

98-11-06b Colossians

We're back now from our break and we're ready to resume our summary review of Colossians chapter 1 and again we want to do this, it's a typical thing that can happen if you do a verse by verse study, especially in the epistle. It's one thing when you're in narrative and you're following a story and the story sort of moves you forward and you can hang the principles and applications and so forth on the different points in the story, but in the epistles where you have a lot of concentrated what they call didactic material or teaching material that's expressing theological truths, doctrines, principles, promises, it's easy to sort of get down amongst the trees and not really know where you are in the forest. So hopefully having looked at some of these things in great detail, we won't lose sight of this as a letter, a letter that would probably have been received, someone in the group would have stood up and read this letter from Paul at a single sitting.

They might have spent several weeks or several worship services going over the letter that they received from Paul, but it would have been in a much more summary fashion perhaps. It seems unlikely to me that receiving a letter since they spoke Greek, Paul wrote in Greek, they wouldn't have sat down and broken it down into the small pieces that we typically do. Part of the reason that we do that is because it isn't our first language, Greek is not, and so to be sure that we've rendered it accurately and understood it accurately, we take it in smaller portions and study it more carefully to try to ensure that we have an accurate understanding.

The original recipients had the advantage of being able to see it in their native language with all of the connotations and so forth that would come in it, but you can imagine the original recipients would treat it just like we typically if you get a newsy letter from somebody that's dear to you but separated from you, you know you can, I've gone back and re-read when I was in Okinawa, of course I had all the letters I got, I would re-read them over and over to make sure I didn't miss any details and really soak up what was happening back home and so forth. And I'm sure that recognizing that this was an important letter from Paul the Apostle and obviously the preservation of the letter is evidence of its value to the church, but we want to be sure that we can absorb it, standing back at a little bit of a distance and reading it as a letter and getting the general drift without getting all lost in the details at the same time. It is so full of doctrinal truth and has so many ties and parallels in the rest of scripture that sometimes it's hard to draw back and just read it all the way through without pausing to reflect.

But we have seen the summary of the introduction, we've seen the summary of verses 3 through 12 where, and that section primarily looks at the believer's life doesn't it, and verses 3 through 12 it's focusing on here is your standing, here is your opportunity as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The soul of the believer is the arena, it is the ground from which the fruit springs. The hearing of the truth, the understanding of the truth and the application of faith, making that truth the object of faith is what fulfills the plan and the purpose and the calling of God.

All of this concerns us because this is our soul, this is our life. We think our life is the accomplishment of tasks, we think our life is the paying of bills and the raising of children and the meeting of deadlines and the normal mundane details, but our life, our real life, these are just story problems. And our real life is the application of the principles, determining what the right thing is, what the pleasing thing, what the better thing is in a given set of circumstances to please our Heavenly Father in the way that we think and in the ways that we're motivated.

That's our real life. So verses 3 through 12 concern themselves with us as believers walking the worthy walk. Then in the next section he transitions in verse 13 talking about the son of God's love, the expression of God's love.

Here he's been talking about the love of the saints and how it's developed and how it's powered, where the strength to exercise that special, unique, divine love comes from. Now he's going to talk about the love of the Father. Here's Jesus Christ, the son of God's love.

And now Jesus Christ becomes the focus in this next section which is verses 13 through 23. And this is one of the greatest doxologies in scripture, focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ, his identity as the God-man. And you'll recall we looked at this in some detail.

And I'll just review very briefly the points that we established. And there were just four points that we summarized this with when we went through. This section talking about Jesus Christ, God the Father has delivered us in verse 13 from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the son of his love in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

He, Christ, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in all things he may have the preeminence. If you get lost in the details there, it says a lot about Jesus Christ in a short space.

What's the point? Jesus Christ ought to have preeminence in all things. It doesn't say preeminence in spiritual things or preeminence in most things, preeminence in all things, when you're folding the laundry or when you're driving your car, when you're balancing your checkbook, when you're in conversation with other people. Sometimes it is the people closest to us that we have the hardest time remembering that Jesus Christ has the preeminence.

Every thought, every conversation, the way that we treat one another, the respect, the priority of putting that person's well-being, that person's needs ahead of our own. Sometimes we have the need to assert ourselves and we hurt other people when we do so. We, selfishness rears its ugly head, impatience rears its head, insecurity, whatever it may be in our soul, rears its head.

