

Hope and Suffering

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 September 2020

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would come and move amongst us with gentle and deep power to bring Jesus close to us, to have him truly rule in our hearts, and that we will be gripped not only by who he is, but what he has done for us on the cross.

And that as we are brought closer to Jesus, we ask, Father, that you fan into flame within us a deep hope, a deep hope of glory for those of us, for all of us in Christ Jesus.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. One of the, I don't really like watching cooking shows that much. I'm not against them.

I just don't watch that many cooking shows. Some of you maybe have eaten some of my food. We'll say it shows. But, and I don't know anything at all about baking.

I, sometimes I have to bake a birthday cake for my wife because she'd much rather that I baked it than I bought one from Tim Hortons or Loblaws or something like that. So I, I do. And she always says polite things about it.

[1 : 2 0] But anyway, the reason I mention this is there is one cooking show I like, and it's called Chef. The Chef, I think it is. And it features this guy, the director, producer, who's done the Iron, some of the Iron Man movies, some of the Marvel movies.

He did the remake of, of the Lion King, only with, with live actors. He's John Favreau. And he does it with this cook called Roy, a Korean cook.

The two of them had met because Roy was catering the first one of the Iron Man films that John Favreau did. And, and then later on, John Favreau sort of decided to do this small budget film, which is very interesting, about a high level chef who loses a star and sort of rediscovers who he is by getting into a food truck and going across the United States with his son, cooking out of this food truck.

And he used Chef Roy to teach him how to actually look like he knew how to cut vegetables and do all that other type of stuff correctly. And now what they do, they've just finished their fourth series, is they get together and they just basically have fun hanging out together, trying to cook some stuff and meeting a few other celebrities or a few other, a few other famous cooks.

And I just, I just enjoy the way they joke with each other. And it's sort of cool to see the food. This past episode, they have just had a brand new series come out on, on, on, on Netflix.

[2 : 3 9] And, and they're both cooks, not bakers, they're cooks. And they, they go and they visit somebody who's an expert at making cookies, cookies, brownies, birthday cakes, and truffles. And, and so she's showing them how you put things in, in a certain order.

And there's, you put this, the butter and this and this in, and then you whip it a long time. And then you put these in, you don't whip it very long. They get into a bit of a discussion because in the previous like episode or two, the two of them, John Favreau and Chef Roy tried to, to bake something.

And in the episode, they, they try to bake it. It doesn't turn out. They try to fix it. It doesn't turn out. Try to fix it. It doesn't turn out. And it's just, anyway, so they're talking to this, this woman and they realize that they'd done things in the wrong order.

And not only had they done things in the wrong order with the baking, they said, oh, that's, that's why it didn't turn out. That's why it didn't turn out. They, they put the, you know, the things that they should have hardly beat at all. They beat a long time.

And the things that they should hardly, you know, like, anyway, they got it all order. They got it all wrong. And the way they tried to fix it was all wrong. So they said, okay, we got the order, right? We got some of the fixes all. I mean, if we got the order wrong, we got some of the fixes all wrong.

[3 : 43] That's why it didn't work out. I mention all of this because we're going to talk about hope this morning. And hope is very, very important. Just recently, I had a conversation with somebody.

And one of the things I told them is that many people think that Christianity, when they think about Christianity, they think about rules. They think about following rules and following rituals and having to do particular things.

And I said, obviously, there's some rules. But what people don't understand is that actually Christianity is far more about being drawn by hope in terms of how you live and how hope is important.

In fact, I said Christianity is quite an amazing thing. And I contrast it. We won't get into it. Contrast it with Buddhism and Eastern religion. Because Christianity would say that God made us to hope. Where human beings inherently were made, are made to hope. So I mention this because we're going to look at a text about hope. But for most people, in fact, let's look at verse 21.

[4 : 39] Open your Bibles to Colossians chapter 1. That's the text that Matt, we're preaching through the book of Colossians. And so look at Colossians chapter 1, verse 21, the following.

And I think some of the times, most of the times, the scripture text will be up on the screen if you don't have your own Bible. And look how it begins. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

And if you look at this, you just, I just, you know, I'm preparing this sermon. I think, I wonder what it would be like for some of my very secular friends to look at a text like this. And first of all, I mean, most of them wouldn't understand it.

And they'd have a range of other objections. But one of the things that they would definitely say is that this doesn't seem to be the way to talk about hope. In fact, you know, to call people all evil, to tell people that they're alienated from God, like, you know, all this focus on death, like, George, that just seems to be the wrong things to talk about.

