

## REFLECTION GUIDE

### COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5 | THEOLOGY IN LIFE

#### KEY TERMS

**Filling up what is lacking** - This is a potentially confusing phrase from Col 1:24. Paul cannot be saying that Jesus' afflictions were not sufficient for forgiveness of sins and salvation because that would contradict Col 1:22 & 2:13-14. His point seems to be that on the cross Jesus didn't end all suffering and that the pattern of the Christian life is to suffer like Christ (see Rom 8:17 & Phil 3:10).

**Mystery** - In biblical terms, *mystery* (vv. 1:26, 27 & 2:2) does not refer to a puzzle to be solved, but to God's plan or will which was previously partially hidden but has now been fully revealed in Christ (see Dan 2 & Eph 1:9).

**Toil/Struggle** - These terms highlight that Paul's ministry was hard work. *Struggle* or *struggling* (vv. 1:29-2:1) come from the same word Paul uses in 1 Tim 6:12 to say "*Fight the good fight of the faith.*" The word has the sense of "fighting" or "contending" (i.e. Paul is "contending" for the faith in 1 Tim and "contending" to see people grow into maturity in Christ in Col).

#### BACKGROUND

Following his description of Jesus in Col 1:15-20 and reminder of the gospel in 21-23, Paul introduces himself further to the Colossians as he winds down his introduction. First, Paul wants them to know that he is suffering for them (Paul is in prison while writing), but that he rejoices in his suffering on their behalf (v. 1:24). Part of the reason Paul can have joy even in suffering is because he sees his ministry as a *stewardship from God*, the goal of which is to *make the word of God fully known* (v. 1:25). According to Paul, the *word of God* is a *mystery* richly full of glory, which was partially hidden but has now been revealed—to both Jews and Gentiles (vv. 1:26-27). At the heart of this mystery is that the cosmic Christ from Col 1:15-20 who created all things now dwells inside those who trust in him (v. 1:27, see 2 Cor 5:17 & Ro 8:10). Paul goes on to explain that Jesus *is* the message he proclaims, and that by the power of God he works hard to see *everyone* come to maturity in Christ (vv. 1:28-29). Paul then returns to his *struggle*, telling the Colossian church that he hopes that their *hearts will be encouraged*, that they will be *knit together in love*, and that they will *reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ* (vv. 2:1-2). Paul ends his introductory section telling the church that his desire is that they would not be distracted by *plausible arguments* from the competing philosophies in Colossae, but would instead maintain *good order* and *firmness of faith* (vv. 2:4-5).

#### GOING DEEPER

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:10, Galatians 2:20, and John 15:4. These verses describe a doctrine called "union with Christ." Based on these verses how would you explain what it means that Christians are "in" Christ and Christ is "in" us? What practical implications does this truth have for our lives?

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Laodicea (v. 2:1) was a city close to Colossae which Paul had also never visited. Col 4:16 mentions a letter Paul wrote to the Laodiceans. Some scholars believe this letter has been lost, but it's likely it is actually the letter to the Ephesians which was a circular letter (and would visit all the neighboring towns nearby).

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

### **COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:5 | THEOLOGY IN LIFE**

#### **LEARNING THE WORD**

1. Read Colossians 1:24-2:5. What stands out to you? Make several observations about this section.
2. What “process” words or phrases do you see in this passage (i.e. words/phrases that describe ongoing or progressive action)? What type of processes are they describing?
3. Verses 1:26 and 2:2 mention a *mystery*. Based on Colossians 1:24-2:5, what does Paul tell us about this mystery?
4. In Colossians 2:1-5, Paul describes what he desires to see in the Colossian church. What types of things does he mention?

#### **LIVING THE WORD**

5. Why do you think it’s important to integrate theological truth with our lived daily experience? Do you find this challenging?
6. Colossians 1:27 describes the Christian doctrine of union with Christ. How does working, parenting, eating, relaxing, all of life become more meaningful when we do those everyday things aware of “Christ in (us)”?
7. How have you seen your faith grow because of the community of other Christians? What are some specific things you’ve learned from other Christians or specific ways you’ve grown simply from living in community with others?
8. What do you think it looks like practically to rely on Christ’s power in your life? What is one way you can rely on Christ this week?