And we, in the people that we talk with and live with and deal with the most, we inflict injury, we fail the grace of God, we fail to reflect the love of God toward one another. You would think, well, I've got to work on my procedures, I've got to work on curbing my tongue, I've got to work on developing a different attitude and so forth. The fundamental thing we have to work on is focusing on Jesus Christ and remembering that we live before the Father, we live to reflect the glory of Christ.

In all things, Jesus Christ should have the preeminence. That should be our goal. And it's sort of a lofty, theological-sounding goal, and we have to find a way to make that a practical, daily living kind of goal.

But we know how to do that. It's one thing to say that that should happen, and much of Christianity can stand up and tell us, be Christ-like, be loving, be forgiving, be patient, and so forth. What a lot of our teaching and a lot of our church worship fails to instill in us is the means.

Well, Paul has preceded this focus on Jesus Christ with the means, hasn't he? He has told us it comes through the truth of the Word. It comes through the power of the Spirit. It comes through the strength that God gives those who are striving to be saints, who are striving to be faithful, who have as their goal walking worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing, who want to know the will of God and be filled with all wisdom and all knowledge.

That's the means. If we find ourselves impatient, if we find ourselves falling short, if we recognize that we're not reflecting love, Jesus Christ doesn't have the preeminence, how do we get over that? We tend to treat symptoms. We're like somebody who finds their child breaking out with the measles and we say, my goodness, look at all these red bumps.

And so we run to the cosmetics drawer and get out the face paint. You know, they've got that flesh, I don't know what you call it, flesh-colored face paint. When you have blemishes on your face, you can get this flesh-colored stuff and rub it on there and it makes it look great.

It makes it look like you've got this smooth, unblemished, unmarked skin. Well, you can get that stuff out and paint over the measles. You say, well, now look, all those little red spots are gone.

That's treating symptoms and that's what the world does. And that's what a lot of Christianity, unfortunately, does. You see someone with family problems.

You see someone with marriage problems. You see someone with child problems. Their children are undisciplined.

They can't control them. They've got issues. They've got all these frustrations and so forth.

So everybody's got to run in for counseling to try to meet these needs and try to solve these problems. That's trying to paint over the spots. The power of God goes to the virus that infected

you and produced the spots.

The power of God reaches in and divides asunder the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow. It is a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The washing of the Word cleanses our heart, cleanses our conscience.

You can go to Hebrews 10. We come before God with our hearts having been sprinkled from an evil conscience. Where does that sprinkling, cleansing, enabling power come from? It comes from the Word of God and the Spirit of God and from no other place.

It doesn't come from insight into how your problem developed, going back and saying, well, it was a breakdown in communication. It was selfishness here. It was trauma there.

It was this circumstance and that circumstance. And this is what analysis and a lot of secular-based counseling tries to do, is go back and trace the causes. And we'll see you had this problem in your home when you were little.

And your father wasn't there for you. And so you developed an insecurity. And that's why you have trouble with men now that you're all grown up.

Or if you're a guy, well, you had a fixation on your mind. You know, they have all of these weird things. And, well, this is why you are the way you are.

Well, all of that insight, you may say, well, you know, the spots caused by measles are produced when a particular kind of irritation is produced in the epidermis, resulting in an influx of blood and a swelling of the outer epidermis and an itching and a this and a that. You can find out all about how the spot was formed. That doesn't make it go away.

There's only one power that can make the symptoms go away, and that is to get at the root. Well, the root of the problem is in the depths of our soul. And that's where the Word of God and the Spirit of God do their work.

And when we have problems, when we have unresolved issues in our soul, that's the place to go. Do you want the answer to the symptoms? Go to the source. That's what the Word of God does.

Jesus Christ is before all things. Before you ever had a problem, He was there. After you have died and turned to dust, Jesus Christ will still be there.

He is before all things. In Him, all things consist. Everything relates to Jesus Christ.

We as believers, there is no aspect of our life that doesn't relate to Jesus Christ, because we are in Him. He is in us. We live because He died for us.

In Him, we have our being. He is our wisdom. He is our righteousness, our peace, our sanctification.

There is no part of our life that doesn't have a relation to Jesus Christ. He is the head of the body, and we are the body. The church, He is from the beginning.

He is first born from the dead, so that in all things, He may have the preeminence. Any solution, any proposed answer to our problems that doesn't relate to Jesus Christ isn't addressing the problem, because focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, recognition of His place, and our relationship to Him. That's the key.

