

The MYSTERY

Hidden for Ages

Is Now REVEALED

A Study of the Book of Colossians

LESSON 8

This Week's Passage:

Colossians 1:23–25

New International Version (NIV)

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—²³ **if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.**

²⁴ **Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.** ²⁵ **I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—**

Memory Verse: Colossians 1:17

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ **He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**

Day One: Read Colossians 1.

1. Review verse 22. Believers will be presented before God as "holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." How is that possible?
2. Review verse 23. The "if" at the beginning of this verse makes it sound as though the Colossians could fall away and lose their status before God. However, the Greek actually suggests that "Paul fully expects that the Colossian believers will continue in their faith; no doubt is expressed."¹ What does Paul say continuing in the faith looks like?
3. What Christ has done for us and what we do in response are always linked. What does being "established and firm" in the faith look like?
v. 23

"To 'continue in the faith' is to be content with the gospel that first saved and delivered us.... It is to be unmoved and immovable in the face of strong winds of new doctrine, not just when people would deny the... gospel but when, more subtly, they would [seek to] improve upon it."²

Col. 1:9; 4:12

1 Cor. 15:58

1 Cor. 16:13–14

Heb. 12:1–3

2 Pet. 1:5–11

How are we able to do these things? (Col. 1:11; 1 Pet. 5:10)

Day Two: Read Colossians 1:22–23.

4. What is the “hope held out in the gospel” (v. 23)?
Gal. 5:5

1 Thess. 5:8–10

Titus 1:2

1 Pet. 1:13

5. How can we be confident that what we hope for will come to pass? (Heb. 6:13–20a; 1 Pet. 1:3–5)
6. Why do you think Paul tells the Colossians that the gospel they heard was the same one “that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven” (1:23b)? (Consider also Col. 1:6. 📖* Acts 4:12)

Day Three: Read Colossians 1:24–25.

7. Paul has reminded the Colossians of Christ’s supremacy over all things and of his redemptive work in their lives. Now he turns to his own role in God’s redemptive plan...³

Paul identifies himself as a servant of the _____ (v. 23) and as a servant of the _____ (vv. 24–25).

8. What was the commission God gave to Paul (previously called Saul)?
v. 25

Acts 9:1–16, 20

Acts 13:2–5

Rom. 1:1–5

9. How do you think Paul understood his commission to “present ... the word of God in all its fullness” (v. 25)?
(Acts 20:20–24)

Day Four: Read Colossians 1:24–25.

10. Paul suffered many things in his life for the sake of the gospel.
a. What was Paul likely referring to when he writes of his suffering in verse 24? (Col. 4:10, 18)

- b. How does Paul view his suffering?
v. 24a

Acts 20:22–24

2 Cor. 4:8–10, 16–18

2 Cor. 12:9–10

c. Who benefits from Paul's sufferings? (v. 24b;  Phil 1:12–14)

11. In what ways will believers suffer and in doing so “fill up...what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions” (1:24)?
Mk. 13:9–13

Jn. 15:18–21

Day Five: Read Colossians 1:24–25.

12. What does Peter encourage us to do as we face suffering for the sake of the gospel? (1 Pet. 4:12–16)

13. Read Paul’s discussion of suffering in Philippians 3:7–17.

a. What does Paul believe he will gain that gives him perspective on his suffering and loss?

b. How does this encourage and challenge you to “join together in following [Paul’s] example” (Phil. 3:17)?

Filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions does not mean that the sacrifice of Christ is somehow deficient in its ability to save. In actuality, “Christ’s sufferings are...[completely] sufficient and nothing...can be added to secure salvation. What was ‘lacking’ in Christ’s afflictions was the future suffering of all who (like Paul) will experience great affliction for the sake of the gospel...”⁴



Reminder: Remember to read the entire book of Colossians this week.

*  Indicates verses for further study

¹ *ESV Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 2295.

² Dick Lucas, *The Message of Colossians & Philemon* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1980), 63.

³ Note on Col. 1:24-27, *NIV Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 1903.

⁴ *ESV Study Bible*, 2295, note on verse 24.