

Colossians 1.²⁴-2.⁵

5. 'The best job!'

Background

This passage is about *ministry*, and as with the previous two sections the statement Paul gives in relation to ministry is as comprehensive as it is concise!

There's a progression to his thought (as you'd expect!) which it's helpful to note in passing. After the introduction to his letter (1.1-14), he began with **'the Man'** (1.15-20), setting out the most condensed statement of the person and work of Jesus: then he moved on to **the message** (1.21-23) – again an extraordinarily compact articulation of the gospel: and now in this passage (1.24-2.5) he identifies the key features of **the ministry**. That, he would have argued, is the right way round: 'the Man', not the ministry, is where the emphasis should always lie – and in today's 'celebrity culture' that's a priority of which we're constantly needing to be reminded.

It's worth noting, too, that although Paul is speaking about himself – and he was, of course, an apostle – what he says has application to all believers, as those who are, in one regard or another, servants (or 'ministers') of the gospel.

1) His starting point (v.24) indicates that the ministry of which he is speaking is in truth the ministry of Christ Himself, through His church: that perhaps affords the best way of understanding the reference he makes to filling up "*what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions.*" It's a difficult statement (wouldn't Paul, for instance, have been the first to insist that what Christ suffered for us was and is and must be always entirely sufficient – and thus complete?) which has been variously understood, and maybe the most helpful approach to understanding the statement is to think of the ascended Jesus' challenge to Saul ("*why do you persecute Me?*" – Acts 9.4) against the backdrop of Stephen being stoned to death (Acts 7): his experience of martyrdom in the name, and for the sake, of Jesus can be seen as part of "Christ's afflictions" and was key to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

2) The essence of the ministry entrusted to His church by the Lord is then stated by the apostle (1.25-27): whatever else such ministry may involve, at core it is the task of 'presenting the Word of God in its fulness;' there's an echo in that of the apostles' insistence early in the life of the church that the priority of prayer and the ministry of the Word must be safeguarded (Acts 6.4).

3) Having stated that clearly, Paul then explained what the *aim* of all such ministry is to be (1.28-29) – that of 'presenting everyone fully mature in Christ.' It's to that end that Paul laboured with such God-given energy and zeal.

4) But what does the 'labour' of such ministry involve? It's to that that Paul turns in 2.1-5. It's worth noting and pondering both the ultimate 'end' of his labours (that they may know Christ) and also the sequence by which that 'end' is attained, a sequence he narrates in vv.1-3.

As ever the whole passage is worth studying as a helpful portrayal of what's involved in Christian ministry, but I've added some additional questions under **'days' (3), (4), and (5)** which I hope will stimulate useful discussion in your Community Group!

1) Monday 24th October – suffering

Read [Colossians 1.24](#)

“.. I rejoice in what I am suffering for you ..” (Col.1.24)

Nothing needs to be added to the work of Jesus: His ‘afflictions’ are complete – but the Lord involves His people in His saving grace. Count it a privilege, in your sufferings, to be the conduit through whom the Spirit applies Christ’s finished work to others

What did Paul mean when he declared himself able to **rejoice** in what he suffered for these people?

How might your ‘sufferings’ be used under God for the benefit of others?

Prayer: *Keep me from becoming resentful, Lord, in regard to what I may be suffering: teach me, rather how to rejoice through all such trials as You use them for Your glory.*

2) Tuesday 25th October – servant

Read [Colossians 1.25-26](#)

“.. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me ..” (Col.1.25)

Your life is the Lord’s, and He has purposes to fulfil not only *for* you, but *through* you as well. Wherever it may take you, and whatever it may involve, as a follower of the Lord Jesus you become His servant: make each day count for His glory.

What is the service in which the Lord has called you to engage?

In what ways do you share in the task of Christ’s church to ‘present to (others) the Word of God in its fullness’?

Prayer: *Help me always to remember, my Lord, that there is no great privilege than that of being Your servant: in all that today involves help me to serve You well.*

3) Wednesday 26th October – mystery

Read [Colossians 1.25-27](#)

“.. the glorious riches of this mystery which is Christ in you ..” (Col.1.27)

The message is a ‘mystery’ in the sense that it’s not something you would work out for yourself: it’s been ‘disclosed’ by the Lord. The heart of the message is the reality of Christ dwelling in believers by His Spirit, guaranteeing a greater glory to come.

Is it just those in ‘official positions’ (like an apostle) who can speak of the ‘commission God gave (them)’, or is that true for every believer?

What does Paul mean by presenting the Word of God “*in its fullness*”?

How is that given expression in our own fellowship?

What difference does it make to you as a believer knowing that Christ is in you, and in what ways have you experienced that reality?

What is the 'the hope of glory' to which Paul refers and why is that identified so completely with the reality of 'Christ is you'?

Prayer: How good it is, my Lord, to know that I don't ever embark on a day on my own! May You constantly be the one to speak and act and live Your life through me.

4) Thursday 27th October – ministry

Read [Colossians 1.28-29](#)

".. so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ .." (Col.1.28)

Here is as good and concise a summary as you'll find of the ministry of Christ's church. Centred clearly on Jesus, directed towards an evident growth into the likeness of Jesus, and characterised by an urgency and energy inspired by His Spirit.

What is meant by the phrase 'fully mature'?

How is that 'maturity' best cultivated in our life as a fellowship?

To what extent, and in what ways, do these two verses describe your life and living as a believer?

What practical lessons for yourself do you draw from the example of Paul?

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for those who have faithfully and lovingly pointed me to You and helped me grow in grace: help me to nourish such growth in those around me.

5) Friday 28th October – contending

Read [Colossians 2.1](#)

".. and for all who have not met me personally .." (Col.2.1)

Out of sight and therefore also out of mind can often be a failure on our part. You may never have met the missionaries or the fellowships across the world for whom your church prays, but you're still to contend earnestly for them in whatever ways you can.

Have we a tendency to be too 'parochial' in our perspective, preoccupied almost exclusively with what's being done in our own 'corner'?

In what ways are you able to 'contend' for those you've never met?

How familiar are you with the work of the gospel in other parts of the city and shire?

What steps might you take to learn more of the missionaries your church supports and the fellowships and ministries for which you pray?

Prayer: *You call me into a family, Lord, that encompasses people from every nation: help me to seek the welfare of those who, though unknown to me, are Yours.*

6) Saturday 29th October – encouraged

Read [Colossians 2.2-3](#)

“.. that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love ..” (Col.2.2)

The great end to which all the living of believers is directed is that of helping others know Jesus. To that end Paul was ever striving, recognizing that in Christ is best known in the context of fellowships encouraged in heart and united in love. Is that yours?

How have the encouragement of others and the unity among them helped you grow in your understanding and get to know Jesus better?

What steps can you take today to foster that encouragement in heart and unity in love among your fellow believers?

Prayer: *Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is despair let me sow hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sorrow, joy. [Francis of Assisi]*

7) Sunday 30th October – disciplined

Read [Colossians 2.4-5](#)

“.. how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is ..” (Col.2.5)

The path of the believer is beset by many challenges, not least the constant bombardment you face from beguiling and deceptively impressive lines of argument. Build into your life good spiritual disciplines and habits which will serve you well.

How ‘disciplined’ are you in your life as a servant of Jesus?

How do you avoid the disciplines of public worship, Bible reading and prayer, subtly becoming a form of ‘legalism’ in your life?

Prayer: *Teach me from Your Word today, O Lord, as I share in the worship of Your people: and guard me from being deceived by subtle lies of the evil one.*