

Main Idea: According to Colossians 1:24-29, a very powerful way to make Christ known to a world that doesn't want to hear about Him is through *rejoicing in suffering*. If we're to do that, we must grasp God's purposes for three individuals or groups.

- I. To rejoice in suffering, I must grasp God's purpose for Christ (24).
 - A. In the plan of God, Christ suffered for us.
 - B. In the plan of God, Christ is made known through our suffering.
- II. To rejoice in suffering, I must grasp God's purpose for the church (25-27).
 - A. God has made known a mystery in the church.
 1. It's for all people groups.
 2. It's the hope of glory.
 3. It's the truth that Christ lives in all who know Him.
 - B. God is making known a mystery through the church.
 1. He uses people.
 2. He uses suffering.
- III. To rejoice in suffering, I must grasp God's purpose for me (28-29).
 - A. My God-given mission involves a message.
 1. I am not here to promote myself.
 2. I am here to proclaim Christ.
 - B. My God-given mission involves a motivation.
 1. I am not merely seeking decisions for Christ.
 2. I am seeking to present people complete in Christ.
 - C. My God-given mission involves a means.
 1. God expects me to work hard in ministry.
 2. God Himself provides the power for ministry.

Make It Personal: Three questions to consider...

1. Am I thinking rightly regarding suffering?
2. Am I giving the people around me a good picture of the sufficiency of Christ?
3. Am I tapping daily into the means of strength that God alone can provide?

How do we make Christ known to a world that doesn't want to hear about Him? One powerful way, as we've seen in the past couple of weeks, is through forgiving. But there's another way, which is actually often related to forgiving others. It's through *suffering*. Christ suffered, and it is through the suffering of His people that He makes Himself known in unmistakable ways, as we'll see today in Colossians 1:24-29.

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:24-29

As a pastor I see people in the midst of their suffering quite often. I see it in the hospital. I see it in the counseling room. I see it after worship services when people open up to me about their pain.

Quite frankly, whenever I see people in their suffering, I am seeing the unveiled truth about the person in my presence, for suffering is a revealer. Suffering reveals what we truly believe about God, about life, about ourselves, about what's important to us, and a whole lot more.

The fact is, it's easy to say, “Yes, I believe in Christ. He's my treasure.” But the reality will be shown by the way we respond to suffering. It's true. People who are cherishing Christ above all react differently when suffering strikes than do people who are not.

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see WBC 10/18/09.

In reality, self-focused people don't suffer well. Just ask any nurse who works a hospital floor. People with self-consumed agendas don't suffer well. In fact, suffering exposes whether it's Christ's agenda or our own that matters most to us.

When I jog in the neighborhood, I notice people's garages. What's the purpose of a garage? It's supposed to be a place that houses your car. That's what it's for, but unfortunately, I see a lot of garages with cars sitting out front. Why is that? Because garages tend to accumulate clutter, and before long, the clutter replaces the car.

One of the reasons God allows suffering to enter our lives is to "declutter the garage," if you know what I mean. Suffering invites us, actually suffering *compels* us to take inventory of what's really important to us.

The fact of the matter is, when I am cherishing Christ, it shows up in my response to suffering. I will rejoice in suffering. Let me give you some texts to support that.

Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. *Rejoice and be glad*, because great is your reward in heaven..."

James 1:2 "*Consider it pure joy*, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds."

1 Peter 1:6 "In this you *greatly rejoice*, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials."

So how do we make Christ known to a world that doesn't want to hear about Him? That's the question we're seeking to answer in this series. And here's the answer of the perhaps the greatest missionary the world has ever seen.

"*Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you.*"² Sometimes we read our Bibles and gloss over statements that ought to grip us. Like this one. *I rejoice in what was suffered for you.* The apostle Paul said that he *rejoiced* in what he *suffered* for the Christians in the city of Colosse.

