

Theme: Christ has reconciled all things to himself (1:20) by the blood of his cross. Peace is assured. But that peace is not yet fully secured. God's plan doesn't change in its character. Christ suffered to reconcile all things to himself. His servants suffer in proclaiming that message to the world.

Introduction/Background:

The greatest power the world has ever seen? The Gospel!

But it doesn't always feel like it – especially when God's people are suffering. (Matthew 5:11 & 12)

I. Gospel Servants Suffer

NOTE: We start with what we know before we consider what we don't know.

A. Rejoicing - Joy as a servant! (1:11, 23, 24)

B. For their sake (and ours)

C. Suffering

1. Paul suffered a lot (2 Corinthians 11:23-33; Acts 9:16)

2. Filling up what is lacking in Christ's suffering?

a. Speaks often of suffering with Christ and for Christ - 1 Peter 4

b. What is lacking?

- Nothing - regarding Christ's perfect sacrifice (1:20; 2:14)

- John 19:30; Romans.6:10; Hebrews 10:10

- Paul's suffering will not be added to that of Jesus to finish it

c. His suffering is not just his own - but in some mysterious way it is Christ's

D. Our work in Christ

1. Salvation/life has been secured by Christ's perfect work.

2. It is being brought to completion in the same way it was achieved - through suffering.

II. In Revealing God's Plan

A. The stewardship of this mystery - That which is precious and powerful

B. To reveal the mystery (secret)

1. Daniel revealed the plan

2. Paul reveals the fulfillment of the plan

3. Even the Mystery is full of glory!

C. Christ in you! The hope of glory!

1. The power of the eternal

2. Establishing His Kingdom in a people all his own

D. Suffering is part of the plan. - 1 Thessalonians 3:3

III. Through Preaching

A. Him we proclaim.

1. Warning!

2. Teaching!

B. With purpose - Mature in Christ!

C. With toil and struggle

D. With *His power* at work in us

IV. The Challenge Ahead

A. KNOW - His plan is still being fulfilled. He is still *in Control!*

B. CHOOSE - The way of the Cross (2 Timothy 1:8)

C. REST - For the plan, the purposes and the power of God will not be overcome