

Colossians 1:24-2:7

Verses 24:

--Having spoken about his ministry (23), Paul describes what his stewardship involves.

--*I now rejoice in my sufferings for you.* . . . Part of Paul's personal call was that of suffering.

Acts 9:16: For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.

--How did Paul find joy in suffering? In knowing *who* and *what* his suffering was for. He rejoiced in his suffering for Christ and His Church.

--*and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.* . . . Obviously, Paul is not teaching there was something lacking in the atonement of Christ.

--The Greek word for **afflictions** is used 45 times in the NT and only here of Christ and never of His substitutionary atonement.

--Paul's point is that when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, He didn't break all His links with earth. In fact, He is still present and working through the Holy Spirit in the Church. In this way, Christ's afflictions are those that come to His body, in His place, since He is not present, but Christians are.

--Jesus Christ still has His enemies, and while they cannot reach Him, they can and will reach us. Jesus was very clear with His followers about the fact they would be treated like He was in and by the world (**Mt. 10:25; Mk. 13:13; Jn. 15:18-21; 2 Cor. 1:5+10; Gal. 6:17**).

--The apostles made it clear sufferings and tribulations were a part of the Christian message. We are each called to suffering for Christ in some portion—a portion (unchosen but discovered) accepted or rejected by every individual.

Acts 14:22: Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Philippians 1:29-30: For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

--See also: **1 Thess. 1:6; 3:3-4; 2 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Tim. 1:8; 3:12; 1 Peter** (Has a reference to Christian suffering in each chapter of the letter).

--We may be called to suffer but we are also so weak when it comes to suffering! We cower at the slightest discomfort, awkwardness, embarrassment, negative opinion, slander, or criticism. But if so, who will go and suffer for Christ and His body? Who will take on the heavy oar so there is less weight for others?

--Paul was willing to fill his flesh with affliction for Christ personally and His church collectively.

The very Christ and Church he had made to suffer!

--Part of Paul's victory over suffering was keeping it in context. Suffering is a part of the Christian message but not the whole Christian message.

--Comfort and communion in suffering were also part of the message!

2 Corinthians 1:5: For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

Philippians 3:10: that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

--If we are to be followers of Jesus Christ, we will face suffering for a time in this world. Will we accept our portion to please our Father and love all the bride of Christ?

Verse 25:

--of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you. . . Paul was God's servant according to God's *dispensation* or **stewardship**. God ordered His house by giving Paul a job to benefit others. All the apostle's labor and authority were aimed at pleasing God and building up the body.

--Paul literally found himself serving **to fulfill the word of God**. This simply means to communicate the commands and truths given to him by God. ***God's Word—not ours!***

Verses 26-27:

--(26) In the Bible, a **mystery** is something that would have remained such if God had not revealed it. What was this particular mystery Paul was a steward of, that the saints now understood?

--(27) To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. . . In the OT, it was clear that God's plan would go beyond the nation of Israel and touch the entire world—all Gentile nations.

--We see numerous OT passages speaking about God's work touching the Gentile nations: (**Gen. 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; 49:10; Ps. 72:8; 87; Isa. 54:2-3; 60:1-3; Micah 4:1-2; Malachi 1:11—Acts 3:25-26 + Rom. 4:17-18**).

--Essentially, the question was: *How would God use Abraham's seed to bless all nations?*

--What was the revelation of that mystery? **Christ in you, the hope of glory!**

--It was a mystery that God would send His own Son into the world, and through the cross, bring Jews and Gentiles into one Spirit-born community as His body and bride.

--Jesus promised this to His disciples:

John 14:20: At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

Romans 8:9-10: But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

--You and I have been born of the Spirit and we can say as Paul—**Christ lives in me!** In regeneration and the Holy Spirit we have the **riches + hope of glory**.

Verse 28:

--**Him we preach.** . . Christ, His full Person, words, and works. Not just the gospel. Paul knew that Jesus Christ was the answer for all the greatest problems in life. **I got a guy for that!**

2 Corinthians 4:5: For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

--Paul wanted to make sure people walked away knowing it was **Him we preach.** *I want people to know Jesus better for having known me.*

--Also, notice that Paul wants to make it very clear his message was for **every man**—not just Jew or Gentile, man or woman, slave or free, friends or enemies, etc. Paul didn't know anything about the fear of preaching to the non-elect! The apostolic gospel—the true gospel—was and is for **every man!**

--It is important for us to also see in Paul's **warning** and **teaching** he preached Christ as Savior and Example—never one without the other.

