



COLOSSIANS  
**REVEALED**  
COLOSSIANS 1:24-29

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**MAIN IDEA**

God gloriously revealed His strategy for ongoing transformation through the presence of the indwelling Christ.

**INTRODUCTION**

*As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.*

- **What is something you've witnessed that served as an epiphany to you (a meteorological phenomena, birth, the transformation of a new believer, etc.)? What did that event teach you?**
- **What would you say your life probably teaches your family? Your coworkers? Your neighbors?**

The way we live is important. Whether we realize it or not, our lives give testimony about something: what we view is most important, where we find hope, and what we believe about God. We reveal truth or falsehood through the way we think, speak, and live.

- **Where do people often try to find hope other than in Jesus?**

- **What is the danger in looking for hope in these places? How have been disappointed by these thing?**

Think about what brings you back up when life is tough, and you feel down. Although it is tempting to wallow in sorrow, the hope that tomorrow will be better, or the certainty that the trial you're facing won't endure forever, can sustain you. So, two of the most important questions we ask are: Where do we find hope, and how do we keep hope alive? Today, we will study what Scripture says on this subject.

## UNDERSTANDING

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

> Have someone in your group read Colossians 1:24-26.

- **How did Paul respond to the suffering he experienced?**
- **Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-30. What kind of suffering did Paul experience? How would you characterize the suffering Paul endured?**

How could Paul claim to fill what Christ lacked? Paul was not saying that Christ's atoning act was insufficient to bring salvation, or that it failed to do something it was designed to do. Rather, Paul emphasized that followers of Christ will suffer because they follow Christ and that suffering like Jesus helps us identify with Him on a deeper level.

- **In verse 25, what did Paul state as his commission? What does it mean for the Word of God to be fully known?**
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- **What mystery has God revealed to the world through Christ?**

Paul acknowledged that the Lord is the One who gave him a position of leadership and authority in the church. Paul was not proud in his leadership but humbly submitted to God's call on His life.

The Holy Spirit is the key to understanding the mystery Paul referred to. The biblical sense of mystery is not a riddle to be deciphered but truth revealed by the Spirit of God—namely the message of the gospel. Paul stated this mystery is for all the saints, meaning Jews and Gentiles alike are granted access.

- **What are some ways people suffer in the world today?**
- **What are some specific ways Christians are called to suffer?**

Sometimes suffering serves to advance the gospel because it confirms the sincerity of the one preaching the message. Paul would not have endured all the suffering that he did unless he believed the message he preached was accurate.

- **How does our view of Christ affect the way we respond to suffering?**
  - **How can dealing with tough times be a witness to those around you? In what way is suffering like Christ a visual reenactment of the gospel?**
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The world watches how you live. When Christians suffer well, they provide a visual representation of the truth of the gospel. One way the people of the Colossian church could know Paul loved them was by his willingness to suffer for their sake.

Our suffering is important because we testify to the suffering love of Christ when we endure it well. That is how Paul's suffering "completed" the suffering of Christ—by making Jesus known. He believed such suffering served the gospel and Christ's church. We display the gospel as we hold on to Jesus when difficulties come our way.

- **Why does the call to suffer not diminish God's power and authority in the world?**
  
- **In what sense has the gospel been revealed to all people?**

In Christ, the fullness of God's redemptive plan has been revealed. This is a mystery, not because it is hard to understand, but because it was previously unknown. Now, through Christ, all people can experience redemption.

> Have someone in your group read Colossians 1:27-28.

- **How did Paul describe God's intention in the world?**
  
  - **Why is it important for us to recognize the gospel, "the hope of glory," is only found in Christ but is offered to everyone?**
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The mystery of God has been revealed to His saints, the church (v. 26). In verses 27-28, Paul makes sure we understand that the church includes each individual believer in Christ. If you have turned in faith to Jesus for salvation, His Spirit dwells in you. Religious heritage and tradition makes no difference in the truth Paul laid out here—God wants the gospel to reach every single person who lives. That has been true past, present, and throughout the length of any earthly future.

God chose to make known to us the hope of glory found in Christ alone. We proclaim the gospel to those who need to hear it. We warn everyone of the judgment of God and the salvation in Christ. And we teach believers so they become mature in Christ.

- **What does it mean to have “Christ in you” in daily life?**

The central message of Paul’s preaching was Jesus. He wasn’t interested in sharing his own opinions, thoughts, or entertaining stories. He unapologetically preached Jesus and what it meant to follow Him.

- **According to verse 28, what is the proper response to God’s revelation of Christ in your life? What verbs did Paul use to emphasize this?**
- **What other teachings in the New Testament come to mind when you read Colossians 1:28?**

Paul’s goal was to share the gospel with the lost and help believers mature in their faith so they too would have an impact on those around them. The Great Commission Jesus gave just before His ascension is for all believers (Matthew 28:18-20). Imagine the impact on the world if more Christians took seriously Jesus’s commandment and obeyed it as Paul did.

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- **How did Paul show obedience to the Great Commission throughout his life following Jesus?**

> Have someone in your group read Colossians 1:29.

As Christ worked in Paul, Paul worked in the church at Colossae. Paul sought to edify the church, helping the believers there grow in spiritual purity and maturity. This meant warning them about the dangers of false teaching and compelling them to continue to share their hope with the world in need.

