



# DIGGING DEEPER

Colossians 1:24 – 2:5 – **Gospel labour**

**PLEASE READ** – Colossians 1:24 – 2:5

## GETTING STARTED

Check through Colossians 1 and 2, noting how many times the words “all” or “every” (probably the same word in the Greek that Paul wrote) and “fulness” appear. Using those words (and, of course, “Jesus”), can you come up with a short summary of this section of the letter?

If your summary is maybe sounding a bit theoretical, what does it mean in terms of everyday living as a believer in Jesus?

## A possible confusion (1:24)

Remember, it is fair – and *not* unspiritual – to admit that a verse or passage like this does seem odd or problematical. So ... does this verse teach that there is something lacking in what we normally call “the finished work of Christ”?

- That would contradict something Paul had said only a few lines earlier (19-20) – so it's not likely to mean that.
- Paul is saying that his various sufferings and privations *in some way* serve other believers.
- He is (literally) “filling up what comes after” Christ's sufferings. Jesus' sufferings proclaim “It is finished!” (John 19:30); Paul's sufferings proclaim “It is worth it!” – or *He* is worth it. It's part of ...

## The costliness of ministry (1:24,29)

Think of a husband willingly risking all to protect his wife and family, or parents their children. Or think of the work that a parent will put in in order to raise their children and provide for their needs. Similarly, Paul *rejoices* in his sufferings, seeing such a purpose.

How far are we willing to put ourselves out for the sake of Jesus – or his people?

## The unveiling of the mystery (1:25-27)

Various of the promised blessings in Christ are rolled together into one emotive word: *glory*.

Wonderful words, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” – but what do they mean in practical and day-to-day Christian living?

## The objective of maturity (1:28 – 2:5)

“Christ in you” doesn't mean that the work is complete, though. Rather it signals the start of a long process of sometimes painful revolution. Proclaiming Christ means insisting upon his Lordship over our thinking and our lifestyles – so we (everyone!) must expect to be taught, and we must expect to be challenged.

- Are you teachable? Are you open to challenge? Honestly?

Paul considers that recognition of his hard work (Greek *agona*) should lead the Colossians to realise the reality of his concern for them - but not for the sake of his own reputation, or to boost their own self-image. Rather it is so that they would then agree that they most need, as Paul says, a living relationship with Jesus Christ. So ...

- How fully you would say you are **focused on Jesus Christ**?

Error, Paul warns us, can be very subtle, very beguiling, very seductive. But Paul is delighted that *so far*, at least, their defences (v5's terms have a military nuance) have remained secure. So ...

- In terms of your **faith in Jesus Christ**,

What arguments do *you* find yourself most susceptible to?

What would it be wise to do, to shore up your defences?

Who do you need to do it? Can you ask?

- **Following Jesus Christ** – come back for the next in this series, next week!

**If you have some spare time, give thanks for what you've learned or re-learned today about that amazing privilege: “Christ in you, the hope of glory”.**