

# Colossians 1:24-29

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[ 0 : 00 ] We turn to Colossians chapter 1 and verse 24-29. Colossians chapter 1. It's on page 983 if you've got a black church Bible.

It would be a great help if you could have that open before you. There is a force at work in the world today that is more powerful and that is more significant.

Than any other in the history of the world. And as we told the children that force is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel you who have come to faith in Jesus Christ have heard and understood and believed.

And what we've seen from Colossians 1 is that that gospel which we've been learning from the Apostle Paul. Is bearing fruit. Verse 10.

And it is growing in the whole world. Indeed as you look at Colossians 1 you see that that gospel is reverberating. In all creation of the heaven.

[ 1 : 13 ] The trouble is and it was then. It was then for those who first heard this letter. Just as much as it is for us. It doesn't always look like that does it? The most powerful force at work in the world today.

The gospel. It doesn't always look like that. And as you let's be frank. It rarely looks. As though the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the most powerful and significant force.

In the history of the world. It's not easy to see. That this gospel is really so powerful is it? There are so few who are persuaded by it.

There are few who are even interested in it. I expect in your workplace. And our society moves further and further away from any positive recognition of the truth of this gospel.

Indeed as many of you have taken any notice. They grow more and more disdainful of the gospel. They write it off. And it's very, very easy I think.

[ 2 : 18 ] To think that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is not as significant. As is being claimed. Even for Bible believers. Now if that's our experience tonight. Can you imagine.

Can you appreciate. How hard it must have been for the first Christians. To see that the gospel that they had come to believe. Was the most powerful force in the history of the whole world. Now I take it that is why.

At the point we've reached in the brilliant introduction. To Paul's letter. And we are still in the introduction. That he speaks about God's strange ways. With the gospel.

There is a strangeness. To God's ways with this gospel. You see the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Does not work the way that you and I.

Would do it. And if we were in charge. It wouldn't. Indeed the way the gospel is working. Is as distinctive as the gospel itself. So let me remind you.

[ 3 : 17 ] We saw right at the end of last week. In verse 23. That Paul had become a minister. Can you see that at the end of verse 23. It's also translated.

The servant of this gospel. And if you want to understand. How the gospel is working powerfully. In our world. In the whole world. Then you've got to look at the apostle Paul.

Who is a servant. The servant of this gospel. And you need to understand. That this gospel is having its impact. Through servants of the gospel.

Like Paul. But that of course. Isn't it. That just brings the problem. It's sharper focus. I think that helps us. The Colossians have heard the news. As we have. But the apostle Paul.

The leader of this so called. Most powerful movement. In the history of the world. Is incarcerated. Is in prison. In Rome. He's subject to the Roman Empire.

[ 4 : 11 ] He's a victim of the Jewish authorities. So just how powerful is this movement. Really. And it seems to me. That Paul's purpose. In speaking of his own role.

As a servant of the gospel. Is to show the way. The manner in which. The gospel works itself out. And so it's very. Very important.

For you and I. To understand. The role of the gospel servant. In God's plan. Otherwise. It's really easy. It's really easy.

To miss the great thing. That God is doing. There are three. Way. Three things here. For us to learn. About the servant of the gospel. And the first thing we learn. Is this. The gospel servant. Suffers. Can we see that in verse 24. Well it's very simple tonight. Well it's not very simple. Because verse 24. Is one of the most difficult verses. In the New Testament. My point is simple. Look at verse 24. Now I rejoice.

[ 5 : 06 ] In my sufferings. For your sake. And in my flesh. I am filling up. What is lacking. In Christ's affliction. For the sake of his body. That is the church.

It's one of the most difficult verses. In the letter. It's one of the most difficult verses. In the New Testament. Can you see verse 24. What is lacking. In Christ's afflictions. This is an odd phrase. But let me give you. A really important principle. When you have any. Difficult verse in the Bible. And there are a number of them. Aren't there. You need to be clear. About what is clear. Before worrying about. What is not clear. That's a very very good rule. Of interpretation. Be clear. About what is clear. Before you worry. About what is not clear. And very often. What you find. And discover. Is that what remains. Unclear. Is far less important. Than what is clear. And in fact. What is less clear. Is often illuminated.

[ 6 : 04 ] By what is clear. Am I making any sense? Number one. The gospel servant. Three things. Under this first point. The gospel servant suffers. Number one. The gospel servant.

Rejoices. Can you see that verse 25? Now I rejoice. Second thing is. He suffers. And number three. He suffers in this way. To serve the assembly.