Was he serious? My wife might say to our daughters, "I rejoice in what I got out of the suffering I went through for you," in reference to the childbirth and rearing process. But Paul takes it further. *I rejoice IN what was suffered for you.* He said that because he knew that one of the most compelling ways we can make Christ known to a world that doesn't want to hear about Him is through *rejoicing in suffering*.

Now how do we do that? How could Paul? How can you and I? We need to know the answer to that if we're going to make Christ known in this world as we ought. Thankfully, Paul gives the answer in Colossians 1:24-29. We must grasp God's purposes for three individuals or groups.

I. To rejoice in suffering, I must grasp God's purpose for Christ (24).

Notice verse 24 again, "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church."

So Paul's ability to rejoice in his suffering was linked to his understanding of God's purpose for the person of Jesus Christ. Paul saw his sufferings in light of what God's purpose for Christ. So what was God's purpose for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? Paul doesn't tell us explicitly in this verse (he does elsewhere), but he has two purposes in mind.

² ESV "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake."

A. In the plan of God, Christ suffered for us. That's the point Paul made just three verses earlier in Colossians 1:21-22, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death..."

It was God's plan that His Son suffer and die for us. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16)." "God demonstrated His love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8)."

But Christ's suffering is not all the Father had in mind, for there's a sense in which His suffering hasn't ended.

B. In the plan of God, Christ is made known through our suffering. Paul says, "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church."

What's that? Did Paul just say that something is lacking with regard to Christ's suffering? Yes, he did. But wait. Wasn't Christ's suffering on the cross sufficient and complete? Didn't the Lord cry out from the tree, "It is finished"? Yes, He did, and yes, His suffering for sin is indeed over.

Then in what sense are Christ's afflictions still lacking? Think of it this way. The fact of Christ's atonement required suffering, but so does the knowledge of it. No more suffering is needed to secure man's salvation. But suffering is still necessary to make man's salvation known. Whose suffering? Ours.

Do you remember what Jesus told Paul at his conversion? He sent Ananias to him with this message in Acts 9:15-16, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he *must suffer for my name.*"

Why did Paul have to suffer? To pay for his sins? No. Christ's suffering took care of that. But Paul's suffering was necessary to make known the name of the One who paid for his sins.

This is what's still lacking with regard to Christ's sufferings, the suffering necessary to make the Savior known to those who have yet to believe in Him. Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 1:5 "For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." Did you catch that? Christ's sufferings flow over into our lives.

It's God's agenda to use suffering to save the lost. His Son's suffering to secure salvation for the lost. Our suffering to make this salvation known.

Listen to how the *New Century Version* translates verse 24, "I am happy in my sufferings for you. There are things that Christ must still suffer through his body, the church. I am accepting, in my body, my part of these things that must be suffered."

Did you know that when you came to Christ you were responding to a call to suffer? Unfortunately, that part of the invitation is often left out these days. But for Paul it was standard equipment. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," was Paul's message according to Acts 14:22.

"Why would anyone respond to a call to suffer?" you ask. I'll let Paul answer that question. "Why did you choose a life of suffering, Paul?"

Hear his answer in Romans 8:18, "I consider that *our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*" That's why. The suffering won't last, and the suffering can't even begin to compare with the glorious outcome of the suffering!

Paul didn't just tolerate suffering. He embraced it. In fact he said he *sought* it in Philippians 3:10-11, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

You say, "I struggle to have that kind of perspective on suffering." I do too, which is why we need God's Word and each other. To declutter the garage. What can we do to view suffering rightly? We're learning from Paul. Here's where we begin. To rejoice in suffering, I must grasp God's purpose for Christ, and specifically, God's purpose for making Christ known.

One day several summers ago, I noticed our dog, Maddie, was limping. Now that was a problem since our then five year old Boxer-mix loved activity, I mean *loved* activity—like fetching a ball for hours, or retrieving a Frisbee as long as you want to throw it, and most of all, running with her master in his morning workout. I looked closely at her front paw and noticed the problem. She had ripped one of her front nails down to the quick.

