

#4 Colossians

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Verse 21: And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled'

This means we were alienated from God; we were His enemies, cut off, separated and estranged from Him. We hated God because we loved our evil works: 'And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.' John 3:19

But it also means that God hated us. 'You hate all workers of iniquity.' Ps 5:5

We were all workers of iniquity; there is mutual hatred and estrangement between God and the World.

Imagine: there are two mountains with a wide, deep valley between them. God, Who is Spirit, stands on one mountain while we, when lost, stood on the other mountain with a deep chasm between us. We could not come to God because of our sin; we could not even see or hear Him because we were spiritually dead. Our spiritual ears were dead and our spiritual eyes were dead.

'For everyone who does evil (all who are in the World) hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.' John 3:20 Everyone who practices sin, hates the Light: 'This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 1 Jn 1:5

We hated God and God hated us: 'You hate all workers of iniquity.' Ps 5:5 That was all of us, still is, the World.

When Jesus said, 'For God so loved the World,' the word for World is cosmos: the entire Creation, all the Universe which He would reconcile back to Himself; but individually, as workers of iniquity, He hated us.

Does He also hate His children when we sin? Absolutely not! As far as He is concerned... we are completely righteous and holy in Jesus Christ.

Back to imagining: We are standing on opposite mountains with a great gulf between us: the Lord Jesus Christ was raised up on a Cross, high up from the valley floor. His crucified form stood between God, the Father and us. Then, as we looked across to Jesus Christ, and as we looked to Him, our spiritual eyes and ears were opened; we could see Him and we could hear His call; He said, 'Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.' We called out to Him and were willing to be raised up on the Cross with Him so that we too were crucified with Him and we were then raised with Him to new life. He came to our mountain, picked us up and carried us across to God's home where He seated us with Himself in Heavenly places. Jesus Christ is seated at God the Father's right hand; we, who are now in Jesus Christ, are seated at His right hand; now, when God looks at us, He is actually looking into, and through, the Lord Jesus Christ, at us, so that He only sees the holiness and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ has reconciled us back to God as He will, eventually, all the Cosmos, the entire Creation.

Verse 22: '...in the body of His flesh through death, to present (us) holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.' Now, because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, God sees us in exactly the same way that He sees His Son; to Him we are completely holy; we are completely blameless and we are absolutely above reproach; no one can bring a charge against us in any way for anything whatsoever.

'*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.... Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Nothing! Rom 8:1, 33

Verse 23: 'if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.' What is Paul saying here? Is He saying, 'You'll only be saved if you continue in the faith and stay strong in the Lord?' Not at all! He is saying, 'If you really are born again, you will continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, not moved away.' The proof of your genuine faith will be that you do continue. Many who seem to have been saved will not continue. Do you remember the parable of the sower?

Jesus said, "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶ Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. ⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. ⁸ But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop, a hundredfold... Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. ¹³ But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵ But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.' In Luke 8 He also said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Matt 7:21 Many, who look like they're saved, are not; many, who think they're saved, are not; only those who have truly placed their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross are saved... not, *will be saved*, but **are saved**. John said, 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.' 1 John 2:19 They're having continued with us will have been the proof that they really were saved. Paul is speaking of the same type 'believer' that the writer of Hebrews was addressing: those who hear and understand the Word and who even seem to be a part of the Church but eventually, they prove themselves to be counterfeit Christians by *going out*. Now, of course, this is not to discount the reality that there are also those who seem to turn away for a season, like the prodigal son, but who then eventually are drawn back to the Body by God, Himself. Only God knows one's heart, whether they are saved or lost.

Verse 24: 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God...' Most of this verse is pretty straightforward until he says, '*I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for your sake.*' We've had callers, believing the false teachings of Catholicism who have thought that the suffering they were going through was God's will that they are suffering for others... sharing other's sufferings so that it would be more fair, that it is God's will that they are suffering for the sins of the World... that's terrible *heresy!* Is there some part of Jesus Christ's Crucifixion and suffering, for us, that is lacking? Is there some part of what He did that is incomplete? Is that what Paul is saying? Or have we just glossed over that verse in the past? Let's read it again: 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister **according to the stewardship** from God which was **given to me for you**, to fulfill the word of God...'

A steward is a servant who is tasked with watching over the Master's household and over all the other servants. He oversees all their daily needs.

It's a little clearer in the NASB, but still murky: 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.'

He says 'I do my share for your sake.' So, has it been allotted to each of us a certain share of His suffering which we are to do so that Christ's afflictions will no longer be lacking?

When His Work on the Cross was finished, the Lord Jesus Christ said, 'It is finished!' Completed... filled to the top. Every bit of the Law had been fulfilled perfectly for us and every single punishment deserved by every sin of ours had been laid on Him in full. What are we missing here?

Paul is saying, 'As I willingly and patiently endure suffering in my ministry to you, Colossians, and the rest of the Body of Christ around the known World, I am seen as a present, physical, visual representation of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you.'

We have been given a share of the Lord Jesus Christ; we have been given a share of His faith, of His patience and obedience, of His inheritance, of His glory, etc. and we have also been given a share of His suffering if we are willing to accept it. It doesn't mean that we are fulfilling a demanded responsibility but, rather, we are given the gift and privilege of this small piece of gold and if we are willing to spend it wisely, if we are willing to suffer patiently when we are persecuted, that small piece of gold will grow into a huge eternal reward.

How was Paul using his share? He was willingly enduring suffering for the sake of bringing the lost to Jesus Christ. He could have rejected suffering. He could have just stayed in a little resort on the Lebanese coast, filling his days sunbathing while filling his evenings writing letters, but his having been willing to go out into the World, willing to endure all persecution and suffering, he became a visual picture of the Lord Jesus Christ for these Gentiles who had never seen or even heard of Jesus Christ. He was a picture of Jesus' suffering.

