

By Nick Rao

OVERVIEW

Some scholars suspect this passage to be an ancient hymn or liturgy that was memorized and recited in the early church. In it, Paul gives us insights about Jesus's nature, what his death and resurrection accomplished, and the cosmic effect of his saving work. Whereas earlier and later verses in this chapter focus more on the Colossians as a body, these verses are particularly Christo-centric, with Jesus being the clear focus. Paul's earlier prayers in verses 9-12 point to the importance of spiritual growth and wisdom, and verses 15-20 help us see that such wisdom and understanding is rooted in knowing Christ and his work, as described in verses 15-20.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

DISCUSS

1. What does it mean in verse 15 that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" and the "firstborn of all creation"? How does this help us understand more about who Jesus is? What implications does this have for our belief and practice?
2. In verse 16, why do you think Paul specifically refers to authority figures when talking about what Jesus made? Why would it be significant that Paul emphasizes the authority of Christ over all spiritual authorities? How should this inform how we think about spiritual evil?
3. What are some things in life we give preeminence instead of Jesus? You can speak about people in general, or better yet, be honest with your group about idols in your own life.
4. What does it mean that Christ has reconciled all things to himself? How do we know this doesn't imply universalism (the belief that all people will inherit salvation rather than condemnation)? Substantiate your answer from this text and other Bible passages.

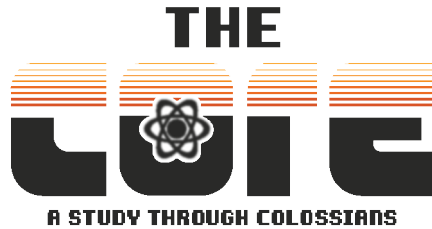
5. What words or phrases in this text can provide your soul with hope, comfort, and joy in the midst of challenging circumstances?

PRAY

1. Pray that these truths about Jesus penetrate your heart, moving beyond mere intellectual understanding.
2. Pray that we, as a church, would remember that Christ is the head of the church in all we say, think, and do.
3. Pray that you would experience the impact of Christ's reconciliation in your life in a deeper way and that he would be pleased to use you to bring reconciliation between others and himself.
4. Praise the Lord and marvel that he is before all things and gods.

PREPARE

Before next week's sermon, read Colossians 1:1-2. Make a list of all the "hats" you wear in life: parent, child, friend, coworker, etc. Thank God for entrusting these responsibilities to you.



By Nick Rao

OVERVIEW

Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians while he was in prison. Although he hadn't physically met the Colossians, he had heard commendations of the church through Epaphras (v. 7), who helped start the church. Epaphras was a faithful minister, and Paul highlights that the brothers and sisters in Colossae are also faithful to the Lord, seeming to imply that faithful leadership and teaching play a key role in fostering faithfulness within the members of Christ's body.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:1-2

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

DISCUSS

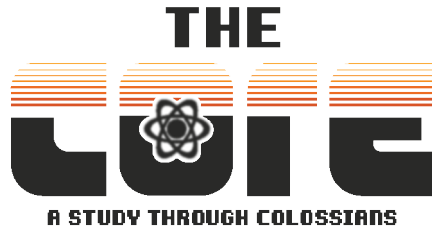
1. Compare the introduction of Colossians to the introduction of other epistles such as Ephesians, Philippians, or Galatians. How is the introduction to Colossians similar or dissimilar to the others?
2. Paul calls himself an "apostle" of Christ Jesus "by the will of God." Paul viewed his apostolic office as God's will and God's work. What "offices" do you currently hold (grandparent, parent, child, friend, coworker, etc.)? In what ways are you specially called to minister to others as part of these roles?
3. In what ways are these verses in Colossians connected to College Park's Core Values? Do we see any of our values emphasized in these verses? Which ones? How are you presently living out these values in your own life?
4. How has God shown his grace in your life recently? How are you extending his grace to others?
5. In what areas of your life do you need peace?
6. Paul had never met the Colossians in person when he wrote this letter, and he was likely in prison at the time of writing. How do you think Paul must have felt? How do those circumstances influence how we read the book of Colossians? How does it influence how we pray for other believers?