"Her running days are on hold for awhile," I thought. "She can't even put her wait on that foot without grimacing in pain."

But I was wrong. When Maddie saw me head outside for my next morning workout, she ignored her pain and ran down the road right beside me *on three legs*. The pain was still there, but her love for her master inspired her to endure the pain. In fact, it broke her heart when I stopped, took her back inside the house, and insisted she stay off that foot for the next week or so to allow it to heal.

It's amazing what you can learn from God's creatures. Maddie taught me that you can endure a lot of pain if you're living to please your master. But that's my struggle. At times I'm pursuing other things. Can you relate?

If we're going to suffer well, in ways that will make Christ known to an onlooking world, we must affirm this priority every day before our feet even hit the floor. *Today, it's all about You, Lord Jesus*. Knowing Christ, and making Christ known to others.

II. To rejoice in suffering, I must grasp God's purpose for the church (25-27).

Take another look at verse 24, specifically to answer the question, "For whose benefit did Paul say he suffered?" He said, "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, *for the sake of his body, which is the church*." That's why Paul suffered, because he was gripped by God's purpose for the amazing organism called *the church*.

The church, says Paul, is Christ's body. The church, says Paul, is worth suffering for. Paul knew something we tend to ignore, that Christ didn't die merely to rescue individual sinners. Christ died to form those rescued sinners into an entity called *the church*.

This is critical, my friend. If we're going to rejoice in suffering, we must be gripped by the amazing purpose God has for the church.

Listen to Paul's passion for the church as he writes in verses 25-27, "I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

I hope you love the church. I hope you're an active, supportive, functioning member of your local church. But what is about the church that makes it so special? There are many things, but let's focus on two of them that Paul highlights here.

A. God has made known a mystery in the church. Let's unpack what Paul says about the church in verses 25-27. First, he says, "I have become its servant."³ Who was Paul's master? "It was Christ," you say. That's true, but here he says he served the church. That's not a contradiction, for again, the church is actually Christ's body, so to serve the church for the glory of Christ is to serve Christ.

How did Paul become a servant of the church? Did he volunteer? No, he was recruited. He became its servant "by the commission God gave me." The Sovereign Lord chose him for the task, just as He did with you, if you are His follower. When Christ saves a sinner, He grafts that person into His body, gives that person a spiritual endowment or giftedness, and then tailor makes ministries for that person to accomplish.

What was Paul's ministry? He says he was commissioned by God "to present you [the believers living in the city of Colosse] the word of God in its fullness." Paul's ministry was preaching. "I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher," he says in 2 Timothy 1:11.

And what specific message did he preach and teach? In verse 26 he says he preached "the mystery". He's not talking about mystery in the sense of *mysterious* (like a mystery novel). The term refers to something previously unknown that's now known. In fact, Paul specifically says in verse 26 that this mystery "has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints." (see Eph 3:2-13)

Two thousand years BC God chose a man named Abram, and through that man formed a family, and then a nation called Israel. And He gave to that nation His Word, and a place for sacrifices, and a priesthood to offer those sacrifices. And so for century after century, if you wanted to be right with God you had to be a believing member of that nation (or at least approach God in dependence upon that nation).

But then, through that chosen nation, God sent into the world His chosen Son, who on a Roman cross died and then conquered death for sinners, not just Jewish sinners, but sinners from *every* nation. And that's the mystery.

1. *It's for all people groups.*
2. *It's the hope of glory.*
3. *It's the truth that Christ lives in all who know Him.*

That's what verse 27 says, "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles [lit. 'among the *ethnesin*,' that is, all the ethnic people groups of the world] the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

That's the mystery. If Christ is in you, then it doesn't matter what your skin color is, or what language you speak, or whether you eat rice, or borsch, or pasta. If Christ is in you, then you're heading for glory, and if Christ is in you, then you're part of His Body along with men, women, boys, and girls from every people group on this planet.

