

# Christ in you, the hope of glory

Colossians 1:26-27

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We live in a time where our hope has been challenged. We see it in the streets, where everyone now wears masks wherever they go. We hear about it in the government, where the elections are getting more and more chaotic and some even threatening violence. We watch it on the news, where corruption, scandal and the pandemic get so much attention. We see it in the economy, where there are so many questions and uncertainties. We see it in the values and the moral standards of our society, where more and more people are choosing to just do whatever seems right in their own eyes. We see it in the church, where many times God's people and the church's leaders are not any different than the people of the world. We even see it in our own lives, as we struggle with temptation, apathy and pride.

In times like these, where do we go to find hope? This is the question that we will seek to answer as we look once again to Paul's writings to the church in Colossae.

The book of Colossians is a letter from the Apostle Paul to the church in Colossae. At this time Paul was in prison in Rome. It was around A.D. 60 or 61. He had been visited by Epaphras, a church leader from Colossae who had reported to Paul about the heresies that were being taught about Christ in the church in Colossae. In response to these heresies about Christ, Paul wrote to the church in Colossae.

In these verses the Apostle Paul is declaring his call of God to make the word of God fully known. Paul is speaking of . . .

***<sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.***

Paul is accomplishing two things with his use of the word "mystery" in these verses. First, Paul is taking and redefining the word "mystery" that the false teachers in Colossae were using. The false teachers acknowledged Jesus, but had stripped Him of His divinity, His authority, and all characteristics that qualified Him to be our God and Savior. Because in their minds Jesus was not the way to God, they now were teaching that to know God the people needed some kind of special revelation, which the false teachers possessed and only the spiritual elite could receive. This was not true. ***"Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Him"*** (John 14:6). Christianity is no mystery religion that is only available for the super spiritual people. In Mark 2:17, we read that Jesus came for the sick, not for the well, for the sinner, not for the righteous.

Salvation is available to all who will turn from their sin and put their faith in Jesus Christ, regardless who we are or what we have done. As we see in verse 10, this good news of Jesus Christ was being preached all over the world and was bearing fruit and increasing. It was not for the “super spiritual”, instead it is for the “poor in spirit” who will acknowledge their sin and weakness and will humble themselves before Jesus Christ. That is great news for us, because we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), but yet God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Because of this all who will turn from their sin and put their faith in Jesus Christ will be saved.

Paul also used the word “mystery” for another reason. In verse 26 Paul says, ***“The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints.”*** As we look back throughout the Old Testament we see glimpses of the gospel, but to those who lived during the Old Testament it was not visible. They could not yet see the imagery of Christ in the garden of Eden, when an innocent animal had to be killed so that the sin and nakedness of Adam and Eve could be covered; or at the first Passover in Egypt, when the lamb was killed so its blood could protect God’s people from death; or when Hosea bought back His adulterous wife, as Christ bought back His bride, the church, by giving His life on the cross so that we could be His.

They could not see the true meaning of the sacrificial lamb, or the veil in the Holy of Holies, or the scapegoat who bore the sins of the people on the Jewish Day of Atonement. They could not see the parallels of the Christian life to the Hebrews in slavery, then in the wilderness, and then in the Promised Land. They could not understand the suffering servant in Isaiah 53. They could not see how God’s one-sided covenant with Abraham would mirror our salvation by faith that was completely accomplished by Christ and nothing that we had done.

Time and again God gave glimpses of Jesus Christ and the salvation that He would bring, but to the people who lived during these ages and generations of the Old Testament, they could not yet see the completed gospel story that God was bringing about. Like a puzzle that only has a small number of pieces in place, the story was not yet ready to be fully recognized.

Galatians 4:4 then tells us that, ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son.”*** The time of imagery and types had come to an end. Jesus, Immanuel, “God with us”, was born, lived, died, rose from the dead, and ascended back to heaven. The mystery of the Old Testament was being made clear and the gospel of Jesus Christ was being revealed.

