

## REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

Colossians 1:24-29

### I. THE MINISTRY: (vs. 24-25)

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions (vs. 24)...

In my sufferings for your sake...Paul is referring to his *present imprisonment* in Rome.

In filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions...Paul doesn't mean that Christ's *suffering* on the cross was *insufficient* or *lacking* in any way. Christ's *suffering* alone procures *salvation*.

*"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."*

~Hebrews 10:10-14

**Affliction**...Gk. *thlipsis*, is *never used* in the New Testament to refer to Christ's death. It means *distress...pressure...or trouble*. Ordinarily it *refers to trials in life...not the pains of death*.

Paul experienced plenty of these *trials* in his life...and he counted it a *privilege* to *suffer* on account of his relationship with Jesus. He even *rejoiced* in the midst of his *sufferings* (vs. 24a...I Peter).

*"Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold*

*and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches."*

~II Corinthians 11:23-28

Scripture even says that it's *the believer's privilege* to *suffer* for the sake of Christ.

*"Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled."*

~I Peter 3:13-14

*"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."*

~James 1:2-4

Since the church is Christ's body, He is *affected* when it is *affected*. When the church *suffers*...Christ *suffers*. He asked Saul...later called Paul...on the **Damascus Road**, *"Why are you persecuting Me?"* (**Acts 9:4**). He didn't say *"Why are you persecuting the Church?"* What began as a *mission to persecute the church*...later Paul *willingly suffered* for the sake of Christ's *body* (the *church*).

*"For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."*

~Philippians 1:29

**2017**...the **500<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of the **Reformation**...**Martin Luther** and the nailing of his **95 Theses** in **Wittenberg, Germany**.

**Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God (vs. 25)...**

**Of this church I was made a minister**...Paul didn't *volunteer* to become a minister of Jesus Christ...he was *appointed* one by the Lord Himself. Because he was **made a minister** by *sovereign call*... Paul view his ministry as a **stewardship from God**.

**Stewardship**...Gk. *oikonomia*, a compound word made up of *house* and *manage*. It means to *manage a household as a servant of someone else's possessions*. Being a *steward* was a position of great *trust* and *responsibility* in the ancient world.

**Paul** never lost the *sense of wonder* or *awe* that God would *call* him to the ministry. He desired to *preach the whole counsel of God* to those to whom God called him. Towards the end of his life he wrote to **Timothy**...

*“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.”*

~I Timothy 1:12-14

**Paul** was a *God-ordained servant* of the precious *truth* of the Word of God. The **Colossian heresy** boasted of a *fullness of knowledge* possible only through their *mystical experience*. But **Paul** declared that the *fullness of the mystery is found only in Christ*.

## II. THE MYSTERY: (vs. 26-27)

That is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints (vs. 26)...

**Mystery**...By **mystery**, **Paul** meant *something once concealed but then revealed*. This contrasted with the **Colossian heretics'** notion that a **mystery** was *a secret teaching known only to an exclusive group* and *unknown to the masses*.

The *reconciliation* by Christ of both *Jews* and *Gentiles* to God...and them becoming *one body...the church*...was a **mystery revealed** only in Christ. The *church* was *unknown* in the Old Testament because it had been kept **hidden** for **ages and generations**. In fact, **Paul** said that it is only now *being disclosed* to the **saints**. Since the *church* is *Christ's body*, resulting from His *death on the cross*, it couldn't possibly have been in existence in the Old Testament.

Since the *church* is Christ's *body* joined together by the *baptism of the Holy Spirit*, the church's birth *occurred* when this baptism took place (**Acts 1:5; Acts 2**).

*“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”*

~I Corinthians 12:13

The **mystery** wasn't *that* **Gentiles** would be *saved* but *how* they would become **fellow heirs** (**Ephesians 3:6**) with the **Jews**...how they would be on the same level with *no wall* or *partition separating* them.

*“Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall”*

~Ephesians 2:12-14

In the Old Testament, **Gentiles** who believed and became a part of **Judaism** were still considered *lower* than **Jews**. This special union in which...

*“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

~Galatians 3:28

...was *nonexistent before Christ died* and the Spirit descended to baptize all believers into this new body...the *church*.

