

THE MISSION OF PAUL IN THE CHURCH – 2nd update

The power of Paul's evangelisation

The core of the apostolic action of Paul is the name and the love of Jesus by whom he has been called to offer his testimony, as he himself says: "The love of Christ impels us" (2Cor 5:14), and "Woe to me if I do not preach it!" (1Cor 9:16). In fact his extraordinary apostolic activity can only be explained by his exceptional love for Christ whose Gospel has an intrinsic power, the "power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16).

Paul manifests a great sense of responsibility in his task to communicate the Gospel of Christ. For him it is a gift and a duty that's why he dedicates himself fully to the Gospel given to him by God: "Now I want you to know, brothers, that the Gospel preached by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human being, not was I thought it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal 1: 11-12)

Christ, who entrusted Paul with the task to announce him is taken up wholly by Paul to the point of becoming 'his life': "For to me life is Christ, and death is gain." (Ph 1:21)

The constant missionary zeal of Paul

Paul's zeal is the answer to the initiative taken by Christ, who invited him on the Damascus road to spend his entire life in communicating Him.

The missionary thrust of Paul runs on a constant "continuum", independently from the real possibility of announcing his message, or from the difficulties that he encounters. It is an inflexible conviction that becomes his solicitude and strength in the many difficulties. "...he is chosen as instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, Kings and Israelites, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name." (Acts 9:16)

His concern is for "all the Churches" (2 Cor 11:28), for the single communities and for the individual people. With much solicitude, anxiety and love, Paul writes, travels, speaks; and if necessary he changes his plans. (Acts 16:9).

Paul's Hardships for the Sake of the Gospel

His courageous endurance is the hidden root that holds up the tree of his ministry: "In everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God, through much endurance, in afflictions, hardships, constraints, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, vigils, fasts; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love, in truthful speech, in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness at the right and at the left; through glory and dishonour, insult and praise.

We are treated as deceivers and yet are truthful; as unrecognized and yet acknowledged; as dying and behold we live; as chastised and yet not put to death; as sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor 6:4-10)

Paul never loses heart even when he is constantly exposed to death for the sake of Christ: "For we who live are constantly being given up to death for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor 4:11), instead he is full of courage and trust: "We are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16).

Paul even finds "the wait of tribulation" to be light. He is not ashamed to fight and suffer for the sake of the Gospel: "but I am not ashamed, for I know Him in whom I have believed and am confident that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

COLUMN

Paul in His own Words

Christ lives in me

For through the law I died to the law that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me. Galatians 2:19-20

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