

A GLORIOUS HOPE FOR PAGAN PEOPLE

Colossians 1:24-2:5

What do WE have to be thankful for?

Each year as we prepare for Thanksgiving, and remember what God has done for us during the past year, do we just think about our material blessings, our friends and family, our freedom?

Or, do we remember all the *spiritual* blessings we have received because of Christ's work in us?

Paul expresses some of *his* reasons for gratitude as he describes the work God has done in the lives of the Colossians.

He's grateful for the privilege God has given him of investing his life in the lives of other people.

What benefits have we received as a result of Christ's work in our lives?

Are we as grateful about receiving them as Paul was for the privilege of proclaiming them?

Paul's attempt to help the Colossians in their struggle against those attacking the Gospel reveals his attitude toward them and toward the ministry.

***Central thought of everything Judaizers stood for:
God's plan is based on promise to Abraham and received by keeping Moses' law.***

***Paul's response: God called him to proclaim that
He provides everything we need through
Christ—Jew or Gentile. All come through Him.***

Paul chose as the starting point for his main message his own call to ministry.

As he tells about his call, we discover his purpose for his ministry among them.

His ministry centers on the proclamation of all that God has provided for us in Christ– the essence of the letter.
 When faced with legalists, who want to maintain their relationship with God on the basis of works, we must *understand* the good news about Jesus.

That's why Paul prays that we will understand what God wants to do, so we might walk worthily, empowered by God, through His Son.

Paul has already demonstrated that Jesus is GOD.

ALL THAT GOD IS IS IN JESUS!

He has done EVERYTHING for us.

Christ provides everything we need.

We are complete in Him;

WE LACK NOTHING.

This message is the essence of the Gospel.

Even when we couldn't save ourselves,

God demonstrated His love for us by sending His Son to die for us
 God called Paul to proclaim good news: we have *everything we need* in Christ.

He's grateful God has chosen him for this special role in His program.

PAUL'S REVELATION 1:24-27

His suffering 1:24

Paul has a balanced perspective about his ministry.

His ministry has brought him joy which he considers a privilege.

It's also a source of suffering

1:24

It's difficult to imagine how a pastor or church leader suffers in ministry.

People usually see positive side. But it can be discouraging.

The only thing close is parents watching children.

Our kids can be a source of incredible joy as we watch them grow.

But it's hard to watch kids we love make bad decisions and suffer consequences.

You know *that* feeling?

That's what ministry feels like!

Tension Paul lives with.

He enjoys it more than anything he's ever done.

He senses awesome privilege of proclaiming good news about Jesus.

He also feels the pain of suffering over wayward children.

It reminds me of what I've heard others say often, and experienced myself:

Some days you react to ministry saying:

“And to think they actually *pay* me to do this!”

Other days you respond:

“They couldn't *pay* me enough to do this!”

Paul rejoices in affliction, not because he *likes* to suffer; but because he realizes the *value* of suffering for God's people.

Paul's suffering results in benefit for them.

When he says he's completing what's "lacking" of Christ's afflictions, you might get the impression Jesus' death isn't enough by itself—*just what the Judaizers are proposing!*

His message opposes this!

Paul isn't referring to suffering which leads to *redemption*.

He isn't *adding* something to Christ's *never-to-be-repeated* death on the cross.

He just affirmed that *nothing is lacking* to accomplish our redemption OR our sanctification.

Jesus work is *already* complete.

In referring to *his* affliction, Paul identifies with Christ's suffering.

Just as Jesus suffered in *His* time, Paul suffers for the church in *his* time.

Christ suffered persecution, rejection, misunderstanding, and frustration.

He assured His followers that they could expect the same.

Paul experienced that kind of suffering.

God promised beforehand: "*I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.*" (Acts 9:15-16).

He learned that lesson well! (**2 Cor. 11:23-29**):

"I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own

*countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. ²⁷I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸**Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?"***

That daily struggle for the church still goes on today

Someone is always suffering for the church's benefit!

Paul didn't escape it. He supplied what was needed in his day.

Whoever dedicates themselves to doing God's work will suffer, just as Christ and Paul suffered.

Dr Helen Roseveare served God in Zaire for many years. She delighted in a busy schedule meeting the medical needs of more than ½ million people. In the revolution of 1964 she and her coworkers were thrown into 5½ mos. of unbelievable brutality and torture. For a time she wondered whether God had forsaken her. In the midst of her struggle God overwhelmed her: "20 years ago you asked me for the privilege of being a missionary, the privilege of being identified with me. These are not *your* sufferings; they are *my* sufferings."

Whoever dedicates themselves to doing God's work will suffer.

Perhaps not as intensely as Christ, Paul, or Helen Roseveare, but there will be suffering.

That suffering results in benefit for God's people.