That's the content of the Word of God. What did Jesus say about the Holy Spirit? What is His entire mission in life? If you go back to John 14 and John 15, when Jesus is talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit, He says, the Holy Spirit isn't going to tell you anything out of His own mind. He didn't bring along a bag of Holy Spirit truth and Holy Spirit knowledge and Holy Spirit activity that He's going to infuse you with.

Jesus said, He's not going to say anything of Himself. He's going to take the things about me and give them to you. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to communicate Christ to us, to make the Word of God that focuses and communicates Jesus Christ real, and understandable, and applicable to us.

We think we have a problem. We think we have a pressure. We think we have a situation that we have to cope with that is challenging us, that is causing us to stumble, or that is making an issue in our lives.

Jesus Christ is the answer. That's what we need to focus on. Don't try to paint over the spots.

Go to the source. The answer, the way to go, the decision to make, the issue to prioritize, the peace, the joy, the stability that we need in that situation is bound up in the Lord Jesus Christ. We spend a lot of time stewing about the details of the problem, trying to figure out how to get rid of the red spot, instead of stopping and focusing on the central issue in our existence, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In all things, He should have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell. It's not just the spiritual fullness.

It's not the heavenly fullness. It's not the fullness for worship or the fullness for Sunday. It's all the fullness.

Everything is bound up in Jesus Christ. So, our points of summary on this section, 13 through 23, about the Lord Jesus, began in point one. A son or a child is the material evidence and expression of intimate love.

Paul prefaces these remarks by identifying Jesus Christ through the title, The Son of His Love. Jesus Christ is the Son of God's Love. What is a son? Why does he bring up sonship in this

regard? Tied up with sonship is heirship.

It calls him the firstborn two different times. He's the firstborn of all creation. He's the firstborn from the dead.

All of this relates back to his sonship. Why does Paul make such an issue out of the sonship of Jesus Christ? Because a son is the material evidence, the material expression of intimate love between two people. Where does a child come from in the ideal world? In our world, they come about in all kinds of ways.

But in God's economy, in God's perfect plan, a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and they too become one flesh. And the product of that union is children. Blessing from the Lord.

Christ, our second point, Christ as deity is like his father, his image. He's the image of his father. He is the firstborn of all creation.

He is the fullness of deity in bodily form. Christ as deity is like his father. He is the image of the father.

He is the preeminent creator and sustainer of all things. And he is the reason for which everything exists. The third point we saw in this connection, Christ as humanity, you'll notice the contrast.

Second point, Christ as deity is like his father. Christ as humanity, point three, is like us. Glorified.

He is like humanity, glorified humanity. He is the exemplar of resurrection life, indwelling deity and unhindered fellowship with the father. Christ as humanity is like us in the glorified state, humanity having attained the goal for which God created us.

The exemplar of resurrection life, life out from death, indwelling deity and unhindered fellowship with the father. He is our example. Fourth, which actually sort of summarizes the first three points, Jesus Christ is the bridge from man to God.

He is the mediator. We saw several scriptures in that regard, especially Psalm 85, verses 10 and 11. You'll also find this in 1 Timothy 2, 2-6, Hebrews 8-6, Hebrews 9-15.

We saw those passages when we studied this. And you can't say enough about this section. It's tempting to just dwell on this wonderful section of Scripture that deals specifically with Jesus Christ, but we'll move forward to make two points of summary.

In fact, we'll make four points of summary on this section overall because that section there deals with Christ. What does it mean to us? Paul goes on to make application to us in this section. What does he say? Well, point one, Christ's work of redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation is the foundation for our sanctification.

There's a lot of actions in there, isn't there? There's a lot of T-I-O-N words. Redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation, those are the three primary aspects of the work of Christ on the cross. You should know this.

Anytime the subject comes up of Christ's work on the cross, those three words ought to be in your mind. Redemption, reconciliation, propitiation. One is sin-ward, one is God-ward, and one is us-ward.

Redemption, reconciliation, propitiation. These are mentioned in verses 14 and verses 20 and 22. Christ's work redeems us, reconciles us, and propitiates, propitiation, which is directed toward God.

Redemption is sin-ward. The price for sin is paid. Reconciliation is us-ward.

We are reconciled to God. Propitiation is God-ward. God's character is satisfied by the work of Christ.

Redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation. Christ's work in those three areas, that's the foundation for our sanctification. What is sanctification? To sanctify, to set apart, to holiness.

