

COLOSSIANS 1:24 – 2:5: Revealing the Mystery

This is what I want for you ...

- * In a world in which DISCOURAGEMENT is never far away, Paul's hope is that they be EN-COURAGED.
 - * KNIT TOGETHER: UNITED in spirit.
 - * In LOVE = AGAPE.
 - * To have complete CONFIDENCE to understand what Paul describes as the MYSTERY of God.
- *Do you consider yourself to be encouraged or discouraged in your Christian faith? If so, why, and what has contributed to the encouragement or discouragement? Who do know who's a great encourager and what do they do?*
- *Why is 'knit together' so crucial? What sorts of behaviours in church life work against that sense of unity? How can we all work to promote, maintain and guard it? Read Psalm 133 and discuss what it promises.*

MYSTERY

- * In the Bible, mystery is a TRUTH that stays HIDDEN until God REVEALS it (v26,27).
 - * The Jews had CLUES, knew they needed RESCUING and that a MESSIAH had been promised, but other than that, it was all a MYSTERY (Rom 16:25-26, Col 4:3).
 - * But now God has OPENED your EYES, UNCOVERED the MYSTERY and REVEALED to you JESUS.
 - * For Saul of Tarsus, God literally knocked him off his HIGH HORSE and while his NATURAL EYES were blinded, his SPIRITUAL EYES were dramatically opened.
- *What other Old Testament 'clues' can you think of, 'mysteries' that point to Jesus? Why was it that so many of the religious Jews couldn't see it? Is there a danger that any of those reasons also keep us from seeing the truth?*
- *Read the story of Jesus on the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24 and see how powerfully and beautifully the mystery was revealed in that account?*
- *Why do people like to have and guard their mysteries? Is it mystery that actually empowers or the unveiling?*

THREE THINGS WE LEARN HERE ABOUT THE 'MYSTERY'

1. The mystery is CHRIST HIMSELF (2:2-3)
 - * St Augustine: "The NEW is in the OLD CONCEALED; the OLD is in the NEW REVEALED."
- *Was St Augustine right? What does his saying mean and how does it help us to understand and interpret scripture?*

2. The riches & glory of Christ are for the GENTILES too (1:27)
 - * The Gentiles were regarded by the religious Jews as OUTSIDERS, UNCLEAN, ALIENS.
 - * But God loved them as HIS OWN CHILDREN too, with just the same need for RESCUING & RECONCILING.
 - * The Jews should have SEEN THIS COMING but they didn't. To them it was a MYSTERY (Col 3:11, Rom 10:11-13, Eph 1:9-10).

→ *Why couldn't the Jews see it? Why were their eyes bolted so firmly shut? In the Old Testament, should faith & relationship with God have been exclusively for the Jews, & why did they increasingly make it seem that way?*
3. Christ IS IN YOU (1:27)
 - * The mystery = The HOLY SPIRIT comes to DWELL IN YOU at the moment of salvation.
 - * Because Christ is in us, we can ALL have the HOPE that we will see the GLORY of the King.
 - * The Good News: When people SEE the glory of the King, they'll come RUNNING.

→ *Read the account of Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3 through the lens of mystery. Why didn't Nicodemus see it (at least at that stage) and what do you think caused him to 'get it' later on?*

→ *What do we mean by 'the glory?' How does God display it TO his people and THROUGH his children?*

PAUL'S MANDATE (1:28-29)

LABOURING to present you PERFECT in Christ.

- * MATURE: No longer a CHILD, but an ADULT in the faith.
 - * But note that in Paul's contending, the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT is the ENABLING STRENGTH for service.
- *How do you become 'mature?' What are the signs of maturity and, indeed, what are the signs of immaturity (carnality)? What are you intentionally concentrating on right now in pursuit of greater maturity?*

APPLICATIONS

1. It must be CENTRED on JESUS if you want it to be free from DECEPTION.
→ *What does it mean to look at everything through the lens of Jesus? How do you do so and what are the benefits?*
2. Don't be SURPRISED the Gospel is a MYSTERY to the WORLD (2 Cor 4:4).
→ *Why is the Gospel so mysterious to them when it seems so obvious to us? How does what Paul says in 2 Cor 4 help?*
3. Paul LOVED the CHURCH and SO SHOULD WE.
→ *How should we 'love' the church? How are you nurturing, promoting, encouraging and serving Christ's body right now?*