That suffering increases our sense of identification with Christ.

Paul was willing to pay the price; he knew it would benefit these brethren.

They would be strengthened as a result of his suffering on their behalf.

His message: 1:25-27 4 descriptions:

1. **His message is first and foremost the Word of God**
He didn't preach just another human opinion.
God gave the message; the words were His, not Paul's. **1:25**
2. **His message is a mystery. 1:26**
Gives *us* idea of something hard to understand, secret, mysterious.
Refers to something hidden.
Paul's message was *hidden* to previous generations.
God didn't *reveal* it before, but now reveals it to His people.
3. Paul considers **His message to be glorious riches. 1:27**
Deals with riches—*great value*—God has now spread to pagans also.
4. To complete 3rd description, **Paul reveals content of message: "Christ in you [pagan Gentiles], the glorious hope."**
Paul's grateful God allowed him the privilege of announcing to pagans that *we* now have part in God's program.

For Jewish people, it's similar to incident **John Green of Australia** tells: working with boys, some of aboriginal blood and some of English descent. Racial tensions grew. They couldn't sit together peaceably on a bus. One day it got so bad he stopped the bus, made them all get out, and told them they were no longer black and white, but green. He lined them up in alternating order. As they got back on the bus, he made each say, "**I'm green!**" That seemed to work well until he heard a voice in the back: "OK, light green on one side, dark green on the other!"

That's how it was with Jews and Gentiles.

Animosity was strong. Jewish people didn't understand how God could open door to pagans.

Previously Gentiles were far removed from God, with no hope (Eph. 2:11-13).

But now, in Christ, God gives us same glorious hope He gave to Jewish people.

Now *we lack nothing* required to receive the same inheritance.

We who were previously pagan, worldly-minded people, enjoy this glorious hope

Mystery not understood previously:

Christ, the Messiah, would be the hope of Gentiles also.

Although God didn't reveal it before, now he's revealed it clearly. God Himself gave Paul this message:

Christ in us is now the hope of Gentiles too.

Salvation by faith in the Christ is for everyone,
Jews and Gentiles.

JESUS IS THE HOPE OF PAGANS ALSO

That's cause for great celebration!

Paul's grateful—what a wonderful message to
proclaim to people who have always been *left
out—rejected, looked down on, even hated!*

**PAUL'S PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST TO EVERYONE
1:28-29**

Paul proclaims this *universal* message to *everyone*,
that he might present *everyone* perfect in Christ.

1:28

In this summary we find **PAUL'S PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY.**

He presents a pattern worthy of memorizing and imitating in
our ministry today also.

It's extent is *universal*—it's for *everyone!*

He repeats three times that his goal is to reach
EVERYONE!

...admonishing *every person*, and

...teaching *every person*, . . .

...so that we may present *every person* PERFECT, in Christ!

His purpose: extend opportunity and open door to
everyone, not limit it!

Paul's vision: present *everyone* perfect before God,
through Jesus Christ.

We've all heard of **Heinz** whose "**57 varieties**" made his name a
household word. One day after an evangelistic service the speaker

said to him, "You're a believer. With all your energy, why aren't you up and at it for the Lord?" Heinz went home angry. That night he couldn't sleep; at 4 in the morning he prayed God would use him to lead others to Jesus. A few days later, at a meeting of bank presidents, he turned to man next to him and told him about Jesus. His friend looked surprised, and said, "I knew you're a Christian. I've often wondered why you never talked to me about it." That man was the first of 267 he eventually won to Christ—Heinz' "267 varieties" from all walks of life!

**PAUL'S REASON FOR BEING:
TO PRESENT US ALL TO GOD –(EVERYONE!)
COMPLETE (PERFECT) IN CHRIST**

Not just saved, but *perfect—all God wants us to be!*

Paul proclaimed message to everyone, he exhorted and taught continually.

He's grateful he can spread the word to everyone!

The work was hard. God never said ministry would be easy. It's difficult. Impossible!

Paul put everything he had into accomplishing this goal.

His inexhaustible resource 1:29

God provides all the resources we need.

Our source of energy isn't the flesh. It isn't our own hard work.

We're energized by God. 1:29

5 words demonstrate how great struggle is and power God provides to accomplish this goal.

Paul uses all these resources to present us all perfect in Christ.

What are WE living for?

In what are we investing our life?

Is there another goal more important than this that God desires to accomplish through us?

Why not make this OUR primary goal in life?

What steps would that require for US to pursue this goal?

PAUL'S STRUGGLE THAT WE NOT BE MISLED 2:1-5

Paul's passion—he's excited about the ministry to which God called Him.

He cares intensely about those to whom God called Him.

He longs to see us grow in understanding what God has done for us.

