

Colossians Study – Part 6

Colossians 1:24-29 (KJV)

- 24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:
25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;
26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:
27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:
28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:
29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

This passage in Colossians puts before us one of the most important aspects of our calling today and it is impossible for us to recognize this calling apart from the teaching of Paul.

Much of this message from Paul is overlooked by Christianity and much of this is ignored by lumping it in with what has been promised to Israel. The fact that Christians overlook this calling is a sad thing because God has given to us, as the body of Christ, a unique calling and unforeseen ministry in the world.

Starting with verse 24, Paul is explaining the suffering he personally endured that was told to him by God when he was converted on the road to Damascus. God said to Paul that he would suffer some things for my sake which he is now referring to in verse 24.

In 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 Paul is speaking about the suffering he has endured in his walk...

2 Corinthians 11:23-27(KJV)

- 23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.
24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.
25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;
26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;
27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

We see in Acts 28:20 that all the suffering he has received up to this point had been for the nation of Israel

Colossians Study – Part 6

Acts 28:20 (KJV)

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

From the time Paul was converted in Acts 9 through Acts 28, he had suffered many things for the hope of Israel... but that suffering changed at the close of Acts because Paul was given a special ministry that was hidden in God, before the foundation of the world. In Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, Philemon, 1 & 2 Timothy, Paul was acting only for the body of Christ to propagate the Mystery as is referenced in Colossians 1:25.

Near the end of this ministry, Paul said that all those in Asia had turned away from this ministry which is similar to what Christianity has done today with Paul's message.

2 Timothy 1:15 (KJV)

15 This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

Let's take a look at what this ministry is...

Colossians 1:24-25 (KJV)

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

There are four points to call out from verse 25:

1. Paul's ministry as a minister
2. A dispensation of God was given specifically to Paul
3. This Dispensation was given to Paul for you
4. This message completed the Word of God

First of all, Paul was made a minister of a particular ministry which God had specifically given to him. The word "dispensation" tells of a period in which God has a ministry that is delivered by a minister and people are accountable to how they respond to that message.

There are several theories on how many dispensations are in the Bible, but the most important aspect of a dispensation is that there is a time of obedience or testing to the calling that God has given and then the determination of faithfulness or unfaithfulness.

Colossians Study – Part 6

For example, Adam was in a dispensation of innocence and he was given instructions to keep the garden. Adam was unfaithful to his calling and then came judgment and the end of the dispensation of innocence.

What we do know of this dispensation was that it was given to Paul, the minister of the Church of the body of Christ, for the gentiles (not Israel) and this includes you.

This is stated in Ephesians 3:1-11

Ephesians 3:1-11 (KJV)

- 1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
- 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:
- 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,
- 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
- 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
- 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:
- 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.
- 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
- 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:
- 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,
- 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

Back in Colossians 1:25, Paul declares that this message has made the Word of God complete! The word “fulfill” means to fill to the full the Word of God which means there is nothing more to be added to it. There is no more of the God’s word to be added because Paul was the last minister of the Word of God.

Paul completed his task by preaching the dispensation that was given to him... as he said in verse 23...

Colossians 1:23 (KJV)

- 23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

Colossians Study – Part 6

And also in 2 Timothy 4:17...

2 Timothy 4:14-18 (KJV)

- 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:
- 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.
- 16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.
- 17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.
- 18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

So what is this dispensation that Paul was given to preach to the Gentiles? Paul calls it “The Mystery”.

Colossians 1:26 (KJV)

- 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

This is not “the mysteries of God” that Paul had been made a minister of in Corinthians where he stated it is required of stewards to be found faithful...

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 (KJV)

- 1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- 2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

During the timeframe of Corinthians, Paul was a minister to the circumcision and the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

2 Corinthians 3:6 (KJV)

- 6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

The words “new testament” means “new covenant” which is specifically given to Israel as stated in Jeremiah 31:31 and Hebrews 8:8

Jeremiah 31:31 (KJV)

- 31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Colossians Study – Part 6

Hebrews 8:8 (KJV)

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Paul further declares the ministry of the new covenant in 2 Corinthians 4:1

2 Corinthians 4:1 (KJV)

1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

Now back in Colossians, we have the ministry of The Mystery not the ministry of the New Covenant. The Mystery is a body of truth that speaks to the fullness of Christ and who He is.

There are many particular things about The Mystery...

Colossians 1:26 (KJV)

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

The Mystery had been hidden from Ages... and from Generations... this means that you cannot find anything about The Mystery in scripture until it was revealed by Paul in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. There is no person that knew of anything about this calling until Paul was told to speak it.

Now the testimony that Paul had during the Acts period is easily found in the Old Testament. Some of it was hidden in scripture and hushed up until it was to be revealed at the proper time but this is not so with The Mystery.

The Mystery is not one bit part of the Old Testament teaching. It is not part of the Gospels, nor is it one bit part of the Acts teaching. The Mystery was hidden in God before the foundation of the world and only revealed when Paul was given this body of truth after the close of Acts.

Colossians 1:26 (KJV)

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

“But now” in verse 26 doesn’t mean back at the cross, not Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, not Acts 9, or 13, but now after the close of Acts when Israel is set aside. This is made manifest now to the saints who are the believers in Christ.

Colossians 1:27 (KJV)

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Colossians Study – Part 6

Paul declares this mystery among the gentiles involves Christ in you. Not the New Covenant or anything promised to Israel, but Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Verse 27 talks about the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles. Prior to the close of Acts, the gentiles had no Christ, they had no Messiah, and they had no hope, the only thing they did have was to lay their hope in Israel. Just because they had received Christ during the Acts period, they still did not have any covenant relationship to God but through Israel.

Ephesians 2:11-12 (KJV)

- 11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
- 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

Now back in Colossians, Paul continues to point out that the Gentiles now have a unique relationship with Christ for the first time...

Colossians 1:27 (KJV)

- 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

We have the promises of Christ, not hanging on the coat tails of Abraham, but rather a direct relationship to God since Christ is among the gentiles.

Ephesians 3:6 (KJV)

- 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

For the first time in scripture, the Gentiles are directly addressed by God with a hope.

Colossians 1:28 (KJV)

- 28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:
- 29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

The idea that Paul is stating in verse 28 is to present every man with a full maturity in Christ. Chapter 2 ends with Paul expressing his labor towards this end, to make all saints realize what they now have in Christ.

Colossians Study – Part 6

Want to know more about the Mystery? Be sure and check out all of the lessons found on www.rightdivision.com

You will find messages about your calling today at:

http://www.rightdivision.com/html/your_calling.html

You will find charts that help explain the changes in dispensations here:

<http://www.rightdivision.com/html/charts.html>

The mystery is often called the hidden purpose of God in contrast to His revealed plan that involved Israel. The big chart that shows the Overview of God's Revealed Plan and Hidden Purpose in the Ages and a table that shows Some Differences Between God's Revealed Plan and Hidden Purpose are invaluable to help clarify the differences.

You will find these resources here:

http://www.rightdivision.com/html/overview_of_the_ages.html

http://www.rightdivision.com/html/revealed_vs_hidden_purpose.html

There is a chart provided by Mike Penny of the Open Bible Trust to help identify some of the dispensational differences in the New Testament between the Gospels, Acts Period Books, and Post Acts Books.

http://www.rightdivision.com/html/progressive_rev_chart.html