If we had just \$10 in 1980 and had wisely bought a share of Apple stock, it would be worth \$80,000 today. We have been given a share of Christ's suffering. If we invest and use it wisely it will eventually give a return of astronomical proportions.

It's what Jesus was speaking of in His Parable of the Talents. The Master went away; to one servant He had given 1 talent, to another 5 and to another 10 talents. The one with 5 gained 5 more. The one with 10 gained 10 more and the Master said, 'You've been faithful in small things, I'll put you in charge of many great things.' The one with 1 talent, said, 'I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, it's right here... the whole thing!' "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave... throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Suffering is one of God's most valuable gifts and we too often shun it as the most undesirable.

God intends for the afflictions of Christ to be presented to the world through the afflictions of His people. It's why the Gospel did spread so quickly and continues to spread in these last days. When one is willing to suffer and die for the truth of the Gospel... people sit up and take notice... they are moved by that sacrifice... they are seeing the sufferings and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, played out for them.

Paul made the afflictions of Jesus Christ real for the Colossians and we have the opportunity to make the afflictions of Jesus Christ real for the savages of the Milwaukee tribes.

God intends for the humble, suffering Christ of the Cross, and Resurrection, to be seen in us.

Greedy and miserly false teachers want to show a rich and glorified false Christ to their paying customers.

False teachers today try to portray who we are, as believers, as conquering warriors... stamping out the devil, forcefully taking territory from the kingdom of darkness and converting it into the kingdom of light. The Lord Jesus Christ has only presented Himself to the Church and the World so far, as the patient sacrifice for sin. He has only presented Himself as the Royal King of kings to John in the Revelation which is meant for the future.

We have no right to portray the Lord Jesus Christ as anything other than how He has presented Himself to us; the patient, sacrificial Lamb of God is what He has commanded us to portray to the World.

Verse 26: 'the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.'

There are eleven mysteries, previously unknown to the people of God, which Paul was commissioned, by God, to reveal to the Church, the Bride and Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Engaged couples should not keep secrets from each other. The Lord Jesus Christ feels the same way so He taught Paul several previously secret things which Paul was to share with the rest of Jesus' Bride. Unfortunately, many who are told God's secrets refuse to believe them, treating them as if they are lies and deceptions.

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever,' Deut 29:29

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit.'" 1 Cor 2:9

The eleven Mysteries in the Word are:

1. The Mystery of the Incarnation, that God would actually become a man. 'God was manifest in the flesh.'
1 Tim 3:16
2. The Mystery of the Divine indwelling, that God's Holy Spirit would actually live within us. 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' Col 1
3. The Mystery of Jews and Gentiles together in one body, the Church. 'That the Gentiles should be 'Fellow Heirs,' and of the 'Same Body,' ' Eph 3
4. The Mystery of the 7 stars and 7 candlesticks representing 7 churches and their angels. Rev 1
5. The Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Jews rejected Christ; the Kingdom temporarily became 'not of this World.' 12 Parables in Matthew.
6. The Mystery of the translation of living Saints in the Rapture. 'Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump' 1 Cor 15:51
7. The Mystery of Israel's blindness until Jesus Christ completes His Church. 'For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.' Rom 11:25
8. The Mystery of Iniquity: Antichrist, the man of sin and his powerful deceptions. The Mystery of Godliness is God manifest in the flesh; the mystery of iniquity is Satan manifest in the flesh. (This is another reason why we are told of the fallen angels in Gen 6... it appears that the Antichrist will be the result of such a union and that Satan has been practicing and perfecting this science for Millennia.
9. The Mystery of Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots. The Revelation
10. The Mystery of the Church as the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. '... the relation of man and wife. "This is a 'Great Mystery'; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." The first Adam had a bride, Eve; and the second, or Last Adam will have a Bride, the Church. The counterfeit 'last adam,' the Antichrist, will also have a bride, Mystery Babylon, the Great.
11. The Mystery of the Restoration of all things, when, in the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times, God's purpose is to restore, remake and undo all that sin has done, to restore all things as they were before Satan's rebellion and then Man's rebellion and fall. 'having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the *dispensation of the fullness of the times He* might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.' Eph 1:9

Verse 28: 'Him, we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.'

Paul was willing to suffer and endure, for the sake of Jesus Christ's Body and Bride, every trial, tribulation and hardship with patience and joy through the power of the Holy Spirit living and working within Him until the moment the Church is removed in the Rapture. That is how he exemplified the Gospel.

Paul faithfully preached the Gospel which led to his being persecuted and thus being a true picture of Jesus Christ. This is the only legitimate way we '*live the Gospel*,' or that our lives '*are the Gospel*'... we are only living out the Gospel when we patiently endure every tribulation and persecution which come as the result of our '*telling forth*' the Gospel. *Loving our neighbors and feeding the poor is not living out the Gospel*; it is simply being obedient children of God. Those are things we should do but they are not the Gospel; they are simply the result of our having heard and believed the Gospel. Often we refrain from telling the Gospel for fear of refection or persecution, preferring to believe that if we simply live a nice, 'gospelly' life, that is enough. It is not! If we are ashamed of the true Gospel, He will be ashamed of us before His Father in Heaven. Luke 9:26
There is absolutely no substitute for lovingly telling, preaching and explaining the Gospel, the words of the Gospel that explain what Salvation is and how we attain it, in the face of any and all persecution... ***which is coming for us, soon!***