

FPFWC Christian Development



Experiencing Hope

June 2024

Summer Quarter

June 1, 2024

Lesson #1 – Glorious Riches

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Colossians 1:24 – 2:3

ICE BREAKER –

What should a believer do if they become tired “FROM” the work of the kingdom of God?

How is suffering an essential part of the Christian life?

Key Verse – “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”—Colossians 2:2–3

LESSON BACKGROUND

Colossians and Philemon are two of the four letters we call the Prison Epistles, the other two being Ephesians and Philippians. Paul wrote them from prison in Rome in the early AD 60s. There is no indication that Paul planted the church in Colosse (Colossians 2:1). Instead, a certain Epaphras probably did so after Paul had visited nearby towns (1:3–8; 4:12). According to most scholars, the church in Colosse was likely planted as a result of Paul’s third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:16). Paul refers to the nearby towns of Hierapolis and Laodicea in Colossians 2:1; 4:13–16.

The congregations of Paul’s day faced the dual threat of their members returning either to pagan deities or to superseded Jewish practices (Romans 7:6; etc.). A more insidious heresy was syncretism—a blending of old beliefs and practices with new ones. Teachers of this system would say something like, “Having Christ is important, but to be saved, you also need....” That sentence might be completed by one or more Jewish practices of the Law of Moses. Or it might be finished with speculative elements of Greek philosophy. Both seemed to have been problems at Colosse per Colossians 2:8–15. But before he confronted those problems, Paul first needed to ensure that his readers understood his own status, intent, and work.

LESSON COMMENTARY –

1:24–27. In discussing his own ministry, Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for the church in that they fill[ed] up what [was] lacking in Christ's afflictions (v. 24). Though exalted, Christ continued to endure afflictions through His persecuted followers (Ac 9:4). So, in one sense Christ's afflictions are not over (they are lacking), although these afflictions are not atoning. Thus, Paul's work as a minister (vv. 23, 25) has meant sufferings, which he gladly endures on behalf of the church. He endures his share since God gave him the task (stewardship) of preaching the word of God. Here the word is called the mystery: some aspect of God's plan that was previously hidden but that has now been made known (2:3; Rm 11:25; Eph 3:3). The mystery is further explained this way: Christ takes up residence in believers (in you, v. 27), even among Gentiles, those previously excluded from the people of God (Eph 2:11–13).

1:28–29. We refers to workers such as Paul and Epaphras. He described their work as proclaiming Him. There are five aspects to this proclamation: First, Christ is the center of their message. Second, one feature of the proclamation was admonishing every man—correcting wrong beliefs and practice. A third facet was teaching—guiding into correct beliefs and practice. Fourth, the goal of the proclamation was to present every man complete in Christ. Fifth, all this activity involved not merely human energy but labor and striving according to His power.

2:1–3. Paul was not emotionally detached in his work. He suffered and was not ashamed to tell of his struggle even to those who had not personally seen his face. He related the struggle, not to boast, but so that others may be encouraged. This encouragement stems from being “instructed in love” as this word is used in 1Co 2:16 (better than knit together of NASB). Instruction yields deeper understanding (full assurance) and has as its further goal knowledge, not just of facts, but also of a person: God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself. Spiritual wisdom and knowledge, which are treasures (Is 33:6), should be sought nowhere else, for they are found in Him.

LESSON NUGGET – **The Hope within you.** Heaven is more than a destination; it is a motivation because Christ lives within. It is a living hope (1 Peter 1:3) that affects how we think and act all day long. Because Christ is with us, we need not fear what is ahead.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Word for Today Bible, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary