

# The MYSTERY

Hidden for Ages

## Is Now REVEALED

*A Study of the Book of Colossians*

LESSON 2

This Week's Passage:

### **Colossians 1:6b-8 and 4:12-13**

New International Version (NIV)

**In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. <sup>7</sup> You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, <sup>8</sup> and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.**

<sup>12</sup> Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. <sup>13</sup> I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

### ***Memory Verse: Colossians 1:10***

<sup>9</sup>For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, <sup>10</sup>***so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ...***

### **Day One: Read Colossians 1.**

As you read, bear in mind that Paul's main purpose in writing this letter to the believers at Colossae was to oppose false teaching that had cropped up there and to encourage them that the gospel message they had received through Epaphras was in fact the true and complete gospel.

1. All through his letter to the Colossians, Paul reaffirms many of the basic truths that make up the gospel message. Read the following verses, and then jot down aspects of the gospel in the categories below. (Hint: Skim through the list of categories before reading the verses so that you know what to be on the lookout for.)

1:13

2:6-7

3:2-4

1:19-22

2:9-10

3:9-10

1:27

2:13-14

3:17

Our situation without Christ

The nature of Christ

What he did for us

Question 1 continues on page 2.

The benefits we receive through him

How we live out our new life in Christ

**Day Two: Read Colossians 1.  
Then reread 1:6b–8 and read 4:12–13.**

2. What two things does Paul say the gospel is doing? (v. 6)

What do you think this means?

3. It seems that false teachers were telling the Colossians that their faith and the gospel they had heard were inadequate. If the Colossians were feeling uncertain in the face of this false teaching, how would these statements of Paul help reassure them?
  - a. “All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing” (v. 6).
  - b. “[They have] understood God’s grace in all its truth” (v. 6)—especially since “the description here is quite emphatic, *understood* being a strong word implying that their grasp of the truth was a firm one.”<sup>1</sup>
4. Paul further seeks to reassure the Colossians by expressing his confidence in Epaphras. Epaphras, who was from Colossae, was a Gentile who had probably become a believer when he heard Paul preach in Ephesus; he had likely returned home and shared the gospel with the people in his hometown, and perhaps with those in the nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis.<sup>2</sup>
  - a. What do we learn about Epaphras in Philemon, a letter that was probably written at around the same time as Colossians? (Phlm. 23)

- b. How does Paul characterize him? (1:7; 4:12–13)

### Day Three: Read Colossians 1 and 4:12–13.

5. What language does Paul use for the way Epaphras prays for the Colossian believers? (4:12)

What does he pray for them?

6. For whom are you called to wrestle in prayer?

Writer Sam Storms describes Epaphras's praying this way: "his prayers for [the Colossians] were characterized by a determination to fight through all resistance and a refusal to give up when it became demanding, painful, and inconvenient.... No perfunctory, casual requests here. He worked hard at prayer. He persevered through temptations to quit. He was tolerant of no distractions."<sup>3</sup>

What struggles or temptations do you face when you pray?

Share with your group and pray for each other, that you would learn to be faithful and diligent in prayer.

### Day Four: Read Colossians 1.

7. Earlier, Paul commended the Colossians for "the love [they] have for all the saints" (v. 4).  
a. Who do we learn now is the source of this love? (v. 8)

- b. What do you think such love looks like?
- c. How is their love a further proof of the genuineness of the gospel that Epaphras preached and they believed? (You may wish to consider the following verses: Jn. 13:35; 1 Cor. 13:1–3, 13; Gal. 5:22; 1 Jn. 3:14, 18–19; 4:7–8.)

### **Day Five: Read Colossians 1—4.**

Normally when you receive an important letter, you don't read just part of it – you read it from start to finish. Since Colossians is a letter, read it in one sitting each week. This will give you the big picture and a better understanding of each week's passage.

8. Paul is at pains to commend the true, complete, and authoritative gospel message to the Colossians. Look at the following verses and for each one write down what Paul desires for these believers – and for us.
- 1:23a

2:2-3

2:6–7

3:1–2

3:16

<sup>1</sup> Dick Lucas, *The Message of Colossians & Philemon* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1980), 33.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 90, 347.

<sup>3</sup> Sam Storms, *The Hope of Glory: 100 Daily Meditations on Colossians* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 47.