

June 2, 2024

“Glorious Riches”
Lesson 1

Colossians 1:24 – 2:3

Intro

Colossians is one of the four “prison” epistles, written by Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome. The church at Colassae was likely planted during Paul’s third missionary journey. The congregations in churches Paul planted had similar problems spiritually. They faced a dual threat of their members either returning to pagan practices or to Jewish practices over their Christian new lives. There was also the possibility that old beliefs and practices would be added to the new ones. Teachers who taught this way might say something like, “Having Christ is important, but to be saved, you also need...” The added elements might be one of the Jewish practices from the Law of Moses, or some element of Greek philosophy. Both of these problems seemed to be present in the church at Colassae according to what Paul writes in chapter 2:8-15. But before confronting those problems, Paul first explains his own status, intent, and work.

Read Colossians 1:24 – 2:3

1. vs. 24: Many of Paul’s letters refer to a life with suffering

However, Paul never complains about this suffering

Here, he points out that his sufferings have a *purpose*

They are sufferings for the benefit of those he has brought to Christ

Paul connects his sufferings to Christ’s

Nothing is lacking in Christ’s sufferings, done for “the sake of His body,...the church”

What is lacking in Paul is that his sufferings are not yet complete, as Christ’s are

Paul has suffered for the body of Christ, as Christ himself did

The more he traveled, the more sufferings he encountered

By the time his life was done, his sufferings in and for Christ were completed

2. vs. 25: Paul states three things about his life, his “calling”

He is a servant

God gave him a commission, his job or purpose

Paul says his purpose is to present to the Colossians “the word of God in its fullness”

This is his purpose to all the churches he established, to each person he met

3. vs. 26: The “mystery” Paul refers to is the gospel message of salvation in Jesus

This message was hidden for a long time, but now it has been revealed

Even though Christ brought, modeled, and explained this, many didn’t understand it

This shows how “mysterious” and hard to understand this message was

There are two important aspects to the gospel message

The first is the *personhood* of Christ

This is what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John develop

They give evidence that Jesus was/is the Son of God

The second is the *work* of Christ

This refers to why His death, burial, resurrection and ascending are essential

The Gospels don't address this aspect of the message to any great degree
The letters written by the apostles to the churches are the explanations
This is how the message "is now disclosed to the Lord's people"

4. vs. 27: This verse makes several things clear

First, Gentiles were to be included in the message of salvation

The mystery was being made known to them as well as to the Jews

Second, the content of the mystery is simple—it's Christ

It's not Christ in and of Himself, but "Christ in *you*"

His is in us, fellow believers, and we are in Him

Third, Christ's presence in us is "the hope of glory"

Christ is the believer's hope for sharing in the glory of heaven

Fourth, the riches he speaks of are spiritual blessings we receive in Christ

5. vs. 28: Paul says that he and other apostles are proclaiming Christ

They do this through admonishing (preaching) and teaching

He also makes the goal of admonishing and teaching clear:

"everyone fully mature in Christ"

Fully mature means something that has reached its goal, its completion

We know that human perfection is impossible, but we continue to strive for it

We are commanded to be perfect by Christ Himself (Matt. 5:48)

We don't lower the standard He set

We keep aiming for it and asking forgiveness when we fall short

We strive toward perfection by pursuing godly wisdom

6. vs. 29: Paul says he "strenuously contends" to achieve this goal of making Christians mature

This is the goal of the church, and each member of the church

To accomplish this goal, Paul does this with "all the energy of Christ"

It is not by his own strength that Paul works, but with Christ's strength

It would be evident to all who saw him work that Paul had Christ's strength

7. vs. 1: Paul tells the Colossians "how hard I am contending for you"

His contending is primarily through prayer, since he is not with them physically

He has the same zeal for them as Christ, in wanting them to grow spiritually

He says he does this "for all who have not met me personally"

This could suggest that he has never been to Colossae, or that these are newer converts

8. vs. 2: Paul's desire for them, what he is striving for, is for them to be encouraged

He says "encouraged in heart"

The heart is the center of one's morals and ethics, one's will and attitudes

He wants to encourage them to continue to be strong and grow in these areas

He wants them to be "united in love"

He wants them to be united in having the same goals and purposes

These goals revolve around their attachment to Jesus Christ

Only a love built on Christ and a desire to serve others can unite the church

Paul's third desire in the verse is for Christians to have "complete understanding"
This understanding he calls "the full riches"—the best and end of all goodness
He wants them to know Christ—that is the full riches
This understanding is in contrast to the mystery he spoke of earlier
What was formerly a mystery (Christ) can now be known completely
This will help them distinguish between true and false teachings

9. vs. 3: Believers have access to the wisdom and knowledge of Christ
Knowledge is the mental grasp of truth; wisdom is the ability to use truth appropriately
Believers can access this wisdom and knowledge in Christ
It is hidden from those who reject Christ
This verse speaks against false teachers who claim to have "hidden truth"
Only they and a select few know this hidden knowledge, they say
But Paul says that Christ's knowledge is available to all who follow Him

Application: Paul here is being used by God to guide and protect the church, His body. This letter, like most of Paul's writings, is a call to alertness and action. They were to remain alert to wrong views of Christ, of wisdom, of power, or glory, of mystery, and all other things that have a bearing on their spiritual lives. Being alert about such matters allows them to then act appropriately to protect the church, since Paul cannot be there physically, and won't be able to be there throughout all of time to act as a protector. They need to develop the ability to do this themselves. This duty is in our hands today, as we are to do the same things for our churches that Paul wants of the Colossians—be alert and protect the truth of Christ.

Prayer: Father God, remind us constantly of your presence and Your power that is available to us through Christ. Help us to know Jesus so well that we are never fooled by false wisdom and false teachings. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

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