

## Col 1:24-29

### Paul's Apostolic Ministry in Relation to the Church in General

#### His Attitude (1:24)

##### Joy in the midst of suffering

- A key element in many of his letters
- Ex: the theme of the whole book of Philippians
- What was he joyful about in the midst of difficult circumstances (in prison)?
  - Being given the privilege to suffer for the Church, the body of Christ and to serve it.
  - The glory of the gospel itself filled him with enough joy to enable him to look past his difficulties.

##### "Shared in the sufferings of Christ", "Filled up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" – what does these mean?

- His suffering was different from Christ's
  - Christ's suffering atoned for our sins
  - Paul's suffering did not atone for anything
- His suffering was the same as Christ's
  - Christ suffered for the benefit of others, the church, to redeem them from their sins
  - Paul suffered for the benefit of others, the church, to bring the message of redemption to them
  - In this way he (and we) share in the sufferings of Christ - he suffered for the church just like Christ did.
- His suffering also was in addition to Christ's (fill up what is lacking...)
  - God chose to allow him (us) to do the suffering that is required to spread the message of the Gospel in this fallen world.
  - Christ suffered to redeem us. Once this was done, his suffering ended.
  - Now it is our turn – suffering continues as we carry the gospel around the world – the world will give us a hard time as we do so.

#### His Calling (1:25)

##### God gives each person in the Church specific gifts and callings.

- He is the Master and we are the stewards
- Our gifts and callings are to be used for the benefit of the church
  - Not to promote ourselves
- We are to be fully engaged in doing so like Paul was – are you?

##### Paul's calling was to preach the Word of God

- To Jews and Gentiles alike
- He was specially called to preach to the Gentiles
- He was specifically he was to preach a mystery – the message of the gospel

#### His Message (1:26-27)

### The mystery that had been hidden from the past ages and generations

- Mystery – what had previous been unknown, kept a secret or only partially revealed, but was now no longer a secret because it was made fully known or revealed
- Mystery – is made known to God's saints
  - Saints – “called out ones” – his elect
  - God makes it fully known to his saints – “to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery” – it is available to all saints of every race
- Mystery - the Gospel that was prophesied in the OT but not clearly understood
  - “hidden from past ages and generations” – OT times – “but now been manifested to His saints” – NT times
  - What was now made clear?
    - The hope of glory (or eternal life) is found through union with Christ.
      - 1:27 “the glory of this mystery...which is Christ in you”
    - The Messiah came not to set up an earthly kingdom ruling from Jerusalem (what the Jews had come to believe), but a spiritual kingdom ruling in the hearts of believers. Jn 18:36
    - The hope of eternal life is not just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles – for all races.

### **His Aim (1:28)**

#### To present every man complete in Christ

- Paul was not only called to make converts but to disciple them to follow Christ
- He admonished & taught with all wisdom – warn, instruct and apply the Word  
2 Tim 3:16-17
- What is the goal of discipleship?
  - Maturity or completeness in Christ

#### “Every man” is used three times in this one verse.

- What's the point?
- Paul was concerned about each individual in the church – are we?
- Maturity or completeness in Christ is intended for all saints.

### **His Labors (1:29)**

#### Paul labored and strove to see this accomplished

- This is the ministry God called him to - to fully carry out the preaching of the Word of God (1:25)

#### Preaching the gospel is strenuous work

- It is hard work teaching and preaching to people with the aim of seeing every person made complete in Christ.
- 1 Tim 5:17 – “honor those who rule among you, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.”

#### Preaching the gospel can only be carried out successfully by the power of God.

- Paul made sure nobody thought he was a superman

- The power and ability came from God - “When I am weak, then I am strong”
- Gave God the glory for any good that was accomplished through him.

### **How this relates to the purpose of the letter**

All of the possible sources of the false teaching we discussed in the introduction had this in common:

- Sought a secret knowledge of God above what was readily available to the average Christian
- Only the spiritual elite could obtain this knowledge
- It was obtained through rigorous efforts or strict regulations and severe treatments of the body that prepared one for mystical experiences of climbing into higher realms – angels coming into play somewhere in there
- These strict regulations and severe treatments of the body were also viewed as aids against the sinful flesh.

Paul uses all their buzz words in his explanation of the real way to gain the knowledge of God.