We are set apart. We are called out from the world. We are called out from the great swarming mass of humanity that you see anytime you fly in an airplane.

You look down on the rooftops and the swimming pools and the streets and the cars. For me, at least, probably the smaller your mind is, the more easily it's overwhelmed. But when you fly up in an airplane and look down and see the swarming, it's like an anthill.

There are millions of us in humanity. What is the purpose? What's the point? Why does God let us proliferate like ants? You get up high enough in the sky and it just looks like ant work. Little roads, little buildings, little quarries, little fields.

Our work is just ant-like on the surface of the planet. And there are millions of us, billions of us on the planet. Why does God do that? Because within that swarming, teeming mass of humanity, there are a few who raise their eyes heavenward and realize that there is a purpose and there's a reason why we're here.

And it's the calling of God. There is a way to be raised up from the mundane, from the temporary, the fleeting vapor that is human life, and to step into the eternal realms, into realms where your life and your thoughts count. To step into eternal life, eternal relationship and fellowship with God.

Well, the basis for that is the work of Christ on the cross. Without Christ it's impossible. We live, we die, and we fade like a leaf.

And there's no point, there's no purpose. You might as well eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow

we die. Why not? If when you die you wink out and you are no more, you might as well just go for as much self-gratification as you can in this life.

There's no reason to obey laws, there's no reason to do anything other than just pursue gratification. There's no judge, there's no standard, there's no structure or meaning to life at all. But Jesus Christ has given us meaning and purpose and definition in our lives.

His work of redemption, reconciliation and propitiation is the foundation for our calling, our sanctification. You find that in verse 22. In the body of His flesh, through death, He has reconciled us.

And what's the purpose? In order to present us holy, blameless. How does that take place? Is it automatic, because we're elect, as some would teach? Not at all. The second point of summary, we are sanctified through steadfast faith and hope by means of the Word.

This is verse 23. Jesus died for us. He accomplished those three things so that we could be presented holy and blameless and above reproach in God's sight.

That's what He died to give us. That's what He died to enable. But we can give it away if we are not grounded and steadfast in the faith and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

If somebody deflects you, if somebody distracts you, if we get busy thinking about other things and doing other things, we lose the thing Christ died to give us. Standing before God, holy, blameless, and above reproach. That was the goal.

It wasn't just to rescue us from the lake of fire. It was to take us all the way. We're at a minus 100% as unbelievers.

And a lot of people think, well, Jesus died and gave us salvation. That gets me to the zero point. It fills that deficit of negative 100.

But the Scripture teaches that Jesus did more than that. He died to deliver us out of this present evil age. He died to take us to a positive 100%.

To present us before the throne of His Father, holy and blameless and above reproach. And we can do that, Paul says, verse 23, if indeed you continue in the faith. You don't just start in the faith and then crater out.

Continue in the faith, grounded steadfast, not moved away from the hope of the gospel. So the second point, we are sanctified through steadfast faith and hope by means of the Word. That's verse 23.

We know about the hope. It's refreshed in our minds. It's like that picture on your TV screen.

I forget how many times your little cathode ray tube guns in the back of your TV. The old black

and white television is a better example. So let's pretend like TV is black and white.

You got one gun in the back of the tube and you've got this phosphorescent glass in the front. This one little electron beam scans in little parallel lines from the top to the bottom of the screen and it beams in some places and it doesn't beam in others. And it scans so fast that it paints a picture.

And back in the early days when we were all watching black and white TV, of course there are people that can think of a lot earlier days than that, but in my early days you could see Walter Cronkite or you could see Huntley and Brinkley on the TV screen in black and white because this little gun would scan down the screen and cause that phosphor on the glass to glow in certain places. But to keep on seeing the picture and to see it move, it had to go back and scan again because the phosphor would decay away. And you can remember if you ever saw those early TVs, when you hit the button to turn it off, you'd see this little squiggly line and then a little hole right in the middle, a little bright spot that would just slowly fade away.

Well, the squiggle and the dot in the middle slowly faded away because it was no longer being refreshed. To see the picture and to see the TV show and to see those faces and those images on the screen, it had to be refreshed several times a second. We need the image of heavenly things.

We need the image of spiritual things refreshed in our souls regularly or it will fade away. Our souls are like that phosphorescent glass. We can't just hear it once and keep it.

We have to be refreshed. We have to be renewed. And there is electricity.

