

REVIVAL NEWS

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MINISTERS OF THE MYSTERY

In **Colossians 1:24-29** Paul gives us deep insight into his calling to be a minister. From this we learn what are the key components of a genuine minister of Christ.

A Call to Suffer

“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” Col.1:24.

The first thing Paul says about his ministry is the degree of suffering he experienced in fulfilling his calling to be a minister to the church. This suffering affects Paul’s flesh. It is a real experience that he went through. Some are drawn to the ministry for career or income or position, but a true minister of Christ is firstly called and the calling involves suffering.

Jesus said, *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep” Jn.10:11.* A true minister is one who **‘lays his life down for the brethren’**. It is a call to suffer.

Some ministers are hirelings

The person who seeks to go into ministry for some self-seeking reason is actually a hireling. Jesus said when *“the wolf comes, the hireling leaves the sheep and flees. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep” Jn.10:13.*

Concern for the churches

The suffering comes by carrying the burden of responsibility for the body. In listing his afflictions experienced in the conduct of his ministry, Paul says that what came upon him daily was *“my deep concern for all the churches” (2Cor.11:28)*. Paul is saying that his greatest burden is not the difficult things he had suffered physically even, but his concern for the churches.

It is an intercessory burden

Paul says that his sufferings were actually *“the afflictions of Christ”*. We know that Jesus was *“stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted” (Isa.53:4)* and we know that His suffering and death was the full propitiation for our sins. Paul is not referring to the afflictions that Jesus literally bore for us, but there is truly a sense whereby a minister can enter into the sufferings of Christ in prayer and intercession, identifying with the heart of the Lord for His body. Remember what Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane was not physical but was perhaps harder for him to bear than the physical suffering of the cross.

Every true disciple and certainly every true minister must come to the place of persevering even when there is pressure, perplexity, persecution and physical affliction, *“always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body”* (2Cor.4:8-10). We are called to go through such things for the sake of the body to release grace to the body (v15).

A Stewardship of Grace

Ministry is the effect of an enablement of grace. God by His spirit gives us the ability to minister (2Cor.3:5-6). Paul says that he *“became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to him”* (Col.1:25). This stewardship is a stewardship of grace. Paul says in Ephesians 3:2-3 that it was a *“dispensation/stewardship of the grace of God given”* to Paul for the church, enabling him to be a minister of the word to make known the revelation of the mystery.

The call to ministry can only be fulfilled *“according to the gift of the grace of God”* (Eph.3:7) which enables the minister to do the work of the ministry – it is *“the effective working of His power”* (Eph. 3:7).

The call is from heaven. John the Baptist said *“a man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven”* (John 3:27).

The Ministry of the Word

The stewardship from God is *“to fulfil the word of God”* (Col.1:25). The ministry we are speaking of is not the ministry of the deacon, which is a ministry of service, but the **ministry of the word**. The apostle Peter made a clear distinction between the calling to minister the word and the calling to practical service.

In Acts 6:1-7 a practical problem had arisen in the Jerusalem church and the apostles’ answer was to raise up more ministers, *“whom we may appoint over this business [practical service]; but we [the apostles] will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”* The result of this proper division in the work of the ministry was *“the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly.”*

TO KNOW AND PREACH THE MYSTERY

The revelation of the mystery

According to the Scripture the ministry of the word is only fulfilled when the minister can make known the *“mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations”* (Col.1:26). Scripturally a fundamental part of the ministry gifts of apostle and prophet is to receive from the Holy Spirit the revelation of the mystery (Eph.3:5) and make it known to the saints. For many centuries the ministries of apostle and prophet have not been in existence or if they existed, they were not received by the church. Therefore, the church has been ignorant of the knowledge of the mystery.

The deeper wisdom

The mystery is the deeper wisdom of God and is for the mature (1Cor.2:6-7). It can only be known by the mature. The mystery is made known by the effective ministry of the

word, bringing to the saints the revelation of the mystery by the Spirit. The knowledge of the mystery is the means by which God gives to the saints the inheritance.

The inheritance

The inheritance is *“incorruptible and undefiled and does not fade away, reserved in heaven ... ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1Pet.1:4-5). The knowledge of the mystery comes by revelation and that revelation is first given by the Spirit to apostles and prophets. That is why the restoration of apostles and prophets is essential in these days for the church to come to perfection.