PRAY

1. Praise God for the grace and peace he offers us in Christ.
2. Confess areas where you need to trust him and/or serve him more faithfully.
3. Ask God to give you eagerness to pray for gospel work, even laboring for those whom you've never met.
4. Pray that God would help you see things in this book afresh that you haven't seen before.
5. Thank God for the different "offices" he has called you to. Ask God to help you be holy and faithful in these roles.

PREPARE

Before next week's sermon, read Colossians 1:3-8. Consider people in your life who have influenced your faith. Thank God for them and pray that the gospel would continue to bear fruit in their lives.



By Jill Henry

OVERVIEW

In Colossians 1:3-8, Paul expresses gratitude to God for the faith and love demonstrated by the Colossian believers, which stem from their hope in heaven as revealed through the gospel. He highlights how the gospel is bearing fruit globally and acknowledges Epaphras, a faithful servant, for sharing the message with them and teaching them about God's grace.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

DISCUSS

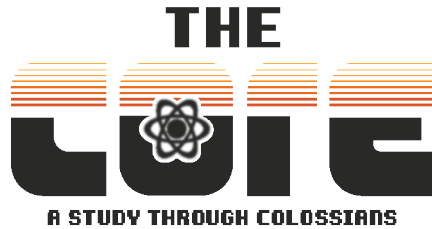
1. Paul begins this letter by expressing his love to the Colossians, letting them know that he often thinks of them and prays for them. How do you regularly encourage the believers in your life or in your small group? Do you pray for them regularly? Take time to go around and encourage one another about the work you see God doing in each others' lives.
2. Since becoming a believer, how have you made Jesus the core of your life? Do you think people would say they see Jesus at your core? What kind of impact do you have on others because Jesus is at the core of your life?
3. When was the last time you shared your testimony to believers? What was their response? When was the last time you had a conversation with a non-believer about Jesus and his saving work in your life? What was their response?
4. We should have gratitude to God because of the amazing growth and grace we see in others. Where does this come from?
5. Paul probably wrote this letter from prison and yet he is giving thanks. Do you see the world through a lens of Christ-centered gratitude? Would anyone or could anyone use your life as a conduit of gratitude to God? How much praise to God did your life create this week?

PRAY

1. Pray that God would help you to live a life of more gratitude for him and his saving grace in others.
2. Pray for each person in your small group. Pray for a specific way they would like to see Jesus work out his saving grace in their life this year.
3. Pray that God would give you more opportunities to share your testimony as a way to bring glory to him.
4. Pray that God would give you more opportunities to share the gospel with non-believers. Name specific people you want to share the gospel with this year.

PREPARE

Read Colossians 1 each day and start a daily gratitude journal to rehearse all the ways you see God's grace in your life, including both the small and big things.



By Jane Schuth

OVERVIEW

Paul's petition for the Colossians in this section is powerful. Often people are drawn into prayers for a safe and healthy life. These prayers aren't bad, but oh how much richer they could be! Paul is passionate about the growth of the Colossians in their faith as he prays that they may be "filled with the knowledge of his will" (v. 9). When and only when they know the Lord and his desires can they truly serve him and "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (v. 10). Paul is persistent: "we have not ceased to pray for you" (v. 9). Finally, his prayers are rooted in thanksgiving as he shows gratitude in rehearsing the truth of the gospel (v. 12-14).

READ COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

DISCUSS

1. In verse 9, what does it mean to be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding"? Share an example of a character in the Bible or someone you know whose actions reflect spiritual wisdom and understanding. How do we strive towards this? How do we encourage others in this?
2. This prayer begins with a desire for knowing God's will, but most of the remainder is focused on the benefits that flow out of a relationship with God. Identify these benefits and discuss how they look in practice in the life of a believer. How do we balance desiring to serve God in actions but not doing works to prove our worth or earn salvation?
3. We often want to pray people out of difficult circumstances. Although that may not be wrong, it may be more important to pray for God's strength. Read the following passages and discuss both the source of strength and why God might see value in allowing trials in our lives: Colossians 1:11-12; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:2-5; 2 Corinthians 4:7-10.