There's power in that electron beam that causes the phosphor to glow. The phosphor has the ability to glow, but it has to be struck by that beam of energy and then it glows. Our souls have the potential to glow with the energy of God, but it's got to be refreshed.

That's why we return again and again to the Word of God. That's where the power of God is. That's what keeps our sights set on heavenly things.

That's what reminds us of our inheritance, of our hope. So to continue in the faith grounded and steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, we've got to keep our focus on the Word of God. The Old Testament Scriptures over in the Psalms, it says your mercies are renewed every morning.

Great is thy faithfulness. Remember that? Every morning it's renewed. Why does God remind us every day of His mercy? Because we need reminding.

We can't just see it once. The Israelites saw God part the Red Sea and they were very impressed that day. But less than a week later they were grumbling in the desert and ready to go back to

Egypt because they didn't refresh their minds.

They didn't continue to have that faith grounded and steadfast, not moved away from the hope of the promise of the inheritance in the land. We've got to do the same thing. It's so easy to get our eyes on people, to get our eyes on circumstances, to get our eyes on ourselves and our petty problems, the details of the story problems that have been put before us.

There are some people that are so empathetic. I think I may have at least one daughter that's this way. You start telling a story and they get so involved in the story and they start feeling and empathizing with the characters and thinking, oh my goodness.

Well, if you're taking a test in school and they put a little story problem out there and Mary is carrying a basket with seven eggs and she runs into Anne who's carrying a basket with five eggs. And if you start worrying about, oh well Mary, I wonder why she's carrying those eggs. You get all caught up in the story and lose sight of the fact that the whole reason we have this whole thing here is to see if you know your math.

Can you add? Can you apply mathematical knowledge to arrive at the right answer in the story problem? But you get all caught up in the story and you forget all about the math. Oh, what was she doing out there in the hot sun with that bag of eggs? It sounds so silly, but this is what we do in our lives. Our lives are nothing but a big story problem that is designed to exercise us in the application of the Word of God in discerning good and evil.

The mature have their senses exercised to discern the better things. But we get all caught up in the story problem. We forget all about the application of the principle.

So we need to be refreshed. We are sanctified through steadfast faith and hope by means of the Word. As I've said before, it's so frustrating to have the picture painted of how things should be and not be told how.

Paul tells us how right here. It's the Word. It's the Spirit.

That's the power of God for salvation. The power of God for deliverance in daily life, Romans 1.16. Point three, the fully pleasing life that Paul is talking about in this chapter enables us to be presented faultless. That fully pleasing life that we've reviewed in our previous points, that's what enables us to be presented faultless before the throne.

You can go back and trace. What is the cause and effect? Where does that fully pleasing life come from? Knowledge of the will of God. All wisdom and spiritual knowledge and making that the object of faith.

There is a means, there is a way to do this that is seldom emphasized in our churches and our Christian teaching today, but it's right here in the Scripture. Point four, that by the way is verse 22. That's the possibility of being presented holy and blameless and above reproach and insight if we

continue in the faith.

The fully pleasing life is the means for that. Point four, to be so presented, we must continue steadfastly in the faith, hope and love to which we are called. So it's a wonderful full circle that Paul has accomplished in the opening page of his letter here.

He commends the Colossians for their faith, their hope and their love. And he says that is the means by which you will stand holy and blameless and above reproach before the Father. That's how to be presented is to continue in that faith, that hope and that love.

He mentions the faith in verse 23. He mentions the hope of the gospel which they heard in verse 23. It's been preached to every creature under heaven, but it is clear that every creature under heaven is not responding to that truth.

It's not the hearing, it's the faith. Israel had the promises, but they weren't mixed with faith and they dropped in the wilderness. We don't want to do that.

So we come now to the fourth and final section of chapter one, which is verse 24-29. And our summary here can be given in three points. Remember we've seen these different sections where after the introduction you have a section that focuses on our life, the faith, hope and love section in verses 2-12.

Then in verses 13-19 you have the Lord Jesus Christ at the center. Then in verses 20-23 it's back to us. What does Christ mean to us? He has made it possible for us to fulfill our calling to be presented.

So it goes us, Christ, us. Now Paul is going to talk about himself in verses 24-29. He says, I, Paul the Apostle, rejoice in my sufferings for you.

I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. He doesn't say here, he's not using we, is he? He doesn't say we believers, all of us in the church and in the body are filling up the afflictions of Christ. He says I because this is an apostolic function.

This is something unique to the apostles. You remember we covered that in some detail. I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the church.

