

# Paul's Ministry to the Church

Colossians 1:24- 2:5

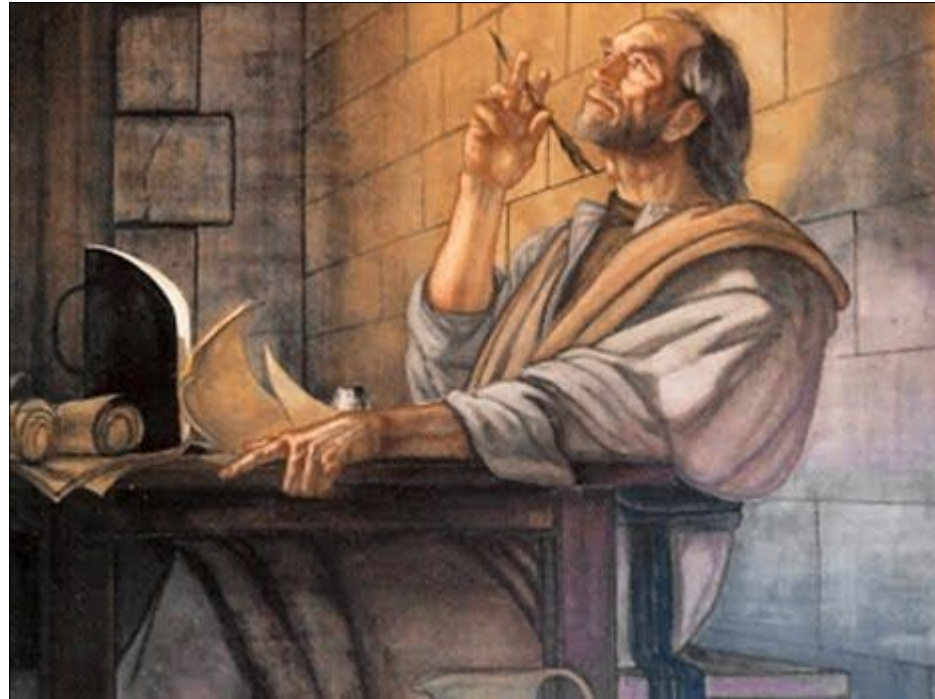
Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.



Colossians 1:24- 2:5

In this section, Paul shares about his pastoral work amongst people he had not met but only heard about. We can be thankful for his work and writings that by the grace of God have reached us too.



Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake,

*James 1:2-4 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

There's a purpose – character, spreading the good news  
Helping God's children



Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake,

What kind of sufferings?

- 1, Physical restrictions ?
- 2, He was writing from a Roman prison (under house arrest?)
- 3, How much more he wanted to do for the Lord

*Acts 28:30-31 He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.*



and in my flesh  
I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions

How is my suffering part of “Christ’s afflictions”?  
Cf, on the Damascus road

*Acs 9:4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”*

*Isaiah 63:9 In all their affliction he was afflicted,*

**It is part of Jesus’ identification with his people  
in the things we go through for his sake**

It has nothing to do with Christ’s completed atoning work on the cross.

*John 19:30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

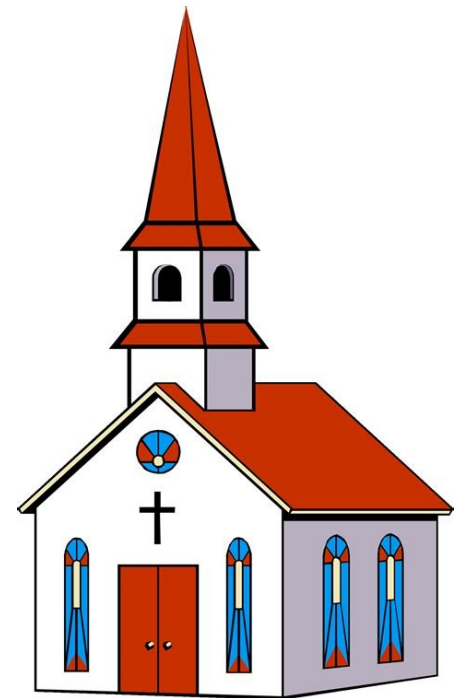
What I have gone through was in order to serve him by ministering to his people.

*Matthew 25:40*

*And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'*

Paul often uses the 'Body' illustration for the church (called out ones)

They were part of the 'whole' church.



of which I became a minister

Being a minister means having a servant ministry

*John 13:14-15 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.*





of which I became a minister  
according to the stewardship from God  
that was given to me for you,

The responsibility for the work was given by God  
Cf like a house steward – preparing food etc

He knows his calling – doing God's will?  
He was to be a channel of God's grace

**Me for you**

Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard  
in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of  
the Lord Jesus, how he himself said,  
‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

to make the word of God fully known,

This was the focus of Paul's ministry

To explain and teach the **word of God**

(the message that was given and written)

Nothing was to be hidden or kept obscure

*2 Timothy 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

This contains an implied criticism of the false teachers he refers to later.



the mystery hidden for ages and generations  
but now revealed to his saints.

Mystery means a secret not yet known rather than incomprehensible idea, although these things are hidden to unbelief and need God's revelation.

