

**"Serving Jesus Christ in a Fallen World"**

**Part 2**

**Colossians 1:23-29**

**Introduction:** Tonight, as we return to our study in Colossians we are going to start where we stopped last week. We were looking at Colossians 1:23-29 and in these verses, Paul gives the believers at the Colossian church information about himself. Let us keep in mind that they did not know Paul personally. They knew about him that he had caused havoc in the church because of his hatred for Christians. They had heard that he was in prison, and now they were receiving a letter from him instructing them in theology. Could he be trusted?

**I. Paul's Service**

**Notice Colossians 1:23**

Paul was MADE a minister by the Lord. He was not self-made but he was called and equipped by the Lord for sharing the Gospel.

**II. Paul's Insight**

**Notice Colossians 1:24**

Paul rejoiced in his sufferings because he understood that there were great benefits in suffering. One of those benefits was EXPERIENCE. It made him better able to identify with others who were suffering. He informed his readers that he was filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh for the sake of the church. This did not mean that the redemptive suffering of Jesus Christ was lacking. His redemptive suffering on the cross paid the FULL sin debt for the entire world. Paul is speaking of the suffering that Jesus experienced while He walked on the earth. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus' suffering was to make Him perfect and that is perfect in experience. He would be able to relate to His followers because of what He suffered. In the same way Paul was filling that up because he was the body of Jesus and so as he suffered, he too was able to better identify with his suffering brothers and sisters in Christ. This was all for the sake of the church because through his suffering he would be able to comfort others with the comfort he received.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;*

<sup>4</sup> *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

### III. Paul's Responsibility

#### Notice Colossians 1:25

The word "dispensation" here refers to "the oversight of someone else's property" or "stewardship." If we notice the verse very closely, we see that Paul was given a responsibility to fulfil the Word of God for the sake of the church. Notice the words of Wiersbe on this thought.

*"Paul was called to fulfill the Word of God. This can mean, "I must preach the Word fully and not compromise any truth." It can also mean, "I am commissioned by God's Word and I must be faithful to discharge my office"."*

Both of these apply to Paul's situation. Paul was entrusted with God's property. God gave him the Gospel which he was to deliver to sinners on behalf of God. He was called to be faithful to his office of Apostle.

#### 2 Corinthians 5:19-20

<sup>19</sup> *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

<sup>20</sup> *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

#### Application:

We are not Apostles but we are entrusted with God's property, the Gospel. The Gospel is entrusted to us so that we will share it with those we have contact with. We too are ambassadors for Jesus Christ and we also have the ministry of reconciliation. Our ministry goes beyond sharing the Gospel. Do you realize that God has assigned you a specific ministry and that in fact you are not in part time but in full-time ministry! In 1 Corinthians 12 where Paul writes concerning spiritual gifts, he tells us that God gave each of us spiritual gifts. Each one of us has a specific spiritual gift which we are to "manage". One of the purposes of a believer on earth is to be a minister of God as we use our gifts. How are we doing? Are we sitting and soaking or are we selflessly serving and exercising our gift or gifts following the in the footsteps of our Example, Christ Jesus? If not, now is the time to begin to fulfil our mission, it is a decision that you will be forever thankful that you made.

**Notice Colossians 1:26**

Here Paul refers to the "mystery" that had been hidden for many ages. When he speaks of a mystery, he is not referring to something mysterious.

Notice the words of J. Vernon McGee.

*"A mystery is something which had not been revealed in the Old Testament but is now revealed in the New Testament. It is something which you cannot learn by the eye-gate or the ear-gate. Nor has it entered into the heart of man—that is, it is not something man would have thought of. It is a fact which must be revealed by God."*

**Notice Colossians 1:27**

Here is the mystery that Paul is speaking of. It was the permanent indwelling of Christ in each believer. But there is more to the mystery which is not mentioned here.

**Ephesians 2:11-16**

*<sup>11</sup> Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;*

*<sup>12</sup> That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*

*<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

*<sup>14</sup> For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*

*<sup>15</sup> Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;*

*<sup>16</sup> And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

**Galatians 3:27-28**

*<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

**<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.**

The mystery is the church. It was not known in the Old Testament and did not exist. It is a "NEW MAN" in which the Jew and the Gentile are one in Jesus Christ. We who are saved are a unique group of people. We are given the Holy Spirit the moment we are saved and He will never leave us. The believers in the Old Testament were not permanently indwelt by the Spirit. He came upon them for specific ministries and then He would leave. He will never leave us.

#### **Hebrews 13:5**

*<sup>5</sup> Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

When the church age is over and the Tribulation begins and people get saved, they will NOT be indwelt by the Spirit as we are. We are unique because we are the body of Jesus Christ. We are the bride and we make up one NEW MAN that only exists in this age in which we live.

#### **Notice Colossians 1:27 again.**

Paul refers to this mystery as containing the riches of God's glory. We do not even begin to understand how spiritual wealthy we are as members of the body of Jesus Christ.

#### **Ephesians 3:8-9**

*<sup>8</sup> Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*

*<sup>9</sup> And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:*

The riches of Jesus Christ are unsearchable. It will take all eternity for us to know the depth of our spiritual riches. In contrast, the riches of this world are one day going to pass away. Notice what John wrote concerning commercial Babylon.

#### **Revelation 18:16-17**

*<sup>16</sup> And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!*

<sup>17</sup> For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

**Notice Colossians 1:27 again.**

Christ in us is our hope of glory. Christ in us guarantees our eternal glory. But there is more. He lives in us to give us His power for living here in this fallen world.

Notice the words of S. Lewis Johnson.

*"Gentiles "have the hope now and shall soon have the glory. As Eadie says, "What a blessed change to the Gentile world! They had been described as once 'without Christ,' but now Christ was in them; once they had no hope, but now, they had in them Him who was the hope of glory." It is no wonder at all that Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossians. After years of alienation from the commonwealth of Israel and the covenants of promise, without hope, without Christ, and without God in the world, now the apostle was able to present to them, the Messiah for their very own."*

#### IV. Paul's Motto

**Notice Colossians 1:28**

Here in this verse, we see two responsibilities of the pastor that he is to carry out to bring believers to maturity.

1. Preach the Gospel to win people to Jesus Christ.
2. Teach people the Truth of the Bible so that they will be equipped.

Ephesians 4:11-

<sup>11</sup> And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

<sup>12</sup> For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

<sup>13</sup> Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

<sup>14</sup> That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

*<sup>15</sup> But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

*<sup>16</sup> From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

**Notice Colossian 1:29**

Paul also labored to reach the goal of perfection. God is the One who brings the growth but man must labor in the Word and in obedience by the power of God not our power. Paul knew that he must be growing in order to teach others and bring them along in their spiritual growth.

**Conclusion:**

There are many achievements that we can attain in life but the top achievement is spiritual maturity. The more maturity the more Jesus Christ is seen in us which magnifies our testimony.