But that brings us to a related, second point. You see, the reality is, not all the people groups have heard the mystery. How will they hear? Here's how. Not only has God made known a mystery *in the church*, but right now...

B. God is making known a mystery through the church. And how is He doing it? According to Paul...

1. *He uses people.* He commissioned me, says Paul. But not just me. *To them*, says verse 27 referring to the saints. *To them* (the saints) God has chosen to make known *among the Gentiles* the riches of this mystery. So God uses people. Once you come to know this mystery, you are now accountable to make it known.

³ESV "Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you."

But it's not just people that God uses. It's people who are experiencing something.

2. *He uses suffering.* In fact, put the two together. God uses *people* who are *suffering* to make the mystery known. Isn't that what Paul is saying? Why could he rejoice in what he was suffering? Was he a masochist? Did he just love pain? No. He embraced the suffering because He saw what God was accomplishing through it to make the mystery known.

Beloved, there are many personal benefits to suffering mentioned in the Bible. God uses suffering to mature us (James 1:3), to produce perseverance in us (Rom. 5:3), to teach us His Word (Ps. 119:67), and so much more. But He also uses suffering to accomplish things, not just *in* us but *through* us, namely to make the mystery known.

This is so hope-giving. Suffering, when embraced with joy, provides a powerful platform from which we can make the mystery of Christ known to those in darkness.

A hospice nurse, Deborah Howard, provides a good illustration of this in her book, *Sunsets: Reflections for Life's Final Journey*. She shares about a man named Abe Caldwell who once was a well known, greatly loved trainer at a racetrack who had a severe stroke that left him comatose in a nursing home. "He couldn't move, was badly contracted, and had shrunk to nothing but skin and bones despite a feeding tube. He couldn't speak or acknowledge in any way that he understood what people said to him."

In time most people stopped coming to visit Mr. Caldwell. Even his wife was uncomfortable coming, as it hurt too much to see him that way. But there was one person who came faithfully, a young friend named Ruth who was like a daughter to Caldwell. Ruth would speak tenderly to him, comb his hair, and just sit with him. Ruth shared that Abe and his wife more or less raised her, and that when she was old enough Abe got her a job as a 'pony girl' at the track, a job she loved as the person who escorted racehorses from the paddock to the starting gate.

One night Ruth and Deborah (the hospice nurse) were all alone with Abe when the following conversation took place:

Ruth asked, "Why is this happening to someone as nice as Abe? Why does he have to suffer like this? Why doesn't God just take him on to be with Him?"

"I don't know, Ruth," I answered. "But I'm absolutely convinced that there are reasons. We're told in the Bible that all the days of our lives are numbered before even one of them comes to be. The bottom line is that he's still here because it's not his time yet."

"Well, for the first time in my life, I've actually been reading my Bible. I've been trying to find something in there that will help me understand why this is happening. I pray all the time that God will take him. I can't stand to see him like this."

"This is the first time you've prayed or read your Bible?"

"Well, I've prayed before. I was raised Catholic; so I never really had to read the Bible. But I'm certainly getting a lot out of it now. I've never felt closer to God. But I don't understand why He's leaving Abe here like this."

I smiled at her. "Could one of the reasons be that this is what it took to draw you closer to God and to encourage you to start reading His Word and praying? You say you've never felt this close to God before. Could it be that you wouldn't have this new closeness with Him if all this hadn't happened?"

She opened her mouth in shock. "Oh, my! You're probably right. If that's the case, I'm so sorry Abe had to go through all this for my sake."

"He didn't Ruth. There are likely many reasons why this is happening. That may just be one of them. You know, God uses whatever He wants to draw His children to

Him. Don't waste this experience, Ruth. Even after this is over, I suggest you continue reading and praying and know that nothing you've ever done or ever will do will make you good enough to go to heaven."

"Then what does?"

"Christ. Just Christ. You have to trust in *His* righteousness, not your own. If you are one of His children, you will believe He is your Lord and you'll ask Him to forgive your sins and save you from hell. And He will."

