

JESUS IS ENOUGH!!!

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

Christ In You – The Hope of Glory

Most of us love good mysteries! Today, we are going to look into a mystery of God that existed for generations but has since been revealed to His saints. Just so you know up front, this mystery of God is Jesus Christ! In Paul's day and still today would-be 'wise' men attempted to build a church without Christ, and to proclaim a salvation without a Savior. C.H. Spurgeon said, 'Their Babel building was a bowing wall and a tottering fence.'

The Colossians were being 'fed' false teachings. They were surrounded by pagans and were mistakenly trying to make the message of Christ fit into pagan ways resulting in people thinking that Jesus was not the only way to God. Their false teaching may have been similar to the modern false teaching called channeling. Channelers try to make contact with spiritual beings for the purpose of receiving spiritual enlightenment not otherwise available. *Ecclesiastes 1:9 (ESV)*⁹ *What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.* The many ways to deny Christ is not new theology. It is the devil's lie from the beginning.

In the church of Colossae the 'Babel builders' were attacking the mystery of God that had already been revealed. They said Christ was not God and that further revelation was needed to obtain eternal life. What the Colossians needed was not more revelation but reconciliation.

First Alienated – Then Redeemed

*Read Colossians 1:21-23 (ESV)*²¹ *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,*²² *he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,*²³ *if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

All of us have experienced times and may still be experiencing times when we find ourselves 'at odds' with loved ones and/or friends. It is an unpleasant experience to say the least. Even more unpleasant is being 'at odds' with our Creator. It is a matter of life and death! The word alienation comes from the root word alien, which means **foreigner or stranger**. To be alienated from God means that we have made ourselves strangers to Him because of our sin. *Romans 3:10 (ESV)*¹⁰ *as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one.*

Humanity became strangers to God in the Garden of Eden when sin severed our relationship with Him because of the first couple's disobedience. Reconciliation in scripture is the process by which we are brought together again with God – reconciled. One of my favorite verses is *Romans 5:8 (ESV)* *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Even though the broken relationship was our fault, God loved us anyway – loved us enough to do something about it.

In Lesson 1 of this series, I mentioned that the Gnostics were teaching that Jesus did not actually die on the cross but ascended to the divine realm from which He had come. Paul answered this accusation by reminding the Colossians and us that we are *reconciled in his body of flesh by his death*. I cannot fully comprehend it but the Bible says in **Hebrews 9:22 (ESV)** ²² *Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

The only way to reconcile us to God for the sole purpose of presenting us to God as holy, blameless and above reproach is through the sacrifice of the flesh of Jesus. What Christ did for us in His flesh is so astounding that it is blasphemy to suggest that He did not literally die on the cross. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ *For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.* The Colossians were leaning towards emptying the cross of its power.

Those who believe a person can lose their salvation might use Paul's 'if statement' in verse 23 as a proof text. However, what Paul is saying is not an 'if condition' but an 'if argument' meaning if you are a child of God today, you will continue in the faith grounded and settled.

Ironside says, "Paul did not pretend to know who of the Colossians were really born of God. While he had confidence that most of them were, he wanted to stir up the consciences of any who were becoming slack. Their readiness to adopt new and fanciful systems was a cause for grave concern. Those who are really children of God, grounded and strengthened in the truth, will not be moved away from the hope of the gospel. Knowing what it has already done for them, they will not lightly turn away from it to some new and untried theory." Keep this in mind:

**We are not saved by continuing in the faith.
We continue in the faith which proves that we are saved.**

It is the responsibility of each professing Christian to test our own faith and examine our own hearts to be sure we are a child of God

Read 2 Corinthians 13:5 (ESV) ⁵ *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!.*

How do test our faith to discover if we are really 'born again?'

We know we are born again if we have the Holy Spirit in us.

Read Romans 8:9 (ESV) ⁹ *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*

We know that we are born again if we love our brothers.

Read 1 John 3:14 (ESV) ¹⁴ *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.*

We know we are born again when we practice righteousness.

Read 1 John 2:29 (ESV) ²⁹ *If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.*

These are just a few of the tests we can apply to our own lives to be certain that we are the children of God.

Read Colossians 1:24-26 (ESV) ²⁴ *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,* ²⁵ *of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,* ²⁶ *the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.*

Suffering has been part of man's human experience since man's fall into sin. One-third of the book of **Psalms** is about suffering and includes graphic descriptions of suffering. The theme of the book of **Job** is the problem of suffering and why God permits the righteous to suffer. The Bible makes it clear that some suffering is the **result of evil action or sin** in the world.

Read Galatians 6:7-8 (ESV) ⁷ *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.* ⁸ *For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

The Bible also shows that some suffering is not related to the past. Instead it is forward-looking and shapes and refines God's children.

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV) ⁶ *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,* ⁷ *so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

All believers face trials. We must accept trials as part of the refining process that burns away impurities and prepares us to meet Christ. As gold is heated, impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off. Likewise, our trials, struggles, and persecutions refine and strengthen our faith, making us useful to God. Instead of asking, "Why me?" we should respond to suffering with confidence, perseverance, and courage.

Remember:

- Suffering provides examples for the demonstration of God's power. **2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*
- Suffering puts us in the position to comfort others who suffer. Suffering helps believers to identify with Christ. **2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (ESV)** ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,* ⁴ *who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able*

to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Paul was willing to suffer anything that was necessary to get the message of salvation to others. Through our own personal sufferings we should be mindful of opportunities to share the message of Christ. Remember: Serving Christ does not offer a trouble free existence. But, we can cling to the promise of **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**
²⁸ *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

Paul saw himself as a servant who was responsible to take the message to others. There is a danger to belonging to a church with a full-time paid staff. It creates the tendency in church members to believe that the staff is paid to minister and the rest of us have no responsibility. I suggest that if something is on your heart that you believe the “staff” should do such as hospital visiting, contacting absent members or visitors to the church, or even telling a particular person about Jesus, it may be that God is speaking to you to perform that task.

Back to that mystery I mentioned in the beginning. The word mystery was used by the Gnostics. During this time, there were mystery religions that were characterized by elaborate initiation rituals and secret rites. Paul mentioned the word mystery at least 21 times. We could do quite a few lessons on biblical mysteries, but for our purposes today what we need to know biblically speaking is a mystery is an ‘open secret’. Herschel Hobbs says, “God’s purpose to save Gentiles as well as Jews in Christ was a mystery hidden in the mind of God through the ages; but it was revealed in Jesus Christ.” A biblical mystery cannot be discovered through research or reason. The mystery Paul was speaking of could only be revealed through divine revelation.

Read Colossians 1:27-29 (ESV) ²⁷ *To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* ²⁸ *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.* ²⁹ *For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*

It was unknown in Old Testament times that God himself would indwell every believer.

The indwelling Christ is the believer’s hope of glory.

Theodore Epp writes, “On the surface the emphasis of Christ in you may not seem so important. But, when we grasp the significance of this great truth our thinking about Christ and ourselves will be changed and even our prayer life will be changed.” Epp goes on to say, “I well remember when I was a young preacher and my father had grasped the glorious truth of “Christ in you.” These were good words to me, but I did not see the importance in them that my father did. But one of the red-letter days of my life was when God opened my inner eyes and ears to understand what it really is to be in Christ and to have Him in me. I then experienced a change in my outlook on life in general and on my prayer life in particular. I experienced a new insight and a new understanding of what it means to be able to say: *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20*