In John 1:29, John the Baptist saw Jesus and said, ***“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”*** John was beginning to put together the facts of the Old Testament and the purpose of Christ. An even fuller picture of this is found when Jesus joins a couple of his followers on the day of His resurrection as they walked on the road to Emmaus. As they walked together their eyes were kept from recognizing Jesus. They could not understand how Jesus could have been killed. It did not make sense. They had hoped that He was going to redeem Israel, and now Jesus was dead. In response to their misunderstanding of the Old Testament teachings, Jesus began to teach them. Luke 24:27 tells us, ***“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”*** Jesus was removing the mystery and now making clear the gospel story that God had been putting together for ages and generations past.

While the gospel story would now be complete, not all would see and not all would believe.

The truth of Christ cannot be truly seen or believed without the work of the Spirit in one's life, without God drawing one to Himself, without faith being granted. The mystery of the gospel would be revealed to those whose hearts were turned towards God. These are the saints to which Paul refers. Those who have been forgiven and made holy through faith in Jesus Christ.

***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.***

To these saints God made known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery. Let's take a moment to better understand the word "Gentile" in this verse.

When one follows the story through the Old Testament it begins with a promise to one man named Abram. God tells Abram that He will be the father of a great nation and that his descendants will be like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. The Old Testament then follows this story. Through the generations they grow in number. During the time of Moses they grow to become the nation of Israel. They receive the Ten Commandments, the Torah, the priesthood and the tabernacle. They finally move into the land that God had promised them.

During all these years, the people of Israel began to understand that Yahweh was their God and was favoring them alone above the other peoples, because to them alone had He given His revelation. This type of thinking even led many of the early Jewish Christians to think that for a non-Jew to become a follower of Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, they must first become Jews. While one can understand how this type of perspective might have been formed amongst the Jews, God was doing something else that was so much bigger.

If we go back to the early promises of God to Abraham in Genesis 22:18, we find these words, ***"and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."***

God's walking with and blessing the descendants of Abram was just the beginning of His plan. As God taught, blessed, disciplined and guided the people of Israel, He was laying a foundation for the gospel story that was to come. Through Abraham came the Nation of Israel, and through Israel came Jesus Christ. Through Christ came the salvation that is available to the peoples of every nation, even the Gentiles.

That was the original meaning of the word "Gentile". In Hebrew and Greek the word "Gentile" actually meant "people" or "nations." The Greek word is actually *ta ethnē*, from where we get the word "ethnic" or "ethnicity". Only later did the word Gentile come to mean the "non-Jewish" nations. In Galatians 3:8 you can even find this same Greek word, *ta ethnē*, translated "Gentiles", and later in the verse translated "nations" because of the context.

***"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles (τὰ ἔθνη, ta ethnē) by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations (τὰ ἔθνη, ta ethnē) be blessed.'"***

It is now among the Gentiles, those supposed barbaric, pagan peoples, that Paul is now proclaiming the glories of the riches of this mystery of God. It must have been so strange for the Christian Jews to believe that the Messiah had come for all peoples, even those who had been foreigners and aliens for all these generations.

It might be similar to the story that Jesus told in Matthew 20:1-16. A landowner went out early to hire day laborers for his vineyards. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them out into the vineyard. The landowner went back out at nine, noon and three, and hired more workers, telling them that they would be paid a fair wage. The landowner went out one more time at 5:00 pm in the afternoon, and saw men still standing in the city square. He hired them for a few hours labor. When the day was finished he called the workers to himself.

He first paid the workers who had been hired at 5:00 pm in the afternoon and gave them one denarius. When those who were hired early in the morning saw this, they thought that surely they would receive more, but the landowner paid them a denarius as well. They began to grumble, but the landowner responded, ***“I am not being unfair to you, friend . . . Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”***

In the same way the Jews had walked with Yahweh for generations, through the Egyptian slavery, through the wilderness, conquering the Promised Land and even enduring the Babylonian Exile, and now the Gentiles were being invited in to receive the same glorious riches that were theirs in Christ.

Yes, that was exactly what was happening. God’s promise to Abraham was that his descendants would become a nation that would bless the nations. As Paul preached the gospel and non-Jews believed, this promise was becoming a reality.