*Matthew 16:16-17 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*

Something new although had been hinted at previously

*Zechariah 2:11-12 And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem."*

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery,

The 'saints' benefit from God's sovereign choice of revelation to the Gentile outsiders.  
He shows them the riches of glory. (immeasurable)

It is something well worth knowing.



which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The indwelling Messiah! Not just 'with' but 'within'.  
The guarantee (real hope)  
Of glory ( to see him and be like him)

*1John 3:2-3 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

*And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*



Him we proclaim,  
warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom,

It is to be the proclamation of Jesus (rather than ourselves)  
– his person, teaching and deeds, since he is the Father's  
appointed means of salvation

**Everyone** – it's a personal application – wise teaching as  
needed in each case.



that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

A wonderful objective!

What is Maturity in Christ like?

(likeness to him in character)

**Present** speaks of a 'final' result before God

*Ephesians 5:27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

We are on the way, but when will we get there?

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy  
that he powerfully works within me.

Two things working together  
Our human responsibility – I toil, struggling  
God's sovereign enabling – his energy

He was conscious of God's working in and through him.

How aware are we of God's working in us and through us?



For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you  
and for those at Laodicea  
and for all who have not seen me face to face,

His struggle not something theoretical.  
He is using athletic imagery.

It involved 'wrestling' in prayer,  
and writing out of his love and concern  
for the Colossian believers and nearby Laodiceans

Even though they had never met him personally  
That is our situation too-

How well do you know what Paul did for us?



that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love,

His aim is for God to bless them

Encouraged hearts – by God's love within

*Romans 5:5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

Then God's love flowing out ...

**Knit together** (not just a meeting) but loving each other.

Let's pray for our brothers and sisters to be encouraged.

to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding  
and the knowledge of God's mystery,

To see personal growth – to that maturity

Riches of blessing = full assurance of understanding  
the truth

Knowledge is not simply intellectual but a personal  
acquaintance/experience of the 'mystery'

**SECRET**

which is Christ,  
in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

It's all about Christ

Hidden – but discoverable – treasures

The pearl of great price whose value was recognised by  
the buyer

Wisdom (cf personified Proverbs 8)

Proverbs 8:1 Does not wisdom call?  
Does not understanding raise her voice?

Knowledge – real versus empty speculations and guesses

**The things that matter most are to be found in Jesus**

I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

The reason for his letter is that there are dangers around

Note his use of words such as 'wisdom', 'knowledge'  
They are also part of cult type uses – '*we are in the know*'

Deception is possible (to talk you out of your blessings)  
often by the promise of easy answers etc.

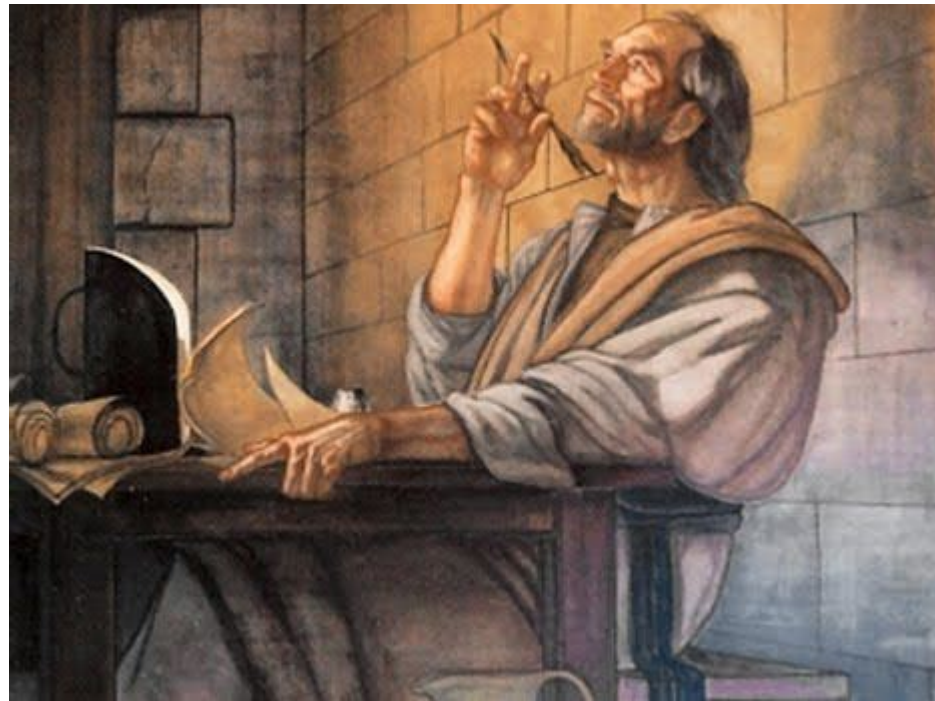
by what appears on the surface to be very plausible  
Discernment is needed – and the truth about Jesus

Matthew 24:24-25 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.

For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit,

He may be physically absent but he was keenly aware of their situation

By faith/ prayer /his letter he is present in his spirit.



Can we in prayer identify with the situations our brothers and sisters face?

rejoicing to see your good order  
and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

And as if I were actually present, I can see how well  
you are doing as Christ's disciples  
Good order - disciplined lives and fellowship  
Solid faith in the Lord Jesus

Rejoicing to see them blessed and going on.  
Happy servant.



There are three mysteries are described in in this passage:-

- The Church as the Body of Christ, for which Paul suffered and served (1:24-26).
- The Indwelling Christ, the hope of glory in each individual believer (1:27).
- The Revealed Jesus, the treasury of all wisdom and knowledge (2:2-3).

**Have we discovered them for ourselves?**

**SECRET**