

Colossians: Jesus Our Rock**Colossians 1:24-2:7**

The story so far. Growing in the Christian life is about understanding and relying on what God has done for us in Christ.

We can be confident in Jesus because of who He is—the full image of God—and what He has done—dying to reconcile a rebellious world to God.

The Big Idea. Because Jesus is fully God and His victory is total, it is fruitless and foolish to move on from him—instead we should grow deeper roots in Him.

Summary. Paul was prepared to suffer in order to proclaim Christ because it meant building up His body (the church). For Paul, the real privilege was to explain the wonders of God's purposes to the non-Jewish (Gentile) world: namely, that a Jewish Messiah (or King) was in fact the ruler of the universe. Jesus is the focal point for all Christian ministry. Even though such ministry brings hardships, Paul is confident that God is at work in him, providing all energy he needs to carry out his ministry.

The threat to the Colossian's faith is what particularly provokes Paul to write this letter. There are those who undermine Jesus' finished work by saying that a believer needs to supplement what Christ has done, perhaps through wisdom that is to be found elsewhere (compare **2:3-4**). But such people are deceived by their "fine-sounding arguments." The heart of Paul's message is, therefore, in **2:6-7**—don't move on from Christ, go deeper into Christ.

Talk about: What things, if any, shake or try to shake your confidence as a Christian?

Paul endured a great deal in his life—including insults, beatings, and imprisonments—all for preaching Jesus.

Investigate: Read Colossians 1:24-29.

1. What enabled Paul to persevere and even rejoice in the midst of his suffering?

In no sense did Paul enjoy suffering, nor did he rejoice at the fact of other people suffering. Paul rejoiced in that he was found worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ. **2 Corinthians 4, 11, and 12** list some things that Paul suffered through. Suffering is part of the Christian discipleship, but joy is to be found in the *perspective* and *purpose* that Christ gives suffering. It is used for the furtherance of the gospel, to display the power and the grace of God and for one to partake of the suffering of Christ. Paul also considered his suffering as taking up (fill up) that which was lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

2. A “mystery” in the Bible is not something strange or spooky. Instead, it is something that was secret but is now out in the open and public. The mystery mentioned in **Colossians 1:26** is that the believing Gentiles will be united with the believing Jews in Christ. He is the hope of glory for both. This is remarkable because for centuries Gentiles were counted out because they were not the seed of Abraham.
3. The Church is Christ’s body—God’s agent on earth. He is the one suffering through its suffering (**Acts 9:4**), and God is the one to commission the preaching of the gospel. It is His mystery that was hidden, and it is now disclosed by Him. God is the one working powerfully within His agents as they proclaim Christ.
 - Paul’s part: In the light of that, Paul and all who follow him in Christian ministry are merely servants, who seek to present the word faithfully and its fullness (**v. 25**), and must be prepared to suffer for it (**v. 24**).
 - The goal is for people to be presented perfect in Christ (**1:28**)—it is disciples that God seeks, not merely converts.
4. Those who feel intimidated by how non-Christians respond to their Christian faith, may naturally experience some fear. However, we are called to follow Jesus and we should expect some of the things that Jesus experienced. Jesus endured and we should also. He never abandons us and is always with us. Paul states in **v. 29** that Christ’s power and energy works within him. Christ also works through the believers today.
5. As Christians we have both the privilege of “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” (**v. 27**), and the privilege of Christians being in Christ (**v. 28**). There is a strong sense of security and confidence in both truths. We have these in the present, but for the future Christ is our “hope of glory.” This is no pipe-dream, but the confident hope we have because it is based on God’s promises.

Explore More. Read Acts 16:16-34. Here we see Paul living out what he taught the Colossians. For the preaching of the gospel and casting out a demon, Paul was arrested, beaten and thrown in prison. And even after all the suffering, he still witnessed to his jailer and his household. Paul and Silas endured the suffering with joy as they sang hymns while even in the stocks.

Investigate: Read Colossians 2:1-7.

1. Paul's ministry for the Colossians reached over long distances even though he never met them. Paul is struggling in devoted prayer for them as well as writing this letter. Paul is struggling for them by contending for the gospel. This can encourage Christians everywhere (**1:23**).

Paul's message is one that offers "the full riches of complete understanding", and "all the treasures of wisdom" (**2:2-3**). Just as he did in chapter 1, Paul emphasizes the truth that the gospel of Jesus provides everything we need for life with God.

2. It's important for Christians to know what they have in Christ so that they will not be enticed to follow false teaching or be easily deceived. Some may offer to supplement Christ with their own ways of thinking or living which offer an easier life, or giving room for our own pride. We don't need to add to what Christ offers us.
3. Let's look at Paul's advice to both the Colossians and you and I in **Col. 2:6-7**. We need to stick with Christ. There is always room to grow. There is also a need to express thanksgiving.

Apply:

1. How can we be deceived into thinking that the message of Jesus is not enough for us?
 - We can be deceived by people pointing out what we struggle with or are dissatisfied with in our Christian life and pointing out a "better way." A "better way" to overcome our problem(s) that don't follow the teachings of Christ. Maybe they even point us to other religions!

2. Why is it important to overflow with thanksgiving?

- Gratitude is not just a good thing; it is a Christian discipline. When we start to look for things to be thankful to God for, we will always find more than enough in Jesus. It is something we should do even if we are not “feeling thankful”. It strengthens us against those who would deceive us into thinking we need more than Jesus.

Pray:

Thank God for the ways in which Jesus has been enough for you this week.

Ask God to help you continue to live in Christ and to see through fine-sounding arguments.

Homework: Jesus Our Fullness. Read **Colossians 2:8-23**