

# Colossians 1:24-2:5

## *Paul's Ministry of Joy and Suffering*

It is easy to question our purpose and, at times difficult, to find motivation to get up each morning. Paul knows his purpose and is willing to suffer to accomplish all that God has called him to do. In Colossians 1:24-29 we find a single long and complicated sentence that Paul uses to explain his purpose, willingness to suffer, and the joy of his mysterious message.

1:24 – How is it possible that Paul can rejoice in sufferings?

Have you ever gone through something extremely difficult (even painful) knowing that the end result was worth the discomfort and pain? Where did you find the motivation and energy to push through?

In this life, our suffering has purpose. It can be used for our growth in faith and hope. Suffering can also result from the diligent use of our gifts and skills for the sake of Christ and the growth of His church. How can we protect ourselves from losing joy and hope while we suffer?

1:24 - Douglas Moo helps us understand this confusing phrase: “Paul is not, of course, suggesting that the redemptive suffering of Christ requires any supplementation. As 1:19-20 and 2:15 in this letter make clear (quite apart from the evidence of other Pauline letters), Paul is convinced that Christ’s death on the cross is completely and finally capable of taking care of the human sin problem. It is not that there is anything lacking ‘in’ the atoning suffering of Christ but that there is something lacking ‘in regard to’ the tribulations that pertain to Christ as the Messiah as he is proclaimed in the world. The difference may even be suggested in the vocabulary that Paul uses, since he shifts from ‘sufferings’ (Greek *pathema*) to ‘afflictions’ (*thlipsis*), this latter word never being used in the New Testament for Christ’s redemptive sufferings” (Moo, 151).

1:25 – How would you describe Paul’s ministry? How has God gifted/skilled you to minister to others? Are you willing to go through discomfort and hardship to use these gifts and skills?

1:26 – In what way was the inclusion of the Gentiles and the coming of Christ mysterious? Do we see any hints of these things in the Old Testament? Where?

1:27 – Most of the Pauline epistles speak of us being “in Christ,” here Paul speaks of “Christ in you.” From the reality of Christ’s presence in our lives springs forth our “hope of glory.” Where else in Colossians, up to this point, has Paul referred to “hope”?

Paul is creating a theme of “hope” here in this first chapter of Colossians (1:5; 1:23; 1:27). How do we increase and grow in our hope? How does this hope inform us and change us on a day by day basis?

How can we help each other increase in hope (as Paul was trying to do for the Colossians)?

1:25-29 – What is the role of God’s Word in Paul’s ministry?

How important should the Word be in our own lives and ministries? What is your next step in growing in your study and knowledge of God’s Word?

1:28-29 – What does Paul do in order to present every man complete (fully mature) in Christ?

How much effort does Paul put into this ministry? How do we both “labor and strive” while also living, moving, and ministering “according to His power”?

How do we live out 1 Peter 4:11?

What is the scope of Paul’s mission? What does it say about a person or a church who does not seek to admonish and teach “every” man (regardless of race, status, or success)?

What happens if we only honor parts of God’s Word and not all of God’s Word?

2:1-5 – Paul returns to the “struggle” that is necessary for encouraging their hearts and growing their faith. One of the results of Paul’s ministry is that the Colossians would have a “full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself.” The rest of chapter 2 will address false teachings. Paul clearly communicates here that all they need to know, in order to grow in spiritual maturity, is Jesus and His redeeming work communicated in the Word.

What are things that Christians tend to add to God’s Word to attempt to increase their level of perceived maturity? How does God measure maturity?

What is the danger of not having a solid working knowledge of God’s Word (2:4)? How are you protecting your family and friends from being drawn away from Christ?

From this section of Scripture (1:24-2:5), what expectations should we have as we try to share and teach the Word?

Does your purpose in life need some work? How can you live in a way that has a greater impact on others? Where does God’s Word need to be preached and taught into your life and into the lives of those around you?

Are you willing to put in the time and energy needed to accurately understand and teach God’s Word? What is your next step? How could you better use your time and resources toward this end?

Take the time to share your next steps with your group or with a friend. Even now, spend some time in prayer asking God to move in and through you as we seek together “to teach every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (1:28).