Tears were rolling down her cheeks now. Her bottom lip quivered as she whispered, "I do believe that."

We prayed together, and then I gave her a hug. She smiled, "Even though I still don't know all the answers, I do feel better now. I know there's a purpose to all of this. It really is all in God's hands, isn't it?"

"Yes, Ruth. It really is."

Abe died early the next morning.⁴

Brothers and sisters, we can be certain of this. When the Lord allows us to suffer, it's because He intends to do some things *in* us and *through* us.

Is that our perspective on suffering? Do we *rejoice* in the suffering that the Sovereign Lord allows into our lives? Grasping God's purposes for the church will help us.

A century ago J. C. Ryle had this to say, "Trials are intended to make us think—to wean us from the world—to send us to the Bible—to drive us to our knees. Health is a good thing but sickness is far better if it leads us to God. Prosperity is a great mercy; but adversity is a greater one if it brings us to Christ. Anything, anything is better than living in carelessness and dying in sin."⁵

When God allows us to suffer, He's making that point quite clear, not just to us, but to those watching us. Pastor Doug Reed put it this way, "Suffering does not make us good. It leads us to the place where we find Christ as our good. It brings us to the end of ourselves that we might reach the beginning of God."⁶

This brings us to our third point. In order to rejoice in suffering, first I must grasp God's purpose for Christ—it was God's plan that Christ suffer for us, and it is God's plan to make Christ known through our suffering. Second, I must grasp God's purpose for the church, that He's making a mystery known *in* the church and *through* the church, and specifically He's doing that through the suffering of His people. Now it's time to make this very personal, as Paul did in verses 28-29.

III. To rejoice in suffering, I must grasp God's purpose for me (28-29).

Verses 28-29 "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."

I love this text. These two verses are my life verses, when it comes to how I approach ministry, my mission statement. I'd love to preach a whole message on just these two verses (and have done so). But for now, I just want to hit the highlights. According to Paul, I have a God-given mission (and so do you), and it involves three things.

⁴ Deborah Howard, *Sunsets: Reflections for Life's Final Journey*, p. 141-2.

⁵ J. C. Ryle, quote taken from Deborah Howard, *Sunsets: Reflections for Life's Final Journey*, p. 140.

⁶ Doug Read, quote taken from Deborah Howard, *Sunsets: Reflections for Life's Final Journey*, p. 140.

A. My God-given mission involves a message. “We proclaim him.” Who is the ‘him?’ It’s Christ. The previous verse ends stressing that the mystery is “Christ in you.” We proclaim *him*. So I have a message to preach.

1. *I am not here to promote myself.* That’s not what life’s all about. Rather...

2. *I am here to proclaim Christ.* Christ is our message. So I haven’t fulfilled my mission if I go through a day and talk about myself, and my kids or grandkids, and job, and politics, but not Christ. Nor if I just talk about “God” or “family values” or “the good programs my church offers.” Our message is a person by the name of *Jesus Christ*.

What’s involved in proclaiming Christ? Paul uses two participles to tell us. Proclaiming Christ involves “admonishing” and “teaching”. By definition, to admonish (*noutheteo*) means “to rebuke, to warn, to advise of consequences for wrong action.” And to teach (*didasko*) means “to provide instruction, to give information so a person will know what he needs to believe and do.”

It’s what you parents are doing all day long with your toddlers. You advise of consequences for wrong action, and you give information so your kids will know what to believe and do. You admonish and you teach.

That’s what Paul says he did as he proclaimed Christ. He warned people about their sin problem and what was coming, namely the judgment of God because of sin. And then He taught them how they could escape that judgment, by cherishing the person God sent to take that judgment in their place.

That’s what we’re to do. Paul says *we* proclaim Him, referring initially to Timothy who co-authored this letter, but the Scriptures make it clear that all who know Christ are to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). “Him *we* proclaim (ESV).”