- The “mystery” of God was simply the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Gospel is rich and full of glory – complete – the fullness of knowledge
- It is made available to all God’s saints – there are no spiritual elite.
- The method for obtaining knowledge of this mystery is simply by hearing the preaching of the Word.
- The teaching of the Word is what sanctifies us and makes us complete – able to fight against the sinful flesh.

### **Col 2:1-7**

#### **Paul’s Apostolic Ministry in Relation to the Colossian Church Specifically**

Paul goes from discussing how his apostolic ministry relates to the church in general to how it relates to the Colossian church specifically.

He is getting ready to give specific warnings to a church he has probably never visited before. So before he gets in the details he assures them of his motives. He truly has deep concern for them, is confident in their faith and strongly desires for them to continue in it and grow.

#### **His deep concern for them in particular (2:1-4)**

##### A description of his concern

- He wants them to know about his deep concern for them
  - The issue they are facing is serious
  - He therefore does not take this lightly – he doesn’t want them to take it lightly either
- His concern is a “great struggle”
  - 1:29 – “labor”, “striving”

- Something that weight heavy on his heart, mind and soul
- His concern is for all churches, including them – “on your behalf”
  - 2 Cor 11:28 – After Paul made a long list of the many physical hardships he encounter in his ministry he says, “Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.”
  - This included the churches at Colossae and Laodicea – most of which it seems he had never seen face to face.

### The particulars of what he was concerned about

- For their hearts to be encouraged, knit together in love
  - What would be discouraging them?
    - Not trials and tribulations (not the context here)
    - But the confusion of false doctrine – they heard & believed one system of truth in the gospel from Epaphras – now they were hearing something else that was saying they really hadn’t been taught the whole truth.
  - What would be threatening their unity?
    - False doctrine, if believed by some will result in divisions
- For them to be completely filled with the knowledge of Christ, the mystery of God
  - Them having confidence in the gospel as the whole truth, and that nothing else was needed would clear up the confusion and strengthen their of faith
  - It would also unit their hearts in love around the truth of the gospel.
    - Our bond of unity is to be based upon the faith once delivered to the saints.
    - Eph 4:1-3 Paul had the same concern for their unity to be preserved.
    - Eph 4:4-6 Paul states the bases for their unity – one body, one Spirit, one hope of calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God
  - The mystery (or complete truth) of God is Christ Himself – nothing else!
    - Mystery – something once hidden but now revealed
    - All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ Himself
    - The false teachers taught that there was a higher knowledge of God to be had then what was readily available to believers through Christ.
      - They sought this through mystical relations to angels and visions
      - Paul emphasis again that Christ is superior to any of this. In Him are all the answers.
- For them not to be mislead by persuasive arguments
  - Maybe the false teachers were very good speakers who could persuade people with their smooth words and attract sounding ideas.
  - Confidence in the truth and completeness of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the key to not being misled by false doctrine.

### **His confidence in them (2:5)**

- Paul emphasizes his spiritual connection with them – even though he is not physically there with them he is confident that they are truly part of the body of Christ as he is.
- Paul emphasizes he believes their faith is stable enough to withstand the threat of false teaching – they evidently haven't given in yet to it – just probably a little confused at the moment – his aim is to clear up that confusion.

### **His exhortation to them (2:6-7)**

- Therefore...since the answer is completely found in Christ... since they have a good faith in Christ ...
- Maintain the form of doctrine about Christ they had first been instructed with
  - Jesus was the true Messiah, the Savior, their Lord, the complete revelation of God, the mystery in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in.
- They had not only just accepted these truths mentally but accepted Christ personally in their hearts and lives.
  - They must not now abandon him, whom they have a personal relationship with, because of some new teaching
  - They must stay established in their faith and maintain that personal vital relationship with Christ.
- Their faith in Christ needs to continue to grow and their lives conform to it – they needed to walk in Him, be rooted like trees, and built up like a house,
  - “Walk in Him” - manner of life – putting into practice the teachings of Christ – be a true follower of Christ
  - “Rooted in Him” - Rooted like trees – stability in faith not wavering
  - “Built up in Him” - Built up like a house – growth in maturity and completeness
  - Resulting in overflowing attitude of thanksgiving
    - ➔ Is this a description of our life?
    - ➔ Are we letting other things get in the way of us being followers of Christ, of being rooted in Him, of built up in Him growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior?