

Expressing The Truth  
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Colossians 1:21-2:7

Opening: Have you ever bought a car or a new TV or a computer, and after using it a while someone comes along and shows you features you had no idea it had?

If it's a computer, who usually shows us what it will do? It's usually our kids.

"I had no idea it would do that!"

Think about this example: What if someone gave you tickets to a concert by an artist or band that you just absolutely love and you just chose to stand in the lobby? "Oh, I can hear 'em" You're IN but you aren't enjoying the FULL MEASURE of the experience. Ridiculous right?

How many times do we not take full advantage of something at our disposal or an experience we're entitled to?

Colossians 2:2-3 Paul writes:

2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

How many Christians STOP at SALVATION and not enjoy the "full riches" of life with Christ?

Since we've missed the beginning of our journey into Colossians let me give you setting:

- Paul had never visited the church at Colosse --- evidently the church was founded by Epaphras and other converts from Paul's missionary travels.
- The church had been infiltrated by false teachers who were attempting to combine elements of paganism and secular philosophy with Christian doctrine.
- Epaphras was so concerned he went to see Paul in prison in Rome and Paul writes this letter to try to confront these false teachings.

Colossians 1:21-23

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of[a] your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

- Verse 21 tells us WHAT we were and why we WERE.
- ... "enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior"

- In an unbeliever there is a "...mental alienation as well as a moral alienation." (J.V. McGee)
- Power translation: Pagans THINK like pagans...that's why they act like they do!
- Paul is NOT saying unbelievers are lost because of sins they commit; they commit the sins BECAUSE THEY ARE LOST.
- Paul is saying to these church members in Colosse: You were alienated from God because your MIND was alienated from God.
- Verse 22 he reminds us of what we ARE and HOW we got there.
- RECONCILED by Christ's physical body through death
- He emphasizes PHYSICAL BODY to counteract the heresy of the Gnostics who were saying Jesus was not really a man just a spirit.
- Jesus was FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN.
- RECONCILED

2 Cor. 5:17-21 Paul talks about "The Ministry of Reconciliation"

- A new creation
- All from God...who reconciled us to Himself through Christ
- Gave US the MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION
- We are ambassadors for Christ

Reconciliation is not man seeking God but God seeking man!

J. Vernon McGee said:

*God is not out to get you...He is waiting with arms outstretched to forgive us and to reconcile with man.*

- What results from this RECONCILIATION?
- Verse 22 says Christ's sacrifice will "present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation"
- God made a way that we can be COUNTED AS RIGHTEOUS in His sight.
- Verse 23: Says "If you continue in your faith..."
- Question: Is Paul saying that a Christian might NOT continue in our faith? What do you think?
- Many believers argue about ETERNAL SECURITY...the doctrine of the PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Wayne Grudem in Systematic Theology: (I will only highlight in the interest of time but here are the full quotes:

***The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again.***

*This definition has two parts to it. It indicates first that there is assurance to be given to those who are truly born again, for it reminds them that God's power will keep them as Christians until they die, and they will surely live with Christ in heaven forever. On the other hand, the second half of the definition makes it clear that continuing in the Christian life is one of the evidences that a person is truly born again. It is important to*

*keep this aspect of the doctrine in mind as well, lest false assurance be given to people who were never really believers in the first place.*

***There may have been people at Colossae who had joined in the fellowship of the church, and perhaps even professed that they had faith in Christ and had been baptized into membership of the church, but who never had true saving faith. How is Paul to distinguish such people from true believers? How can he avoid giving them false assurance, assurance that they will be saved eternally when in fact they will not, unless they come to true repentance and faith? Paul knows that those whose faith is not real will eventually fall away from participation in the fellowship of the church. Therefore he tells his readers that they will ultimately be saved, "provided that you continue in the faith" (Col. 1:23). Those who continue show thereby that they are genuine believers. But those who do not continue in the faith show that there was no genuine faith in their hearts in the first place.***

I do not believe Paul was saying that believers could become UNBELIEVERS again

John 10:29 (New International Version, ©2011)

29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all[a]; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

Like the old hymn says: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day."

I believe he WAS saying if your faith in Christ is not real... time will tell

To summarize: You were alienated from God; God RECONCILED you to himself through Christ; and if you are TRULY SAVED you are without blemish and seen as "holy in His sight" because of Christ.

Here's the point of these verses:

If we'll remember what we WERE without God; we'll praise Him for WHAT HE DID about it!

And if, with all our hearts, we've TRULY ACCEPTED WHAT HE DID...we WILL CONTINUE in the faith. And no one can "snatch" us out of our Father's hand!

Now if you BELIEVE that and are GRATEFUL for that...then you and I will want to DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT...and even be willing to PAY A PRICE to serve God.