Essentially for you, Paul says. I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me on your behalf, for you, to fulfill the word of God. The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations but is now 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 is Christ in you, the hope of glory. This is Paul's mission, to reveal this mystery, to communicate it, to flesh out in this age the forward progress of God's revelation of his glory. And it's revealed in us.

When Christ is formed in us, this is the revelation of God's glory. This shows the angels and shows the saints the glory of God. Something they hadn't seen before, it was hidden, but now it's revealed in us.

So, in order to accomplish this, what does Paul do? How is this Christ in you, the hope of glory, accomplished? Paul says, in order to make this happen, I preach Christ. Remember, he's just made that point in the section that focuses on Christ. He is before all things, he is the originator of all things, he's the purpose for all things, in him all things consist, in all things he should have the preeminence.

So what do we do to fulfill the calling to bring the body of Christ to the point of revealing the glory of God? We preach Christ. Him we preach, verse 28, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, so that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to his working which works in me mightily.

What do you think that is, the working that works in Paul mightily? What is the energy that works in every believer mightily? It's the Spirit of God. It's the Word of God in the hands of the Spirit, the sword of the Spirit. So our summary of this section, point one, Paul the Apostle functions as Christ's witness, as Christ's proxy, his representative to the church.

Verse 24 and 25, he is taking Christ's place. When Christ was here, he suffered in the flesh. Now Christ is gone, so Paul the Apostle.

You have twelve men exhibiting the suffering of Christ, communicating the truth of Christ, being witnesses to him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. That's the apostolic commission. You have this in Luke 21, verses 12 through 19.

We don't have time to turn there, but that's where Jesus told the disciples, you will stand before kings and princes, you will suffer abuse, you will be persecuted for my sake, but that's your job, you're apostles. You will suffer on my behalf. And this is what Paul is doing.

He says, I'm filling up the suffering of Christ, what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. And you can't look at this and understand it fully without going to Philippians 2:30. What does it mean to fill up what is lacking in something? People have wrestled with this. How could there be something lacking in the affliction of Christ? Just go back and look at Philippians 2:30 where Epaphroditus fills up what is lacking in the hospitality that the Philippians want to express toward Paul.

They're not physically present to do it, so Epaphroditus is their proxy. He's their representative, and he is filling up what is lacking in their ministry to Paul. He is able to do it because he's physically present.

The apostle Paul is able to suffer on behalf of the church because he's physically present, and Jesus has gone to the right hand of his Father. That's what it means to fill up. It means to

represent Christ in that unique way.

Secondly, God is revealing the riches of his glory to the saints of all ages through us. Paul says in verse 26, this mystery has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now it's revealed to his saints. These are all the saints.

At resurrection, when all the saints of every different age are resurrected and get a chance to see what God has done in history, we are going to be the ultimate expression of the glory of God in human history, the believers of this age, because we are uniquely united with Christ. We are unique in being the many brethren of which he is the firstborn. We are the bride of Christ.

What does the Scripture say? Paul talks about this in another place. The woman is the glory of the man, right? The bride is the glory of the groom. We are the reflection of the glory of the groom, Jesus Christ.

That's why we're here. That's our purpose. He is preeminent.

So God is revealing the riches of his glory to the saints of all ages through us as Christ is. Thirdly, the fully pleasing life resulting in presentation at the throne, perfect, holy, blameless. For that to take place, we need to be warned.

We need to be taught. We need to be instructed, rebuked, corrected in righteousness under the Spirit's ministry. The fully pleasing life that results in presentation, perfect, at the throne requires warning and teaching under the Spirit's ministry.

That's verse 29. That's why Paul says in 28, we warn every man and we teach every man so that we can present every man perfect in Christ. Paul says, I labor and I perform this ministry energized by the power of God that works in me mightily.

That's the Holy Spirit working in Paul. It's the Spirit and the Word that make this happen. So that, in a nutshell, is chapter 1 of Colossians.

We have one more area to review as we go into chapter 2, and that is Christ in you. We're going to take one parting look at that. We'll take only about five minutes next time, but it's five minutes more than we have tonight, so we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of studying your Word. We thank you for the unique and special place that we have as believers in this age through the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray that these truths that we have reviewed tonight will be active in our souls, that God the Holy Spirit will enable us to see the application in the daily details of our lives, both great and small, and that in so doing, making these things the object of our faith, we will fulfill that great and high calling that we have through the author and finisher of our faith.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

