which is our duty to convey. This is about The Person and Work of Christ, His life, death and resurrection, how He delivered us out of sin and into our new life with salvation that we did not earn or deserve. It is by His life and sacrifice that we have deliverance, forgiveness, preservation, the Kingdom and abundance of life here and forevermore. All of this that we do not merit, earn or deserve (John 1:17; Rom. 3:22-24; 10:9-10; 11:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:7; 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; Heb. 2:3; 4:6).
- *His power.* It takes the power of the Spirit to keep us motivated, especially in the common places of life! We are to live in the Holy Spirit, not in the world!
- *Lord's people.* We have to be Christ's faithful servants in order to help further the Kingdom and glorify Christ our Lord! Because His great love is in us, we see His wonders at work; then, we can display His love through our lives. Love is the call He has given to us! Further, we are not alone in this; we have His Holy Spirit to enable and empower us! So, what is stopping us?

- *Preach.* This means "God delivers" as to proclaim salvation is from, and only from, God, Christ as Lord. This refers to the person and Work of Christ, how He delivered us out of sin and into new life. It is by His life and sacrifice that we have the Kingdom and abundance of life here and forevermore. This also refers to how God delivered Israel out of bondage as proclaimed at Sinai. To proclaim Christ, we have to receive His work; we have to believe Who Christ is and what He did for us. Now we, as His servants, can preach this Good News and Hope, heralding to all, just as Paul did. Paul was a missionary to the Gentiles. He was a prayer warrior and servant for the Lord. He was passionate and concerned for others. His realization of what Christ did for him drove him to the ends of the world in Christ's service (Col. 1:19-23; Heb. 2:3; 4:1-11).
- *Boundless/manifold riches.* Much variegated, this is the fullness and best of God's wisdom. We who have not earned a thing, we who do not deserve anything, yet we have God's boundless love and kindness, greater than can be imagined. By Christ alone, by His unaided grace are we saved; this is a gift freely given that we receive by His grace through our faith in Christ alone. This most valuable gift--more precious and unlike anything from the world--is ours by the hand of the Father who loves us. It is boundless, and it is eternal. The question is this: What are we going to do with our precious gift (Eph. 2:1-10)?
- *Manifold wisdom of God.* The wisdom of God is to be made known. We are to learn and to grow in our relationships and knowledge of our Lord. We must realize that God will not allow His message to be thwarted. We must be set apart to be a distinction and a mirror to His majesty. The love of our God is to be known and expressed by His followers and made known to others. Christ is our Head, and when we do not get this essential fact, we will spill our diseases of pride instead of blessings from His presence. We are to give God the glory in all that we do, so our triumphs will be His and our failures will be His as our Lord transforms us and gives us the determination to go on with greater Fruit and empowerment to His goal.
- *Rulers and authorities.* Our spiritual enemies. This may refer to the false teachers too, and human might, and/or powerful, political figures and people of wealth and power. Even though we may admire, envy, or fear them, they too are mere people, while Jesus is Lord and thus Superior (Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 6:10-17; Col. 1:15-20)!
- *Heavenly realms/places.* Where God is. In Paul's time there was no distinction between what lies outside of the atmosphere and what is heaven and the various levels of it. Today, we see a distinction of atmosphere, space, dimensions, and a metaphysical realm of Heaven unseen by the naked eye. This, in context, showcases Who and What Christ is, Who redeems us, as Christ was raised from the dead, He also raises us out of sin by His victory over death and makes us to be eternal with Him. It also means we are purposed and governed by and by Christ for His glory (Eph. 1:3-6; 22; 2:6).
- *Eternal purpose.* God's Decree, according to the council of His will, whereby for His own glory He foreordained and 'presented' what is to come to pass, that we are to 'realize.' Some things God proposes to do, others He decrees. Permitting them to be done, He affects good and permits evil. So, He is in control of both yet He is not the author of evil. We must willing to be servants of Christ, to let Him mold and shape us to His Glory and purpose, and remain in this relationship! We can trust in Him! God has a plan for us made before the ages! We have an eternal purpose (Eph. 1:10-11; 3:11; Heb. 9:2)!
- *Accomplished in Christ.* This is what Jesus did for me. In response, we are called to glorify Christ in all that we do! Pride is our biggest barrier to know Christ and receive His redemption.
- *Through faith.* Our Justification is by Faith apart from the Law. This is God's act of pardoning us from sin. Thus, we are accepted by God for what Christ has done on our behalf. Faith is the instrument and not the cause; Christ is the cause. It is based on the faithfulness of our Lord, and has nothing to do with our goodness as we have none. This is just as animal sacrifice in the O.T. was a means of forgiveness and surrendered attitude because of a loss of something precious, but not the cause (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom 3:1-26; Heb. 9:11-15; 10:1-4).

