

Sermon Notes Col 1 24 - 2:15

Introduction. Paul takes joy in his struggle to proclaim Christ. Christians should base their lives only on Christ.

Vv. 24. Paul, a servant to proclaim the gospel.

Christ = the church as '**Christ's body**'. In Acts 26:15 the risen Lord Jesus accuses 'Paul' (Saul) of persecuting him. By persecuting Christians, those who trust in Jesus, Paul is persecuting the risen Lord Jesus. Paul teaches that all believers, those united to Christ, are identified with Christ's past suffering and suffer in conformity after the pattern of Christ's earthly suffering (Rm. 8:17, 29; 2 Cor. 1:5, 7; and esp. 1 Peter 2:21). **The risen Lord Jesus has saved the Colossian believers from their sin and its consequences.** Paul rejoices in the privilege of suffering on their behalf and perhaps also in a way that limits their suffering. **All Christians participate in sufferings because of their faith in Jesus Christ** (1 Thess. 3:3, 7). Suffering with Christ is a necessary prerequisite to being glorified with him (Rm. 8:38, 39).

'**lacking in Christ's afflictions**' probably refers to the suffering that will occur for the church, the body of Christ, until the set time when the Son of Man returns in glory (Rev. 6:11).

VV. 25-29. Paul has been commissioned to teach the word of God in its fullness. The Colossian Christians are being warned that what Paul has taught is the full word of God which cannot be added to. To do so is to undermine the full word of God. **The mystery** which is now disclosed is '**Christ in you, the hope of glory**'. There is no other hope but Christ. Christ is the mystery now revealed to all people Jew and Gentile. Christ indwells all believers.

Paul's work derives from the work of God (1:22) to present believers mature in Christ ('holy'). Paul's ministry is to present everyone fully mature in Christ (1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4:15; Heb. 5:14). Paul will accomplish this task by the power of God. Paul holds together his responsibility to strive to teach the truth by word and example and God's enabling.

Vv. 2:1-5 Christ alone

'**encouraged in heart**' = OT usage - the inner life of the person, the centre of their personality (will, emotions, thoughts). So that the believers will not easily be discouraged or led astray.

'**united in love**' = the Christian community is to live as those in whom Christ dwells, showing his love by loving each other.

'**To know Christ**' in whom '**are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**' = some were undermining the Colossian Christians confidence in Paul's teaching by claiming that there was other wisdom and knowledge that they needed and experiences that they must have to be mature Christians. Paul is confident that for now they are *disciplined* and *firm in their faith in Christ* alone.

Vv. 6-15. Christian maturity

The Colossian believers are to continue to live as those united to Christ with a spirit of thankfulness. **The Colossian believers already possessed all they need through being united to the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.** So, they are to reject teaching that claims that they need more than Christ. They are to resist following the spiritual or secular forces (demonic and human) which seek to usurp Christ. Christ is the supreme ruler and authority over all powers and authorities (spiritual and secular) because all the fullness of Deity (God, see 1:19) lives in him. **The Colossian believers are reminded that they have been (already) brought to fullness in Christ.** The certainty of this is assured even though the outworking (becoming mature in Christ) awaits the return of Christ.

'**circumcised by Christ**'. Paul uses circumcision as a metaphor for those who are marked as belonging to Christ and who have been made new people. This new life was dramatically symbolised in their baptism showing they were buried and raised with Christ. **God took the initiative to make them alive with Christ even when they were 'dead in their sins'** (see Eph. 2:1-10). God forgives us all our sins, through the death of Christ. Through the death of Christ (in our place, implied) God cancelled our legal debt so our sins could be forgiven (Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21). The powers and authorities, spiritual and secular, put Jesus on the cross. However, God's plan of acting in weakness on the cross was His means of triumphing over these powers and authorities.

Reflection/Response.

How do we show that Christ is our hope in this world and in the world to come? What teachings or experiences encourage us to shift our allegiance and confidence in Christ alone? How does knowing that God took the initiative in forgiving us and making us alive in Christ give us confidence to strive to become mature in Christ?