

# Hidden Treasures

Colossians 1:24 – 2:5



## The Mystery

❑ Read Colossians 1:24-2:5. “The mystery” is mentioned three times in this passage (1:26, 27; 2:2). In Paul’s writings, “mystery” refers to aspects of God’s eternal plan that were previously hidden but have now been revealed.<sup>1</sup>

1. What is “the mystery” in this passage? (1:27; 2:2)<sup>2</sup>

## Paul’s Struggles

❑ In verse 24, Paul talks about the joy of sharing in Christ’s sufferings.<sup>3</sup> Paul also says he labors and struggles in his ministry (1:29; 2:1).

2. Why does Paul labor and struggle? What motivates him? What are his goals? (1:25, 28; 2:2)<sup>4</sup>

❑ Paul works hard to proclaim Jesus Christ (1:28-29). Why?

- So that he may present believers “perfect in Christ” (fully mature in their faith) (1:28).
- So that they may “be encouraged in heart and united in love” (2:2a).
- So that they may “have the full riches of complete understanding” (2:2b).
- So that they may “know the mystery of God, namely Christ” (2:2c).

❑ While Paul must work hard, he does not rely on his own strength. He labors with “all [Christ’s] energy which so powerfully works in [him]” (1:29).

3. As Christians, in what ways should our labor be like Paul’s labor?<sup>5</sup> What can we learn from Paul’s example? How does his example apply to us?



<sup>1</sup> Paul also talks about “mystery” (*mystērion*) in Romans 16:25-26 and Ephesians 1:9-10; 3:3-11. Paul’s use of the term contrasts with pagan religious usage, which refers to secret knowledge available only to an exclusive group of people.

<sup>2</sup> “The mystery” is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27). Through the gospel, all people (including Gentiles) who receive Christ are united with him; and become part of God’s family and participants in God’s promises and blessings.

<sup>3</sup> “I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking...” does not mean that Christ’s atoning death was inadequate. His suffering and death were entirely sufficient! However, there is a sense in which Christ’s suffering continues in “his body – the church” (Acts 9:4). Christ’s followers share in his sufferings (Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 1:5; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 4:12-13). The New Living Translation (NLT) translates verse 24, “I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue in his body, the church.”

<sup>4</sup> Paul works in response to God’s commission to serve as an apostle (1:25). Struggle is needed because of challenges, resistance, and opposition. Paul’s goals are seen in 1:28 and 2:2. He also wants to help them resist false teaching (2:4).

<sup>5</sup> We may not be apostles, or even teachers, but we are all called to serve Christ. We will face challenges, resistance and opposition (both external and internal), so we must “struggle”, relying on God’s strength. God’s love and purposes should motivate us! We should commit to encourage others, and to promote love and a deeper knowledge of Christ.

## Hidden Treasures

4. “Treasure hunters” search for “treasures” – stored-up things that are precious or valuable. To some degree, we are all “treasure hunters”. What kinds of “treasures” do we search for? What methods do we use to find them? How often are we successful in finding them?



- Read Proverbs 2:1-6. In this passage, the “treasure” consists of understanding, knowledge and wisdom. In particular, it involves understanding “the fear of the LORD,”<sup>6</sup> having the knowledge of God, and having the wisdom that comes from the LORD (2:5-6). We are to seek these things as if we were searching for “hidden treasure” (2:4).

5. According to Colossians 2:2-3, where can we find this “hidden treasure”?

- “All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are hidden in Christ. He is the “place” where the treasures are found. The “place” is not secret, but has been revealed in the gospel.

6. Does this mean we stop pursuing the “treasures” when we become followers of Christ? Explain.<sup>7</sup>

- Paul labors and struggles so that others would experience the “riches” and “treasures” found in Christ (2:2-3). He shows them (and us) the way to the place of treasure. By doing this, Paul helps the Colossians (and us) avoid being misled by those whose “treasure maps” lead in the wrong direction, despite their “fine-sounding arguments”<sup>8</sup> (2:4).



## Reflection/Application

- What “treasures” are you searching for? Are you searching for answers to questions about the meaning of life, fulfillment, purpose, love, peace, joy, and hope? The Bible says that “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are found in Jesus Christ. Are you looking there?
- If you are a Christian, in what ways are you continuing to pursue the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ? What do you need to do?
- Paul had an intense desire to see others experience all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ. To that end, he “labored” and “struggled”, always relying on God’s power. Do you share Paul’s concern for others? In what ways is your concern evident in your daily life? What changes are needed in your life?

<sup>6</sup> “the fear of the LORD” is acknowledgment of who God is, accompanied by a right attitude toward Him.

<sup>7</sup> Paul is writing to believers (1:2). He struggles for them (and others) so that they may grow in their knowledge and maturity (1:28, 2:2). There are “riches” and “treasures” yet to be experienced. Believers (including Paul) must continue to pursue the knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 1:17-18; Philippians 3:10; 2 Peter 3:17-18). We continue to pursue “treasures” through responsive Bible reading and study, prayer, fellowship, and “walking with Christ” in our daily lives.

<sup>8</sup> “fine-sounding arguments” (*pithanologia*) – “plausible arguments” (ESV); “persuasive arguments” (NASB). The word is generally neutral but the context demands a negative meaning here.