- **Approach God.** By what Christ has done, we are brought into the presence of God; we who had no right or ability to come before Him can now approach God! We are even declared holy and blameless because of Christ, so God now sees us clean and pure and without fault. But, for this to happen, we have to receive His work; we have to believe Who Christ is and what He did for us. We must stand firm in Him and never drift away from His Good News. Now we, as His servants, can preach this Good News and Hope, heralding to all, just as Paul did (Col. 1:19-23).
- **Freedom.** We are freed from the law; there is no profit or value in our pride (Rom. 3:19; 6:14; -15; Gal. 3:23-25). Do we seek the doctrines of man that lead nowhere but to despair or the doctrines of God that lead to liberty and salvation? We must seek Christ as Lord over all—including our desires; only the will we see maturity and success in dealing with passions (Jer. 29:13; 1 Tim. 1:8).
- **Confidence/boldness.** This means confident 'trust' access to God. Faith is the confidence, without hesitation or distrust, which we are to have in God's power, and assurance that are exercised in that what we hope for, by His will, will indeed happen (Rom. 5:2; 11:1-10; 2 Cor. 3:4; Eph. 2:18; Heb. 3:1-6; 11:1-16).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

If we just live our lives with the attitude of how things affect "me" rather than "others," we are living with the devil and or with pride, and not with God! Instead, we are to live for Christ, by faith and our faithfulness. Our faith will produce real authenticity; this comes from believing that God will do what He says and looking to Him, not our circumstances, fears or desires. It is about control--if it will be God or me. It is trusting in His tug on my soul and not mine or the world's, so I can make the best righteous decisions. It is like a switch that turns God's power and Holy Spirit into us. Faith is the key to removing hypocrisy because it focuses us on Christ, whereas insincerity and pretense focus us on our personal, sinful agendas.

Church Leadership Tip: We are to be bold for Christ, not to our conceit. It is imperative that we live what we preach; being a hypocrite is a disgusting obsession in the face of our loving and gracious Lord as well as our witness!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Why does Paul call himself a *servant*? Would you ever use that term? What about a pastor?
2. How did you develop a deep, meaningful relationship with God? What role did gratitude play?
3. What does it mean to give God the glory in all that we do?

4. What can you do to be more like Paul and willfully keep Christ as your head, for He already is? What would happen in your life and church if you did?
5. Are you Christ's faithful servant? Are you helping further the Kingdom and glorifying Christ? Is His great love with you so it is also being displayed through you?
6. How can your church best express the love of our Lord, so it is to be known and made known to others?
7. What gets in the way of Christ as our head? What happens when we do not get this essential fact?
8. How can you better stand firm in Him and never drift away from His Good News?
9. What have you done to preach this Good News and Hope? What can you do?
10. You do not have to be a preacher or evangelist, but what can you do to make Christ known more and be His servant and herald?
11. How can your church do a better job to carry the knowledge Who Jesus is and what He accomplished on our behalf?
12. What would your life look like if you were totally at the disposal of our Lord? What gets in the way?

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