But what was this mystery that had been hidden for so long? What was this all-important truth that was at the core of the gospel?

***“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”***

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit would temporarily come upon someone for a certain purpose and then the Holy Spirit would leave them. In the New Testament we see something different. At salvation, when a person puts their faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live in them. So much so that believers are now referred to as the temple of God in the New Testament. We are now the place where God dwells. Before, the temple where God dwelt was in Jerusalem, but now He lives within each of us (1 Corinthians 3:16).

In Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul says that we are ***“sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance.”*** At salvation, although we are not yet in the eternal presence of God, we receive the Holy Spirit as our down payment and guarantee of what is to come. The Spirit is proof that God will keep His promises to be with us both now and for eternity.

Many times in scripture the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of Christ. That is what is referred to here when Paul says, ***“Christ in you”***. The Spirit of Christ lives in all who have put their faith in Jesus. It is a huge advantage and resource for us to be intimately related to Christ in this way. As Jesus told His disciples in John 16:7, ***“I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”***

Jesus’ disciples must have been confused when Jesus said this to them. They had walked with Jesus for 3 years, every moment of every day. He was the Christ, the Son of God. What could be better than Jesus walking with you? Jesus living in you. This restored intimate relationship with God is the core of the gospel message.

We, who were alienated and hostile in mind and doing evil deeds, now have a way to draw near to God. And not just near, Christ now lives in us and we are in Christ. It changes everything.

When Christ comes into our lives it completely changes our relationship to God. Scripture describes it in this way. We are changed from dark to light, slavery to freedom, aliens to citizens, enemy to friend, lost to found, sick to well, guilty to innocent, condemned to forgiven, separated to brought near, wrath to mercy, rebellion to repentance, despair to delight, from death to life.

Being in Christ is the key to our spiritual life and relationship with God. On our own merit we have no possibility of standing in the presence of a holy God. Christ is our hope. Read through the following verses and see how being in Christ has reconciled us to God:

- Romans 6:23 – ***“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”.***
- Ephesians 2:13 – ***“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”***
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 – ***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ (Jesus), he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ (Jesus), not counting men’s sins against them.”***
- Ephesians 2:4-10 – ***“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”***

In Christ we are now allowed into the presence of God. We have been forgiven. We are now seen as righteous, counted innocent, and have been adopted into the family of God. In Christ everything has changed. We no longer are ostracized because of our sin. Now, clothed in Christ, we receive the full benefits of a child of the king. Read the following verses to see what we have gained by being in Christ:

- Romans 8:1 – ***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***
- Galatians 3:28 – ***There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.***
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 – ***Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.***
- Philippians 4:6-7 – ***Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

- Ephesians 1:3 – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, in Christ (Jesus).*
- Romans 8:37-39 – *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- 2 Corinthians 1:20-22 – *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ (Jesus).*
- Philippians 4:19 – *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

Is that what is being experienced in our lives and in the lives of the “Christians” that we know? Is Christ meeting all of our needs according to His glorious riches? God has already given us access to the glorious riches in Christ Jesus, but we often find ourselves living in the flesh, in a way that is void of the power and presence of Christ. We have turned away from all that we have in Christ and have put our hope in ourselves or in the world. But it does not have to be this way.

***“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”***

When we usually use the word “hope” we use it as wishful thinking. A possibility, but definitely not a certainty. “I hope it doesn’t rain today.” “I hope I can find a job.” “I hope I can find a parking space or a seat on the bus.” “I hope the restaurant has tables on the patio with good ventilation.” “I hope my children sleep late in the morning.” But in scripture “hope” is an expression of faith in the promises and character of God. It is a “confident expectation,” a “not yet realized certainty.”

In what or who are we putting our hope in? Where are we looking for security? Where are we looking for safety? Where are we looking for happiness? Where are we looking for relief? Where are we looking for significance? Where are we looking for healing? Where are we looking for approval? The answers to these questions reveal where we are putting our hope.

For those of us who are in Christ, He is the source of our hope. He is our “confident expectation”, our assurance of things hoped for, our conviction of things not seen.

