

Public Service at Surabaya - Sunday, January 28, 2007

Colossians 4:12-18 is about struggle.

Colossians 4:17

4:17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

Nowadays we struggle to fulfill the service and ministry which we have received in the Lord. The word fulfill implies two meanings:

- working with all our heart
- working with all faithfulness from beginning to end

God never lies to us; if we fulfill the service and ministry, we will reap the result.

2 Peter 1:10-11

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

11 for so an entrance (Indonesian: hak penuh = full entrance) will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The result is a full entrance into the everlasting kingdom/New Jerusalem. But if we do not fulfill the ministry, we will not receive a full entrance, even it may be eliminated. That's why, beware of stumbling block (verse 10)!

These are three kinds of stumbling block:

1. Ezekiel 18:30-31

30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin (Indonesian: batu sandungan = stumbling block).

31 "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?"

Transgression = disobedience = rebellion

Ministry in disobedience will become a stumbling block.

Hebrews 10:25-27

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries (Indonesian: orang-orang durhaka = transgressors/rebels/the sons of disobedience).

This is the practice of disobedience: not willing to serve and minister God or being unfaithful and forsaking the service and ministry. So far, we know practices of sin, for example, murders and lies, but now the verse above reveals that forsaking the service is also sin.

Being absent or forsaking the service is a sin which is commonly done in two developed stages:

- done as a habit; meaning that one feels no sin/guilt when he does not serve God. It is common to be absent in the service; "There is still plenty of time. We could do it next week or next month."
- done on purpose; such disobedience brings forth perdition in hell fire.

A stumbling block called disobedience (Ephesians 2: the prince of the air/wandering spirits) always tries to dwell in the Christian, either full-timers (pastors) or non full-timers (servants and ministers). In order not to stumble, we must undergo the renewal of heart.

Ezekiel 18:31

31 "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?"

The renewal of heart is processed through repentance (stopping sinning and returning to God = being dead to sins) and baptism of water (buried in water). It is logical; after being dead, a man must be buried. The baptism of water renews our heart and mind.

Romans 6:4

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory

of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Through baptism of water, we are raised to walk in newness of life by the renewing of heart and mind. In such a manner, the spirit of disobedience will not control us.

The new heart

1 Peter 3:20-21

20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

In the days of Noah, all people including children (but not Noah and his family) were disobedient. No little child was saved. Seeing that, parents should pray for our children. It is necessary to support and not forbid our children if they want to go to church, especially in Sunday School Service - service specially intended for children. Children who are not willing to go to church are at risk; spirits of disobedience are coming upon them. It is much better if they want to come with us in general services; we must invite, but also pray and discipline them so that the spirit of disobedience will not come and induce them to leave God.

The new mind

Colossians 3:1-2

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

The new mind is to think of those things which are above (spiritual matters) more than any thing in the world. The old mind, however, surely thinks of earthly things more than service. It is unreasonable for people of the world to prioritize God through service.

God wants us to struggle for committing service from the beginning until the end. The reward is obvious, i.e. full entrance into heavenly kingdom but we still face stumbling block. It is disobedience, which makes one stopping ministering God even falling. Seeing that, we must repent and have the baptism of water to have renewal of life, that is to say new heart (obedient heart) and new mind (thinking of things above). In such manners, we will neither be disobedient nor stumble.

Psalms 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;

24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Our faith and ministry toward Jesus Christ will last forever/not stumble if the heart and mind is always searched/renewed. We should not sacrifice heavenly matters for earthly ones like Esau who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. Such mind is of the world. How is your mind after baptism of water? If the mind is renewed to prioritize God, we will never stumble until receive a full entrance into the everlasting kingdom of heaven.

2. Ezekiel 7:19-20

19 'They will throw their silver into the streets, And their gold will be like refuse; Their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them In the day of the wrath of the LORD; They will not satisfy their souls, Nor fill their stomachs, Because it became their stumbling block of iniquity.

20 'As for the beauty of his ornaments, He set it in majesty; But they made from it The images of their abominations—Their detestable things; Therefore I have made it Like refuse to them.

Silver and gold / treasures of the earth

We could fall on this stumbling block in the following cases:

- We serve and minister God just to seek and be satisfied with worldly treasures. It means that we fall on the lust of money. The main purpose of serving God is to receive salvation/eternity and perfection. If you want to be rich, you must work in the world, not in church.
- We misuse blessings of God. Indeed, blessings come from God, but improper use will make them our stumbling block. Why? Because the treasures are only used to adorn ourselves/for our sake. This is egoism; we will become stingy and forget the needy. Moreover, the improper use becomes idolatry, namely greediness. A greedy man steals the rights of God (tithe and special offering) and others. In blessings we receive from God, there are parts which belong to God and the needy. If we steal God's possession, we are greedy; and if we do not share with the needy, we are stingy. Thus, we shall fall on worldly treasures if we become greedy and stingy.

In short, the first stumbling block is disobedience and the second is treasures of the earth (committing service just to seek gold and silver of the earth - stumbling block / misusing blessings of God through stinginess - egoism - and greediness - idolatry, stealing God's possession).