Not the church. The gospel servant rejoices. The gospel servant suffers. And in this way. He serves the assembly. Now before we get to the suffering part.

I want you to notice. That for Paul. There is joy. There is joy. Isn't there. In being a gospel servant. There shouldn't be. A break. In the paragraphs. Between verse 23 and 24.

Of which I became a minister. A servant. Now I rejoice. In my sufferance. For your sake. I don't want you to slip over this.

[ 6 : 59 ] It is a joy. To serve the gospel. I take it. There is a sense of.

The privilege. For Paul. What better way. To spend one's life. Than in the service. Of the gospel. What a marvellous thing. Paul is saying. That I. The apostle Paul. The great person.

The church. Should be involved. With this gospel. But it's more than that. It's the joy. Of the gospel itself. Do you remember. Chapter 1. And verse 12. There we're told.

About thanksgiving. The joyful. Thanksgiving. That every believer. Should know. Because what God. Has done for us. In the Lord Jesus. And of course. It's a joy. To be a servant.

Of the gospel. Isn't it. The joy. Of serving. The gospel. Is an expression. Of the joy. Of believing. The gospel. The joy.

[ 7 : 52 ] Of serving. The gospel. Is an expression. Of the joy. Of believing. This gospel. And I hope. You know. That tonight. However. Joy. Isn't the focus. Of verse 24. Is it. No.

I rejoice. In my suffering. The gospel. Servant. Suffers. And the apostle Paul. And his sufferings. Are well documented. In the new testament. Isn't it. He wrote.

This letter. With the distinct possibility. That execution. Was awaiting him. His life. As a servant. Of the gospel. Had involved. Much suffering. He'd been rejected.

He'd known hardships. There'd been misrepresentation. There'd been slander. There'd been gossip. There'd been loss. There had been conflict. And it's striking to note. Isn't it. That Paul.

Does not say. Now. That I have become. A gospel servant. I rejoice. In the status. Conferred upon me. He does not say. I rejoice. In the authority.

[ 8 : 48 ] That has now been given to me. I rejoice. In the reputation. That I expect. To win. I rejoice. In the impact. That I will make.

I rejoice. In the financial security. That church work. Will bring. He doesn't say that. The ways of the gospel. Are strange. Aren't they. The servant.

Of this gospel. Says. Can you see it. I rejoice. In my sufferings. It's not of course. That he's a masochist. Just as.

The joy. Is gospel joy. The suffering. Is gospel suffering. The part of this verse. That is really different. Difficult. Is where he describes.

What his sufferings mean. Can you see what he says. That I am filling up. What is lacking. In Christ's afflictions. For the sake of his body. That is the church. We know.

[ 9 : 44 ] That Paul often. Supposed to be. Of suffering. With Christ. Or sharing. In Christ's sufferings. But the difficulty here. Is obvious. Isn't it. What can he possibly mean. By suggesting. That anything. Is lacking. In the afflictions. Of the sufferings. Of Christ. What can he mean. And if we know anything. Of Paul's teaching. We know. That he can't possibly mean. That Christ's afflictions.

What he just called. Just a few verses earlier. Verse 20. The blood of his cross. Or in verse 22. Simply his death. What he possibly.

What he cannot possibly mean. Is that these sufferings are. They are somehow inadequate. That they are not. Not up to scratch. As though it was up to Paul.

To complete. What Jesus only partially accomplished. That cannot be his meaning. Just look at chapter 1. In verse 20. Do you see. That through him.

[ 10 : 41 ] He might. Reconcile. Himself. To himself. All things. Whether on earth. Or in heaven. Making peace. By the blood of the cross. He has reconciled. All things.

To him. In his body. Of the flesh. By his death. He has reconciled to you. Reconciled. But it seems to me. That the sense. In which. Christ's afflictions. Are lacking. Should be seen.

In this context. There's a very obvious sense. Isn't there. In our life. In our world. That all things. Are not yet reconciled. Anyone can see that.

The hostilities. They are not ended. We have yet. To be presented. Before God. Blame us. Before him. The death.

Of Christ. Was everything. That is needed. To achieve. These things. These things. Will happen. Because of Christ's death. But the effect. Of Christ's death. Has not yet.

[ 11 : 41 ] Been fully realized. His afflictions. Are not lacking. In the sense. That they're not enough. But in the sense. That they've not yet. Had their full effect. And the way.

In which the effects. Of Christ's affliction. Are being brought. To the whole world. To the whole of creation. Under the heaven. Is by the servants. Of the gospel. And that involves.

