**FILL UP IN MY FLESH CHRIST’S AFFLICTION**

Colossians 1:24-2:5

Key Verse 1:24

“Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.”

**Introduction**



In this passage Paul mentions how he served the church and his gospel-preaching ministry. First of all, Paul said that he rejoiced in suffering for them. He suffered for them because although he did not know them personally, he loved them dearly in Christ Jesus, and was willing to go through suffering if only it might keep them rooted in the true message of the Gospel. Paul suffered all such things in his life as a shepherd. For them he labored night day to pray for them and teach them the words of God. Indeed the best suffering we can embrace in our day is to bring the word of God to God’s flock, to pray for them faithfully, and to shepherd them until Christ is fully formed in them. That is why he also introduces Jesus as mastery of God in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and encourages believers to know Christ fully. May God help us to pick up eager desire to learn of his shepherd heart to let our spiritual and physical children know Jesus deeply.

1. Read verses 24-26. Why does Paul rejoice? (24a) What does he want to fill up in his flesh? (24b) For what purpose did God call him to become the Church’s servant? (25, 26)

1-1 Read verses 24-26.

Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. **25** I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— **26** the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people.

1-2 Why does Paul rejoice? (24a)

· ***Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you,***

- Paul wrote this letter from a Roman jail. He was able to see that his sufferings were for the Colossians and other believers.

- Paul rejoiced because Colossians would get spiritual benefits through his suffering.

- Paul rejoiced about having chance to suffer for God’s flock and church.

- Paul did not suffer for himself in the way that an ascetic might. Rather he suffered for the sake of body of Christ. Paul followed Jesus’ footsteps of Jesus and he suffered for others.

- When we know the value of suffering for God’s flock, we can serve them with great joy despite of all sufferings.

- Do we have such joy? Are we serving them with such joy?

1-3 What does he want to fill up in his flesh? (24b)

***· I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.***

- Paul wanted to fill up in his body Christ’s afflictions(Christ’s suffering).

- Paul considered his suffering as Christ’s afflictions that is lacking. It doesn’t mean that Christ’s suffering for our salvation was not sufficient in terms of redemptive suffering on the cross. He suffered sufficiently to redeem us from our sins. The suffering on the cross for our salvation is perfect and nothing needs to be added to his suffering.

- Christ’s affliction that is lacking means the suffering for the church, the body of Christ remains. The church, the body of Christ suffers in this world with much persecution and trials.

- Paul was filling in his body the suffering every day. It is each believer and church’s duty to suffer in this world to carry the mission that God ordered.

- Paul was talking about his own suffering, and about the fact that Christian suffering did not end with Jesus but that it goes on in Jesus’ name for the sake of the church, Jesus’ church and his bride.

- Paul was suffering for them as a shepherd for he was called to suffer on behalf of God’s people. Paul was struggling for them in prayer. He was deeply concerned for their spiritual well being.

- When he had heard that false teachers had gone out into the world and that false gospels might make their way into their midst, he could not sleep.

Acts 9:15-16 reads,

“This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name”

- Paul must have known that in serving Christ Jesus, suffering would be a part of his life. For this reason Paul personally accepted his sufferings with joy.

Philippians 1:29 reads,

“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.”

* When we are born again in Christ like apostle Paul, we must be given to whatever it takes to bring the Gospel to a dying world with meaningful suffering!

1-4 For what purpose did God call him to become the Church’s servant? (25, 26)

***· I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—***

· Paul became church’s servant to serve the church by the commission that God gave him. Paul emphasized that the mission and his authority came from God.

· To present to you the word of God in its fullness - Paul’s mission was to present the truthful word of God in its fullness.

- Paul carried out his mission faithfully by preaching the gospel to them fully. His single mission was to preach the gospel fully despite of any challenges and problems.

- When Paul received the Gospel through a personal revelation, it did not make him special and proud that he would do his own thing or teach something else. Rather he knew clearly that he was commissioned like all the others to teach the word of God in its fullness.

- Sometimes we are apt to forget about what we are called to do as Christians. But we too must know that God’s word does not change.

- As Paul was commissioned to present the word of God to others, so also Christians are commissioned to do the same.