4. Verses 12-14 end with gratitude as Paul recites the truth of the gospel. What is the relationship between the Father and the Son in these verses? What contrasting imagery do you see?
5. Is reciting the gospel a frequent part of your prayer life? What habits can we build to regularly rehearse the gospel to ourselves?

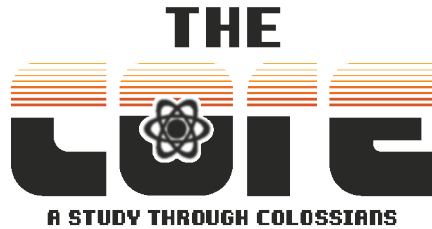
PRAY

1. Praise the Lord that he has "delivered us from the domain of darkness" through Jesus.
2. Ask the Lord to help you be committed to fruitful prayers for yourself and others.
3. Pray for someone in your life that you have given up on knowing that God is able to do above and beyond all we ask or think (Eph. 3:20).
4. Ask God to help you "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" and to "bear fruit."

PREPARE

Before next Sunday's sermon, read Colossians 1:15-16 and reflect on the following:

- What do we learn about Jesus from this passage?
- How do these truths affect what we believe and how we live?



By Jane Schuth

OVERVIEW

Colossae had been exposed to false teaching. To ward off heresy, this passage focuses on the truth by looking at the person of Christ. Paul tries to do an impossible thing—capture Christ in words. He brings to light the characteristics that set Christ apart: his deity, his power, and his position.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-16

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

DISCUSS

1. What truths do we learn about Jesus in this passage? How can studying these truths help protect us from false teaching?
2. How do we know that Jesus is God? Are you ready to answer that question for yourself or others who may ask? Read through the following verses and discuss what you learn: John 5:17-18; Hebrews 1:1-3; Philippians 2:10-11; Colossians 2:8-10. Are there other verses you know that would also be helpful?
3. In our culture we think of firstborn as the first child to come from the womb, but in Jewish culture it was often a word denoting position. The offspring who was given the inheritance, land, and position was the “firstborn.” In what ways do you see Jesus as the firstborn? If we are united to him by faith, what hope does that give us?
4. Throughout history some have used verse 15 as proof that Jesus was created, not the creator. Why does this distinction matter? Read these verses in a few different Bible translations and discuss the differences. Then read the following verses and discuss what information they add: Genesis 1:26-27; John 1:1-5, 14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6.
5. Take some time to discuss the list of things created by Christ. What do these words mean, and what does it mean that Jesus created them (heaven, earth, visible, invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities)? What does it mean that all these things were created *for* him?
6. If we are created by him and for him, how does that change our perspective, goals, and how we invest our lives? How are we to live in light of this?

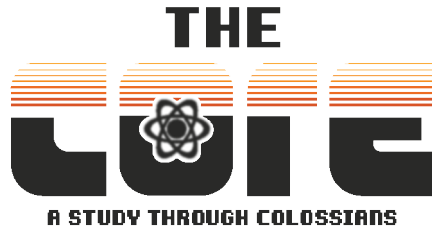
PRAY

1. Praise Jesus for being fully God, the creator of all things, willing to sacrifice himself for us.
2. Pray that you and those you love would be diligent about studying God's truths and by doing so would be watchful for false doctrines.
3. Pray that you would be mindful that you are created by Christ and for Christ. Pray that you may live in a way that brings glory to Jesus with your words, thoughts, and actions.
4. Pray that you would be ready to give a gentle and winsome answer to those who may question your beliefs. Pray that your actions would give witness to the truths you share.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday's sermon, read Colossians 1:17-18 and reflect on the following:

- What truths are revealed about Jesus in this passage?
- How does Jesus's role affect our personal lives, our church, and the world at large?