- **Now consider verses 28-29 together. What verbs did Paul use to describe how the revelation of Christ to him would manifest in him and through him?**
- **Why could proclaiming the gospel and discipling other believers be difficult work?**
- **What help did Paul have in that work? What help do you have in that work?**

Strengthened by the Lord, Paul worked hard to fulfill God's call on his life. But Christ's strength works powerfully in every believer's life. We can work and strive to help others know and follow Jesus too.

- **In what situation do you need God's power to work through you? How will you seek His strength? What responsibility do you have in this?**
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In our own strength, we will fail repeatedly. But we don't have to rely on our own strength. We must rely on the presence of Christ within us. All who have believed the gospel message have access to that power through the Holy Spirit.

### APPLICATION

In the beginning of today's study, we considered truths that have been revealed to us. There is no greater mystery than the mystery of the gospel, and God has revealed it to us in the person of Jesus Christ and His indwelling Holy Spirit. The proper response to that revelation is to share the mystery of Christ with others—laboring toward kingdom purposes in the strength of Christ given freely to all whose eyes are fixed on Him.

- **Our priority as the church of Jesus Christ should be sharing the gospel with the world. Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear the gospel? Pray this week for opportunities to share Christ's love with those who need to hear it.**
- **Read Jeremiah 29:13. Relationship with Jesus requires us to go all in. What does it mean to seek the Lord with your whole heart?**
- **What would it look like to give God complete control over your life? What areas you are currently withholding from Him?**
- **How can you seek encouragement from the Holy Spirit and other believers in this area? Do that this week.**

### PRAY

Praise God for loving and saving you. Ask that His saving work in your life would cause you to go boldly on mission for Him. Pray that God would use Northbrook to connect people to Jesus Christ as the Savior of all.

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## Historical Context of Colossians

### Purpose

Paul wrote to counter the “Colossian heresy” that he considered an affront to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The false teaching is identified as a “philosophy” (2:8), presumably drawn from some Hellenistic traditions as indicated by the references to “his fullness” (1:19); the “elements of the world” (Gk *stoicheia*, 2:8, 20); “wisdom” (2:3, 23); and “self-made religion” (2:23). In addition, the false teaching contained Jewish elements such as circumcision (2:11; 3:11); “human tradition” (2:8); Sabbath observance, food regulations, festival participation (2:16); the “worship of angels” together with “access to a visionary realm” (2:18); and harsh human regulations (2:21–23). Paul addressed this syncretistic philosophy by setting forth a proper understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and by noting appropriate implications for Christian conduct.

### Author

The Apostle Paul is identified as the author of Colossians (1:1; 4:18). The church fathers unreservedly endorsed Pauline authorship (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 3.14.1; Tertullian, *De Praescr. Haer.*, 7; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, 1.1; cp. Justin, *Dialogue*, 85.2; 138.2). A close reading of Colossians reveals a considerable number of lexical, grammatical, and theological similarities with the other Pauline writings (1:9, 26; 2:11–14, 16, 20–21; 3:1, 3, 5–17). Also favoring the authenticity of Colossians as a letter of Paul is its close connection with Philemon, an epistle widely regarded as Pauline.

### Setting

During his ministry in Ephesus (Ac 19:10), Paul sent Epaphras to spread the gospel in the Lycus Valley. Epaphras subsequently established the church at Colossae (1:7; 4:12–13). The city’s population consisted mostly of Phrygians and Greeks, but it also included a significant number of Jews. The church, likewise, was mostly composed of Gentiles (1:21, 27; 2:13), but it also had Jewish members (2:11, 16, 18, 21; 3:11). When Epaphras (Phm 23) informed Paul of certain heretical teachings that had spread there, Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians as a theological antidote.

### Special Features

Paul’s letter to the church at Colossae is one of the prison letters (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). Paul’s desire with this letter was to correct the false teachings that were cropping up in the church. In doing so, Paul presented a clear picture of Jesus Christ as supreme Lord of the universe, head of the church, and the only one through whom forgiveness is possible.

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## COLOSSIANS 1:24-29

1:24. Paul rejoiced in his sufferings (Rm 8:18; 2Co 1:5; Gl 5:24; Php 3:10) because they benefited the church. By suffering Paul was completing in his flesh what was lacking in Christ's afflictions. This enigmatic phrase cannot mean that something was lacking in Christ's atoning work (v. 20). Rather, Paul's sufferings benefited the church by promoting the spread of the gospel.

**Notes:**

1:25. God's commission (Eph 1:10; 3:2, 9) pertains to God's plan for Gentiles to receive salvation and to share in the inheritance of God's people. Paul's role was to make this message fully known (see note at v. 9).

1:26. The term mystery (cp. v. 27; 2:2; 4:3; Rm 11:25; Eph 1:9; 3:3–9) refers to something that was previously hidden in God's plan but has now been revealed. Here it relates to the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God.

1:27. The words glorious and wealth jointly connote the wonder and blessings associated with this mystery. In you could mean "among you," or, more likely, refer to Christ's indwelling of believers (Rm 8:10; 2Co 13:5; Gl 2:20; Eph 3:17).

1:28. The words warning and teaching express the manner of their proclamation, which is further characterized as being in keeping with all wisdom. The purpose of this ongoing ministry was to present everyone mature in Christ in correspondence with Christ's purpose in reconciliation (v. 22).

1:29. Paul viewed his work along the same lines as Christ's work of purifying and maturing the church. This was not something that Paul accomplished in his own strength but in conjunction with the work of Christ operating in him.