Colossians 1:24-29

Paul's Labor for the Church

24 Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of

God in its fullness— 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

- Verse 24: Paul's makes a startling statement! "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions..."
- We just said God made a way through Christ and we believe there is nothing we are to do for salvation. Is this a contradiction? NO!
- Paul was suffering in his body for Christ's body...the church... but we're talking about a different kind of suffering.
- The sufferings of Paul were NOT redemptive. They mean nothing as to the redemption of others.
- There are some sufferings we can share with Christ and some we cannot.
- We cannot share in Christ's "human" suffering.
- (Example: Physical suffering of loved ones.)
- How many times has a parent stood by a suffering child and said "I just wish I could take that suffering away from them and absorb it myself"?
- We also cannot share Christ's suffering for redemption...ONLY CHRIST was the SINLESS, SPOTLESS SACRIFICE that would atone for our sins.
- Paul is NOT saying that Christ's REDEMPTIVE sacrifice was LACKING in any way
- So what WAS he saying?
- As believers, we CAN share and we WILL share in certain kinds of Christ's suffering.
- We can...
- Suffer for righteousness' sake - You'll suffer if you stand for Christ in this world
- Suffer in the measure in which we identify ourselves with Christ

John MacArthur said:

*"In spite of His death on the cross, Christ's enemies had not gotten their fill of inflicting injury on Him. So they turned their hatred on those who preached gospel."*

John 15:18 (New International Version, ©2011)

Jesus said:

18 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

- We also have to "pay a price" for others to come to Christ.
- This is really what Paul is talking about regarding his own suffering
- Mothers Day is coming up.
- Question for all the Moms in the room...show of hands...if you have natural children, how many of you brought your children into the world with no suffering of any kind? Anyone? Dad's how many of you felt a thing?
- That's a great reminder of how we should honor our Mothers.

- I don't care if you have a terrible relationship with your mom...if you got here SHE SUFFERED!

John Gill a great theologian from hundreds of years ago reminded us that just as a mother must suffer for her child to be born; someone must pay a price for people to be born again.

- It costs something to reach people for Christ. Someone has to pay a price.
- It might be the price of risking resentment when we share the gospel.
- The risk of offending a friend or family member.
- That's a suffering WE can and SHOULD share in.
- Paul said he REJOICED in what he had suffered for this church and others like them.

Christians should REJOICE in being able to go through LABOR PAINS to see others BORN AGAIN.

- You see Paul had been chosen to reveal a "mystery" as he says in verse 26.
- What was that mystery that had been hidden and was not revealed in the Old Testament?
- That the Gospel was available to ALL not only the Jews but also the GENTILES.

Acts 9:15 (New International Version, ©2011)

The voice of God said of Paul:

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.

- Here's a perspective for you. God didn't just say that to Ananias about Paul. If you are a believer, God has said about YOU: (your name) is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name.
- To proclaim: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."
- To tell people you can have "Christ in you, the hope of glory."
- Question: Look at verse 28 - What do we proclaim? Trick question it's really WHO do we proclaim?

J. Vernon McGee said:

The Gospel is not WHAT we preach it is WHOM we preach! The gospel IS Christ. You don't share the Gospel without sharing Christ.

What's the point?

If we remember WHAT we WERE and WHAT GOD DID FOR US; we will be willing to suffer some LABOR PAINS to see others BORN again.

Colossians 2:1-3

Colossians 2

1 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. 2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

- Verse 1: Paul says he is working hard on behalf of this church and other churches
- Look at Verse 2: What was his goal? Would someone just read that verse?
- Let's just unpack that a bit:
- Encouraged in heart - That's straight forward...I don't want you to be DIScouraged I want you to be ENCouraged.
- United in love - I want you all to get along as brothers and sisters in Christ
- But here is the REAL HEART OF PAUL'S GOAL:
- Have the full riches in understanding to know the mystery of God...namely, Christ
- These people were confronted with FALSE TEACHING and FALSE DOCTRINES and Paul wanted them to have the FULL UNDERSTANDING of the TRUTH of Christ

John MacArthur writes:

*The false teachers claimed to possess a secret wisdom available only to the spiritual elite...*

*Paul declared that all the richness of truth necessary for salvation, sanctification, and glorification is found in Jesus Christ.*

Here's the point:

If we remember WHAT WE WERE and WHAT GOD DID ABOUT IT...we'll want to ENCOURAGE other believers in LOVE to have CONFIDENCE in Christ and who He is.

Paul said in verse 4:

4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.

- "Fine sounding arguments"
- Sadly, if many believers are challenged to explain what they believe...they can't.
- Many believers stopped at salvation and never went any farther in their knowledge of Christ
- You know the old saying: "You've got to stand for something or you'll...fall for anything."
- We can't REFUTE false teaching if we don't learn everything we can about the TRUTH
- We can only do that by DEEPENING OUR OWN RELATIONSHIP with Christ.

5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Paul wanted them to be equipped in their faith because he wouldn't be there to do it for them.

Verse 6 sums it up nicely:

6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him,  
7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

- Circle those ACTION words
- I want you to CONTINUE to LIVE YOUR LIVES IN HIM
- What does he want us to be?
- Rooted
- Built up in Him
- Strengthened in the faith
- Overflowing with thankfulness

What's the point?

Don't get saved and just stop at salvation...eternal life...but live the Christian life to the fullest!

So What's The Takeaway?

- If we REMEMBER what we WERE and WHAT God DID ABOUT IT...
- We will CONTINUE TO TRUST HIM DAILY
- We will BE WILLING TO PAY A PRICE to see others come to Christ
- We will ENCOURAGE other believers in love and unity to have CONFIDENCE in Christ and who He is.
- We will help other believers stay away from false teaching...and to do that
- We will DEEPEN our relationship with Christ through studying His Word and time with Him