

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 278 – October 5th – Colossians 1:24-2:5

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Colossians

Dunn, James D G	<i>The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996
Eadie, John	<i>Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians</i> , Richard Griffin & Co, 1856

Verse 24

Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐκκλησία,

χαίρω rejoice, be glad
παθημα, τος n suffering, passion, desire

"Paul accepted suffering on behalf of others (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν) – a reminder that the sufferings were not sought in anything like a masochistic spirit, but were accepted, indeed welcomed, as the unavoidable consequence of the all-important objective of preaching the gospel." Dunn. Cf. Rom 5:3; 8:18; 2 Cor 1:5-7; 4:17-18; 7:4.

ἀνταναπληρῶ complete
ὑστερημα, τος n what is lacking, need, absence
θλιψις, εως f trouble, suffering
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body

Many mediaeval Catholic interpreters believed this text supported their view that the sufferings of the saints had atoning value. Dunn writes, "The words have caused bewilderment to generations of translators and commentators. But in fact they are simply the extension of Paul's complete eschatological schema. It contains several elements:

- i) Christ's sufferings and death as the eschatological tribulation expected as the antecedent to the new age – Paul's adaptation, reflected particularly in Rom 8:18-23, of the older Jewish theme;
- ii) Participation in the death of Christ as itself the means of transition from old age to new (Rom 6:3-11; 8:18-23 prefaced by 8:17; 2 Cor 4:10-12 leading into 4:16-5:5; Phil 3:10-11; Heb 2:9-10 offers a different model with equivalent effect); and consequently,
- iii) Christian existence as a lifelong process in which dying with Christ leads to a share of his final resurrection (Rom 6:5; Gal 2:19; 6:14 – still nailed to the cross with Christ [note the perfect tenses]; Rom 6:5; 8:11, 23; Phil 3:11 – resurrection still future...

"But Paul here has also made a unique addition to the theme by adding the (implied) thought that Christ's afflictions lack something (ὑστερημα, 'lack, deficiency') and need to be completed in Paul's flesh (ἀνταναπληρῶ, literally, 'fill up in place of'; cf. the similar phrase in 1 Cor 16:17 and Phil 2:30...). This again is partly a reflection of the cosmic scope of the reconciliation envisaged and of Paul's awareness that it is not yet complete; therefore the decisive sufferings of the Christ cannot yet be complete... It was because Paul saw himself as a major actor in the final drama of God's reconciling purpose that he could also see his all too real sufferings as somehow bringing to completion what was still outstanding of the sufferings of Christ ('crucified with Christ') by which the world was redeemed and transformed."

There is perhaps also the thought that while Christ's atoning suffering is over and finished, he continues to suffer in and through the sufferings of his people, the body of which he is the head (cf Acts 9:4 and 2 Cor 1:5). "The apostle filled up what was wanting in the Saviour's sympathetic sorrows." Eadie

σωμα, τος n body
ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church

Verse 25

ἧς ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ,

διακονος, ου m & f servant, helper, minister
οικονομια, ας f management of a household, responsibility, (divine) plan
δοθεῖσάν Verb, aor pass ptc, f acc s διδωμι
πληρῶω fill, fulfill, accomplish

May here mean, 'make fully known', cf. Rom 15:19. "As in the only close parallel use, in Rom 15:19, there is an eschatological overtone: Paul's commission as apostle (to the Gentiles) was intended as a decisive factor in completing the inbringing of the Gentiles and so facilitating the final climax of God's purpose (Rom 11:13-15, 25-32; cf. 2 Tim 4:17)." Dunn

Verse 26

τὸ μυστήριον τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν, – νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ,

μυστηριον, ου n secret, mystery (of something formerly unknown but now revealed)

ἀποκεκρυμμένον Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc & n nom/acc s ἀποκρυπτω hide, keep secret

ἀπο could indicate those from whom the mystery had been hidden, though here it probably indicates time span.

αἰωνων Noun, gen pl αἰων, αἰωνος m age, world order, eternity

γενεα, ας f generation, contemporaries, age, family, posterity

ἐφανερωθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s φανερωω make known, reveal

An affirmation in line with Jewish apocalyptic thinking. "What has been 'revealed' to the apocalypticist is precisely the 'mystery' of how the cosmos functions and particularly of how God's purpose will achieve its predetermined end... The revelation to the saints took place particularly through Paul's preaching ... his gospel was itself an apocalypse (cf. Rom 16:25; Gal 1:12; Eph 3:3)." Dunn

ἅγιος, α, ον holy; οἱ ἅγιοι God's people

Cf. Eph 3:3,6

Verse 27

οἷς ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς γνωρίσαι τί τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τοῦ μυστηρίου τούτου ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ὃ ἐστὶν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης·

θελω wish, will

γνωρίζω make known, disclose, know

πλοῦτος, ου m & n riches, wealth

δοξα, ης f glory

ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ους n nation, people; τα ἔ. Gentiles

