

**Colossians 1: 24-27; “Christ in You, the Hope of Glory”, A Sermon Delivered
at the Premier Estates Nursing Home by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on the afternoon of April 2nd, 2017.**

How could the apostle Paul say that he now rejoiced in his sufferings for those brethren in the church at Colosse? How is it that we as Christians come to rejoice in our own sufferings on behalf of Christ? I would assert to you that it can only be done when you come to have a greater realization of the glory of communion with Christ in your heart. When you were saved, if you have been saved, it came about because God mercifully showed you grace. If you are a Christian you know that He showed you mercy when you didn't deserve to be shown mercy. You were shown favor even though you were sinful, and you knew that you were unworthy of the least of God's mercies. When you called upon the name of the Lord you were forgiven of all of your sins because of what the Lord Jesus had done on your behalf. You believed this and you were saved. The believer in Christ comes to know that when they believed in Jesus they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, who came to live and dwell in their heart. In these verses He is called, “Christ in you, the hope of glory”. It is this phrase that I want to open up to you this afternoon. 1st of all - Christ in you, gives you the ability to rejoice in the mystery of your sufferings and afflictions. (verses 24 and 25) And 2nd - Christ in you has caused you to understand the riches of the glory of this mystery, that is, that you now have the hope of glory. (verses 26 and 27) Let's ponder together the greatness of all that God has called you to, if you are a believer in Jesus.

1st of all - Christ in you, gives you the ability to rejoice in the mystery of your sufferings and afflictions.

In verse 24 Paul says that He rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossian brethren, and he filled up in his flesh what was lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church. Paul was appointed by the Lord to be the apostle to the Gentiles. He was the one who was going to go about and preach Christ and see people won to Christ from all over the then known world, and then form churches out of those believers, where the triune God could be worshiped, and Christians could grow up in their knowledge of the great salvation that they had been given. Having learned from Paul, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts, they would then serve God and Christ in the context of their everyday lives. Paul could rejoice in the sufferings related to his going about to preach and to establish those churches. He had been given a stewardship by Christ to do this. It was not that his sufferings for the sake of Christ were in any way redemptive, for Christ. For when He died upon the cross He suffered everything that was necessary to accomplish our redemption. When He died and rose again, the work was all finished; nothing needed to be added to it, because nothing was lacking in it to save any person who will come to Him for salvation. But it was because Christ was in him that his sufferings had this great value; because they helped other Christians to understand how the living risen Christ uses the sufferings of his saints to help many to understand Him and His salvation better. This is what Paul is talking about.

You remember how the apostle Paul was converted to Christ. He was very much opposed to Christ and to the idea that he needed to be saved, before his conversion. He thought that he was approved of by God because he was an Israelite, circumcised, and zealous for the truth that he was being saved by keeping the law of God. Actually, he wasn't keeping the law of God at all, although he was zealous for his own self-righteousness. He thought that he was righteous when his heart was full of murder, and you should know that no murderer has eternal life dwelling in him. (1st John 3: 15) He persecuted Christians, and he was approving when they were put to death. He got letters from the chief priests to imprison all those who belonged to this Way, which he thought was evil. And then there came that great day, when he was on the road to

Damascus. He was going there to round up Christians and put them in prison. And a blinding light shone around him and he fell to the ground and he heard a voice saying to him – “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” “And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’” “And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’” “It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” “So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’” “And the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’”

He was so blinded by the light that had shone around him, that they had to lead him by the hand into Damascus. He was taken to the street called Straight, and he stayed at the house of a man named Judas, a true disciple of the Lord. And after 3 days, the Lord was going to send a man named Ananias to him with a message for him about his future usefulness to Himself. But Ananias did not want to go. He protested that he had heard about the harm he had done to Christ’s saints in Jerusalem, and how he had authority from the chief priests to bind all who called on the Lord’s name. But the Lord said this to him: “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. “For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” What an interesting statement this is: Christ would show him how many things he must suffer for His sake. This shows us that all of our sufferings as Christians are ordained for us. They are all carefully planned and thought out for us by God in terms of how we will glorify God by going through these sufferings. God knows that they will bring us to greater maturity in our faith, and that they will really benefit other people around us in terms of their coming to understand something more about Christ and how God is glorified in us, in and through our reactions to those sufferings.

