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God Has a Purpose for You (Colossians 1:24—2:5)

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THE PRE-EMINENT Christ has a place in His work and purpose for your life. He wants to make you holy and blameless and share with you His glory.

Jesus is pre-eminent above all things: the image of the invisible God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, the head of the church, and the source of reconciliation.

Paul tried to impress the pre-eminence and supremacy of Jesus upon the Colossians because of competing philosophies and systems of thought and religion that were reaching for their minds. He encouraged them to keep their eyes on the all-sufficient Christ and not to let anything distract them from the source of all the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and power. The competing philosophies would only lead them away from what is important and powerful.

Jesus is above all. Upon Him all history and reality will ultimately converge.

We are impressed with the cosmic Christ—His power and purpose over all. But what about you and me? Where do we fit into such a cosmic world view? Does He have a plan for me? How does He bring life together for me?

Paul discussed these grand purposes as he explained his personal ministry and the purpose of God (1:24—2:5).

What is God's purpose for you?

A MYSTERY TO SEE (1:27)

The mystery was hidden for ages and generations (1:26). It is now made known (1:26, 27). It is a mystery filled with glory and riches (1:27).

The mystery is "Christ in you, the hope of

glory" (1:27). Christ is the focus of the glorious mystery. Glory is the ultimate aim of the mystery. Glory resides in God, His nature, honor, His loftiness, and majesty. The glory is now seen in Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:5, 6). He invites us to participate in and share His glory in hope here and in consummation in eternity (2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 1:3, 4). Ultimate glorification implies a share in the divine glory by transfiguration (cf. Romans 8:17, 30; 1 John 3:1-3).

This glory is now possessed and enjoyed in hope (1:5; 1:27). Christ in you reveals the personal reality and guarantee of the promise. Christ's presence in us is not some mystical intrusion by an external Spirit. It is the union of our lives with the purpose, person, and nature of Jesus. It is the submission of our lives to His lordship and the reconciliation of our lives to His Father by His blood. It is the oneness of our lives through our faith and trust in Him (cf. 3:3, 4; Galatians 2:20). Christ in us is the hope of glory.

Paul wanted to be sure that their hope was in the right object. What about you? Is your hope in knowledge, philosophy, ingenuity, earthly gain, power, or prestige? Is it in performance, tradition, or human regulations? All of these can distract you from Him who is the real source of hope. We must fill our lives with the Christ—with His nature, purpose, and will.

A PURPOSE TO REALIZE (1:28)

What is the "Christ in us" seeking to do now?

... present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach (1:22).

... that we may present every man complete in Christ (1:28).

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (1:9-14).

... that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God (4:12).

... I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you (Galatians 4:19).

Jesus is not content to save. He wants to change us, to sanctify us, to transform us. How does He do this? He reveals Himself to honest, open hearts through His Word. He allows His mind to be reproduced in us through our knowledge and communion with Him. The Christian refuses to be distracted from the true source of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:6, 7, 18, 19 says,

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

... Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

Live in Him, be rooted in Him, be built up in Him, be established in the faith, and hold fast to the Head.

A MINISTRY TO FULFILL (1:24—2:5)

The divine compulsion of a mature Christian is evident in Paul's life. He was compelled to present every man mature in Christ (1:28). He, like Jesus, was ready to suffer for the sake of the body (1:24). He was toiling and striving with all

his energy (1:29—2:1). It is the reason he wrote this letter.

How can it be done? We can see that Christ is taught and proclaimed. Colossians 1:28 says, "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ." We can see that love prevails. Colossians 2:2 says, "That their hearts may be encouraged. . . ." Where do I fit in? I can exalt, teach, study, talk, live, and rejoice in the Christ. I must be careful of distractions. I must beware of the appearance of busy ministry that is not focused on Jesus and beware of bemoaning the immaturity in the lives of the brethren. I must get to work in building up the body. God has not only called us to salvation and maturity, but to ministry. Maturity in Christ leads to ministry in Christ. It longs for the spiritual enrichment and completeness of others.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is my everything. He is the pre-eminent One in everything. He can be in you the hope of glory. He fills your life and brings you to maturity. He makes your life a blessing to others as you encourage them and present them mature in Christ.

God has a purpose for you. It is bound up in the all-sufficient Christ from beginning to end. Yield to him and be strengthened by His glorious power.

What Is My Whole Life?

For what are you living? Several years ago, the San Francisco *Chronicle* reported a burial in Cypress Lawn Cemetery. A young man, killed in a motorcycle wreck, was buried—along with his Harley-Davidson. His sobbing mother said, "It was his whole life!"

Before we shake our heads in disbelief or snicker in condescension, maybe we ought to ask, "What would someone bury with me? Would loving survivors entomb my checkbook? my record collection? my travel souvenirs? my golf clubs? my car keys? What is my whole life?"

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