To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (vs. 27)...

Of all the *mysteries* God has *revealed* in the New Testament, the most profound is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**. The Old Testament *predicted the coming* of the Messiah. But the idea that He would *actually live in* His *redeemed* people...the believers that were His church...the church that was made up mostly of **Gentiles**...was *not revealed*. The New Testament is clear that Christ, by the Holy Spirit, *takes up permanent residence in all believers*.

To whom God willed to make known...this mystery among the Gentiles...God willed in His *sovereign mercy* to *reveal* and *make known* His *eternal purpose* to New Testament saints.

The riches of the glory...means *divine effulgence (brightness taken to the extreme)* or *blazing splendor*.

Previously God's *special revelation* was to only the Jews (**Romans 3:1-2; Romans 9:4**). Now, those *who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ* (**Ephesians 2:13**). Those *having no hope and without God in the world* (**Ephesians 2:12**) have been given a *glorious hope which is Christ in you*. Because of **the riches of the glory**...believers are *indwelt* by Christ...which is **the hope of glory**. Thus they are **in Christ**...and...

*“In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace”*

~Ephesians 1:7

...and **Christ is in them**.

*“If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.”*

~Romans 8:10

*“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you...unless indeed you fail the test?”*

~II Corinthians 13:5

Because of Christ...believers can look forward to sharing *His glory*!

*“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”*

~Colossians 3:4

### III. THE MATURATION: (vs. 28-29)

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man **complete in Christ** (vs. 28)...

In the midst of the *heretical teaching* that diminished the *deity* of Christ, **Paul proclaims** Christ and His *sufficiency* and *superiority*... and how Christ now *dwells* in *all believers*...both Jew and Gentile.

**Proclaim Him**...Gk. *katangelo*, means to *publicly declare a complete truth or happening*.

No doubt he did this **proclaiming** while **admonishing** and **teaching** because of the *false teaching* about Christ there in **Colossae**.

**Admonishing**...Gk. *nouthetountes*, means to *counsel...to give guidance and direction*. It speaks of *encouraging counsel in view of sin and coming punishment*.

**Teaching**...Gk. *didaskontes*, means to *give instruction* or *training*... the *imparting of truth*.

*“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

~Colossians 3:16

So that we may present every man **complete in Christ**...Paul was interested in believers *maturing*...not remaining *spiritual babies* (**I Corinthians 3:1-3**). Our aim isn't merely to see people *come to Christ*...but to *disciple* them and bring them to *spiritual maturity*.

*“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”*

~Hebrews 5:12-14

**Complete**...A word used throughout the New Testament to describe *spiritual maturity* (**Colossians 2:10; James 1:4**)...*to be like Christ*.

**Paul** preached the *fullness of the Gospel* so that believers could have the *fullness of life* that Jesus promised (**John 10:10**).

**For this purpose also I labor**, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me (vs. 29)...

**For this purpose also I labor**...Paul expended all his *God-given strength* developing *maturity* in believers. This was *laborious* and *tedious* work.

**Labor**...Gk. *kopiao*, means to *work to the point of exhaustion*.

**Striving**...Gk. *agonizomai*, describes the *struggle* and *agonizing* that a soldier expends in the midst of war...*spiritual warfare*. We get our **English** word *agonize* from it. It can also describe the *effort that one exerts* in an athletic event. It describes one's *maximum effort*.

**According to His power, which mightily works within me...**  
Paul's *strength* and *power* for this struggle came from Christ and Christ alone. All his *toil* and *hard labor* would have been *useless* apart from God's **power** in his life.

*"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."*  
~Philippians 4:13

#### LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **When we minister and serve within the church...it is HARD WORK.** But we aren't called to do it in our own strength. Our strength comes from the One we ultimately serve...Jesus Christ.
- **The Church is the body of Christ and every believer has the RESPONSIBILITY to minister as part of that body.** The spiritual gift given to every believer isn't for our own edification...it's given to help and serve others...to help mature others.

*"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*  
~I Peter 4:10

- As challenging and demanding as it is...ministry was never intended to be arduous and difficult. It was never intended to become an unbearable burden. **JOY should be the spirit of ministry for every Christian.**

*"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

~Galatians 2:20