

## The Ministry of the Mystery # 5

Colossians 1: 21-29

Our text this evening deals with the burden Paul carried for those who had not yet come to saving faith in Christ. Everywhere he went, Paul saw a mission field. He was constantly aware of those around him who needed salvation. He was passionate about sharing the truth of the Gospel with those whose eyes had yet to be opened to the mysteries of the faith. Paul was a learned scholar prior to salvation. He knew the Old Testament scriptures as good as anyone, and yet he was blind to the mystery of the faith prior to that point. He now understood the need to expound the Gospel to the lost, seeking to enlighten them through the Word of God.

There can be no doubt Paul was committed to ministry. He knew the need for preaching and sharing his faith. [Rom.10:13-15, 17 – For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.](#) <sup>[14]</sup> [How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?](#) <sup>[15]</sup> [And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!](#) <sup>[17]</sup> [So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.](#) He had received Truth and the call to share that Truth. He knew sharing the Gospel was the means by which men would be saved. We too need to understand and embrace the truths Paul understood. We will never be the Christians we need to be or the church Christ called us to be without being faithful to ministry. The saved have received the Truth, our hearts and minds have been enlightened to the Gospel. We must take that Truth to the world.

I want to consider the [values](#) Paul possessed in regard to his call and work as we think on: [The Ministry of the Mystery](#).

**I. The Profit of the Ministry (21-23)** – Paul knew the ministry was profitable and beneficial to humanity. He too had received the gift of grace and desired all others to receive it as well. Here Paul describes particular aspects associated with salvation the born again receive. He speaks of:

**A. Reconciliation of Believers (21-22a)** – [And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled](#) <sup>[22]</sup> [In the body of his flesh through death.](#) This is true of all who live apart from Christ. We were all born in sin, alienated from God, with no means in ourselves to have the fellowship sin had ruined restored. We stood an enmity with God due to our sin and wickedness. Christ was the only way we could possibly be restored. As He gave Himself the sacrificial atonement for sin, all who come to Him by faith are reconciled to God through the death of Christ. This has the idea of “*setting up a relationship of peace that was*

*nonexistent before.*” Through Christ we now have peace with God through His Son. The fellowship broken by sin has now been restored.

**B. Justification of Believers** (22b) – *In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:* We not only have been reconciled to God, offered peace with Him, we have also been justified in His sight, viewed as *holy, unblameable, and unproveable* in Christ. In Christ we now stand without spot or blemish, free of any accusation or condemnation. Simply, we are viewed in light of the holiness of Christ. God sees the believer as He sees His Son.

- Isn't that amazing when you think of it? Sinners such as we, wicked and defiled, enjoy the righteousness of Christ being imputed to our account. We stand justified in the sight of God because of the sacrifice of His Son!

**C. Sanctification of Believers** (23) – *If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;* By sanctification I mean the continual process through which we are conformed to the image of Christ. Paul reveals our faith in the Lord ought to result in our sanctification. Again, this is not something we can accomplish in ourselves. The flesh does not desire the things of God. Only through a close relationship with Christ, continuing in the faith, are we sanctified into the image of Christ. Justification frees us from the penalty of sin while sanctification frees us from the power of sin.

- It is possible to overcome the lusts of the flesh and live pleasing to God through Christ. That is not to say we will never sin or miss the mark, but that our lives will not be dominated and dictated by the lusts of the flesh.

### **I. The Profit of the Ministry** (21-23)

**II. The Pleasures in the Ministry** (24-25) – Paul goes on to speak of that which motivates and drives his ministry. This is not something he chose, but he has embraced the call and takes pleasure in the ministry he received. Let's consider the pleasures he enjoys. We discover:

**A. Thankful Suffering** (24) – *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:* Paul asks the church in

Colossae to rejoice in the sufferings and afflictions he endured for them. This speaks of great suffering and affliction, being “*pressed beyond measure, squeezed or crushed, to endure great tribulation.*” Surely there were those in Paul’s day, as well as in ours, who would think he had lost his mind. Why would one rejoice, being exceeding happy, for such physical and emotional pain? Paul gives us the answer: *it was for the sake of the body of Christ, the church.* He knew his suffering and affliction would edify and exhort the church. God would use his suffering for the good of other believers. Paul rejoiced that his suffering could be used for the glory of God, the conversion of sinners, and the edifying of the saints!

- That ought to challenge us this evening. Have you thanked the Lord lately for your affliction? Have you rejoiced for the trial you were asked to endure? Many in our day complain if the temperature in the sanctuary isn’t just right. I hear little rejoicing for the trials we endure. I will admit I tend to complain as well. We need the desire of Paul and the help of the Lord to rejoice for everything our Lord sends our way! *Matt.5:11-12 – Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*<sup>[12]</sup> *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.* *Acts 5:41 – And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.* *2 Cor.4:17 – For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;* *Rom.8:18 – For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

**B. Timely Service** (25) – *Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;* Paul had been called for such a time as this. Long before the foundation of the world, God had a plan in mind for the redemption of humanity. *Gal.4:4-5 – But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,*<sup>[5]</sup> *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* Christ had come, fulfilling redemption’s plan, and Paul had been called to share the glorious Gospel with the gentiles. He was being used of God to fulfill His divine plan for humanity.

- That too presents a great challenge to us. We have been called for such a time as this. It is no mistake or mere chance that we are serving the Lord during this age. We remain in the day of grace. Lost souls abound, needing to hear the Gospel. Our world grows darker each day. The need is as great as it has ever been. These are extremely challenging times, but they are also vitally important times. We have the privilege and responsibility to serve the Lord at a crucial moment in the history of the world. Will we step up and embrace the work we’ve been given, or will we be recognized as the generation that refused to share Truth with a world that desperately needs to hear? *Eph.5:15-16 – See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*<sup>[16]</sup> *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

## **I. The Profit of the Ministry (21-23)**

## **II. The Pleasures in the Ministry (24-25)**

**III. The Proclamation in the Ministry (26-29)** – In our closing verses Paul discusses the value of proclaiming the Gospel to a lost and dying world. He speaks of:

**A. The Mystery (26)** – *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:* Paul speaks of the Gospel being opened to all races upon the earth. In the Old Testament God had dealt exclusively with Israel, using them to record His Word, preach the coming of Messiah, and even bringing Christ through the Hebrew people. The Gospel had been a mystery for many until this time. Now Paul had been entrusted with taking the Gospel to the world. The message of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection was available to all.

- We need to share the glorious mystery of the Gospel today as well. Many do not know of Christ and His love for them. Many have not heard of the saving grace of God. Just as Paul took the Gospel to all who would hear, we need to share Jesus with the world.

**B. The Message (27)** – *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:* Paul had one message he consistently shared with the world: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Although he was a biblical scholar, he remembered a time when the Gospel was a mystery to him. He well understood the significance of the Gospel and the impact it has on individual lives. Paul was committed to preaching the Gospel. He had no other message to share. If he preached, he always preached Jesus!

- That is the message the world needs to hear in our day. Jesus alone can bring humanity out of the depravity of sin, cleansing them in His precious blood, and reconciling them to God. He is man's only hope for salvation and eternal life. We must share Jesus with the world.

**C. The Manner (28)** – *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:* Paul left no stone unturned when it came to ministry. He knew none were so wicked Christ could not save and none were so righteous that they didn't need salvation. He admonished every sinner to look to Christ and exhorted every believer in the wisdom of Christ. He preached the whole counsel of God: repentance of sin, salvation in Christ, sanctified living, and unhindered service. *2 Tim.4:2 – Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

**D. The Momentum** (29) – *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.* Paul faced a tremendous challenge in ministry. He was surrounded by many who rejected his preaching, and even sought to take his life. He dealt with churches influenced by false doctrine and heresy. His work took him on long, difficult journeys covering vast distances. He often had to work in order to support himself, along with the demands of evangelism and church planting. All of this took its toll on Paul, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Few would have endured as Paul did, but Paul had a source of strength that enabled him to press on in spite of the difficulties and exhaustion. He had the power of God through the Spirit working mightily in him. Paul did not minister in his own ability. He was not preaching in his own wisdom. God provided all Paul needed to be successful and reach the masses with the Gospel.

- We would do well to learn this vital truth. Serving the Lord can be difficult and exhausting. I rejoice I do not have to depend upon personal strength and ability. We are indwelt with the same Spirit and can enjoy the same power working mightily in us. Christians and churches that are successful in ministry have learned to depend upon the Lord for the strength and wisdom needed to endure. *1 Cor.15:10 – But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Gal.2:20 – I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

**Conclusion:** This passage is dear to me. I know I have been called to preach the glorious Gospel of Christ, seeking to reach the lost around me. But, beyond that, I am a recipient of this marvelous grace. I have been saved through Christ, reconciled to God and justified in Him. I rejoice for all I have received and I am challenged to share the Gospel with others who do not know Christ as their Lord and Savior. I pray this passage has challenged the church to press on in the face of adversity, fully committed to the work of the ministry.

Paul was able to share the Gospel because he had experienced it. He knew Christ as his Savior. He desired all others to know Christ as well. Do you know for certain you have been born again in Christ? Have you received the gracious gift of salvation? If not, I urge you to look to Christ by faith and respond as He speaks to you. He still saves today and desires you to be saved.