By Drew Kirk

OVERVIEW

Chapter 1:15-20 holds the core purpose and thesis of Paul's letter to the Colossians. The affirmative description of Jesus Christ as the supreme Lord over all things is the Colossian church's greatest protection against the theological errors that confronted them. The same is true for us today. Verses 15-16 unpack Jesus's role in the creation of all things (as Creator) and the purpose of all created things (Jesus's glory). Verses 17-18 turn our attention to Jesus's sustaining work in creation in general and the church in particular. Jesus is the eternal Lord whose death and resurrection brings salvation to the church.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:17-18

¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

DISCUSS

1. Jesus is "before all things" meaning he is the eternal, non-created One. There has never been a moment in which Jesus did not exist. Jesus also holds everything together. He continually sustains all that he created. This means that, while he is infinitely in power, he is also intimately involved in every detail of his creation and our lives.
 - a. How have you seen God's infinite and intimate power at work in the major and minor details of your life recently?
 - b. How might your life, or specific situations in your life, look different if you lived more aware of Jesus's intimate presence and infinite power?
2. While Jesus sustains all creation, his role as head of the church implies a special provision for the church, the new creation. In verse 18, Paul uses the metaphor of Jesus being the head of the body to emphasize his leadership over the church, his continual sustenance of her, and the church's dire need for him.
 - a. What is the danger of looking to anyone other than Jesus as the true head of the church?
 - b. How might this inform our value system within the activities of the church?
3. Jesus is the founder of the church as "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." This is a reference to his resurrection and the fact that, by faith, we unite with him in his death and resurrection.

- a. What is the primary purpose of Jesus's resurrection according to verse 18?
- b. How might that purpose conflict with our culture's (and our flesh's) focus on the self?

PRAY

1. Praise Jesus for his infinite power over all creation and the new creation, the church.
2. Praise him for his death and resurrection that ushers us into new life with him.
3. Confess ways in which you doubt his power and intimate involvement in your life.
4. Ask God to show you his intimate power at work in specific situations that weigh on you currently.
5. Ask God to give you discernment to repent when you look to anyone or anything other than Jesus as the sustainer of the church at large and the church of College Park.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read and pray through Colossians 1:19-20. Pray for the Spirit's help in understanding the text. Spend time reading portions of the Old Testament that describe where the presence of God dwelled.

By Drew Kirk

OVERVIEW

Sinful humanity's reconciliation to a perfect and holy God is the most pressing problem in all history. Our sin has separated us from God, made us dead spiritually, and made us entirely unqualified to take part positively in our salvation. Our guilt has created a debt that must be paid in full. Further worsening our plight is the fact that only a human representative can stand in our place. And more, this representative must be without sin themselves. Who is qualified to meet God's standard of perfection and yet willing to pay the penalty for our guilt? In Colossians 1:19-20, Paul reveals the grand plan of reconciliation as he describes the qualifications of Jesus Christ and what he endured to restore our peace with God. What we find is that God has been working this plan out from the very beginning.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:19-20

¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

DISCUSS

1. The fullness of God's presence dwelling with his people is a theme throughout Scripture. We see it in the Old Testament as God's presence and glory fills the tabernacle and the temple. Likewise, Colossians 1:19 tells us, "In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." Read the passages below and discuss the questions that follow.
 - a. **Passages**
 - i. God's presence at Mt. Sinai - Exodus 19:16-20; 20:18-20
 - ii. God's presence in the newly built tabernacle - Exodus 40:34-38
 - iii. God's presence revealed to all the people in acceptance of the sin offering - Leviticus 9:22-24
 - iv. God's presence at the consecration of the temple - 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 7:1-3
 - v. God's presence in Jesus, the true temple - John 2:18-22; Colossians 1:19
 - b. **Questions**
 - i. How do God's people respond to his presence in the passages above?

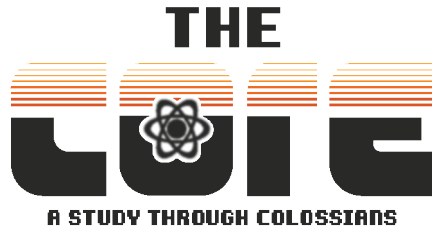
- ii. Is God's presence accessible or inaccessible? Why?
2. For God's people to enjoy and experience his presence, our relationship with him must be restored. This is what the Bible calls reconciliation. The enmity between God and man because of our sin requires payment. In the Old Testament, this took place through the symbol of animal sacrifice (i.e., Lev. 9:22-24). Just as Jesus is the true and better temple, his is the true final sacrifice for our sins (Col. 1:20; Heb. 10:14-18).
- a. Jesus was fully innocent of sin and yet he willingly died on the cross to make peace between us and God. Have you ever been wrongly accused of something or punished for something you did not do? How did that feel?
 - b. The degree to which we love someone is seen in what we are willing to sacrifice on their behalf. What does Jesus's sacrifice reveal about his love for us?
 - c. Hebrews 10:18 tells us, "... there is no longer any offering for sin." What does this tell us about the sufficiency of Jesus's payment for our sin? Do you ever find it difficult to believe your sin (past, present, and future) has been paid in full?

