

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

Intro Question: What's the most important message you've had to pass on?

Pray: That we would grow in our love for each other and our knowledge of God.

Read: Colossians 1:24-2:5

Questions about the passage:

- Why does Paul rejoice in his own suffering?
- What is the 'mystery' Paul mentions, and how does v.2:2-3 develop it?
- What is Paul's aim in all his efforts? How does he describe the effort? v1:29.
- What does Paul say he wants for the Colossians in v.2:2? What's the relationship between those ideas?
- What is Paul's warning, and why does he give it here? v.2:4-5

Questions for us:

- What does it look like to suffer for the sake of the Church? How do you feel about that idea and why can we rejoice like Paul in our sufferings?
- What does a mature Christian look like?
- Paul describes love and theological understanding as feeding one another. Which do you find easier to prioritise? What would it look like to pursue both together in community?
- Paul warns against teaching that is close enough to the truth to seem respectable but far enough away to cause damage. Where do you think Christians today are most vulnerable to that kind of subtle drift? How do you guard against it personally?

Pray: that Village would continue to grow into full Christian maturity

Homework: Pray for spiritual maturity for someone in your life this week.

Remind: Life Series now available online. In-person next week.

Praying to see 10% of the northern suburbs in gospel-centred churches & 250 by 2030 at Village Church who grow, gather, give & go, in love & joy to the glory of God

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Overview:

Paul's letter to the Christians of Colosse in Asia Minor is one of his shortest letters. Paul is writing to a young church that's just starting to figure out what it means to believe in Jesus and follow him. He urges them to dig into the riches of the gospel and let it shape the way they live.

This week, Paul explains why he is writing to a church he has never personally visited, and gives us a window into what Christian ministry looks like at its heart. His suffering, proclamation, and pastoral care for churches across the region are all held together by the mystery of Christ now revealed and that Christ himself dwells in his people.

Paul's aim:

Paul writes to a church he's never visited to establish his apostolic authority and relationship with them. His core aim is to ground them deeply in the gospel so they grow to maturity in Christ. Urgently underlying everything is a warning - don't drift toward the alternative teachings circulating in Colosse.

Asia Minor Map:



Asia Minor in the time of Paul

Source: N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 12, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 18.

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Questions about the passage:

Why does Paul rejoice in his own suffering?

Paul sees his suffering as genuine participation in Jesus' ongoing work for the church. His suffering is a mark that he belongs to Christ and is playing his sacrificial part in God's redemptive mission. He is living out the same pattern of suffering for others that the cross embodied.

What is the 'mystery' Paul mentions, and how does 2:2–3 develop it?

God's secret plan, long anticipated through the Old Testament, is now revealed as Jesus himself. The scandal of His kingdom is that his redemptive mission is not just for Israel but for all people. It was hidden because the time had not yet come. Paul adds that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. As they already possess Christ, they lack nothing.

What is Paul's personal aim in all his efforts? How does he describe the effort? v1:29.

Paul toils and struggles with real human effort, yet insists it is 'with all his energy that he powerfully works within me'. He suggests his effort is both 100% his and 100% God's. His own striving fully powered by God's indwelling spirit and power in wholehearted collaboration. This cuts against both passivity (God will do it) and exhausting self-reliance. It is genuinely Paul's effort, and genuinely God's.

What does Paul say he wants for the Colossians in v.2:2? What's the relationship between those ideas?

Paul wants their hearts encouraged, to be knit together in love, and to reach full assurance of understanding. These are not three separate goals but deeply intertwined ones. Living in a loving and forgiving community assists growth in understanding. Truth is confirmed when it is lived out together and genuine understanding of the gospel deepens love - a way of life in which love and theological clarity feed one another. A church growing in love is a church growing in its grasp of the gospel, and vice versa.

What is Paul's warning, and why does he give it here? v2:4–5.

His warning is against deception from 'plausible arguments'. He isn't warning about obvious error, but about teaching that's close to the truth but far enough away to cause damage. He warns anything that draws attention away or subtracts from Jesus' authority and complete work is a threat to the foundation Paul's teaching has laid. This is the first hint in the letter that false teaching is a real and present danger in Colosse. Everything Paul has built in chapters 1–2 about the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ is precisely what is under threat.

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Questions for us:

What does it look like to suffer for the sake of the Church? How do you feel about that idea and why can we rejoice like Paul in our sufferings?

Paul rejoices in suffering because he understands it as participation in something larger than himself. What motives play into your responses? What needs to be reshaped in order to align our motives with Paul's? Paul's pattern is prayer and effort for people he's never met.

What does a mature Christian look like?

Consider the particular attributes of a mature Christian - brainstorm.

Reflect on where you've invested your time, energy, and resources over the past two years. What does this reveal about your goals? What changes would you want to make?

What would it look like to pursue personal maturity in Christ more fully? What would it look like to pursue the same goal for others?

Paul warns against teaching that is close enough to the truth to seem respectable but far enough away to cause damage. Where do you think Christians today are most vulnerable to that kind of subtle drift? How do you guard against it personally?

This is a fair warning to us. Where is your knowledge of God anchored? In compelling speakers? Feelings? Our primary foundation should be in biblical truth. How can we grow our desire and habits to know God's word more fully so we can be more discerning in our knowledge of biblical truth?