[5 : 55] So what I'd like to say is we're going to look at some of these things. We're going to walk towards the objections and look at the text. And what I just want to suggest is I want to suggest that the world has its different ways of trying to articulate how we get to hope and how we grow hope and how we maintain hope.

And I think what the world does is it gets the order wrong and it gets the emphasis wrong. And it might be this thing which looks like it has nothing to do with hope is actually far wiser.

So let's look at it again. Verse 21, now I rejoice in my sufferings, sorry, and you who once were alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds. Now, just sort of pause there. I mean, to be honest, if we were trying to share this with some of our secular friends, or if you're here as one of our secular friends, or if you're watching this online as one of our secular friends, or just Canadians, I shouldn't say secular, just Canadians, good Canadians, you'd probably say something like, George, this just seems really extreme and really, really harsh.

Like, really, George? Do you think that, do you really think it's the case that human beings are alienated and hostile and doing evil deeds? Like, George, don't you think most people are basically good?

Like, you know, I don't want to puff myself up, they might say, but you're like, I'm basically a good person. George, like, you're basically a good person. I mean, you have these weird Christian ideas like this, which, I don't know, make you meet out of it sometimes, but, you know, fundamentally, you're a good person.

[7 : 24] Most people we meet are good people. This just doesn't seem to be even true. I think that's how most people would try to understand, would understand or hear the text, and including often Christians, if they're honest about it.

So let's think about this for a second. Back in the day when people went to restaurants, all of us have probably, seen something like this. You see a couple sitting, eating a meal, and they're physically close to each other, and they're facing each other, but everything about them screams pain and separation and hostility.

Like, they're close to each other, but you can just tell by the way they stare, the shape of their jaw, the lack of the smile, the rigidity of their body, that the fact of the matter is, is they might be really close to each other.

But something's gone terribly, terribly wrong. In fact, probably not some thing, but some range of things have gone terribly, terribly wrong. Because when you look at the couple eating, it can be in a really nice restaurant, it can be a really nice meal, but they look like they'd rather be a million miles away from each other.

And not only that, it looks like they're going farther and farther away from each other. Now, this is very important for us to think about as an image. Because one of the things that people will often say to me, they'll say, George, don't you think people are all basically close to God?

[8 : 52] Like, why is it that Christianity talks as if people aren't close to God, that somehow or another you're close to God, but we're not? Well, the fact of the matter is, is that Christianity does teach that human beings are close to God.

In fact, that's part of the whole Christian doctrine that God is transcendent over everything, but God is imminent in everything, that in fact, he's closer to you than you think. But it's not a matter of closeness.

That couple was close. That couple was very, very, very close. But they were a million miles away from each other and going in opposite directions.

And that's the thing for us and God, that human beings can, in fact, be close to God, but actually be very, very, very far from him and going in a very different direction.

But some of you might say, George, that still seems a bit extreme. Like, don't you think, like, that's a bit of an interesting analogy, thinking about that. I had never sort of thought about the fact that we could be, just because you're close to God doesn't mean you actually want God to be there or that you like God, that you're sort of might be even stuck with God.

[9 : 59] But still, don't you fundamentally think that human beings are basically good? But here's the thing. Here's how most people think. I think most Canadians, and in fact, I would even say that most people in the world tend to think of people being good or bad in this type of a model, this type of an analogy.

There's only been, back in the day when people went to watch hockey games live, you know, it seems like a lifetime ago, but it wasn't that long ago. There's only been one time in my life that I've ever been at, if you ever watch hockey, maybe you don't know this, but there's one section of the stadium at Scotiabank, which is really, really close to the ice.

And if you get to sit there, you don't just get to sit there, you get a special parking spot. Like, you even just pull up and they park your car for you, get right in there. The seats are really close to the ice.

The seats are bigger, the waiters come and bring you stuff, and I've been there once. Not because I'm rich, but because some person in this church had tickets given to them, and they called me up and said, George, how do you like to come and watch the game from way down there?

Bruins beat the Sens that day, but anyway, it was an interesting experience. But how most people think about people being good and bad is a little bit like a stadium, like a hockey stadium or a football stadium.

[11 : 15] And what they tend to think is, they tend to think that in a sense, all the stadium is the world, and basically, the closer you are to the ice, the better person you are.

And the farther you are from the ice, the worse person you are. So if you're a very, very open-minded, loving, and tolerant person, what you would say is that basically, almost everybody's good.