Because of the greatness of the message which has been entrusted to Paul, the enemy dedicates himself to preventing him from accomplishing it.

He tries to distract Paul and present obstacles in the path toward that goal.

Paul is involved in a continual struggle to keep us from being deceived by those who present such persuasive arguments. **2:1**

He wants us to understand the greatness of this salvation **2:2-3**; Eph. 3:14-21

When we grasp all God has done for us, and its implications, we won't want to go back to old ways of Judaic system with its laws and rituals.

The problem: it isn't easy for people to understand how great God's work is.

Stimulus to go on comes from the bond of love with others in Christ who seek the same goal.

That bond of love helps us understand what God has done for us through Jesus' work.

When we know Him, we discover all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge so we won't be drawn away by other traditions or religions.

This understanding constitutes the best insurance against deception.

Paul is concerned about the danger that we might be deceived by false doctrine.

He dedicates himself to fighting for us, so we might not be led astray.

Judaizers were basing beliefs on other sources of authority they considered equal with the Bible.

They gave greater weight to these sources than to Word of God. Faced with this threat, Paul responded with the warning that WE not let anyone deceive us, no matter how persuasive their arguments! **2:4**

False teachers try to deceive or distract people by logical arguments.

They use words calculated to convince—persuasive arguments.

Popular arguments still try to do that.

They are carefully constructed to sound great.

Beautiful, slick presentations convince many who have never fully understood greatness of salvation God offers us by trusting Jesus alone.

Paul warns us about those who come with attractive words and convincing arguments, but who contradict this message. Paul never minced words about those who brought a different message of salvation.

He's tolerant of people who oppose him *personally*, but resists people who come with a different "gospel."

***The false doctrine of salvation
through our own efforts
always comes wrapped in pretty packages
and persuasive arguments!***

God's people depend on message God Himself sent:

"Christ has done *everything* for us.

We can't add *anything* to His work."

Satan has repeated his message so frequently and so well we're almost convinced by his logic:

"You have to do *something*. It isn't logical to think God would just give us eternal life free!"

Paul reminds us that from beginning to end, everything depends on the fact that we are "*in Christ*."

Though absent physically, Paul's heart is still with them. **2:5**

He wants to see us develop in our faith.

He wants us to understand its implications.

He wants to see us firmly established in what we believe about Jesus and His work.

As we received Christ by faith, so Christian life is by faith in Him. 2:6-7

This message is different from world's message: we have to do *something*, at least add a few of our own good efforts.

The two systems contradict each other.

You can't be saved by faith plus works, because when you try to do it by works, you stop trusting Him and start trusting your own works!

Neither can you start out by faith and finish by works.

The two principles don't mix!

Which path will we take?

That which God established: trusting the completed work of Christ on the cross;

or that which Satan promotes: "I can do it myself!"?

J. C. Masee told of a friend who traveled a great distance to **interview a scholar**. He asked host, "Doctor, I notice the walls of your study are lined with books from ceiling to floor. You have read much. You have written many yourself. You have traveled extensively, and doubtless you've had the privilege of conversing with some of the smartest men—leaders of thought, creators of opinion. Out of all you've learned, what's the one thing most worth knowing?" The scholar replied with emotion, "Of all the things I've learned, only two are really worth knowing. 1st, I am a great sinner, and 2nd, Jesus is a great Savior!"

My hope is in the Lord Who gave Himself for me,
And paid the price of all my sin at Calvary.

No merit of my own His anger to suppress,
My *only* hope is found in Jesus's righteousness.

And now for me He stands Before the Father's throne,
He shows His wounded hands, and names me as His own.

His grace has planned it all, 'Tis mine but to believe,
And recognize His work of love and Christ receive.

REFRAIN: For me He died, For me He lives, And everlasting life
and light He freely gives.

Paul throws himself into this work because he believes
in its importance.

He's grateful for the privilege of proclaiming such a great message!

He suffers greatly because of his commitment and his
intense desire that God's children make the right
decision, but he has no regrets.

He is completing the work Christ began and that
motivates him to go on, when he might otherwise
feel like throwing in the towel.

PAUL PRESSES ON BECAUSE HE CARES ABOUT GOD'S CHILDREN

He presses on because he knows God's people benefit from it.
He presses on so that everyone will understand how great it is
to be in Christ.

He presses on, whether people appreciate it or not.

He presses on, so that God's people won't be misled by fine-
sounding arguments

He cares about his children and won't give them up without a fight!

DO WE CARE THAT MUCH ABOUT PEOPLE AROUND US?

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

Are WE modeling confidence that OUR hope is in the Lord?

Are WE telling other people about what Jesus has done for US?

–that Jesus is OUR hope too?

When we are in Him, we are complete. We lack nothing!

Are we committed to spreading that message around, to everyone?