PRAY

- 1. Praise God for his perfect plan of reconciliation through the blood of his Son.
- 2. Ask God to create in you a proper fear of the Lord and a longing to be with him.
- 3. Confess ways in which you have avoided God's presence in your life.
- 4. Confess sin that required the blood of Jesus as payment for your reconciliation to God.
- 5. Ask God to give you faith to believe Jesus's sacrifice was truly and fully sufficient to save you now and forevermore.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read and pray through Colossians 1:21-23. Pray for the Spirit's help in understanding the text. Remember how God has reconciled you to himself. Remember your life before Christ. Praise him for what he has done.



By Drew Kirk

OVERVIEW

In Colossians 1:19-20, Jesus is identified as fully God and his work of reconciliation by his blood is described. From the beginning, God's plan has been to reconcile all things to himself. In Colossians 1:21-23, Paul applies this general reconciliation to God's people individually. Verse 21 describes who we were before our reconciliation by Jesus. Verse 22 proclaims what is now true of us because of our reconciliation by Jesus. Verse 23 instructs us of what we must do to continue to the end.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:19-20

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

DISCUSS

1. Our alienation and separation from God had implications on our lives. We all were hostile in mind toward God. We were opposed to God. We would be wrong to assume that, before our faith was in Christ, we were merely apathetic to God. The Bible says our natural state in the fallen world is as enemies of God. This hostility manifested itself by the "doing of evil deeds."
 - a. In what ways were you hostile in mind towards God?
 - b. What happened in your life for your alienation from God to turn into reconciliation to God?
2. Jesus's work of reconciliation gives us a new position in him. He presents us to God the Father, and we are declared holy, blameless, and above reproach. How is this position/description of us different from verse 21?
3. While the description of us found in verse 22 is positionally true, we often fall short of these declarations. What reminder does Paul provide to believers who know that in Christ they are holy, blameless, and above reproach while they struggle in sin and with their shortcomings? What hope does he turn our attention to? Read Colossians 1:5-6.
4. Paul describes those that continue in the faith as stable, steadfast, and not shifting from the hope of the gospel. Read the passages below and discuss how we might cultivate taking hold of the hope of the gospel.

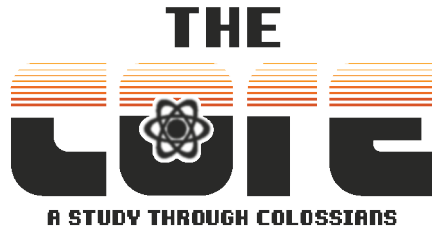
- a. John 15:5-8
- b. Matthew 7:24-27
- c. Colossians 2:6-7
- d. Ephesians 3:14-19
- e. Ephesians 5:15-21
- f. Colossians 3:15-17

PRAY

1. Praise God for his work in reconciling you to himself and his work to preserve your faith.
2. Confess ways in which you have been willing to disregard the gospel as the only hope you have to continue in the faith, choosing instead to trust in your own strength.
3. Ask God to help you believe he has made you holy, blameless, and above reproach through the work of Jesus.
4. Ask God to sanctify you so you become in full what God has already declared you positionally to be.
5. Ask God to sustain your faith to the end by making you stable and steadfast.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read and pray through Colossians 1:24-26. Pray for the Spirit's help in understanding the text. Consider the ways in which you are growing in maturity in Christ. Thank God for the methods he uses to grow your faith and ask for his continued work to perfect you.