--**Warning every man.** . . The Greek word here for **warning** is translated evenly between *Warn & Admonish*. We need both! (Warn: **Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 5:14**; Admonish: **Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 5:12; 2 Thess. 3:15**).

--We need to be warned at times like Paul was doing for Colossians now.

--We need to be admonished at times like Abigail did for David.

--**Teaching every man.** . . no matter where we are in our walk with the Lord, we are all still learners. We can all learn from Him because He *is* the Perfect Man.

--We are to learn His lessons—not by picking out what we most like about Him and emphasizing it—but by following Him and allowing Him to reveal Himself to us. Jesus is the eternal Iconoclast.

--*Iconoclast* definition: "A person who attacks cherished beliefs as error or breaks religious images set up for veneration."

Lewis (A Grief Observed): "My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great Iconoclast. Could we not almost say that this shattering is one of the marks of His presence? The Incarnation is the supreme example; it leaves all previous ideas of the Messiah in ruins. And most are 'offended' by the iconoclasm; and blessed are those who are not."

--Do you think you know a lot about Jesus Christ? What do you think would happen if you were to walk with Him through a normal day in your life as the disciples did? What if you saw Him resurrected like John the Apostle—who fell at His feet like a dead man?

--We need Jesus Christ—not just our idea of Jesus Christ—to continue to teach us Himself. So how do we follow Jesus and allow Him to teach us what He is like?

Ephesians 4:20-21: But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.

Verse 29:

--**To this end I labor.** . . Work! The raising of mature believers will require literal labor just like the raising of mature children. *Bi-vocational pastors; faithful deacons; selfless intercessors; self-sacrificing missionaries; hospitality; three services of worship at our church; etc.*

--Can I offer a simplistic threefold breakdown of Christian labor?

- 1) Those who labor in God's house (discipleship).
- 2) Those who labor outside of God's house (evangelism).
- 3) Those who labor in prayer for the work going on inside and outside of God's house.

--Are we willing to labor for careers, reputations, favorite past times, and physical homes but not God's pleasure or house? First, are you a worker or shirker? Second, where do you labor?

--How in the world did Paul accomplish all he did? **According to His working which works in me mightly!** Paul was constantly in conflict with people, circumstances, and supernatural powers that were greater than him. But he worked in, and depended on, the strength of the Lord!

Chapter 2

Verses 1-3:

--**For** connects this section with the last. We see the **great conflict** Paul has for this church and the surrounding fellowships was the inner desires of the heart released at the throne of God in prayer and the outward physical sufferings he faced.

--You would think that Paul would have been more concerned for himself—and desiring their concern for him—while in prison. Instead, he is burdened for Christians that he has never even seen face to face!

--**(2)** Paul desperately desires to see a few things in this fellowship.

--**that their hearts may be encouraged.** . . An encouraged heart is a very powerful thing, as is a discouraged heart!

--**being knit together in love.** . . The word for **knit** can also be **welded**. Paul wants to see this group of believers encouraged by living in a community whose hearts are **knit** or **welded** together in love to God and one another. *Christian community should be primarily bound by Christian love—not mere theology, intellect, music preference, or social clubs.*

--**(3) and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

--The **full assurance** Paul desires this fellowship to be confident in the knowledge and understanding and wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.

--The most important things for me to understand about life are in relation to what God the Father has revealed in Jesus Christ. To gain that knowledge, I don't need to look anywhere outside of Jesus Christ or God's revelation! Christ needs no supplement. All the divine **riches** and **treasures** are hidden in Him.

Psalm 119:98-100: You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.

--False teaching always offers some wealth of wisdom outside of Jesus Christ. Something rich found beyond the boundaries of God's revelation. Something extra, new, or secret. Reject it!

--Worldly wisdom can help us pass another in worldly ways, but it profits nothing eternally, is not used of the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ, and doesn't get anyone one step closer to redemption or heaven.

