



A new creation focus through Colossians ...

Paul's Stewardship

Paul said that he suffered on behalf of the body of Christ, which is the church. It is worth the Christian's time to contemplate the apostle's motive in being willing to suffer so much for the sake of the gospel. From the time he first began to preach the gospel following his immersion at the hands of Ananias, he was persecuted and often nearly executed for offering *proof* that Jesus is indeed the Christ. Paul reminded Timothy of the challenges that faced him on his first missionary journey, of the "persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium,

and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me!" (2 Timothy 3:11). The second, third, and final journeys of the apostle were filled with the same. So what kept him charging again and again into such emotional and physical pain? His goal: to preach the gospel and save the lost.

- **Made a minister** — "I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church)," he had just stated. As a Christian husband and wife are united in intent and purpose, so Christ and His body are united in intent and purpose. Hence, for Paul to do things on behalf of Christ translates into acting on behalf of the church. Of this church "I was made a minister," affirms this faithful servant of Christ, "according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit" (Colossians 1:25). "In this case, moreover," he had informed the church at Corinth, "it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 4:2). The apostle was responsible for communicating the powerful truths of God's revelation, and for steering the saints themselves in the correct direction. This was no small task, for then — as now — the forces of confusion tried to get the Christians "carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming" (Ephesians 4:14).
- **Fully carry out** — The entire plan of God is centered about Jesus and the church; the execution of His purpose is carried out through the church and for the church as it glorifies Jesus. As Paul had stated, "I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church)." His stewardship for the church, then, is expressed as "that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God." While the words *the preaching* do not directly appear in the text, the thrust of the passage is for Paul to completely execute God's purpose for His word, which could only be accomplished through preaching and teaching the revelation which was given to him. That revelation, implicitly, focuses on Jesus — His life on earth, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His appearances to the selected witnesses, and His ascension to the throne of glory. But as the apostle points out that he is to fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, he brings forth another point: *the mystery!* This mystery, he says, is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). *Christ in you* is another name for the indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:9-11).

Paul fully carried out his stewardship by preaching the mystery.

There are many who have the mistaken impression that to preach the gospel, all that simply needs to be presented is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Christ. This perception results from a shallow reading of the scriptures, such as Paul's statement to the Corinthian church: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received," was his promulgation, "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). But from the time that gospel was first preached as recorded in Acts chapter two, the gospel also includes the ascension of Christ, and the *indwelling Spirit* in conjunction with forgiveness of sins. Paul, in carrying out His stewardship to God, fully preached the mystery — the Spirit of God dwelling in the saints!

JAY WILSON