O, I know that there is a mystery in these sufferings, but it is no greater than the mystery of why it would take Christ’s sufferings and His resurrection to purchase our redemption, to atone for our sins, and His meriting God’s favor. It was this truth being preached to us, which was accompanied by the Spirit’s power, which would lead to His coming to live in our hearts. He has come, and He lives in the lives of His saints. This is why they are saints by the way. A saint, very simply, is a person who has believed in Jesus. But in believing in Jesus a person is seen by God as perfectly righteous, because of Christ’s righteousness imputed to them. And this is the first and foremost reason why believers can legitimately be called saints.

And further, we can go on to state a second reason that believers are called saints. It needs to be understood from the outset of your Christian life, that Jesus died and rose again; not only to justify the one believing in Him, but also in order that He might change and transform the lives of all those believing in Him by the power of His Spirit coming into their hearts; Christ in you, the hope of glory. There is a great glory in the grace of Christ. When Christ comes into your heart, you have His life dwelling in you. Because of your faith in Him, you, like Paul, will suffer at times. All those who would live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution it says in 2nd Timothy 3: 12. But in James chapter 1 we are told that we should consider it all joy when we encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of our faith produces patience, and let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Paul would have to suffer quite a lot for Christ’s sake, but it was His joy to do so. It can be yours as well, dear Christian.

And 2nd – Christ in you has caused you to understand the riches of the glory of this mystery, that is, that you now have the hope of glory. (verses 26 and 27)

“The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.” “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The riches of the glory of the mystery is primarily a matter related to the assurance of salvation. And it is experience of assurance, both on the ethnic level and assurance on the individual level. Let me take the ethnic level first. How would a Gentile in New Testament times, who would have never had a chance to

come to know God in Old Testament times, know that they are someone who has come to know God? It is because of the truth revealed by the apostle Paul that Christ in His death upon the cross, broke down the barrier separating the Jews and Gentiles by His fulfillment of the God's holy law. For it was by means of the law that God had made the Jews a separate and distinct ethnic people; different from all the other peoples of the world. They were His only people, in Old Testament times. But this was only to last until Christ came. Because when Christ came, He lived the perfect life of righteousness which neither Adam, nor any man since has been able to live.

When Christ came and fulfilled the law, then it became apparent through Paul's revelation of this mystery, that the glorious gift of salvation and eternal life in Jesus Christ could be given to anyone of any ethnicity, or people from any country; that there was nothing to prevent this God's holy mind, for Christ had come and fulfilled all of God's holy law. And so, since the gospel could now be freely offered to all men, then it is apparent that all who believed in Jesus could know the sure hope of glory, because when they believed, Christ came into their hearts as well. This Christ being in us, brings us great assurance because we know that when God begins a good work of salvation through the New Birth and salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth, that the reality of this good work is really known by the person believing in Jesus.

A person who believes in Jesus and receives Him as their Savior comes to have the sure hope of glory; both now in its beginnings and culminating in their being received into the realms of eternal glory when they die. Listen to Romans chapter 8, and verses 14-17: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, (Christ in you) these are the sons of God." "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

This is how we are enabled to face all of our sufferings for Christ sake, and all of the trials and afflictions that we will go through as a Christian. We have the assurance of Christ in us, the hope of glory. This is an assurance that we can joyfully believe is a true assurance because it is not based upon our fulfillment of the law, but Christ's. And the strength of our assurance is not based upon our being able to face all of our sufferings and afflictions in our own strength, but through that of Christ who is with us. So let us always be joyful in Him; always rejoicing, even in the midst of our sufferings, knowing that it is Christ who is working all things together for our good, through all that we are experiencing, while we are here upon the earth. We are getting closer to glory.

And then let us be looking forward to that day when Christ will return again. When He returns, He will bring this age to a close by raising all of the dead and all those who have believed in Him will come to know the final stage of their redemption; their body being raised from the dead, and being given back to them forever, without sin. We shall be forever beautiful in holiness, forever strong in righteousness. Listen to Philippians 3: 20 – "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." These are the riches of the glory of the mystery of Christ. Let us glory in them now, and forevermore.