ἐλπίς, ιδος f hope, what is hoped for

δοξα, ης f glory

"In other Pauline writings the 'mystery' of God's purpose is primarily his intention from the first to include at the last Gentiles together with Jews as his people. In Rom 11:25-26 it is the mystery of Israel's partial hardening till the full number of the Gentiles has come in, leading in turn to the salvation of all Israel. In the addendum of Rom 16:25-26 it is 'the mystery concealed for long ages, but now made manifest and ... made known for the obedience of faith for all the nations.' In Eph 1:9-10 it is the divine purpose in Christ 'to sum up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth, in him.' And again in Eph 3:3-6 it is 'the mystery of Christ ... that the Gentiles should be joint heirs and joint members of the body and joint participants in the promise in Christ Jesus.' Here there is a further variation, whose closest parallel is Rom 16:25-26: that the mystery is to be made known 'among the Gentiles.' And only then the mystery is identified, in a phrase similar to that in Eph 3:4 ('the mystery of Christ'), as the mystery 'which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.'" Dunn Christ 'in you Gentiles' is therefore a manifestation of the glorious purpose of God to reconcile the world to himself. "The fact is that Paul saw the reconciliation of Gentile to Jew and both as one to God as an act of cosmic and eschatological significance. It was precisely this breaking down of one of the fundamental dividing lines in human society (between Jew and Gentile; see on 3:11) that Paul saw as the climax of the divine purpose for creation." Dunn. The Messiah in the Gentiles is therefore the manifestation and hope of the 'glory' yet to come in the consummation of God's purposes. While the phrase can be personalised, 'Christ in *me* is *my* hope of glory' we should not lose sight of the primarily corporate and cosmic dimensions. 'Christ in you' is to be made manifest not primarily in personal piety but in the corporate life of the people of God as the community of the age to come. It is this which makes future glory a present reality.

Verse 28

ὃν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ, ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ·

καταγγελλω proclaim, make known, preach

Perhaps contains overtones that the time when the mystery was hidden is now past.

νουθετεω instruct, teach, warn

διδασκω teach

σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight

παραστήσωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl
 παριστημι and παριστανω present,
 bring into one's presence

Cf. 1:22. Dunn argues that the threefold repetition of 'everyone' is wider than the Colossians. Paul saw his work as serving God's purpose in Christ of reconciling *the world* to himself.

τελειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

Dunn writes, "In wider Greek usage this word could denote the quality of sacrificial victims, entire and without blemish ... and is so used of the Passover lamb in Exod 12:5. In view of the similar imagery in 1:22 such overtones are probably present here as well... By natural extension it can denote the equivalent quality of moral character, of which blameless Noah was a classic example (Gen 6:9)."

Of the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Dunn adds, "Here again there may be a gentle reminder that any of the Colossian recipients tempted to look elsewhere for a 'fuller' experience and wisdom need to look, and should look, no further than Christ for their 'completion'."

Verse 29

εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει.

κοπιαω work, work hard, labour
 ἀγωνιζομαι struggle, fight, compete
 ἐνέργεια, ας f (supernatural) working,
 power, activity

ἐνεργεω work, be at work (in)

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγω

δυνάμει Noun, dat s δυναμις

The certainty of the hope of glory does not lessen the need for much work to be done in preparing Christians for it. "As in 1:10-11, however, the balance between human effort and divine enabling is clearly struck... As in 1:11 no room for doubt is left as to Paul's own utter dependence on God's enabling for the exhausting schedule that he followed, or as to its effectiveness." Dunn

Colossians 2:1

Θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ἡλικὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχω ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ καὶ ὅσοι οὐχ ἑώρακαν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί,

θελω wish, will

εἰδέναι Verb, perf act infin οἶδα (verb perf in form but with present meaning) know, understand

ἡλικος, η, ον how great, how large

ἀγων, ονος m struggle, fight

On ἀγῶνα see Phil 1:30; 1 Thess 2:2; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7 also Heb 12:1. Eadie comments, "It points out that intense and powerful anxiety which preyed upon him, now in occasional terror, and now in reviving hope – that ceaseless conflict which filled his waking hours with effort and relieved with prayer the watches of the night."

ὅσος, η, ον correlative pronoun, as much as;
 pl. as many as,

ἑώρακαν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s ὅραω trans
 see, observe

προσωπον, ου n face, appearance

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body

"Paul's depth of concern for his churches must have been well known. The ups and downs of his relations with the church at Corinth in particular would probably have been familiar to the churches of the Lycus valley, since so much of his time at Ephesus had been spent agonising over the problems of the Corinthian Christians and his relationships with them (1 Cor 4:17; 16:8, 10; 2 Cor 1:23-2:4; 7:8; 12:14). Lest it be inferred that Paul was concerned only for those churches founded by himself, the writer(s) hasten to assure the Colossians that Paul was equally concerned for those churches founded by his associates." Dunn

Verse 2

ἵνα παρακληθῶσιν αἱ καρδίαι αὐτῶν, συμβιβασθέντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ καὶ εἰς πᾶν πλοῦτος τῆς πληροφορίας τῆς συνέσεως, εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ,