- Paul was first and foremost a Bible teacher although he was an evangelist and a preacher and more. But first and foremost he was a commissioned Bible teacher.

- He cherished his calling as a Bible teacher, and served his calling with all his heart. Towards the end of his life, when he was a prisoner of Rome and on death row, he was allowed to spend the last days of his life in a rented apartment. While he waited for his execution, Paul taught the Bible to all who came to visit him. From his rented apartment, the Gospel of life went out to the whole world. Praise Jesus who changed him!

***26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people.***

· The mystery is the gospel of Jesus. The gospel had been kept hidden in the Old Testament for ages and generations. But now it is disclosed to all believers all over the world including the gentiles.

· Paul presented such the great mystery ‘gospel of Jesus’ fully to the people.

May the Lord help each of us to have the same zeal that he had had so that we may pioneer all campuses in Los Angeles county by participating Jesus’ remained suffering. Amen!

2. Read verses 27-29. Why does God choose His people? (27) What is Paul’s clear goal for every believer? (28) How does he strive to achieve it? (29)

2-1. Read verses 27-29.

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**28** He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. **29** To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

2-2. Why does God choose His people? (27)

***· To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory***

· The glorious riches of this mystery : The riches of the gospel is so deep, abundant, powerful and magnificent. God’s grace in the gospel is so glorious.

- When we know the gospel deeply we can enjoy all the glorious riches of the gospel.

- Which is Christ in you : Jesus is in each of us through Holy Spirit.

- The hope of glory : In Jesus we can have glorious hope, the glorious hope of resurrection, hope of kingdom of God and Jesus’ glorious second coming.

- Apostle Paul have seen “the hope of glory in Christ” in person and by God’s grace, he was blessed to set the clear life purpose to share such a glorious hope of glory in all Gentiles according to God’s calling.

- Since Adam’s fall, God’s glory in human being faded away. We had had no idea about what the hope of glory is all about. We are bombarded with false ideas and lost God’s glory in us.

- Even believers were confused about what glory to pursue. They ended up seeking worldly glory such as successful career or wealth or fading things. But Christ resumed God’s original glory through his suffering and death on the cross.

- Paul used to grope in the darkness without knowing what was going on. But Christ showed himself to him and he gained the hope of glory in Christ.

- He made a diagnosis in the Colossians about the reason why they ended up being fallen into statistics because they could not see the glorious riches of this mystery, the hope of glory in Christ.

- May the Lord help us to see this hope and glory without losing it. And we may share with others in our times!

- This is our only hope of glory— that Christ in us. Jesus came for this purpose. Jesus suffered for this purpose, that we might not die in our sins. No hope, no glory!

* Also Paul had world mission mind although he wrote this letter to help the Colossians. That is why he prayed for all the Gentiles including them. May the Lord help us to expand our hearts and prayers for all nations although we engage in one to one Bible study!

2-3. What is Paul’s clear goal for every believer? (28)

***· He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.***

· He is the one we proclaim – the key point of Paul’s preaching was Jesus Christ. The core of the gospel is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ should be the very core of our preachings.

· The ultimate goal of Paul’s teaching was to help the believers to get mature in Christ.

. Paul showed his shepherd heart to serve them in prayer and with his whole heart although he did not pioneer the church by himself. He considered them to be his own sheep for God’s glory.

· The goal of ministry of Christ should be to help people to believe in Jesus and grow in Jesus’ image so that they may be presented to God being perfect.

· Fully mature in Christ : Once we are justified by faith in Jesus, we should grow in Jesus’ image which is “sanctification.”

· One of the main purposes of receiving word of God and participating in church is to get mature continually.

· Being mature in Jesus growing in his image is the fruit that we should bear throughout our spiritual life on earth.

2-4. How does he strive to achieve it? (29)

***· To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.***

· When Paul served the ministry, Christ works so powerfully in him. At same time Paul also worked hard for the end, which was to present believers matured in Christ.

. Praise Jesus who changed him who used to work for his own glory into a servant of God who worked hard for God and His flocks.

· Jesus works in us with his mighty power and enables us to do God’s work. We can do work of God by his power, not by our own.

· We should follow Jesus who is working in us and we should also work hard together with him.

