

## Jesus is Our Hope

### Col 1:21-29

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#### Introduction

We know the Bible list: faith, hope, love. Hope is one of the “big three.” God gives us hope. How can we experience and know the hope God desires for us? How can we be what God calls us to be, maintaining hope?

Why do we lose hope? Why do we let go? The concept of hope has strong appeal—to do all that we can do, be all that we can be. To be better, to become capable—these are human hungers. No matter how degraded, downcast or frustrated, everyone longs for fulfillment. And yet, as we observe the bewildering tragedy of human life, we are left shaking our heads at the seeming impossibility of that. In ministry, I listen to stories from members, friends, and almost always in the media, describing endless shame, hurt, pain, murder, divorce, cruelty, abuse and personal failure. Is there a possibility of reversing this?

The good news of the gospel answers with a resounding “Yes”! It can be done! In fact, that is what the apostle Paul says in the letter to the Colossians. This is a first century description of how a life can be changed: “Once you alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 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--- if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.” (Colossians 1:21-23)

What a marvelous thing to find hope in this dark world! How wonderful that God himself helps us to make this change! That is a good word to remember. God is at work. He is sovereign. He can and does reconcile people to himself and make changes in their lives. Col 1:21-29 is a description of the process of change in a human being. It traces **four factors for our study—the essence of hope, the evidence of hope, the enigma (mystery) of hope, the expression of hope.**

Hope involves a reversal of attitude, a change of outlook occurs when you come into contact with the Savior himself. Paul says there was a time when all of us who are now Christians were “alienated from God.” We did not see our need for God. He was not part of our thinking. We did not consider him important. We started and ended each day without thinking about him. We sought our own plans, lived for ourselves, and did what we wanted to do, never giving a thought to God. Or if we did think of God, he was merely a remote Being on the horizon of life, but we never expected anything from him. Because we excluded him from our thinking—even though he was sustaining our very life--we ended up, as “enemies in our minds,” hostile toward God. We did not want anything to do with him. We avoided God. We thought he would interfere with our plans, making us live uneventful and unhappy lives. We were not open to him at all. We were enemies of God, and as a result we expressed that enmity in evil behavior. That is what this text says. Some translations make it sound as though evil behavior is the cause of inner alienation and hostility toward God. It is the opposite. Inner alienation--estrangement from God and hostility toward him, causes evil behavior.

“But now we are reconciled to God.” Something has happened. It occurred when we saw that the death of Jesus was for us, that he had done something to set aside the separation, our brokenness and hurt, and that if we came to him in faith he would deliver us. So we came. Something happened then to our inner attitude. We were changed in our thinking. We no longer saw God as an enemy and a Judge, but as a loving Father. We recognized that the cross was not a symbol of failure but it was a moment when the great enemies that all men face were conquered. Death was overcome and all the evil powers were destroyed. Our whole life was changed.

#### The essence of hope—Christ

Col. 1:21-23. How can a life be changed? The gospel is the grand secret: the mystery of mysteries. It was hidden from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the saints. To most human beings it was unknown. The chosen people only perceived it dimly through the smoke of sacrifices and the veil of types. It remained a mystery which no level of intelligence could guess. It would have forever continued as a secret had not God in his infinite mercy revealed it by the Holy Spirit. It is yet a hidden thing unless the revelation of the Spirit of God is accepted.

We live in a time when the gospel is clearly revealed in the word of God. When faithful preachers preach its teachings, let us take care that we do not despise the mystery. Let not the commonness of the blessing cause us to undervalue it.

The result of Christ's death is mystery, riches, and glory. Christ is the mystery: without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh. Jesus wears the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus is our treasure and in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Christ is mystery, riches, and glory.

The essence of this mystery is Christ himself. These days some are attempting to build a church without Christ and to present a salvation without a Savior. The center of the blessed mystery of the gospel is Christ himself. God took upon himself the human nature. God and man in the person of Jesus is a mystery. The thought of the incarnation was born in the wisdom of God. Omnipotent omniscience was required to suggest the idea of Immanuel, God with us. The heart of the gospel is in this very truth (Hebrews 2:14-18). He can sympathize with our experience fully (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Philippians 2:7-10: Being found in fashion as man he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus came to serve us. Col. 1:20-23, 3:11.

### **The evidence of hope--perseverance**

Col. 1:21-23. God wants to change lives. That is the good news. If you want your life to be changed, begin with God. Change begins with hearts open to Christ, to acknowledge him as Lord. It is the first step in a process with a specific goal, "to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." That is God's purpose. The evidence is, "if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel." Here is the reality. Many people start the Christian life, filled with joy because they have found something new. But it does not last. It fades. Finally, they set Christianity aside and go back to their previous lives. How sad! They have lost hope, because the evidence of hope is in perseverance.

### **The enigma (mystery) of hope—Christ in us**

Christ in you means that you have accepted Christ.

It is a wonderful thing to understand that Christ is in us. He lives in us (Eph. 3:17) by faith. Let us grow in faith; Christ in us by faith is the hope of glory.

Christ in you means that you are possessed by Christ, owned by Christ.

We belong to Christ, 1 Cor. 6:19-20. Christ is Lord.

Christ in you means you are empowered by Christ.

It is not easy to live the Christian life, but Christ can do it, and he wants to do it in us.

Christ in you means you are ruled by Christ.

Christ in you signifies the royalty of Jesus. Jesus is king. He has every right to rule our lives. He is sovereign Lord.

Christ in you means you are transformed by Christ.

Romans 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:17-18. Gal. 2:20: "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

Christ in you means you are connected to Christ and bear fruit in him.

John 15:1-8: We are the branches and he is the strong and living stem.

### **The expression of hope, the effect of hope--we proclaim him**

We continue on, we do not give up, we are faithful. This includes the continuing proclamation of our faith. The world does not understand this mystery. Therefore, the world cannot offer genuine hope. Hope is found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is why the gospel is such a powerful, world transforming, revolutionary statement. Here Paul tells the believers about their hope in Christ. In Ephesians 1:18 Paul writes, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints..."

Here is a summary: living hope, 1 Pet 1:3; blessed hope, Tit 2:13; joyful hope, 1Th 2:19; comforting hope, 1Th 4:13-18; glorious hope, Col 1:27; hope as an anchor, Heb 6:19; purifying hope, 1 John 3:2-3

### **Summary and Conclusion**