παρακληθῶσιν Verb, aor pass subj, 3 pl

παρακαλεω exhort, encourage

συμβιβασθέντες Verb, aor pass ptc, m nom pl

συμβιβαζω bring together, unite

Paul's concern is not simply for them as individuals but for them as a community. "Only a love which penetrates the heart and wells up from the heart can sustain the sort of unity that Paul sought (see also on 1:4)." Dunn

πλοῦτος, ου m & n riches, wealth

πληροφορια, ας f full assurance,

conviction

συνεσις, εως f understanding, insight

Cf. 1:9. "The full assurance of understanding is the fixed persuasion that you comprehend the truth, and that it is the truth which you comprehend." Eadie

"The integration between (as we would say) mind and heart is an important feature of Paul's understanding of how the salvation process works out in the individual and the group." Dunn

ἐπίγνωσις, εως f knowledge, recognition, consciousness

μυστηριον, ου n see 1:26

τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ the abruptness has led to a large number of textual variants from the omission of Χριστοῦ to a variety of smoothing additions such as τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐστὶν Χριστοῦ and many others. The reading given above is supported by early MSS and best explains the origins of the others.

Verse 3

ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι.

ἐν ᾧ Most commentators take this as a reference to Christ. Eadie follows Bengel and others in understanding it to refer to the *mystery* – "in which mystery are hidden all ..." This would then refer to the Gospel which, in opposition to the false teaching being touted at Colossae, is the source of all that is worthy and precious.

πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας
θησαυρος, ου m treasure store
σοφια, ας f wisdom, insight
γνωσις, εως f knowledge, understanding
ἀποκρυφος, ον secret, stored away

"It was this assurance that they, too, were 'in Christ,' together with *all* the treasures of divinely given insight into the mysteries of the cosmos and of human destiny (cf. Rom 11:33; 1 Cor 2:7: λαλουμεν θεου σοφian ἐν μυστηριω την ἀποκεκρυμμενην) and the riches of the experience of the wise in successful living, that was to give them the confidence they needed (see also 3:3)." Dunn

Verse 4

τοῦτο λέγω ἵνα μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς παραλογίζεται ἐν πιθανολογία.

τοῦτο λέγω "The abruptness of 'this I say' ... is a modest attempt to catch attention and to reinforce the importance of the point being made (cf. 1 Cor 1:12; 7:29; 15:50; Gal 3:17; 1 Thess 4:15), so much so that we might speak of 2:4 as a thematic statement of what follows, though the main thematic statement is more obviously 2:6-7." Dunn

μηδεὶς, μηδεμια, μηδεν no one, nothing
παραλογιζομαι deceive, lead astray

Only here and Jas 1:22 in the NT.

πιθανολογια, ας f attractive (but false)
argument

"This term and its cognates denote the persuasiveness and plausibility particularly of popular speakers... Thus the term easily gains, as here, the overtone of plausible (sounding) but actually 'specious arguments'." Dunn

"As the first clear allusion to an alternative religious system confronting the Colossian believers, the verse need imply no more than the sort of popular religious teaching which must have often been heard in the marketplaces of that region, much of which might have been beguilingly attractive to truth-seeking young converts (cf. Hooker). It will become clearer that Paul and Timothy had in mind teaching and praxis particularly of the Colossian synagogue(s) (see ... Introduction, and on 2:16 and 18), so the implication here is that the Colossian Jewish community was not lacking in skilled apologists, but was well able to express the appeal of their worship and code of behaviour in beguiling terms (see also 2:8)." Dunn

Verse 5

εἰ γὰρ καὶ τῇ σαρκὶ ἄπειμι, ἀλλὰ τῷ πνεύματι σὺν ὑμῖν εἰμι, χαίρων καὶ βλέπων ὑμῶν τὴν τάξιν καὶ τὸ στερέωμα τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως ὑμῶν.

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body
ἀπειμι be away, be absent, go
χαίρω rejoice, be glad; imperat used as a greeting

βλεπω see, look, be able to see, beware of
τάξις, εως f order, division

Paul's union with them, implied in the phrase 'present in spirit', is maintained through contact with them and news of them. Though Dunn thinks the phrase is "intended more as an expression of what he would hope to see if it were possible."

στερεωμα, τος n firmness, steadfastness

Both this and the previous term "could be used in military contexts: τάξις = rank and file of soldiers, drawn up in battle order ...; στερεωμα = the solid part, the strength of an army." Dunn

πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief, the
Christian faith

"Thoroughly Pauline ... is the conviction that the whole Christian position (rank and solidity) stands or falls with faith in Christ, with the further implication, again characteristically Pauline, that anything which claims to be an advance upon that faith is in fact a retreat from it... This final recall to faith forms an inclusio with 1:4 and thus brackets the whole of the intervening thanksgiving and personal statement as an exposition of that faith (see also 2:6)." Dunn