And who specifically are we to admonish and teach? *Everyone*, says Paul, a word he repeats three times in this verse. We’re to warn *everyone*, teach *everyone*, and seek to present *everyone* perfect in Christ.

You say, “How do I get the opportunities to tell people about Christ?” There are lots of ways, but I want to focus on the one Paul’s emphasizing in this passage. You get opportunities by *suffering well*.

One day Paul got arrested in Philippi for a crime he didn’t commit. The authorities beat him and ripped the hide off his back. How’d he respond? Read Acts 16:25. He sang songs to Jesus in the prison. The result? He led the jailer and his family to Christ.

Another time he got arrested in Jerusalem, again unjustly, and this time a mob just about tore him limb from limb. In fact, he spent the next four years or so incarcerated. An atrocity of injustice? Yes, but atrocity in which he rejoiced and told everyone he met, from Jerusalem to Rome, that he was in chains for Christ. Indeed, he later testified that because of his chains, many other Christians were emboldened to speak the word of God courageously (Phil. 1:14).

It’s true. Suffering gives us a perfect platform from which to proclaim Christ. I think about our brother John as he’s rehabbing following the loss of his legs. During a visit this week I read with him 1 Peter 1:6–7, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” When I finished reading John said, “I don’t look at this as a trial. It’s just what God has for me right now, and I want to honor Him in it.” I was so encouraged by his perspective.

I think of some of you who have adult children who are breaking your heart. And others who are suffering unjustly with difficult spouses, or job situations, and other platforms of suffering. It's one thing to say that Christ is wonderful, but you are *showing* Christ's splendor by the way you are rejoicing in your sufferings, all by His grace.

B. My God-given mission involves a motivation. “So that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” The Greek *teleion* means “complete, finished, mature, full grown.” That's what we're after.

1. *I am not merely seeking decisions for Christ.* The assignment is far bigger.

2. *I am seeking to present people complete in Christ.* I can't tell you how many times I return to this verse in my mind (that's why I urge you to memorize it)! When I'm trying to minister to someone who gets under my skin, I remember Paul's motivation and make it my own.

Don't just tolerate people. View them in light of this purpose statement. My goal is to present every person perfect in Christ, complete in Christ, spiritually mature in Christ. And if I'm going to facilitate that, I need to ask myself a question about each person God brings my way.

How can I be used today to help make this person more complete in Christ? That question leads to some follow-up questions, like:

-Does this person know Christ? Being complete in Christ starts with knowing Christ.

-Is this person growing in Christ, and if not, how can I help? Share a Scripture? Pray?

-Are there noticeable sin issues in this person's life, and if so, what can I do about it?

-Does this person have relationships that please Christ, and if not, can I be of help?

So, my mission involves a message (that's Christ), and a motivation (to present people complete in Christ). Thirdly...

C. My God-given mission involves a means. Verse 29 (ESV)—“For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” Notice the means.

1. *God expects me to work hard in ministry.* Paul says he toiled and struggled, and we must do the same. Is ministry hard work? Yes. Is it overwhelming at times? Absolutely. Then how do we do it?

2. *God Himself provides the power for ministry.* Paul said *I toil...with all HIS energy that He powerfully works within me.*

Yes, presenting people complete in Christ is work, exhausting work. But we can do it because Christ Himself provides the power and works in us, first, and then through us.

E.g.—

A very powerful way to make Christ known to a world that doesn't want to hear about Him is through *rejoicing in suffering*. And to do that we need to grasp God's purpose for Christ, for His church, and for us.

Make It Personal: Three questions to consider...

1. *Am I thinking rightly regarding suffering?* Paul saw his own suffering as a platform for knowing Christ better and for making Christ known. Is that how you've been thinking?

2. *Am I giving the people around me a good picture of the sufficiency of Christ?* That's what we do when we *rejoice* in our suffering. That's what we could be doing if we would learn to rejoice in our suffering. And for that to happen...

3. *Am I tapping daily into the means of strength that God alone can provide?* He provides the power, but I must tap into that power, and do it every day.