He is our answer to the questions above. Yes, we take steps seeking security, safety or well-being, but our ultimate hope is in the grace and provision of God.

At times we feel desperate, needy, helpless and defeated, but that is not the life that God intended for us. Yes, we will have difficult days, but in Christ we have all that we need. He is the reason for the hope that we have.

In Colossians 1:27, the Apostle Paul declares that Christ in us is our hope of glory.

To benefit from Paul’s words we need to understand his meaning of the word “glory”.

In Romans 3:23, Paul wrote, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* This is stating that all of us have sinned. None of us, except for Christ, have lived up to the holy, glorious standard of God. But those who are in Christ have now been given the righteousness of Christ. When the Father now looks upon us He sees the righteousness of Christ.

This is a glorious gift, but at the same time we often fail to live up to the righteous identity that we now have in Christ. This is the place where Christ in us is our hope of glory.

Though we were sinful, wicked and enemies of God, ***“in Christ we are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*** (2 Corinthians 5:17)

***“We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”*** (2 Corinthians 3:18)

***“The God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”*** (1 Peter 5:10)

***“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.”*** (Philippians 1:6)

Even on those days when we struggle with temptation and habitual sin, we no longer are slaves to condemnation and guilt. Our confidence is that in Christ, He will guide us into all righteousness. He is our hope of glory. It is our confident expectation that, day by day, we will be made like Christ as we draw nearer to the time when we will see Him face to face.

Being in the presence of God is our second hope of glory. In Christ we have been given the Holy Spirit who seals us for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). We are assured that we will spend eternity in the glorious presence of God. With the Spirit of Christ living in us we have already begun eternal life, only now awaiting our glorified body and our home in heaven.

As we pass through the difficulties of this life and this world, we can face it with a sense of expectation, not of what the world can provide, but what awaits us, in Christ, in heaven. This is our eternal happy ending that can never be taken away. This is our just reward that far outweighs the sufferings of this world. We can join with the Apostle Paul in saying, ***“Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”*** (2 Corinthians 4:16)

We, above all people, should be a people of hope. In Christ we are being made holy, as He is holy. And in Christ we are assured of eternity in the presence of God.

Because of this, take heart. Whatever you may be facing today, never view it without the backdrop of heaven in view. Whatever temptation you may encounter, never view it without the grace of God in view. Whatever thoughts you may be having about yourself today, never seek to judge yourself without your identity in Christ in view. If we are in Christ, then Christ is in us. He alone is our hope of glory.

In closing, let us turn our attention to Galatians 2:20:

***“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.”***

In Christ we are forgiven, granted faith, given a new identity, made to stand firm, given a heart to obey God, disciplined by God, grown in our faith. God is always working and it is He who wills and acts in us according to His purpose. He is working all things for our good so that we will be conformed into the

likeness of Christ. Ultimately, God has brought us into new life and it is God who will make us holy. We can take credit for none of it.

Stop trying to live the Christian life. Only Christ can live the Christian life in you.

What is needed for the “Christ in us” to take full effect is for us to die and Christ to live. Today, quit fighting temptation on your own. Quit trying to be the super Christian. Quit trying to earn God’s love. Quit trying to earn God’s grace. Quit trusting yourself to live the Christian life. It is as we die to our plans, our wisdom and our strength that the new life of Christ in us will begin to show forth.

Plead with God to help you die to selfish efforts and selfish desires, and you will find that Christ in you begins to bloom like never before.

### Discussion questions:

1. What of this sermon did you find most interesting?
2. What do you think most people put their hope in?
3. What did Paul mean when he talked of the *“mystery that had been hidden for ages and generations”*?
4. What did the word “gentiles” mean, and why did the Jews have such a hard time believing that the gentiles could be Christians without becoming Jews first?
5. In your own words, what does it mean to be in Christ?
6. What are some of the benefits of being in Christ?
7. What do you think you are likely to put your hope in, if not in Christ?
8. How would you explain the idea that Christ is our hope of glory?
9. What do you think you need to remember from this sermon?
10. What do you think God wants you to do about it?
11. How can we help you with that?