--All true spiritual knowledge is hidden in Jesus Christ. Be assured of that!

Verses 4-5:

--**(4) Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.** . . . the Greek word **deceive** here is used only one other time in the NT in **James 1:22** where James warns any who are not doers of the Word are **deceiving yourselves**. It could also be translated *beguile*.

--The point clearly being, Paul is very concerned they may be led astray. (See: **4, 8, 16, 18.**)

--There are a lot of smooth talkers out there. They use subtle language that sounds good but masks the evil intent behind it. *Satan in the garden was a new voice + Quoting Scripture*

--Paul never saw false teaching as a "little problem". It was always serious and needed to be dealt with. Elders were (and still are!) tasked with teaching sound doctrine and fighting unsound doctrine.

Titus 1:9: holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

--**(5)** Paul wanted to personally be there with them to combat these evil and dangerous teachings but he was there in spirit instead—God using his pen to reach so many more of us!

--That said, he was **rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ**. Both of those terms are military terms and give the idea that they hadn't broken ranks—like a phalanx. They were still holding God's line. *Deconstruction movements today leave people believing in nothing!*

--Something we should ask when "new" and "good sounding" teachings come our way is this: *Am I being drawn away from those my heart was once knit to? From the most spiritual believers I know—like Paul? Am I being tempted to break the ranks? *So sad when this happens!**

2 Timothy 1:13: Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Verses 6-7:

--**(6)** So what should they do? Keep doing what they were doing! **As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.** . . . Paul tells this church to keep on moving forward with the Christ they have received—His person and doctrine—as they had received Him—in Spirit and truth.

--That way He remains **Christ Jesus the Lord**, both Savior and Lord. He must be both!
--Paul says simply, **so walk in Him**, which is *go on walking in Him*. Jesus is the object and the sphere that we continue to walk in. Are you walking with Him through life? Will you be standing with Him at the end of life?

--(7) Our daily walk will include a few things:

1) **Rooted. . . in Him**: The language here is past tense: *having been once and for all rooted*. This is a past act with continual results. There is a constant unseen root system of divine life between me and Jesus, and those unseen roots should be constantly drawing and deepening!

2) **Built up in Him**: The language is: *being built upon Him*. Christ is the sure and stable foundation of all our continued growth. There is purpose, organization, and construction here.

--There is a process here of big materials: beams, studs, walls, + electrical, plumbing, heating/air + floors, stairs, doors, windows + paint, trim, décor, etc.

--So in this image we see a focused goal that is reached from the larger to the finer points. Do you have an idea of constructing a life? What are you trying to build? Where are you in your process of materials?

3) **Established in the faith**: Is *confirmed*, like a solid tree or house. Tested and reliable. This is the life that comes from walking with Jesus as we have received Him! *The disciples' faith was constantly being confirmed as they walked with Jesus.*

--**as you have been taught**. . . Don't desire or be drawn aside by new and slick stuff. Stay in the old paths! A certain message has been passed down to us from Jesus Christ, to the apostles, to the Church, to us. We don't mold it. We keep it.

--Think of all the lives and fruit of Christian people that we admire the most. You see our tendency is to ignore the roots and foundation those lives established. We want quick results without the lifetime of roots going down and the careful planning of meticulous construction.

--We look at these giants of the faith but impatience causes us to ignore their simple beliefs: like how they gave themselves to the Word of God and prayer, how reverently and seriously they took the house of God, how carefully they planned their life to focus on spiritual things over worldly pursuits, and how they labored and suffered to walk with God everywhere and at all times.

--My point is this: it is not possible to speed up the process of abiding in God or building a rock-solid Christian life. That said, the possibility is there for all of us! Paul's desire is for the entire Colossian fellowship to know the joy of this life.

--He ends by saying: **abounding in it with thanksgiving!**

--The revelation of God and a real walk with Christ should cause an overflow of thanksgiving and praise. The Christian walk, rooted, founded and established in Christ, will soon overflow with the joy of the Lord. Don't think so? There is only one type of person to ask!

--Do we abound in thanksgiving for what we have received from God? *Many don't! They despise their birthright like Esau. But praise God, by His grace, I am filled with gratitude!*