By Jill Henry

OVERVIEW

In Colossians 1:24-26, Paul highlights joy in suffering for the church, as he views it as part of his mission to advance Christ's work. He explains that God appointed him to reveal the mystery of God's plan, which had been hidden for ages but now is known to God's people.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:24-26

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

DISCUSS

1. How would you say you view suffering, personally and in our world? Do you think it is okay to strive for an anti-suffering, anti-hardship, or anti-inconvenient life? Why? Do you view suffering differently as a believer in Christ than you did before becoming a Christian? If so, how or why?
2. It is to be expected that at some point in his or her life, every believer will experience suffering—whether for a short season or a prolonged period. Have you experienced a season or seasons of suffering in your life? How did you navigate your suffering while considering Christ as the core of your life? Or maybe as a Christian, you would say you did not suffer well in that season. If so, would you be willing to share this with your group?
3. How has God used your season(s) of suffering to testify to others around you of his saving grace and mercy over your life? Have you seen an eternal impact in the lives of those close to you or others in your circles of influence because you chose to rejoice in your suffering for the sake of others, so his Word would be heard, and God's glory would shine through your life? How?
4. When Jesus is at the core of our lives, our view of everything changes—especially suffering. How has this exegesis and group discussion of Colossians 1:24-26 changed or affected your view of suffering?

PRAY

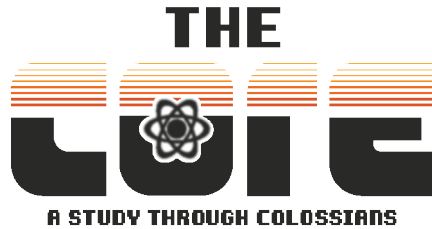
1. Pray that God would help you embrace suffering instead of resisting suffering and

hardship.

2. Pray that in your suffering, current or future, you would keep Jesus at the core, remembering that suffering is not just about you—it could have an eternal purpose. Ask God to use your suffering to make the Word heard.
3. Pray for those in your group currently in a season of suffering.
4. Pray for the people in your life, outside of your group, who are going through a season of suffering. Then encourage them with a quick text to let them know you prayed for them.

PREPARE

Have you been reading Colossians 1 each day since we began this series? Did you start a daily gratitude journal? If not, it is not too late to start! And, if you did, go to the back of your gratitude journal and list all the ways you have seen God work in your life and in others because of the season(s) of suffering you have walked through.



By Mike Hoyt

OVERVIEW

We all know what it is like to live on a budget, right? We make choices every day between what we want and what we can afford. When we hear “riches,” we often think, “I wish!” It feels out of reach, almost impossible. The same goes for mysteries—they seem like hidden truths we cannot quite grasp. These feelings do not just disappear when we read the Bible. Words like “riches,” “glory,” and “mystery” can still feel out of reach, like they are meant for someone else, not us. But remember—the Bible is serious. It is God’s Word, meant to bring what’s out of reach within our grasp through faith in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13-20; 2:2-3, 9-10, 13-14; 3:3; Matt. 5:17-18; Heb. 4:12; Is. 55:11).

So, how do we understand the “riches of the glory of this mystery”?

1. **Start with Christ:** We get a fresh start with Jesus. Our old ideas are renewed, and we become custodians of the hope God gives us through Christ (Col. 1:20-22; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Rom. 10:9-10; 12:1-2; Eph. 2:4-10).
2. **Follow Christ:** We invest our lives in God’s love and draw from his limitless account (Col. 3:1-3, 12-17; 4:2, 5-6; Is. 55:1-3; 57:15; John 15:5-11).
3. **Hope in Christ:** Faith in action brings assurance, unshakable hope, and victory that lasts forever (Col. 2:6-7; 3:4; Heb. 12:27-28; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; 5:10-11; Rev. 3:20-21; 19:7-9).

READ COLOSSIANS 1:27

²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

DISCUSS

1. How can Christ be in you? Consider Colossians 3:3; John 6:35-40, 15:7, 9; and 1 John 4:4, 13.
2. What is the difference between dreaming and biblical hope? Consider Colossians 2:8; Proverbs 14:12; and Romans 4:18-21.
3. How does the mystery of Colossians 1:26 inform your idea of faith in God? Consider Psalm 8; Ezekiel 33:11; Matthew 11:28-30; and Ephesians 3:4-12.
4. How can your daily practice of faith give hope in Christ? Consider Colossians 3:8-10; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; and Matthew 5:16.
5. What seems out of reach in your faith walk with Jesus? Consider Luke 8:43-48; Mark 9:20-29; and John 20:25-29.

