

Message Four

**The Stewardship of God
to Complete the Word of God
and to Present Every Man Full-grown in Christ**

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:24—2:2

I. We need to follow the pattern of Paul to be a faithful minister of the church according to the stewardship of God—1 Tim. 1:16; Col. 1:24-25:

- A. The desire of God's heart is to dispense Himself into man; this is the central point of the whole Bible—Gen. 2:7-9; John 10:10b; Eph. 3:8-11.
- B. Because our Father has a great family, a divine household, and such vast riches, there is the need in His household for many stewards to dispense these riches to His children; this dispensing is the stewardship—v. 2; 1 Cor. 9:17.
- C. A steward is a household administrator, a dispenser, one who dispenses the household supply to its members; the apostles were appointed by the Lord to be such stewards, dispensing God's mysteries, which are Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ, to the believers—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4; 1 Cor. 4:1.
- D. In this dispensing ministry it is most important that stewards be found faithful; as faithful stewards, we need to learn not to care about being criticized by others and not to criticize or examine ourselves—vv. 1-5.

II. For the sake of His Body, which is the church, the faithful stewards of God fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ—Col. 1:24:

- A. The afflictions of Christ are of two categories: those for accomplishing redemption, which were completed by Christ Himself, and those for producing and building the church, which need to be filled up by the apostles and the believers—John 12:24-26; Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38-39; Phil. 3:10; Isa. 53:3-5; Rev. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:10; 2 Cor. 1:5-6.
- B. The fact that Paul mentions the afflictions of Christ in connection with the stewardship of God indicates

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that the stewardship can be carried out only through suffering—1 Pet. 4:1, 10; 2 Cor. 6:8; cf. Psa. 91:1-2; 31:20.

III. The faithful stewards of God labor and struggle to complete the word of God—Col. 1:25; Acts 20:26-27:

- A. In the New Testament the apostles, especially the apostle Paul, completed the word of God in the mystery of God, which is Christ, and in the mystery of Christ, which is the church, to give us a full revelation of God's economy—Eph. 5:32; Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4.
- B. The mystery concerning Christ and the church was hidden from eternity and from all the times until the New Testament age, when it is being manifested to the saints, including all of us, the believers in Christ—Col. 1:26.
- C. We need to fulfill our responsibility to complete the word of God in the sense of fully preaching the word, declaring all the counsel of God; this means that as we contact people, we must progressively, continually, and gradually preach the word of God in full—Acts 20:26-27.
- D. The goal of the Lord's recovery is the completion of the word of God:
 1. If we would be those who complete the word of God, we must minister Christ as the life-giving Spirit and stand with the church as the living expression of Christ on the proper ground of locality; this is our burden, our ministry, and our warfare.
 2. Without the completion of the word of God, God's purpose cannot be fulfilled, and Christ cannot obtain His bride or come with His kingdom.

IV. The goal of Paul's ministry was to present every man full-grown in Christ—Col. 1:28-29:

- A. Paul announced the indwelling Christ in all wisdom for every man's full growth in Christ—Acts 20:20, 31; Col. 2:2-3; cf. 2 Chron. 1:10.
- B. Paul labored and struggled according to Christ's

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operation within him in power, the power of the resurrection life—Phil. 3:10; Eph. 1:19; 3:7, 20:

1. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister Christ to them as the portion of the saints, the reality of the good land, the all-inclusive One who is the centrality and universality of God's economy—Col. 1:12, 15, 18-19, 27; 2:3, 9, 16-17; 3:4, 11.
2. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister the unsearchable riches of Christ for the building up of the church to fulfill God's eternal purpose—Eph. 3:8-11.
3. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must complete the word of God with the full revelation of Christ and the church—Col. 1:25-28.
4. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister Christ as the mystery of God, that is, as the embodiment of God—2:2, 9.
5. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister the church as the mystery of Christ, the expression of Christ—Eph. 3:4; 1:23.
6. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister Christ as life to His members so that they may live by Him and grow with Him unto maturity—Col. 3:4; John 6:57; 14:19; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:13, 15.
7. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must be concerned about the condition of their hearts—Col. 2:1-2:
 - a. If the hearts of the Colossians were comforted and knit together in love, the result would be all the riches of the full assurance of understanding concerning Christ as the mystery of God.
 - b. It is only after their hearts have been comforted, cherished, that the saints can receive the revelation concerning Christ; we must look to

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the Lord for the grace to comfort all the distracted, dissatisfied, and disappointed hearts—Eph. 5:29; cf. Isa. 61:1-2.

- c. If we would have all the riches of the full assurance of understanding concerning Christ as the mystery of God, every part of our being must be exercised—Col. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:7b:
 - 1) Due to our lack of exercise, we may not have the full assurance of understanding concerning the recovery, the kind of assurance that martyrs have when they lay down their lives for the Lord—Acts 1:8.
 - 2) When our entire being is exercised to love the Lord Jesus, we shall gain the full knowledge of Him—Mark 12:30; Deut. 6:5.