

EXPOSITORY TEACHING ON THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

MESSAGE NINE: CHRIST, THE MYSTERY OF GOD

INTRODUCTION: Do you see the need to know Christ as a living reality of your life?

We have looked at:

- “The Supremacy of Christ.”
- “The Supreme Work of Christ.”
- “The Supreme Responsibility of Believers.”
- “The Supreme Ministry of Paul.”
- But now, we will see, “The Supreme Struggle of Paul.”

SCRIPTURE: **Colossians 2:1-5**

- ❖ **2:1-5:** “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.”

1. What did Paul undergo?

- ❖ **Colossians 2:1,** “For I want you to know *how great a struggle I have* for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face.”

The word “struggle” in Greek is *agon*, from which we get the word “agony.” It was used of Greek athletes in the Olympic games agonizing and wrestling to win the prize.

Paul struggled for the believers in Colossae, Laodicea, and for all who have not seen him face to face. He might have struggled for these believers in concern, in prayer and in encouragement.

- We may complain of our “struggles” but do we *struggle* for others’ welfare?
- Real pastoral ministry is a ministry with *struggle*. No struggle? Then a pastor is cold in his heart.

2. For what did Paul struggle?

- ❖ **Colossians 2:2-3,** “*that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*” We will dwell on this later.

3. Why did Paul struggle?

- ❖ **Colossians 2:4-5**, “I say this in order that *no one may delude you with plausible arguments*. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.”
- Paul was concerned that these believers would not be deceived by clever and impressive speech by the false teachers. He longed and delighted to see them living a well-ordered Christian life according to God’s will and stand firm in their faith in Christ, because this is what was assaulted.
- A pastor’s great delight is to see his people living an orderly Christian life and having an unwavering faith in Christ.

2. Coming back to—for what did Paul struggle?

- ❖ **Colossians 2:2-3**, “*that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love...*”
- A. “That their hearts may be encouraged.” “Encouragement” here speaks about “strength” than about “comfort.” There are two things that often rob the strength from believers and weaken the faith:
 - a. False teachings
 - b. Trials and temptations

Application: Be strong and courageous when you face these challenges.

- B. “being knit together in love,”
 - Be united in love for one another. This is God’s and His shepherds greatest desire for His people.
 - One essential way you and I would be safe when we face the challenge of false teachings and trials is in a loving community. We need each other to withstand such challenges.

Now, what is the result of this?

- ❖ Colossians 2:2-3, “that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, **to reach** (so that, NIV) all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

F. F. Bruce comments: “Paul emphasizes that the revelation of God cannot be properly known apart from the cultivation of brotherly love within the Christian community.”

Kent Hughes: This is an important message for an alive Christianity. No intellectual process will lead to a full grasp of the mystery of Christ unless it is accompanied by a love for him and for Christians that knits us, the Church, together in love. We cannot pursue knowledge of God in willful, unloving isolation, rejecting

fellowship with others. Historically, some have tried and have suffered incomplete or even distorted understanding. "Complete" understanding of the mystery comes in loving community.

Note: All great men of God were not just preachers and teachers. They were also great lovers of people. They knew God better because they loved people better.

❖ **1 John 4:8**, "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

How loving one another is connected to knowing God? When we love one another, we experience God who is love.

❖ **Colossians 2:2-3**, "To reach *all the riches of full assurance* of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Observe: There is a difference between have the knowledge of God and having all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ. The former is information, and the latter becomes a reality in one's life.

Jonathan Edwards: "There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. . . . So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance."

▼ **God's Mystery, which is Christ:**

Another observation: Colossians 2:2-3, "To reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of *God's mystery, which is Christ*, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

a. To unbelievers: Many have no problem with the word "God". They want to "seek God", "know God", "experience God." But, when the Lord Jesus' name is presented, there comes the reaction. In fact, no one can know God without knowing Christ Jesus. Christ is the knowledge of God's mystery. He is God's face.

❖ **John 14:8-9**, "Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

❖ **1 John 2:23**, "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also."

b. To believers: Many believers see Christ Jesus as a means, not as an end of all things.

Through Christ, there is peace. But,

❖ **Ephesians 2:14**, "For he himself is our peace."

Through Christ, there is eternal life. But,

- ❖ **1 John 1:2**, “the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.”

Through Christ, there is power. But,

- ❖ **1 Corinthians 1:24**, “Christ the power of God.”

Through Christ, there is righteousness and sanctification. But,

- ❖ **1 Corinthians 1:30**, “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,”

Through Christ, there is wisdom and knowledge. But,

- ❖ **Colossians 2:2-3**, “Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Christ is everything, God’s mystery. But this doesn’t mean Christ is a mystical being (abstract being) and we have to know Him through mystical experience (yoga, eastern meditation). Christ is the historical person and He is now revealed to us by the Holy Spirit essentially through:

a. **The Holy Scripture.**

- ❖ **John 5:39**, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,” (NIV)
 - For this reason, we must study His Word and see His glory in His Word.
 - **Jerome (2nd century) emphatically said**, “Ignorance of Holy Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”

b. **Obedience to His commandments.**

- ❖ **John 14:21**, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”
 - For this reason, we must do what Christ says.

c. **The Community, His church.**

- ❖ **Colossians 2:2-3**, “My goal 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, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (NIV)
 - For this reason, we have to knit together as His community and love one another.