It's really only the people at the very last level that are bad. Because you have to say that there's some people are bad, because we know there's people who own slaves, and you know, there was Hitler and Stalin.

So you can't just say everybody's good. We all know there's some bad people, like slave owners. But that's just the top row. But other than that, you know, they're all basically good. And some of us who are a bit more grumpy might say, ah, I don't know if everybody almost to the top row, that the line is maybe more around the middle.

People and people at the bottom half are the good people, and people in the top half are the bad people. And there's some of us who are really, really, really, really, really, just really grumpy. We might say, actually, no, it's only like the bottom two rows that are good.

[12 : 19] Everybody else is bad. But we all make the dividing line between good people and bad people somewhere in this row of seats, going up and down. And so when people thinking like that hear a text like this, and they go, now I rejoice in you who once were alienated and hostile on mine doing evil deeds, as if everybody's like that, we go, one moment, that's like talking, that doesn't make any sense.

It doesn't fit into our system. But that's not how the Bible understands it. And the Bible understands the issue far wiser. And that's a shock to people. Because the Bible says that the line between good and evil isn't as if in its row of seats, the higher to the lower, the line between good and evil runs right down the center of every human being.

The line between good and evil is within us, not between us. Because in fact, the matter is, is the line between good and evil runs between us.

Like, doesn't that sound a little bit like prejudice and discrimination? And isn't it in fact the case that even the best person is very conscious of their selfishness at times, of their lack of generosity?

That in fact, isn't it far truer to understand that the line between good and evil goes right down the center of human beings? And that's what the Bible text is saying. The Bible text isn't saying that every human being only does evil things.

[13 : 48] It's trying to tell us that, and you who once were far from God and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds. And that's the different image, that people aren't fundamentally good, that in fact, the line between good and evil goes right down us.

But some of you might say, but George, I don't know if it's really true that we're all just like so far from God. But then this would be my response to that. Because in fact, if you think about the fact that the line for good and evil goes right down us, then if that's the case, then it has to be the case that in fact, we are separated from God.

Like, think about this as a thought experiment. If you go into heaven, the new heaven and the new earth, you want to go into new heaven and the new earth amputated. And you go, no, no, I don't want to go into, I mean, how would that even be heaven if you go into heaven and you lose a leg and you lose an arm and then you maybe have a bit of a lobotomy and you lose most of your, like, that wouldn't be heaven.

How would that be heaven? That would be like going to hell. And so, of course, if you go to heaven, you want all of you to go to heaven and you want all of you to be good. But to understand the new heaven and the new earth, what is true in the new heaven and the new earth is actually really, really true of you right now is that God demands every single bit of you to be in heaven, to be in him.

And what does that mean? It means every thought, every second of your time, every place you go, every penny you own.

[15 : 21] And how comfortable are you with this idea that every single penny you own, God has a say in it, that every single second you have, God has a say in it.

That every single thought you have, God has a say in it. That every single thing you will, God has a say in it. That every single place you go, God has a say in it.

And the fact of the matter is, is that we're at all honest. It might be that we're fine with lots of it, but that every single person at some point in time and more than once they'll say, well, God, back off. Back off. Back off. That's mine. That's too intrusive. It's too demanding. And so you can see, if you think about it in that term, that if you look at the totality of who you are and the totality of who you've been, that the fact of the matter is, is that every single human being is a little bit like that couple in the restaurant that you can be close to God.

But there's big parts of you that don't like him present. You want him far away and you want to be far away. And that's what the Bible is describing.

[16 : 38] Listen to it again. And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds. But then the response is, okay, George, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

And this is how Canadians think. And this is how people who are religious and spiritual think. They automatically say, George, okay, okay. Let's, let's say, let's just take a time out, George. You really think that's true?

And, and you, you're a Christian. So you think that's going on with you? Like you're trying to say that you're completely and utterly fine with God and every, every thought, God owning every penny, God owning every second.

Like you think you're okay with that? And, and the implication behind the question is, George, your poop smells just as bad as everybody else's. You're only deluding yourself if you think you smell like a rose all the time.

But this text teaches me to say, no, no, no, no, no. Don't misunderstand me. I am human too. The fact of the matter is, is that there, I, the older I get, the more I know that in fact there is still that part of me that pushes God away that doesn't like the fact that God has a demand on that penny, that second, that thought, that act of the will, that in fact, I can't fix that myself.