3. Read verses 2:1-5. What does Paul want them to know? (1) What is his goal? (2) What treasures are hidden in Christ? (3) What is Paul’s concern and encouragement for them? (4, 5)

3-1 Read verses 2:1-5.

I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. **2** My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, **3** in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **4** I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. **5** For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

3-2 What does Paul want them to know? (1)

***· I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.***

· Paul contended for Colossians and Laodicea for them to keep faith and true gospel even though he had not met them personally.

* Paul embraced all believers as brothers and sisters in the Lord and worked for them and prayed for them.
* We should be able to support and pray for other believers and churches even though we don’t have direct relationship with them. All believers are connected with each other as parts of one body of Jesus Christ.

3-3. What is his goal? (2)

· ***My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ***

· The goal of Paul’s labor and prayer for them was to help them to be encouraged in heart and united in love. The Colossians were experiencing division because of false teaching arguing and fighting each other.

* Paul wanted to help to be united in love based on true gospel of Jesus.
* Paul helped them to have the full riches of complete understanding so that they may know the mystery of God, Jesus Christ.
* Colossians was disturbed and got in trouble by the false teachings because they didn’t have full understanding of Christ.
* All problem can be solved when we know Jesus deeply. Our first prayer topic should be to have complete understanding of Jesus Christ.
* Christ is the mystery of God : All God’s wisdom and plan are revealed in Jesus and by knowing Jesus we can know God’s will and wisdom. God reveals everything through Jesus. So we need to pray and make all effort to know Jesus.
* We can’t know Jesus for ourselves. We need to pray that God may let us have complete understanding of Jesus.

3-4. What treasures are hidden in Christ? (3)

· ***in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***

* Wisdom and knowledge appears at same time (Romans 11:33, 1Co12:8)
* The wisdom is the understanding of God’s plan and work.
* Knowledge is the understanding of the gospel
* The false teachers said that they had higher level knowledge being connected with supernatural being.
* But Paul testified that the true wisdom and knowledge is in Jesus and people in Christ can know the wisdom and knowledge.
* ‘Hidden’ : people cannot know the wisdom and knowledge for themselves. Only when God reveals people can get the wisdom and knowledge.
* Before the treasure was hidden but now it was revealed to all believers through Jesus.

3-5. What is Paul’s concern and encouragement for them? (4, 5)

***· I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. 5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.***

· Paul told them about the purpose of writing his letter. It was to prevent them from being deceived by the false teachers.

* “By fine-sounding argument’ : False teachers argument sounded fine, very persuasive, interesting, deep and great. Many false teachings sound fine. That is the reason why so many people follow false teachings.
* Find-sounding doesn’t mean that the teaching is truth. Their teachings sounded fine but they were totalling wrong teaching against the gospel.
* We have to discern teachings based on the word of God not based on how the teaching sounds to our ears.
* Paul couldn’t be with Colossians because he was bound in prison. But he was present with them in his spirit. He was participate in their situation in spirit and prayed for them earnestly.
* We can be with our coworkers who are in trouble and difficulty through our earnest prayer for them. Our presence in spirit could be more powerful and supportive than our presence in body.
* Delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is: Many Colossians were fighting against false teaching firmly just as disciplined soldiers. Paul heard about it.
* Believers who are disciplined through truthful gospel and word of God can overcome all kind false teachings and stand firm on the truth.
* We have to discipline ourselves and help our bible students through the word of God so that their faith in Christ may be firm and fight against all false teachings and wrong arguments from the world that sound fine.

**Conclusion**

Paul rejoiced in his suffering for the church and filled up in his body Christ’s suffering. He didn’t just talk for the church but suffered in his body to serve the church. The purpose of his suffering was to present the word of God, the gospel to the people and help the believers to become fully mature in Christ. And he wanted them to have the full riches of complete understanding of the mystery of God, Jesus Christ. All treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in him. May God help us to make all efforts to know Jesus all the more through the revelation of Holy Spirit so that we may enjoy all the treasures in him and stand firm on the faith in Christ. May God help us to get mature in Christ continually and fill up our body Christ affliction to serve his church and lost souls.

**One word: “Fill up in my flesh Christ’s affliction”**