

Col. 1:24 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,

1:25 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,

1:26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

1:27 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.

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

1:29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

【From Today's Sermon】

"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." Here we see Paul's further resolve while imprisoned.

With his own body, he is making up for what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of the church, which is Christ's body. He rejoices in suffering... I believe this is the answer Paul arrived at as he contemplated its meaning in prison and amid various trials.

We naturally wish to avoid suffering if possible. I think we even pray for that. But let us fix our eyes on these words here.

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake..."

Paul surely would have preferred to avoid suffering if possible. Even Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "If it is possible, let this bitter cup pass from me." Yet, if this suffering leads to the salvation of those before him, he willingly bears his own pain. This, I believe, is what it means to offer one's own body for the body of the church. How does helping those before us come about? Specifically, it is through "the ministry of proclaiming the word of God."

"This mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Recently, we experienced heavy rain warnings. Lately, we often hear thunder. I hope everyone is safe and well.

I hear Shizuoka suffered damage from Japan's largest tornado on record. Let us pray for the protection of their recovery.

Now, today concludes Chapter 1 of Paul's prison epistle to the Colossians.

Paul's desire was for the growth of those gathered in the church and the advancement of the gospel.

1:19 For it pleased the Father that in the Son all fullness should be dwell,
1:20 and through him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.
1:21 And you, who once were alienated from God and hostile in mind because of your evil deeds,
1:22 But now he has reconciled you by the death of his body, through the law of your flesh, to present you holy, blameless, and irreproachable before him.
1:23 If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, This gospel has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and it is for this that I, Paul, serve.

The sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross was necessary; if it had not been necessary, the Son would not have become human, descended to this earth, and been crucified. But Christ came as a man for us, to atone for our sins. He became our substitute, the representative of the sinful, nailing His flesh to the cross. He died, was buried, and rose again. He saved us so that we no longer live according to our own sinful desires, but in Christ, having died together in the flesh, we might live by the Spirit's guidance.

We still struggle within the old nature of the flesh, a nature that thinks of people rather than God. Yet we believe that through God's guidance, He pulls us along, enabling us to choose what is right. Here lies the path of a person's healed journey. The way is opened for each of us not to live according to our own desires, but to live guided by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, following God's leading. This is not suffering for us, but hope.

1:24 For I now 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.

Rejoicing in suffering seems an exceedingly difficult thing, but it is the heart of a parent, a heart of love, that says, "For your sake, I will gladly endure suffering." This is also the heart of love of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Himself prayed, "Take this bitter cup from me," yet He gave His precious life for us. We too should desire this mindset: "If it is for you, I will not shrink from suffering." If our suffering leads those around us to eternal salvation, then our suffering is rewarded.

We serve the body of the church through the pain of our own bodies. Jesus also offered up His

own body for this redeemed church. Through that one body offered up, a great body is formed. Life increases and spreads.

1:25 I have been entrusted by God with the task of proclaiming His word to you, and for this purpose I have become a servant to the church.

1:26 The mystery of this message has been hidden for generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's holy people.

1:27 God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

"How rich in glory this mystery is for the Gentiles to receive"!!

How could we have imagined such grace when we did not know Christ? Though He was rich, being the Son of God, He became poor for our sake, truly loving us.

1 Peter 2:16 Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; instead, live as servants of God.

2:17 Honor everyone, love your brothers and sisters, fear God, and honor the king.

2:18 Servants, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

2:19 For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.

2:20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for doing wrong, you endure it? But if when you do right you suffer for it and endure it, this is commendable before God.

2:21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

2:22 Christ committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

2:23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges justly.

2:24 He was crucified for our sins, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

2:25 For you have come to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls, whom you have followed, as the sheep have followed him.

This mystery, this secret, is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

1:28 We proclaim this Christ, using all wisdom to instruct everyone and teach everyone. This is so that they may stand perfect in Christ.

1:29 For this I labor, struggling with all His power that so powerfully works within me.

To proclaim this One at all times. To love, serve, and find joy in suffering for others—even when despised, misunderstood, or treated with disrespect—this is the way of life in Christ. And this very way of life is the mystery, where Christ is truly present, and where hope resides.

◇Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for today's worship.

Even in prison, Paul declared, “I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake,” and “I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, the church.” In his words, we sense the compelling power of one who loves and serves. We are taught that this unchanging, deep strength ultimately comes from Jesus Himself. “God desired to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” May this hope spread far and wide. Please lead all who suffer into God's salvation and peace. Bless our families and our neighbors. Use us for Your purposes. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.