[18:00] And that's the point of the text. And by the way, you see, this is actually a very interesting thing. The world would say that this is a bad way to start to talk about hope.

But if you think about it for a second, isn't this the wisest way to start about hope? Because isn't part of the problem with hopes being crushed? You?

Like you being the jerk? You being unforgiving? You being selfish? Like isn't often that which wrecks your hopes you?

So isn't it actually maybe very wise that the Bible begins with you? Now, if it was just this, it would just be terribly, terribly, terribly bad news.

And it's not going to be able to be on the screen because I just did this adjustment in my sermon between the 8 and the 10. But you see, here's where the good news comes in.

[19:03] If those of you have Bibles or if you don't, you can just listen. Listen to what happens just before this text. It's called the Christ hymn or the Christ creed. It's one of the most beautiful passages of Scripture. It begins at verse 15.

This is God the Son. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. I talked about this last week. In other words, everything that you can be seen and known about God is made visible in Jesus.

And he is the firstborn of all creation. In other words, before anything was created, he existed. And he is the one who brought creation into being. And that he's not begotten by God. He's not made by God.

He's begotten by God. In other words, he has the exact same nature of God. For by him, verse 16, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. And in him, all things hold together. And it's a very beautiful way to talk about God, the Son of God, God, the Father, God, the Son, God, the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, and who God the Son is and how God the Son is going to take upon himself flesh.

[20:07] This same God is going to be the one who takes into himself our human nature and walks amongst us as a person of Jesus. And then in verse 18, it makes this jump. It starts talking about what Jesus accomplishes.

It goes, And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And through him, to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And what Paul does here is it's as if he takes that first bit talking about God, and then he goes to this next bit talking about what Jesus does to make us right with God.

And in between verse 17 and 18, you have to wonder, well, why is verse 18 needed? Why is 18, 19, and 20 needed? And this is where Paul returns to it and says, It's because the line between good and evil is something that human beings created and now is in every single human being, and that there's part of every single human being that wants to tell God to back off, get away, stay away. You have no right here. This is mine. That those verses 18, 19, and 20 had to happen. And you see, here's the good news. If you look at verse, go back to verse, listen to verse 21, and then listen to how the good news is verse 22, and you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

[21:45] I'm going to read it again. He is now reconciled. Reconciled. We're going to talk about this in a moment more, but reconciled is a relationship word. Remember, if the governing image is a couple sitting at a table, and they're really, really close to each other, but the way they, their body language, their manner, everything shows that they're a thousand, a million, a billion miles away and going farther away, then what you need is reconciliation.

And then it goes on, you see, he's now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death. And we're going to talk about this again in a moment. But what it's meaning is that this is something which really happened.

This isn't just a story. This isn't like a story about Zeus or Hercules or a story about Krishna. This isn't just like a story from native spirituality. It's not like in the realm of myth that in the actual world that does exist, in a world where there are prisons and where there are criminals and where there are soldiers and where there's war and where there's money and where there's treasure and where there's violence and where there's love.

In the world of things, in the world of men, in the world of stuff, in that world, he came down. And in that world, in this world where he came down, something happens that is an act of God, an only God, that if we receive it by faith, this reconciliation happens.

And it's not just that, listen to it again, he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

[23 : 27] That it's not just that there's a reconciliation, but that there's this entire dealing with this, a reconciliation. If you use the image of the man and the woman and the table, that they go from the body language of a thousand million miles away to the embrace.

The embrace of love. So what's the Bible talking about here? Back when I was young and before I became a minister and when life was very, very simple, I used to think that if a relationship was in trouble, it was sort of always 50-50 or maybe 45-55 or more 40-60.

I now know, I mean, that's often true, but it's not always true. In fact, there's some cases where it's 99.999999999999999 and the nine keeps going percent and whatever's left is the other person.

We all know of breakups and breakdowns that have happened because of profound acts of betrayal, of the husband cheating on the wife, of a dad abusing the kids, of things which have happened, which is very clearly almost all on one person's part and next to nothing on ours.

And one of the problems with this whole language of reconciliation, if you understand that there's a need for that couple to go from looking like they want to be a million, billion, trillion miles away from each other to the embrace.

[25 : 03] And in a human being, you'd go in with counseling, but you'd know how hard it would be to get reconciliation. But what happens when all of the wrongdoing is on one side and the one who's done all of the wrongdoing is also the one who wants to be a thousand, million, billion, trillion miles away?

