

Lesson 6

Colossians 1:24 – 2:5

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- 24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings^a for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up^b what is ^clacking^d in Christ's afflictions^e for the sake of his body, that is, the church,
- 25 of which I became^f a minister^g according to the stewardship^h from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully knownⁱ,
- 26 the mystery^j hidden for ages^k and generations but now revealed to his saints^l.
- 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery^j, which is Christ ^minⁿ you, the hope of glory.
- 28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone^o and teaching everyone^o with all wisdom, that we may present everyone^o mature^p in Christ.
- 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works^q within me.
- 2:1 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,
- 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the ^sknowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,
- 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- 4 I say this in order that no one may delude^v you with plausible^w arguments^x.
- 5 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order^y and the firmness^z of your faith in Christ.

- Notes
- a NJB, CEB sim. "It makes me happy to be suffering"
 - b NRSV, HCSB, CEB "completing"; NASU "I do my share in filling up"
 - c NIV inserts "still"
 - d CEB "missing"
 - e NJB "in my own body to make up all the hardship that still have to be undergone by Christ"; REB "completing what still remain for Christ to suffer in my own person"
 - f ASV "was made"
 - g NJB, NRSV, REB, CEB, NIV "servant"
 - h KJV, ASV "dispensation"; NRSV, CEB, NIV "commission"; HCSB "administration"
 - i KJV, ASV "to fulfill the word of God"; REB "to put God's word into full effect"; CEB, NJB sim. "to complete God's word"; NIV "to present to you the word of God in its fullness"
 - j REB "secret purpose"; CEB "secret plan"
 - k NASU "from the past ages and ..."
 - l NJB, CEB "his holy people"; REB "God's people"; NAB "his holy ones"; NIV "Lord's people"
 - m CEB inserts "living"
 - n NJB "among"
 - o KJV, ASV, NASU "every man"
 - p NJB "perfect"
 - q NRSV "inspires"
 - r KJV, ASV "my face in the flesh"; REB "not set eyes on me"; NASU "not personally seen my face"; HCSB "in person"; CEB, NIV sim. "not known me personally"
 - s NASU inserts "true"
 - t REB "secret"; CEB "secret plan"
 - u KJV in lieu of "which is Christ" has "and of the Father, and of Christ"
 - v NAB, NIV "deceive"

- w NJB, REB, NAB "specious"; NASU, HCSB "persuasive"; CEB "convincing"; NIV "fine sounding"
- x KJV "enticing words"; ASV "persuasiveness of speech"
- y NRSV "morale"; REB "unbroken ranks"
- z REB "solid front"; HCSB "strength"

Comments / Questions

1. The structure of v.24-29 can be seen in the following chiasm: (Note: A chiasm is a series of parallel sentences in reverse order. Thus, **A** statements are parallel, **B** statements are parallel, etc.)

A *"Rejoice in my sufferings for your sake..."*

B *"To make the word of God fully known..."*

C *"the mystery...make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery..."*

B *"Him we proclaim, warning..."*

A *"For this I toil struggling with all his energy..."*

The middle idea of a chiasm (**C** in this instance) is the focus of the passage.

2. Only Paul uses the term "mystery" in the NT (except for 3 uses by John in Revelation), and he uses it with different senses. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15 he speaks of the mystery of the resurrection and in 1 Timothy 3:16 it refers broadly to his incarnation, his ministry, and his ascension. But in Ephesians and Colossians it has a narrower meaning although expressed slightly different in each letter.
 - a. Paul is most explicit in Ephesians 3. What is the "mystery" in this passage? (Eph 3:6)
 - b. Yet, in Colossians, what is the "mystery"? (Col 1:27; 2:2; 4:3)
 - c. Are these two descriptions of the mystery compatible? In other words, are they saying the same thing?
 - d. By the way, why does Paul call these truths a "mystery"? (Eph 3:3-5; Col 1:26)
3. Paul often spoke of his sufferings (1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 11:23-28) that the Lord foretold that he would endure (Acts 9:15-16).
 - a. What was Paul's attitude toward his sufferings? Rom 5:3; 2 Cor 7:4
 - b. With whom did Paul share in his sufferings? Rom 8:17-18; 1 Cor 1:5-8; Phil 3:10-11
 - c. In surveying the above passages, on whose behalf did Paul suffer?

- d. In this passage, Paul seems to go a step beyond his other statements. What does Paul mean by "in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church"?

Were Christ's afflictions deficient ("lacking")?

Could this simply be another way of Paul saying that he shared the sufferings of Christ?

The same two terms 'lacking' and 'fill up' (= 'supply') are used by Paul to speak of that which was done for him. Read 1 Corinthians 16:17-18 and Philippians 2:29-30. Is Paul condemning the Corinthians or Philippians? If not, how does this help us to understand what means about his afflictions as compared to Christ's afflictions?

4. In 1:28, Paul 'proclaims' Christ by both 'warning' and 'teaching' everyone.
- What is Paul's goal in proclaiming Christ?
 - How is a similar thought expressed in Ephesians 4:11-14?
5. Does 2:1 suggest that there are *none* (essentially) at Colossae who have personally met Paul or that there are only *some* there who have not met him?
6. In 2:4 we have the first hint of a possible concern Paul has for the Colossians.
- What, do you suppose, could they be 'deluded' about?
 - How were they to be 'deluded'?
 - Has this 'delusion' already taken place?