

:00 (24) 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.

(27) 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.

(28) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.

(1) 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.

(4) 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.

Think on these things:

- 1) Paul accepts his position of suffering as a missionary for God's Church as normal and God-honoring. He is a minister according to the stewardship given to him. Quickly look at these scriptures and describe Paul's evangelism approach to any city he entered. To what specific ministry did God call him? See Acts 9:15-16; 13:13-15, 44-46; 17:1-2; 19:8-10; and Romans 15:15-17.

Evangelistic Approach – **Paul always entered a Jewish synagogue when arriving at a new city and began sharing the Gospel, pointing to Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. He continued until the synagogue rejected him, and then he would reach out to the non-Jewish (Gentile) residents.**

Paul's Calling (stewardship) – **Paul became known as the "Apostle to the Gentiles," but he still always began with the Jews first, and then turned to the Gentiles.**

- 2) According to vs.25b, 28b, and 2:5b what could we grasp as key purposes of Christian ministers in their churches? Consider also 2 Timothy 3:14-16 and Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

V.25b **To make God's Word fully known to those they serve. (2 Tim – Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness – so that believers may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Heb – Knowing God's Word can be at a baby level up to a mature teacher level. With use and training, Christians should understand the Bible more.)**

V.28b **To present every member of their church as "mature" in Christ Jesus**

2:5b **To see members' lives in "good order" and firmly established in their faith.**

- 3) Now let's take up the issue of God's "mysteries." Job asked, "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty" (Job 11:7)? Moses stated, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children forever..." (Deuteronomy 29:29a). As God told the Israelites they were incapable of taking the Promised Land all at once (Exodus 23:30 and Deuteronomy 7:22), He used a similar approach to His plan for the world → He revealed things about Himself and mankind across time and to different generations. (We refer to this as Progressive Revelation.) Prophecies given to prophets were not fully understood at the time God revealed them (1 Peter 1:12), often because they applied to people and events future. Can you name some things in the Bible that remain mysterious and unknown to you? Consider these verses in your response: Mark 13:32; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 and 13:12; and 1 John 3:2.

**Personal responses. Perhaps understanding Revelation and the events of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, or the nature of a resurrected body like Jesus, or what heaven will be like.**

- 4) What "mystery" is revealed in these verses?

Ephesians 3:4-6 **Through the Gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel – one body!**

Ephesians 5:29-32 **The "union" of Christ and His Church parallels that of unity between a husband and his wife.**

Colossians 1:27 **Christ is within believers (by the H.S.), our glorious hope.**

Colossians 2:2-3 **In Christ we find all the hidden treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge.**

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 **The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus will NOT occur before the Man of Lawlessness is revealed. (Don't be deceived by anybody's report otherwise...!)**

1 Peter 1:17-20 **Christ was chosen to redeem mankind before the foundation (creation) of the world, but it was not fully revealed until He actually came, lived, and died in our world.**

- 5) Finally, in speaking about God's mysteries being revealed, Paul expresses a concern about believers being deceived and deluded (2:4). What does he identify as the cause of what might trip up people of faith? Based on your faith walk, what counsel might you give to us to avoid tripping on this?

Cause – **Other people may share with them fine-sounding (reasonable) arguments designed to draw us away from our firm faith (e.g., thousands/millions of years for creation [dinosaurs]).**

My counsel – **Personal opinions, but, hopefully becoming an expert of Biblical teachings to know when something sounds "off" (like bank tellers only handling genuine bills while training so as to recognize the touch of counterfeit bills). Know God's truth!**

People and situations I want to pray for this week: