

Colossians - Chapter 1
“The Afflictions of Christ”
Colossians 1:23-26

Verse 24

1. Paul said, in verse 23, that he had been made a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ personally commissioned Paul and gave him the gospel that he preached.
2. Christ revealed to Paul all that was accomplished, spiritually, on the cross. This was, and still is, a complete embarrassment to Satan. God kept the hidden wisdom of the cross from Satan, and Satan defeated himself by instigating the crucifixion of Christ.
3. Therefore, Satan absolutely hates the message of the cross. He despises and loathes Paul's gospel. He is seeking to blind people from its life-giving message (2 Corinthians 4:4). One of the ways he does this is by seeking to intimidate and silence its messengers.
4. The preaching of Paul's gospel had brought him much suffering, hardship, and pain. Notice the words “*sufferings*” and “*afflictions*.”
5. Paul calls his suffering “*the afflictions of Christ*.” In other words, Paul's stand for Christ is what brought about his suffering. This was the nature of his suffering. There are three kinds of suffering that believers can go through:
 - Suffering that comes simply because we live in a fallen, sinful creation.
 - Suffering that comes from bad choices that are made by us, or by another person.
 - Suffering that comes because of our stand for Christ, and our proclaiming of the gospel.
6. This last kind of suffering, Paul calls “*the afflictions of Christ*.” In 2 Corinthians 1:5, he calls it “*the sufferings of Christ*.”
7. Jesus warned that the world would have the same attitude toward us that it did towards Him. John 15:18-19; Philippians 1:29
 - Christ now lives in us. We are His body. We cannot expect a nice, trouble-free life. Since Christ is no longer here in the flesh, Satan and the world's wrath will be directed toward us, and the Christ who lives in us, and through us.
8. But Paul was not ashamed of his suffering for Christ. In fact, he rejoiced in it! Paul suffered in his flesh (Galatians 6:17), but he knew that the world could not touch his spirit. Philippians 1:20-23; 2 Timothy 1:11-12
9. Paul was ready to suffer more, if need be. In verse 24 Paul, said, “*I am ready to fill up (accomplish) that which is behind (lacking) in the afflictions of Christ in my flesh*.”
 - In other words, “Yes, I've suffered, and yes, I am now suffering for Christ, but I will continue to suffer until there is nothing more lacking for me to do. I will fully accomplish my suffering for Christ and rejoice in it.”
 - This is exactly what Paul did. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 was written at the end of Paul's life. Paul knew that after the suffering came the glory!

10. Paul knew that through his suffering, God was building up and strengthening the church, so Paul rejoiced that he could suffer for Christ. cf. Philippians 1:12-14

Verses 25-26

1. Paul says, “*Whereof I am made a minister...*” Who was Paul a minister to? Look back at verse 24. Paul was a minister to the body of Christ (the church).
 - The subject of the body of Christ (Jews and Gentiles reconciled together in one body) was exclusively the domain of Paul. You won't find it discussed, and it is scarcely mentioned in other books.
2. While Paul also preached to Jews in the book of Acts, Paul's ministry focus and most of his fruit was with the Gentiles. In fact, in Romans 11:13, Paul called himself the “*apostle of the Gentiles,*” and he said, “*I magnify mine office.*” cf. Ephesians 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:7
3. This was what constantly got Paul in hot water, and stirred up the Jews to persecute him, and caused the suffering of verse 24. 2 Timothy 1:11-12
4. Yet, Paul would not stop preaching. Why? Because a dispensation of God had been given to him. What does this mean?
5. This simply means that a deposit of divine revelation and truth had been committed to Paul's stewardship. There are several insights we learn about this deposit of truth:
 - It was given **to** Paul to give **to** the church. vs. 25
 - This divine revelation would “fill up” (complete, finish) God's Word (the law and prophecy had already been revealed). vs. 25
 - This divine truth was kept secret and not revealed to previous generations (it was a mystery). vs. 26, cf. Ephesians 3:5, 9
 - The time had now come for it to be revealed to the saints. vs. 26
6. What was the core and foundation of the divine revelation given to Paul? Paul calls it “*the mystery.*” vs. 26