A servant's suffering. It's not as if. Christ's afflictions. And Paul's sufferings. Are somehow added together. To make a quantitative whole. That is greater than the parts.

Rather. That this work of God. Is of the same character. From the beginning to end. As the Lord Jesus. Suffers. To reconcile. All things. So there is suffering.

For those who serve the gospel. And by which. This suffering. By which. This suffering. One. One reconciliation.

[ 12 : 39 ] He reaches. The whole. This. The whole world. And so. Paul rejoices. To be a servant. Of the gospel. And he rejoices. In fact. In the suffering. That this entails.

So thirdly. This is how he serves. The church. And the assembly. So look again. Verse 24. Now I rejoice. In my sufferings. For your sake.

And in my flesh. I am filling up. What is lacking. In Christ's affliction. For the sake of his body. That is the church. Of which. I became a minister. Or a servant. Paul's suffering.

In service. It is for the sake. Of others. For your sake. For the Colossians sake. Who are then described. As Christ's body.

And they are referred to. As the assembly. Or the church. And in becoming. A servant. Of the gospel. Paul became. A servant. Of the church. Of the assembly.

[ 13 : 36 ] I am pretty sure. That Paul had in mind. In his writing this. That little group. Meeting in Philemon's house. In Colossae. But that is not all. There were many other. Similar churches.

That Paul was equally. And in the same way. A servant. It therefore. Seems likely. That he is thinking. Of the assembly. Of all those. Who are coming.

Under Christ's headship. Through the gospel. He was serving. It is what he said. In chapter 1. Verse 18. That Christ. He is the head. Of the body. The assembly. But that shouldn't.

Take away from the fact. That he was serving. The assembly. In Colossae. A group of people. He never met. But nonetheless. They had come to faith. In Christ Jesus. It is a very interesting. Expression. Isn't it? A servant. Of the assembly. In our translation. It is translated. As minister. Of the church. But that sounds different.

[ 14 : 33 ] Doesn't it? Doesn't it? Servant. Of the assembly. Or minister. Of the church. And actually. A servant. Of the assembly.

Captures the meaning. Far better. But I think. We need to be clear. That it is. The servant. Of the gospel. Verse 23. Who is the servant.

Of the assembly. Verse 25. And in the process. Will suffer. And so. The very big thing. The big thing. That would have been. Raged in the minds.

Of the Colossians. About the wisdom. Of trusting in this Jesus. Is it really powerful? The big question. Of why is the leading missionary. Of this movement. In chains. In Rome.

That very thing. Paul presents. As characteristic. Of this movement. The very thing. That may threaten. To unnerve you. About the supreme importance.

[ 15 : 29 ] Of the power of the gospel. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. And make no mistake. They will threaten. Even if you don't feel it. At the moment. When you face.

The discouragements. Of the Christian life. And church life. And the sackbacks. Of church life. And the unimpressiveness. Of church life. And the unpopularity.

And the disappointments. Of living as a Christian. They are. The characteristics. Of this movement. And the servant. Of this gospel. Suffers. And it's very important.

To see the second. Main point. That's made by Paul here. The servant. And the sufferings. Are part of God's secret plan. Number one.

The servant suffers. Number two. The servant. And the sufferings. Are part of God's secret plan. Far from Paul's imprisonment. Meaning that. The might of the Roman Empire.

[ 16 : 25 ] Or wiles of the Jewish authorities. They are much more powerful. And mightier. Than the gospel of Jesus. The suffering of Paul. The servant of the gospel. The servant of the assembly.

Is. Read verse 25 with me. Of which. I became a minister. According to the stewardship. Commissioned from God. That was given to me.

For you. To make the word of God. Fully known. The mystery. Hidden for ages. And generations. But now revealed to his saints. To them. God chose to make known.

How great. Among the Gentiles. Are the riches. And the glory. Of this mystery. Which is Christ in you. The hope of glory. Christ. Paul calls this plan. The secret. And the great mystery.

Do you remember Daniel. And King Nebuchadnezzar. It's the best illustration. I think you can find with us. In Daniel chapter 2. We're told in verse 19. That the mystery. Was revealed to Daniel. The secret. Was revealed to Daniel.

[ 17 : 23 ] And Daniel. Then praised God. As the one. Who gives wisdom. To the wise. And who gives knowledge. To those of understanding. And God is the one. Who reveals deep. And hidden things.

And Daniel. In Forbes Nebuchadnezzar. He says. There is a God in heaven. Who reveals mysteries. And he's done just that. For Daniel. And this mystery. Has been revealed to me. You see.