So as not to fall on worldly silver and gold, we must pursue and have the heavenly silver and gold through service and ministry. Now let us look into ourselves and answer this question: what do we come to church for? It is unprofitable to pursue worldly silver and gold in church; we will stumble and be broken.

How and who may have heavenly silver and gold?

Malachi 3:1-3

1 "Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.

2 *"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderer's soap.*

3 *He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness.*

They were the sons of Levi and they are priests and kings – those holding priest's offices and gifts of the Holy Spirit. To become priest and king, one has to undergo sanctification and purification (verse 2) by launderer's soap and a refiner's fire, both of which are the teaching word / the word of sanctification. The word of Gospel is important to draw sinful men to God, but it is not enough. Evangelization must be continued with the teaching word and the teaching word ought to be preached like launderer's soap. In washing clothes - especially in traditional way, not with washing machine -, you must rub them down. So, sanctification by the teaching word is performed through shepherding service system, in which the word is preached repetitiously like the rooster's crow. The crow is so simple but was able to revive Peter the senior pastor to repentance.

We should pray much for pastors:

- who only preaches the word of Gospel in order to preach the teaching word as well.
- who have preached the teaching word but not in shepherding service system/not in a series. Can you imagine washing a shirt separately? When one part is still dirty, you just leave it and wash another part. Or, can you install walls before the foundation is built? Builders obviously build a house in order and so should the preaching of Bride Tidings/the teaching word be – in fact, many pastors still pick up the word according to their pleasure, not in shepherding system. Therefore, pastors, including me, need your prayers. It is hard to preach the word with a certain theme in a series.

Launderer's soap cleanses clothes (garment of ministry) from spots to be white. The first spot is wickedness and laziness (Matthew 25; the parable of talent). He who received one talent hid it, whereas he who received five talents worked and multiplied them to be ten talents.

Students of Lempin-El, remember that God can use the foolish, but not the lazy/unfaithful. The lazy will not be used although they are great. In addition, the lazy will also become the wicked. This is the spot of ministry, which needs to be sanctified by the teaching word in shepherding service system to be white (good and faithful).

Matthew 25:21,26

21 *"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*

26 *"But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.*

Wickedness is real through envy, slander, and evil speaking like in this parable, Jesus was mentioned a hard man. Thus, it is true that the unfaithful must become the wicked. This spotted garment needs to be sanctified to become white/holy.

Good and faithful (verse 21) is the garment of holiness/the holy life. The good and faithful servant will enter into the joy of God in so far as the marriage supper of the Lamb. Besides, such servant is made ruler over many things.

Now is about purification by fire.

Malachi 3:2

2 *"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderer's soap.*

A refiner's fire refines rusts inside.

Launderer's soap cleanses spots which are outside and a refiner's fire refines rusts inside, which are invisible and dangerous. Hence, it is necessary to undergo purification.

As written in Matthew 23, many pastors are like tombs, which indeed appear beautiful / just and holy outwardly (such as loving to give), but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness / rusts. I am particularly searched in this case.

1 Peter 4:12

12 *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;*

refiner's fire = fiery trial = sprinkling of blood = fleshly suffering. It is all intended to refine rusts. How do you imagine gold and silver being corroded? But, it is written in James that gold and silver are corroded. What a far too much trait! The corroded gold and silver needs to be purified.

After being washed, clothes (representing our lives) are dried and ironed. We surely suffer because of the heat, but that is the fleshly suffering due to committing no sin / sprinkling of blood / fiery trial to sanctify and present us as pure gold and silver.

Pure gold refers to godly characteristics; one of them is the fear of the Lord -- gold which is not corroded. Many people are afraid of men and become hypocrites, for example, Moses. When Moses served an Israelite who was in a quarrel with an Egyptian, he looked this way and that way for he was afraid of men. He finally buried the Egyptian in the sand. Hypocrisies appear when we serve God by looking unto men. Now we know the importance of pure gold / the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 8:13

13 *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.*

Very often we tell lies to keep prestige. Such must be purified as well by the fiery trial so that we appear as pure gold; having the fear of the Lord as much as hating lies. Honesty is required in any profession. People say that we will eat nothing by

honesty. However, they are completely wrong because God always blesses the honest.

As long as we have gold (the fear of the Lord) and silver (redemption / deliverance from sins until the tongue is right), we do not need to be afraid.

Proverbs 10:20

20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little.

Choice silver is the tongue of the righteous / the tongue of the honest. Say "Yes" for "Yes" and "No" for "No". This is pure silver, which is not corroded.

Pure gold is the fear of the Lord and pure silver is honesty. A dishonest Christian is the corroded gold and silver and God is ready to punish him (James "Your gold and silver are corroded")

For such a man was blessed, who is sanctified from spots and purified with sprinklings of blood to be gold (to fear the Lord = to hate evil) and silver (honest). Indeed, God cannot deny and must bless such a man in time, for instance, Job.

Job 1:1-3

1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

2 And seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

3 Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

There is no reason for God not to bless such a man; his marriage and children are blessed and the daily needs are supplied. But again, he must have these things: white garment (holiness), gold (the fear of the Lord), and silver (honesty).