The riches of the glory

The knowledge of the mystery makes *“known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: Christ in you the hope of glory”* (Col.1:27). It is the knowledge of the mystery that makes known by revelation the glory of God. *“God ordained this mystery, the hidden wisdom, before the ages for our glory”* (1Cor.2:7).

The fellowship of the mystery

Paul was graced to *“preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ”* Eph.3:8-9.

The result of the saints coming into the revelation of the mystery, which is a deeper fellowship, is that *“now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places”* (v10).

The victory of the church

Therefore the victory of the church over the spiritual enemies of God is dependent upon the church coming to the knowledge of the mystery and therefore we need ministers who are able *“to fulfil the word of God, the mystery”* (Col.1:25-26), bringing the revelation to the saints, enabling the whole church to walk in maturity. The walk in maturity is the walk in the glory, and this is all dependent upon the church knowing the mystery. As the church comes to know the mystery and walk in the inheritance, *“the knowledge of the glory of YAHWEH will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea”* Hab.2:14. The principalities and powers will be overcome and Babylon will fall! (Isa.2:2-4, Mic.4:1-4, Rev.18:20)

HOW DO WE MINISTER?

“Him [Christ] we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” Col.1:28.

Preaching

The first expression of the ministry of the word is:

- to preach Christ
- to proclaim the word of God
- to preach *“the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Eph.3:8)
- *“to declare the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27)
- to *“go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mk.16:15)

- to ***“preach the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”*** (Acts 8:12)

Warning

This word ‘*noutheteo*’ SC Gr.# 3560 means: *to put in mind, to caution or reprove gently* and is translated ‘warn or admonish’.

The second expression of the ministry of the word is:

- to warn everyone
- ***“to admonish one another”*** having been filled with all knowledge (Rom.15:14)
- the ministers are to admonish the saints as part of their oversight (1Thess.5:12)
- those who do not obey the word are to be admonished as a brother (2Thess.3:15)
- when the word of God abides in the saints, they are able to ***“admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”*** (Col.3:16)
- the Scriptures are written for our admonition (1Cor.10:11)

Teaching

The third expression of the ministry of the word is:

- teaching every man
- ***“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”*** (Matt.28:20)
- teaching ***“the first principles of the oracles of God”*** (Heb.5:12)
- teaching the doctrines of the faith (Jude 3)
- teaching the apostles doctrine (Acts 2:42)
- ***“teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ”*** (Acts 28:31)
- ***“they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus the Christ”*** (Acts 5:42)

In all Wisdom

The fourth expression of the ministry of the word is:

- in all wisdom
- Christ is for us ***“the wisdom of God”*** (1Cor.1:24)
- Christ ***“who became for us wisdom from God”*** (1Cor.1:30)
- ***“Wisdom is the principal thing”*** (Prov.4:7)
- it is the wisdom from above (James 3:17)

The Goal is Perfection

“That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” Col.1:28.

The goal of the ministry work of every five-fold minister (Eph.4:11) is ***“the perfecting of the saints, building up the [whole] body till we all come ... to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”*** (Eph.4:12-13).

The minister is responsible through the ministry of the word to bring the saints from being children (Eph.4:14) to being mature saints, who are able to ***“speak the truth in love”*** (v15) and function effectively being ***“joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causing the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love”*** Eph.4:16.

The goal is perfection: *“let us go on to perfection”* (Heb.6:1), having laid the foundational principles *“of the oracles of God”* (Heb.5:12 & 6:1-2). The saints are to become skilled *“in the word of righteousness”* (Heb.5:13). This will be the result of effective ministry of the word.

Ministry is “according to His working” – Colossians 1:29

“To this end I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily” Col.1:29. The minister is called to *“labour”* and strive in the work of the ministry. The minister is to *“be diligent [study] to present oneself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* 2Tim.2:15.

However, the key to ministry is to know *“His working”* in us (Col.1:29); it is the working of God, **His operative power** working in us and through us. Effective ministry is God acting through us by His power bringing forth tangible results. The power of God is at work in us. *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us”* Eph.3:20.

The answer to Paul’s awesome prayer for us that we be *“strengthened with might”* (Eph.3:16); that our hearts be filled with faith and that we comprehend His love and be filled *“with all the fullness of God”* (Eph.3:17-19) is only possible because we are the children of God – His power is already at work in us! It is this same power that works in the minister, enabling the minister to *“present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”*.

This is the goal: to present every brother and sister perfect [complete] in Christ.

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy” 1 Thess.2:19-20.

Paul Galligan