Great King Nebuchadnezzar. For all your wealth. And all your glory. And all your power. And all your absolute impressiveness. You've got no idea. You've got no idea. Of God's secret plan. It was a mystery.

To him. Wasn't it? And even when God. Gave Nebuchadnezzar. A dream. That contained the plan. It remained a mystery. To Nebuchadnezzar. Only when God. Revealed the mystery.

To a Jewish. Youth. Named Daniel. Who explained it. To Nebuchadnezzar. Can he know anything. About it at all? It was hidden from him. Now the mystery. Or the secret.

[ 18 : 16 ] Was made known. In Daniel chapter 2. And it was God's. Great plan. For world history. It was dominated. As it seemed. By the powerful. Pagan nations. That one day.

A kingdom will come. That will do away. With all those kingdoms. And the God of heaven. Will set. Up a kingdom. That will never be destroyed. And it will break. Into pieces. All these kingdoms. And bring them to an end.

And it will stand forever. Daniel 2. 44. That was the mystery. That was the secret. Revealed to Daniel. No one could have guessed it. Could they? Just by looking. At the state.

Of world politics. No one could have guessed. That such a plan existed. Nebuchadnezzar. You remember. He destroyed Jerusalem. He destroyed the temple. He exiled God's king.

But there was a secret plan. Known only to those. To whom God revealed the mystery. And it's this idea. That Paul takes up. And this is what has happened.

[19:12] He explains. Firstly. That the secret plan. Has been hidden for ages. Can you see that verse 26. The mystery hidden for ages. And generations. And Colossians chapter 1 verse 26.

He's speaking about. And the whole Old Testament period. Of course. Much was made known. Through the prophets of Israel. Wasn't it? God made known.

God made known. Many things. Through these great acts. In history. God's promises to Abraham. And promises to Israel. And to David. The mystery was made known. To Daniel. But even then. It remains a mystery. How. When. When. Where. That's a good timing. Would God's promises. Be realised. They remained hidden. Didn't they. For ages. But now. Can you see that? But. Now. That great.

[20:06] That great. New Testament expression. For the secret plan. Second. He was revealed. To the saints. And it was given to Paul. But now. The secret. Has been revealed. To the saints. Whom God will. To make it known.

God chose. To make known. His secret plan. To certain of his people. To certain. Jewish people. He's talking about. The apostles. In the first instance. At least Paul. Was one of them. But now. There's something. Bigger. Than when the mystery. Was revealed. To Daniel. And Paul says. In verse 25. The plan. It was given to me. For. You.

For you Gentiles. What does that mean? Well. Reaching for adequate words. Verse 27. Paul describes. The secret. That has now. Been revealed. And he says. Doesn't he. Are the riches. Of the glory. Of this mystery. It's richly glorious. He hasn't actually.

[21:01] Told us what the mystery is. Yet. Has he. He hasn't said what it is. But he says. It is richly glorious. And it is. To do with the nations. To make known.

How great. And the nations. Are the riches. Of his glory. Of this mystery. It's richly glorious. And it's wonderful. And it's for the nations.

For what is it? Back in verse 25. Paul has said. Paul has said. That it is given. To fulfill. The word of God.

To make the word of God. Fully known. To bring the word of God. To its fulfillment. The word of God. Is the promise of God. And the purpose of God. Made known.

Through the prophetic. Paul. Who was a servant. Of the gospel. In accordance. With God's plan. To fulfill all. That he planned. And purposed. We still haven't got. What the plan is. But do you see.

[21:57] This remarkable claim. That Paul is making. For his role. Can you see that? His role. As a servant. Of the gospel. Here's the big difference. Between Daniel and Paul. Paul was not just.

To make known. The plan. That's what happened. With Daniel. But Paul was. To fulfill the plan. To bring to fulfillment. And God's promises. And God's purposes.

Among the nations. And it's at the end. Of verse 26. A servant. That the secret. Is at last revealed. The mystery. Is disclosed. In these wonderful words.

Three words. And then four words. Of explanation. Can you see them? What is the mystery? Is Christ. In you. The hope of glory.

That's it. That's it. The one of whom. Paul has said so much. In the introduction. To his letter. Can I just take you back.

[22:53] To verse 50. He is the image. Of the invisible God. He is the firstborn. Of all creation. He is the one. By whom all things.

Were created. The hand. And on earth. Visible and invisible. All things. That you see. In the world. Today. Were created. For him. And by him. He is the one.

Who is before all things. And in him. All things. Hold together. And he is the head. Of the church. He is the firstborn. From the dead. He is the one. That all the fullness.

