

Preeminent. Christ's Place in The World

WEEK 4
PROCLAIMING
CHRIST



Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ
Colossians 1:28-29

Addressing a congregation that struggled with false teachers who promoted elitism, the apostle Paul is unafraid in Colossians 1 to stress that the gospel is for everyone. Instead of a message that bears fruit only among the most educated or most spiritual, the true gospel finds adherents the world over (vv. 5a–6). It will achieve a cosmic restoration, for nothing can go untouched by the Savior's work (vv. 19–20). Furthermore, if these statements of the universality of the gospel and the sufficiency of the Savior are not enough, Paul tells us in verse 28 that his ministry is to proclaim Christ, "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom." Jesus is not to be proclaimed to a mere few — He must be preached to everyone.

Warning and teaching are the two sides to the apostle's work. The warning aspect of Christian proclamation entails admonishing professing believers who are tempted to stray from the faith. Following the apostolic model, we exhort others, whether or not we are ordained pastors, to hold fast to the biblical Jesus in all circumstances (Acts 20:29–31; 1 Cor. 4:14; Heb. 6:1–12). Teaching sets

COLOSSIANS 1:24-29

CORAM DEO

C.S. Lewis wrote in Mere Christianity, "Let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His [Jesus] being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." The foolishness of humanity and false religion is seen in the willingness to accept Jesus as a good teacher, but nothing more. He is either the Lord, Creator, and Sustainer of all, or He is worthy of no more regard than we would give any other talented teacher.

forth Christian truth to edify the body of Christ (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 John 9). All believers have a share in the teaching ministry. Some may be ordained to the teaching office, but all believers, in whom Christ's Word dwells richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, at least informally (Col. 3:16). Likewise, we must readily hear instruction in the Word at all times and throughout our entire lives. John Calvin writes, "No one is so eminent in respect of wisdom as to be entitled to exempt himself from tuition [instruction]."

Paul – indeed all Christians – work to present "everyone mature in Christ" – equipped and ready to fulfill the specific work that the Father has given to each of us (Col. 1:28). This can be a toil and a struggle (v. 29), as any full-time preacher would readily confess. But the work of Christian instruction is indeed difficult for us all, for even if our children are our only students, it can be discouraging to instruct them again and again when it seems that they are just not understanding Jesus and who they are to be in Him. Thankfully, like Paul, we have been empowered by the Spirit and will receive the strength necessary to endure in teaching His truth as we rely on Him (v. 29; see also Phil. 4:13).

Coram Deo

God calls all of us to take part in the teaching ministry of the church, though not all of us have the same role. Some will be ordained teachers. Others will help their children memorize Scripture. Still others may support the work of ministries that help train indigenous pastors around the world. There are a variety of ways to advance the proclamation of the gospel. What are you doing to further the church's teaching ministry?¹

OPEN IT



Recall a time when a goal was compelling enough to cause you to suffer for it. What helped you to keep going?

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READ IT | Colossians 1:24-29

EXPLORE IT



1. In verse 24, what emotion does Paul have regarding his sufferings?
2. In verse 25 Paul shares the reason for his ministry. What is it?
3. What has been hidden but is now being revealed?
4. What is the goal of Paul's ministry in verse 28?

GET IT

Paul rejoices that he can share in the suffering of Christ on behalf of the church. He was made a minister/steward of that church by Christ for their benefit, and endeavored to fully preach the word, including the mystery that had been hidden up until that point. Not only did Paul alone know that rich, glorious mystery, but it was shown to all the saints, including the Gentiles. That mystery is Christ in us, the hope of glory. Because that mystery has been declared to us, we are now called to proclaim Him and teach every man with all wisdom so that each man may be presented complete in Christ. That was and still is the purpose for which all of us are to labor in the power of God.

5. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. How did Paul suffer? What things in verse 24 enabled him, amidst such trial and tribulation, to find reasons to rejoice?

How does keeping our eyes on others help us to endure trials with a spirit of rejoicing?

Within this text we come face to face with a difficult interpretive question in verse 24. What does Paul mean when he says he is “filling up what is lacking in Christ's affliction”? It begs the question: **Does this mean that Christ's afflictions were somehow incomplete or insufficient?** According to his other writings in scripture, we must conclude that Paul was not implying this in any way. It would seem consistent with the scriptures that Paul was experiencing the persecution intended for Christ because, in spite of His death on the cross, Christ's enemies had not gotten their fill of inflicting injury on Him; so they turned their hatred on those who preached the gospel. It was in that sense that Paul filled up what was lacking in Christ's afflictions.

6. How does our suffering take on a different look when we see that we are enduring many of our hardships for the sake of Christ?

7. The false teachers sought to use Paul's sufferings to hinder and hurt his ministry and reputation. In what ways does suffering validate one's calling and ministry? Can it invalidate it in any ways?

A steward was a slave who managed his master's household, supervising the other servants, dispensing resources, and handling business and financial affairs. Paul viewed his ministry as a stewardship from the Lord. The church is God's household, and Paul was given the task of caring for, feeding, and leading the churches, for which he was accountable to God. All believers are responsible for managing the abilities and resources God gives them.²

8. Paul was well aware of the role he played in the mission for Christ's Kingdom. How do Christ followers seek to know and understand their calling?

9. According to Paul, his ministry is directly correlated to the ministry of the church. Why should ministry be so connected to the body of Christ?

How does this impact the thought of “Lone Ranger Christianity” where people seek to serve God while being disconnected from the body of Christ?

² <http://www.calligraphyforgod.com/biblestudy/colossians1-24-29.html>

10. Paul concludes this section (vs. 29) by sharing that he is toiling and struggling with all the energy God gives to fulfill his ministry. Do you think that this aggressive approach to ministry is for a select few super Christians or for all? Explain your answer.
11. How does our Christian service (*i.e.* serving in children's ministry, hospitality ministry, teaching ministry, etc.) make "the word of God fully known" to others?
12. How does this question help to define the difference between doing *good things* and doing *God things*?



The Mystery hidden for the Ages?

The OT predicted the coming of the Messiah and that the Gentiles would partake of salvation, but it did not reveal that the Messiah would actually live in each member of His redeemed church, made up mostly of Gentiles. That believers, both Jew and Gentile, now possess the surpassing riches of the indwelling Christ is the glorious revealed mystery.

Ray Steadman says it this way: "There is the great mystery. It is the greatest truth taught in the Bible, and yet it is the most seriously missing element in many churches today. Most Christians in our churches understand that Christ died for the forgiveness of their sins---they believed that and came to Christ because of that---but that is where most of them stop. Relatively few, it seems, ever go on to grasp the fact that Jesus died for them that he might live in them. It is his life in them that is the source of power, change and deliverance, and the ability to resist temptation. That is how loneliness is met and companionship provided. It is not enough to know that Christ died in order that we might go to heaven. We are also to know, understand, and practice Christ actually living in us now!"³

³ Steadman, Ray ; Sermons in Colossians www.raysteadman.org

13. What is the mystery that Paul is talking about? What riches are associated with this mystery?

How should this mystery and its riches impact the life and ministry of every believer?

14. Why should the phrase "Christ in you, the hope of glory" allow us to rejoice in the most difficult of circumstances?

15. How are we to help make everyone mature in Christ? Take a look at the entire book of Colossians. What can we glean from his example in making them complete?