Our mistake is to pursue worldly gold and silver until there is no more honesty, but deceit. We seek a morsel of bread, but our garment is spotted. What a big mistake! Matters that need to be kept are white garment, the fear of the Lord, and honesty. And God Himself -- not our certificate or our job -- is ready to bless us; our marriage and children are blessed and the daily needs are supplied.

By heavenly gold and silver, we will become God's unbothered possession.

Haggai 2:8

8 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts.

Briefly, the first stumbling block is disobedience. Let us be baptized of water to have obedient heart and mind prioritizing God faithfully in order not to be rebellious. The second stumbling block is worldly silver and gold. Let us seek the spiritual ones through sanctification and purification so as to become God's unbothered possession.

3. Matthew 18:6

6 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Based on the meaning in the original language, "cause to sin" is written "cause to stumble". Whoever becomes a stumbling block, he is a millstone hung around the neck and drowned in the depth of the sea. About millstone is also written in

Revelation 18:21.

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.

In a word, the third stumbling block is the sin of Babylon, that is, eating drinking (smoking, being drunk, consuming illegal drugs) and giving and marrying in marriage (sexual sins, including homosexuality and lesbianism). The sin of Babylon causes the sons of God and pastors to stumble and fall that they do not fulfill the ministry. They then lose an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. He who stumbles in the sin of Babylon had a millstone hanging around his neck; so that he is disconnected with God, (because the neck connects the Body with the Head). The neck symbolizes worship. Without worship, we will be dried and wander in Babylon/uncleanness. Perhaps the uncleanness is not real yet through deed or saying, but manifest in the heart and mind. This affects ministry and particularly worship, since worship is the most intimate relationship with God. Instead of a millstone, let the ornaments of God be hung around our necks!

Here are two ornaments of God:

a. Song of Solomon 4:4

4 Your neck is like the tower of David, Built for an armory, On which hang a thousand bucklers, All shields of mighty men.

A thousand bucklers are hung around the neck; meaning that worship is the shield of faith to protect us from the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Ephesians 6:16

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

The fiery darts come in several forms:

1. the sin of Babylon

Not only virgins and bachelors are shot with love passion, but also married men could be shot by virgins and married women by bachelors. We must beware of love passion; this dart could be within anyone without consideration on age or handicap. Therefore, we need to worship much and let the worship become the shield of faith/protection of God towards the fiery darts of the wicked one. In addition, if your husbands work outside the city, even in other country, you must worship a lot.

2. arousing emotion / quarrel

If the spirit of uncleanness cannot destroy a marriage, the spirit of quarrel would like to try. It may happen that a woman has her husband harsh, bitter (love to beat), and disobedient to the word, but she does not resist or start a quarrel because she has the shield of faith, worshiping much. She will finally win her husband and children.

1 Peter 3:1

1 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

To defeat arousing emotion in facing his disobedient wife, a man has to worship much so that the fiery dart is defeated, his wife and children are won.

3. temptations

By worshiping much, the three fiery darts cannot hit and victories are at our hands (for there are a thousand of bucklers) until our lives and hearts are full of peace. It is not a millstone (the sin of Babylon), but a thousand of bucklers that should be hung around our necks until our marriages are at peace and we enter into the kingdom of peace for a thousand year when Jesus comes back.

b. **Proverbs 3:3**

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, the lovingkindness of the heavenly Groom (for the necklace is hung around the neck of the Bride – Song of Solomon).

the everlasting lovingkindness

Although mountains will depart, the lovingkindness of God will not change. Although we fall, He still lifts up; a youthful wife is never left because of the everlasting lovingkindness.

Isaiah 54:5-10

5 For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.

6 For the LORD has called you Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused," Says your God.

7 "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you.

8 With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," Says the LORD, your Redeemer.

9 "For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, So have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.

10 For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

In worship, we receive the everlasting lovingkindness of God - the love that never changes - to face the world which is moving into unsteadiness and destruction. The world is moving into destruction, not development. Nonetheless, we do not need to worry as long as we worship much. The everlasting lovingkindness helps us to overcome troubles in all aspects of life and will bring us to eternity with Him.

I don't mean to scare you, but the world is really moving into destruction. It cannot be expected anymore and none can help us, except the everlasting lovingkindness of God. Unstable economy cannot be settled with certificate or capital, but the everlasting lovingkindness merely. Yesteryears everything ran well, but not today. But remember that God never leaves us! In worship, the everlasting lovingkindness helps and saves us from troubles and crises in the world until we obtain the eternal and everlasting life to be with Him forever more.

the marvelous lovingkindness

Psalms 17:7

7 Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You From those who rise up against them.

The marvelous lovingkindness helps us to remove the impossible away – anything that is impossible and any problem that meets no way out, even the utmost is to become as perfect as Jesus and lifted up to heavens. But, we will be as perfect as Jesus through the process of renewal of life.

Nowadays, we are facing stumbling blocks in the service and ministry, but God has made a way, primarily in facing the sin of Babylon, that is, worshiping much. Besides, we need to trust in the everlasting and marvelous lovingkindness, which never lies to us, so that all troubles may be overcome. God bless you all. Hallelujah.