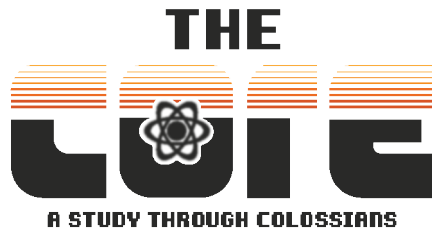
6. What can you afford to do with Jesus this week? Consider Luke 12:31-34.

PRAY

1. Ask God to give you the wisdom to grasp the mystery of Christ in you, the hope of glory. Ask that he helps you live considering this truth every day.
2. Thank God for being your hope and ask that he fill your heart with his presence so that he shines through you.
3. Ask for an opportunity to share your faith with others so that they may come to know the hope and glory found in him.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read and pray through Colossians 1:28-29. Pray for the Spirit's help in understanding the text. Consider the ways in which you are growing in maturity in Christ. Thank God for the methods he uses to grow your faith and ask for his continued work to perfect you.



By Drew Kirk

OVERVIEW

Colossians 1:24-27 introduces Paul's unique ministry to the church. God uses his suffering to "make the word of God fully known." Verses 28-29 explain Paul's ministry further. In them, Paul shares the heart/core of his ministry (proclaiming the person of Jesus), the method of conducting his ministry (warning and teaching), and the final goal of his ministry (that we may present everyone mature in Christ). This ministry is not conducted in Paul's strength. Instead, he works with the power Christ provides.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:28-29

²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

DISCUSS

1. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul elaborates on what it means to proclaim Jesus. Take time to read this passage. What does Paul mean when he says, "Him we proclaim"? How is the message Paul gives different from ideologies in the world?
2. One of Paul's ministry methods is to warn believers against immoral behavior and/or bad theology. Later in this letter (3:16), we see that Paul expects warning/admonition to be a regular activity, not only of elders and ministers, but of the whole of the body of Christ. Have you taken an active role in warning others in the body of Christ when necessary? If not, what prevents you from doing so? If yes, do you warn others with a spirit of grace, love, and patience?
3. Make note of who Paul's ministry includes. Who does he warn, teach, and present mature in Christ? The false teachers that this epistle confronts claimed to have special experiences of divine power and wisdom. Paul's ministry, in contrast, is to and for everyone. What are the implications of the broadness of Paul's ministry?
4. In verse 28, Paul shares a concise goal for his ministry: "that we may present everyone mature in Christ." How would you define spiritual maturity? Do you consider yourself mature? What is something that prevents your growth in maturity, or put positively, would help you cultivate maturity?
5. Paul gives credit to God for giving him energy to toil in his ministry. How does Paul appropriate God's power? According to commentator Dick Lucas, "Paul's answer is that we receive it not so much by believing as by working. It is when we 'toil and strive' at a God-given task, that we receive God-given energy . . . As Paul toiled, God himself granted him strength and ability for the work. God gives his power

to workers.” What are some God-given tasks you need God’s energy for currently? Think through the callings in your life (i.e., spouse, parent/child, employee/employer, neighbor, etc.).

PRAY

1. Praise God that he gives us not a philosophy to realize, but that he gives us himself.
2. Thank God for the warnings in Scripture that we need to adhere to. Confess to God warnings you may be ignoring.
3. Thank God for the ways he has matured you in Christ and ask him to continue the work to the end.
4. Thank God that his ministry includes everyone in the church and does not discriminate against members in the body of Christ.
5. Ask God for the energy you need to fulfill the callings he has given you.

PREPARE

Before next Sunday, read and pray through Colossians 2:1-5. Pray for the Spirit’s help in understanding the text. Spend time thanking God for the people he has used to save you and grow you in the faith. Thank God for the people you never met face-to-face who made an impact that eventually rippled to you.