

Colossians 1:24-2:3 – Paul’s Labor for the Church

In verses 15-20, Paul laid out the supremacy, centrality and divinity of Christ. Christ is not one among many. Christ is THE ONE. Any teaching which minimizes Christ’s place as the second person of the Trinity, the agent of creation and the head of the church is at best misguided and at worst is false teaching straight from the pit. The words of John the Baptist come to mind. He, Christ, must increase. I must decrease. My focus should not be on having a religious experience that makes me feel good or spiritually superior to others. My focus should be on giving glory to Christ. In the next verses, Paul talked about his God given ministry among the Gentiles. Some he knew face to face and some he had never met, like the Colossians.

Read Colossians 1:24-29.

Did Paul rejoice that he was suffering or did he rejoice in the midst of suffering? How did Paul suffer for the Colossians? (1:24)

In verse 24, the phrase “what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” sounds strange. Other clear passages in scripture teach us that Christ’s death on the cross is fully sufficient and effective to save, atone and justify. What does this phrase in verse 24 mean? (1:24)

In verse 25, Paul mentioned that he became a “minister” of the church. The word can also be translated as “servant” or “deacon”. Paul’s official title and office was “apostle” as was mentioned in verse 1. “Deacon” and “minister” are words which are used as titles in many churches. The word is not used here as an official title. Paul served the church at God’s direction and on God’s authority. How did Paul serve the universal church? (1:25)

In verse 25, the ESV has the word “stewardship”. KJV and others use the word “dispensation”. NASB and others use “commission”. This stewardship came from God. What does it mean to be a steward of something? (1:25)

In verse 26, what was the mystery that was hidden for ages and generations? What does it mean that it was a mystery hidden for generations? Who was the mystery revealed to? How was the mystery revealed? (1:26-27)

In verse 28, Paul said that he proclaimed Christ. What was involved in the warning (admonishing) and teaching? What was the goal or purpose of proclaiming Christ, warning and teaching? Later in 3:16, Paul told the Colossians that they were to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom. This verse contains a very important point. How do Christians mature? Is it through emotional, mysterious, ecstatic experiences? (1:28)

Where did Paul get the energy to serve the church? (1:29)

Read Colossians 2:1-3.

In verse 1, the word “struggle” is used. This word came out of athletic competition. It is not just having difficulty. It is experiencing difficulty or struggling with a goal in view. A runner in a race doesn’t run to be miserable. A runner is running to win a prize. (2:1)

How was Paul struggling for the Colossians, Laodiceans and others who had never seen him? (2:1)

In verse 2, what was the purpose of Paul’s struggles? Notice Paul’s use of words like understanding, knowledge, wisdom, and mystery. These words may point us to the false teaching that Paul was dealing with. (2:2)

In verse 2, what is God’s mystery? If you use the KJV or similar version, this question will not make sense to you because it has “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ”. Also see verse 1:27. (2:2)

In verse 3, what does it mean that “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are hidden in Christ? If Paul felt he needed to proclaim this truth to the Colossians, where do you think some of the Colossians were searching for wisdom and knowledge? What sources do people use to seek wisdom and knowledge? What does verse 3 mean in practice? Is knowledge of the Civil War or Calculus found in Christ? (2:3)