



NEWS BULLETIN

DATE: 12th May 2026. "Encouragement and Spirit filled praise" Colossians 1 v 24-29

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, ²⁵ 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, ²⁶ 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 may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

At the beginning of our passage for this morning Paul is rejoicing in his suffering. How do you face up to your sufferings? Christ's suffering adequately atoned for sin. The church continues to suffer so all the world may know of and benefit from Christ's atonement. Some believe Christians must continue the ministry and, therefore, the suffering of Jesus until he returns. Knowing the ultimate purpose of our suffering allows us to rejoice in it. We do not suffer for our ourselves or for some mysterious evil force we do not understand. We suffer for Christ and His church.

The church exists because of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord ruling in the heavens. Using the imagery of the body, Christ is the head which directs the actions of all the other parts of the body. The church is connected directly to its Head and, thus, represents Christ's presence in the world.

The body serves as a beautiful picture of the life of the church. An individual's body has many parts serving various functions. The church consists of people serving Christ in many ways according to the different gifts Christ has given them. The church as the body of Christ emphasizes the diversity of gifts which come together to serve one purpose. As members of Christ's church, we must love one another as we love ourselves. The emphasis is not on uniformity but on a diversity which Christ brings together and uses for His purpose.

The unity of the church results not from everyone thinking alike but from Christ bringing the various parts together in service to Him.

Each and every church member plays a significant and important part in the church's life. The church needs every member. Just stop and think for a moment, if you are not here on Sunday how many people will miss your input into their day. Your special gifts will be missing, unavailable for the Lord to bring to bear on a situation of His choice.

The differing gifts so thoughtfully and graciously given by our Saviour, make us all the more grateful to Him for the extent of His loving kindness toward fallen mankind. Not to give a reason to boast of oneself or despise another. We should thank God for ALL the gifts so liberally given to the whole church. We should seek to mature and be able to exercise any new gifts that God may see fit to give us, exercising them in faith, hope and love for His glory.

Having mentioned that he is a servant of the gospel in verse 23, Paul describes his God-given ministry to the Gentiles including the Colossians, by means of several pictures (v 24 to 29). Although he has not met most of the readers, he identifies with them by sharing in Christ's afflictions on behalf of the church (v 24) and so he can write to them in the way that he does. As an apostle, Paul rejoices in his sufferings on behalf of the Colossians, indeed, on behalf of Christ's body, the church as a whole. These sufferings are part and parcel of Christ's afflictions, not His death on the cross or redemptive sufferings which are "finished", but the afflictions of His people which He endures.

The expression "Christ's afflictions" is to be understood against an Old Testament and Jewish background with its notion of the affliction of the end time. These are called the "Birth pangs of the Messiah", those pains and woes which would occur before the arrival of God's anointed ruler, the Messiah. In the New Testament they occur between the first and second comings of Jesus. The exalted Christ is in heaven and before His return, He suffers in His members, not least in the life of Paul himself (Acts Chapter 9 v 4).

These afflictions have been limited by God, the quota will be complete when the end comes. All Christians take part in these sufferings, it is through them that we enter the Kingdom of God (Acts Ch 14 v22; 1 Thes Ch 3 v 3 , 7). Suffering with Christ is essential if we are to be glorified with Him (Rom Ch 8 v17). Through the sufferings he endures in his own flesh, Paul contributes to the sum total, to "what is still lacking". The more he suffers the less the Colossians have to.

Paul's ministry is a "commission" given to him in accordance with the gospel-plan of God. He is a steward (1 Cor Ch 4 v1) who has been entrusted with this commission (1 Cor Ch 9 v 17). He is not able to withdraw from this solemn responsibility but must fulfil it obediently. As a steward of God's mysteries, he is expected to be found trustworthy (1 Cor Ch 4 v 2).

His special task was to make “the word of God known”. “In all its fullness” suggests bringing it to completion for Paul’s preaching, particularly as directed to Gentiles, was contributing to the ultimate fulfilment of God’s saving purposes revealed in His word (Isaiah Ch 55 v11).

The message itself was none other than God’s “mystery”, His open secret, previously hidden, but now, in the light of his decisive action in Christ, it has been revealed (Rom Ch 16 v 25; Eph Ch 3 v 3). “Glorious riches” indicates the “mystery” is magnificent in every way. It partakes of God’s own character (hence “glory”) and in it God has showered his blessings upon men and women, especially Gentiles. The content of the mystery is “Christ in you Colossians”. Christ had been preached by Epaphras to them as Gentiles. They received Him as Lord and now He lives in them. As members of His body, they have His life within them and with it a sure and certain hope (Ch 3 v4).

In their missionary preaching Paul and his colleagues worked energetically to “proclaim” an important word used of the gospel or some element in it (1 Cor Ch 9 v 14; Phil Ch 1 v 17-18) Christ as Lord. Their evangelistic outreach was not carried out by some superficial preaching of the saving message of Christ to the world; instead, by regularly admonishing and teaching each person (these verbs along with proclaim are in the present tense) the apostolic band set out to make disciples of men and women, building them up in pastoral situations.

Three times Paul writes everyone (“each one”), emphasising that Christian teaching is for all (not some spiritual elite) and that apostolic work had to do with the individual care of souls (1 Thes Ch 2 v 11-12). Their responsibilities were not finished with the conversion of men and women, so they made it their aim to present “everyone perfect in Christ” on the final day when the quality of their ministry would be tested. Their concerns were for well-established and settled congregations whose members were strong in the faith. Paul’s evangelistic and pastoral goals provided models for those engaged in a truly apostolic ministry today. To this end Paul expends all his energies in his ministry for the gospel. “Labour” denotes intense effort while “struggling”, possibly a stronger word, was sometimes used of fights and athletic contests.

Paul gladly acknowledges that the strength for this effort comes from above. God, who had shown his mighty power by raising Christ from the dead is powerfully at work in him as he toils energetically.

Transcript of the presentation given by Deacon Rodney Burge and discussed at the church-based, morning home group on Tuesday 12th May 2026. All scripture is from the ESV Translation.