Of God. Was pleased to dwell. He is the reconciler. Of all things. He is the secret. Now revealed. But more. He is Christ.

In you. In you. Colossians. Israel's Messiah. Now known. And acknowledged. Not just in Israel. But in you.

[23:48] English. And you. Welsh. And you. American. In you. Iranian. In you. Brazilian. In you. Romanians. Christ.

In you. And that is how. The secret plan. Of God. Is being worked out. And if the secret. Plan of God. Is to establish. His kingdom.

And to overthrow. All kingdoms. Then how is he doing it? This gospel. That is bearing fruit. And is growing. All over. All the world.

Christ. Is in the nations. And people. From every nation. Are being brought. To Christ. Christ. In you. The hope. Of glory. And again.

The apostle Paul. He's already. Emphasizes it. That this gospel. Brings a hope. Explicitly in verse 5. And verse 23. The hope. Of the gospel. It's that hope.

[ 24 : 42 ] Of being presented. Before Christ. Holy. And spotless. And blameless. And now he calls that. The hope of glory. Glory. Glory is a wonderful word. Isn't it? I find it very.

Very difficult. To explain the word glory. And the dictionary. Is through two. It sums up. Doesn't it? The wonder. And the splendor. And the magnificence. Of God himself.

And the consummation. Of his amazing. Brilliant purposes. Christ. Now in you. You Gentile believers. In Colossae. Or wherever you might be.

Christ. In you. Is the beginning. Of something. That is so big. That the only single word. That you can use for it. Is glory. And so.

As Paul suffered. And as we witness. And perhaps experience. Is suffering. Of various kinds. That accompanies. Serving the gospel. We like.

[ 25 : 39 ] Paul's readers. Must understand. That serving. And suffering. Are part. Of the remarkable. Plan of God. For the nations. That is how.

The gospel. Works. Christ. In you. Hope of glory. The only question. Is. That's left for us. What does the gospel. Servant do. Thirdly. What is it. About. Serving the gospel. That brings the sufferings. Once you know.

God's plan. Once the secret. Is being revealed. And made known. Then what the servant. Of the gospel. Must do. Is very. Very obvious. Verse 28. What must the servant.

Of the gospel. Do. Him we proclaim. We proclaim Christ. The servant. Proclaims Christ. Christ. And then Paul. Wants us to understand. In verse.

[ 26 : 33 ] Well. Let's. Just look at that. For a moment. What does it mean. To proclaim Christ. It's to warn. Everyone. That's very difficult.

Isn't it. For us. The one thing. We don't want to do. Is say anything negative. We want to present. The positive message. Don't we. People's lives. Cannot be the same. Once.

Christ is known. And so. We must warn them. See what else it says. It says. We must. Teach. Everyone. And how do you.

Teach everyone. Well you need. Wisdom. And what is the aim. Of this proclamation. The aim. Is we proclaim him. The two ways. We do it. Is warn everyone. And teach everyone.

And what is the aim. The aim. Of the sermon. Of the gospel. Is that we present. Everyone. Mature. In. Christ. That's our goal. And this proclaiming.

[ 27 : 29 ] Christ. Well look at verse 29. It is hard. And painful work. And so I want you to see.

That the sermon of the gospel. He toils. And he struggles. And he struggles. Verse 29. With all his energy. Let me say to you.

Lazy ministers. Should be fired. They should be fired. And we are so. Petrified of burnout. I think we are breeding.

A generation of lazy ministers. It's a work. In which you do. Grow weary. And it's a work. That leads to exhaustion. And it can lead you.

In a Roman prison cell. But proclaiming Christ. Is nonetheless. Despite all appearances. To the contrary. Very. Very. Powerful. Because God is at work.

[ 28 : 30 ] God is powerfully at work. In the exhausted. Servant. Of the gospel. The housewife. And mum. Who is absolutely.

Shattered. But teaches her children. Christ. The power of God. Is at work. Father or husband. Who is highly stressed.

At work. But longs face children. To come to know Christ. And teaches them. The gospel is at work. The person who serves.

So hard. In church. Sometimes feels. No one pays any attention. And they proclaim Christ. The gospel. Is at work. Because I want you to see.

That the effectiveness. Of the servant's work. After all. Does not depend on him. Isn't that wonderful. Verse 29. For this I toil. It's hard work. Struggling.

[ 29 : 29 ] With all. My energy. No. Struggling. With all his energy. That he powerfully works. Within me. The effectiveness.

Of the servant's work. After all. Doesn't depend on him. Does it? But it depends on God. That's right.