

# COLOSSIANS

## Lesson 4

### “ROOTED IN THE MYSTERY”

**Ice Breaker:** What do you find to be the most mysterious about God?

INTRO: Prov. 25:2 says, “*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.*” Some things are worth working hard to really understand. Paul tells the Colossians that God has revealed His mystery of Christ to us, and yet Paul was struggling to help them really understand it. You see, just because the mystery has been revealed doesn’t mean we really understand it. Paul says everything we will ever really need to know is hidden in Christ. If we will sink our roots deep into this mystery, we can have “*the full riches of complete understanding.*”

#### Col. 1:24-2:5

Now I rejoice in what was suffered 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— **26 the mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. **27** To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of **this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

**28** We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. **29** To this end **I labor, struggling** with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

**1** I want you to know how much **I am struggling** for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. **2** My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, **in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** **4** I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. **5** For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Q: In vs. 24, Paul speaks of filling up in his flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. What is lacking in Christ’s afflictions?

- Paul was suffering because he was a part of the body of Christ.
  - Jesus suffered while on earth, but He is still suffering when His body suffers.
  - When any Christian is suffering, Jesus is suffering too.
- Jesus wasn’t through suffering after the cross, but the purpose for suffering has changed.
  - The suffering of Jesus when He was on earth was for propitiation, the suffering of His body - the church- is for propagation.
  - He suffers through His servants in order to bring the lost to Himself.
  - Jesus was paying the price for our forgiveness when He suffered on earth. He is now paying the price to bring the lost to salvation when we as Christians suffer.

Q: How will God use my suffering to bring others to Him?

- The “how” part can definitely be a mystery at times, but we should understand that there is always purpose and profit to our sufferings when we respond to those sufferings the way Jesus tells us to.
  - Jesus owns us and has the right to use us any way He wants.
  - He wants to bring as many as possible to salvation, and He has the right to require us to suffer at times so His purpose can be accomplished.
- God intends that something be accomplished through our suffering, but it is not a given that it will work that way.
  - Gal 3:4 *“Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing?”*

Q: According to vs. 27, what is the mystery that has been made known to us? How can understanding this mystery make you rich?

- *“Christ in us, the hope of glory.”*
- Having Christ in us makes a new kind of human... one like Him.
  - **2Cor. 5:17** *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; the old has gone, the **new** has come!”*
  - **Gal. 4:6** *“**Because you are sons**, God sent the **Spirit of his Son into our hearts**, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ **7** So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, **God has made you also an heir.**”*

Q: In vs. 1:29 - 2:2, Paul says he was struggling to achieve his purpose, “... *that they may have the **full riches of complete understanding**, in order that they may **know the mystery of God.**”* What is the difference between understanding and knowing the mystery of God?

- You can understand something based on information, but knowing something comes from experience.
  - Peter understood Jesus was the Christ when his brother Andrew told him He was (John 1:41). But Jesus said it was God who revealed this to Peter (Matt. 16:16-17).
  - Perhaps it was walking with Jesus for years, talking to Him, learning from Him, being Jesus’ servant that caused Peter to really KNOW Jesus was the Christ.
- God wants us to both understand and know (experience) the mystery, which is Christ.
  - That is why Christianity is caught more than taught... why it must lived, not just studied.

Q: In vs. 3. Paul says “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are **hidden** in Christ. What are the implications of this truth?

- To find those treasures, you must be “in Christ”.
- The word Paul uses for “hidden” is not like “locked away” or “purposely concealed”.
  - The word he used was more like gems in a mine... they are not laying on the surface, but they are worth digging for.

- You can definitely find these treasures, but you have to dig in the right place... in Christ.

*\*\*In Paul's day, the Gnostics claimed that there was a deeper spiritual knowledge that people could attain through special disciplines and direct revelation. Today there are groups who claim it is fine to be a Christian, but there is more to learn from other sources besides the Bible. Paul insisted that all wisdom and knowledge was found in Christ alone.*

- Many Christians look for wisdom and knowledge in psychology... trying to apply principles from guys like Freud and Jung.
  - In fact many Christian psychologists are classically trained and try to blend what they find in Jesus with what they find in psychology books.
  - Paul seems to be aiming at that directly in his statement that **ALL** wisdom and knowledge is found in Christ.
- Are there things we could gain knowledge about that aren't in the Bible?
  - Sure, but it might not be helpful to know some things.
  - In the Garden of Eden there was the tree of knowledge of good and evil... it wasn't good for us to know the difference.
  - Eccl. 1:18 says, "*For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; **the more knowledge, the more grief.***"
  - Whatever knowledge about living life God wants us to have is readily available in Christ.

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APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT: *Answer the following questions as best you can, then get with your discipler/discipleship group and discuss your answers.*

1. How has God used your suffering to help someone else come to faith or go deeper in his or her faith?
2. How has God helped you go from understanding the mystery of Christ in you to knowing or experiencing it?
3. Where do you spend most of your effort digging for "treasures of wisdom and knowledge"?