

Paul was willing to suffer and lay down his life for brothers and sisters. Paul suffered hardship in preaching just as he encouraged Timothy and all preachers of the gospel to do (2 Timothy 2:3). Faithful preaching often brings hardship. John instructs us to have that same love (1 John 3:16-19). This is not blind love, for John spoke of those who were false teachers and reprov'd brethren who were not living as they ought (1 John 2:18-27; 3 John 1:9-12). Paul did the same of course. He stood Peter to the face and reprov'd Peter (Galatians 2:11-21). He also said to mark the false teachers (Romans 16:17-19). Paul demonstrated his love toward all in his life and through the suffering he endured for the church.

The **body of Christ** is the **church**. There are varied figures for the people of God and these are two of the figures. The word church means the called out which illustrates that we are no longer serving sin but are serving righteousness (Romans 6:3-23). We are added to the church when we obey the Lord. 'Faith only' does not save (see James 2:24-26). Faith which responds in obedience leads to salvation (Hebrews 5:9). Submitting to baptism is obedience and at baptism we begin our Christian life. When we are baptized we are baptized into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). At baptism we are raised with Christ (Colossians 2:12). Baptism is a burial, and immersion (Colossians 2:12) and is preceded by faith, repentance and confession that Jesus is the Christ. It is at baptism that we become a child of God and have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). There are many religious groups who baptize, but they teach that a person is saved at faith without baptism. The baptism they practice is not the baptism each one is to submit to since they believe they are already saved. Many souls will enter eternity unprepared because of this horrible doctrine of saved by faith only.

Note that Paul refers to the mystery which has been revealed. In the past it was hidden but God revealed it through the apostles and prophets of the apostolic age. See Ephesians 3:1-12 for additional information and the specific mystery revealed: Jews and Gentiles in one body! It is no longer a mystery.

Paul's goal was to present every man perfect in Christ. The word 'perfect' means complete, mature. In each context this word is further defined within the context. Here, Paul said he warned every one and taught every one so each one could become perfect. Paul emphasized the same to the Philippians, noting that he was not perfected but that he was mature (Philippians 3:12-16). There was a growth in Christ to which Paul referred and for which we all should stretch. To become perfect, or mature, we need to grow in knowledge and put that knowledge to work. As Paul wrote to the Colossians he encouraged their growth. In the third chapter he challenged them to look above where Christ is seated rather than involve themselves in the affairs of the world. Read chapter three and note what we are to 'put to death' and what to 'put on' in our lives. Our life today should be different than it was in the past.

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, 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, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 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. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Colossians 1:24-29. NKJ