

Review: You remember that the Colossian church was in a worldly, pagan community, and the influences of Pre-gnostic philosophies and Jewish legalism were strong. Paul would have the church look to Jesus Christ. There were good and sufficient reasons for this:

1. We have been "made fit" to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: in heaven.
2. This came because we have been translated--made to stand out of one kingdom into another one. vs. 13. This kingdom is the kingdom of Jesus Christ.
3. This translation is because of the blood of Christ: We were held by means of guilt. We will see more of this in a minute.
4. Because Jesus is the image of the invisible God: he is over all authorities and powers.  
verse 17-19 sets forth the excellences of Jesus Christ.
5. All fullness--This is a word used a bit by the Apostle Paul, so that we might look nowhere else for complete salvation: all fullness dwells in Him. Not in angels, not in subordinate powers, certainly no in our own hearts. The fullness is in Christ, and those who would draw men off from Christ, no matter what the pretense, are enemies to their faith.  
Col. 2:9: "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."  
Col. 2:3: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."  
John 1:16: "And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace."  
John 5:20: All things have been conferred upon the Son, that we nowhere else for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: I Cor. 1:30
6. Jesus Christ has solved the problem of guilt, so that we might be restored to fellowship with God. vs. 20---This peace is found only in the Gospel of Christ, and it is there alone that we have hope. Others would move them away from this hope in Christ: to the law, or to the pre-gnostic hidden mysteries. Paul said they must be firmly rooted and grounded in the Gospel, for that is where there hope is.

But let us look at the words, as Paul continues his message to the Colossians:

- I. vs. 24. What is the relation of the sufferings of Paul for the church? This is a difficult question, but must be answered.
  - A. There are several ways to look at this, some of them wrong.
    1. The Roman Catholic way: Paul's sufferings were not meritorious. Works of supererogation. This must be rejected because it would contradict what Paul has said concerning the complete and finished work of Christ. Hence, the importance of reason.
    2. Sufferings of Christ = What Christ requires, or what Christ has commanded. This is an awkward and improper use of the genitive: "Of Christ." Paul's sufferings are called the "sufferings of Christ." Christ is suffering in Paul.
    3. What could this mean: the proper meaning: Paul is united to Christ, and his work is the work of Christ. Christ is ministering to the church through Paul: preaching through Paul, praying through Paul, suffering through Paul.
  - B. "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake." "Paul, Paul, why do you persecute me" What a beautiful turn of the phrase here. Paul was persecuting Christ in the Church; now Christ is building the church, through Paul. Paul's sufferings are ministerial, not actual or meritorious.
  - C. "What is wanting" It is God's predestined purpose for the Colossians to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. (Romans 8) God has ordained the means, and that included Paul's labors among them as the minister of Christ. Your sufferings may be for the purpose of building up somebody else in the faith: no pain, no gain.

- D. The sufferings of Christ in Paul are not the ground in any way for the justification of the church--they are not works of the sacrificial lamb, but they are the works of the Minister of Christ, who labors to bring the sheep to the fold, to receive the benefits of redemption.
- II. vs. 25. Paul reaffirms that he (Paul) had been made a minister of Jesus Christ. He was a steward in the household of God, and his ministry in that household is "to fulfill the word of God."
- A. What does it mean to "fulfill" the word of God. "To fill it up--to preach all of it, to bring out all the meaning of the Gospel: and to bring them to obedience. I think that Calvin is a little barren here: that the preaching itself is fulfilling the word, yet, the fruit that appears is its fulfilling. I think that Paul would have used another word: "to perfect" having to do with the purpose of the preaching: rather than the one he did use: to fill it up.
- B. Matthew Henry: "fully to preach it." Declare the whole counsel of God, with all its implications. To exhaust the text. To see it in its relationship to other Scripture; to draw out the applications for the modern world, and the lives of the believers. This is the proper role of reason. To place the scripture in the context of other Scripture: that's why we say that Paul could not be suffering for the church in terms of works of supererogation: because we want to fully preach the word of God, not be drawn aside into misapplication and contradiction.
- C. Hendriksen: "to give full scope to the word of God." What a tremendous treasure has been given to us
- III. vs. 26-27. The mystery has been revealed.
- A. It was hidden in all ages.
- B. But now it has been revealed: it is not occult. "occult" means "hidden." There are no hidden mysteries. See 2 Cor. 4:3. It is hid only to those who are lost. To every man's conscience in the sight of God. Paul preached to the conscience of men.
- C. "manifestation of the truth" uncover, lay bare, reveal. II Cor. 3:3: laid bare that they are the servants of Christ. We have no secret knowledge. Christianity is not a secret: declare it on the housetops, Jesus said.
- D. It is very rich: full of glory. Hallelujah! Amen and Amen!!!!
- E. What is the mystery: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."
1. Christ is in us by the Gospel: the doctrine of Christ, the Gospel. We receive Christ, when receive His word. His word is in us, we have received and believed the truth.
  2. Christ is the hope of glory: All our hopes are in Him: Amen and Amen.
  3. Christ is in us
    - a) Collectively: The gospel is preaching to the Gentiles, as the Scriptures had said.
    - b) Personally and subjectively:
      - by faith: Ephesians 3:9-17: Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. This is a parallel passage.
      - by His works: just as Paul's sufferings were the sufferings of Christ.
      - by His Spirit.
- IV. vs. 28,29 The labor of the ministry: the hard work of the ministry.
- A. In all wisdom: there was nothing lacking in Paul's ministry: it was a full gospel. But all wisdom is in Christ: Paul would warn them of being transported from Christ.
- B. This is a strenuous labor: the labor of an athlete: but there is also the working of Christ in Him. He works, and Christ works. See Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 2:12,13. We can work because Christ works in us.

Preaching is hard work; not just in the preparation and delivery of sermons: but in the trials we are called to in order to prepare us spiritually and mentally for the task. Do not think that the true ministry is as easy road:

it will be the most difficult thing you have ever set yourself to, if you try to do it as the true servant of Jesus Christ. Make sure of your call; and be prepared for the hard work of preparation and trials.

May God bless you.