And the Bible says that's the human situation with God. God has done nothing wrong to us. God is only love. He's only mercy. He's only good. He's only just. He's only kind. We rebel against him and he hates him and he doesn't kill us.

He continues to give us breath. He continues to hold our body together. He continues to keep the world in existence. God is unfailingly loving and unfailingly good and only good and only loving.

And the breakdown and the furtherance and the problem of the relationship is completely and utterly on our part. And if that is the situation and if I can't fix that, if I can't stop that, if I, you see, because what's needed in reconciliation?

Reconciliation. Well, in reconciliation, there's a variety of things that are needed to be done. The one who's done the wrong has to take responsibility for the wrong that's been done.

[26 : 17] The one who's done wrong has to take responsibility for their mistakes in interpreting what went on. The one who's done wrong has to acknowledge that they valued wrong things, that they've valued things they shouldn't value and not valued things they should value, that their system of understanding of justice is wrong, that their understanding of right and wrong is wrong.

And they have to be able to acknowledge it in a way which is actually very, very sincere and heartfelt and not just manipulative. And there has to be a commitment to not do that again, ever again.

And for reconciliation to happen, there has to be not only this commitment to a new way of living, but an acknowledgement that the hurt that you've done to the other person, that there's a cost to that.

And they have to be willing to try to bear that cost in some particular way. And they have to show that they now really value the other person and that they want to do whatever it is that can be done.

And there has to be forgiveness of the other person. And you can see that, in fact, the matter is that reconciliation, as we all know in human affairs, is very, very difficult and has all of those facets.

[27 : 31] I forgot to put up my first point, Andrew. If you could just put up my first point. I did talking. I forgot I had points this week. Just very briefly.

There's the first point. You are farther from the triune God and more hostile to him than you realize. That's verse 21. You are farther from the triune God and more hostile to him than you realize. But if you could put up the second point, which is what Paul has been talking about here from verses 15 on and trying to really bring home to us. Jesus is your perfect representative, penitent, and price payer.

You see, if you go back, what you and I need, if all of the fault is on me and not on God, and I don't even really want to be reconciled to God. Not really, other than on my terms.

But if you know that, if you've, like, you know, husband, if you've cheated on your wife and you don't want the marriage to end and you want there to be reconciliation, it has to be on her terms, not yours.

[28 : 34] Wouldn't we all agree with that? And yet, if I've done the wrong, I can't say it has to be on my term. But where can I go? What can I do?

When verse 22 talks about how the sake, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death. The word flesh there doesn't mean sinful.

It means frail. It means like yours and mine. Our bodies are frail. You know, I shared with you at the beginning of the summer, I had a virus come into my inner ear, and now I've lost almost all hearing in my inner right ear.

And it's irreparable. And because our bodies are frail. And what the Bible is saying here is if we understand that there's a need for reconciliation, where do we go?

And Jesus is God, the Son of God. But there's no better person, there can be no person other than God himself who could possibly be a representative for every single person in his creation.

[29 : 42] And God, the Son of God, doesn't come down with power, but becomes down in this body of flesh, this body of frailty, just like you and me. And what is offered for us is that Jesus is offered as our representative, because he's God.

That's the importance of verses 15, 16, and 17. And he's the perfect penitent. His life is the life that you can't live.

And he offers to be and to be the life for you that you can't live for yourself. In terms of the unbroken relationship, in terms of the commitment to justice, in terms of the commitment to mercy, in terms of the commitment to kindness, and in gentleness.

And because he's also God at the same time, he is the perfect payment, right? Because whenever somebody's been wronged, there's a price that has to be paid. And if there's going to be reconciliation, somebody has to pay that price.

And to forgive another person, as I've talked about in other sermons, somebody has to pay the cost of forgiveness, because you're out. You're out in terms of your representation.

[30 : 56] You're out in terms of your... It might be that physically or financially that things have been stolen from you that can be never paid back. And it could be your reputation. It could just even be your demand for justice.

And what the Bible says is that God, the Son of God, sets aside his glory and divine prerogatives, remaining fully God, takes into himself our human nature.

No one better than him could be the representative. No one. And he lives the life you couldn't live. And he does the work of reconciliation that you cannot do. And he does it on your behalf.

And he pays the price for the restoration of the relationship that you yourself could never pay. And he does it all. He does it all for you. And there can be no higher price paid than death.

In war, they call it the ultimate sacrifice. And we all know that that's the ultimate sacrifice. It means no matter how great the debt is, no matter how far from God you are, to the uttermost, that price has been paid.

[32 : 06] And to the uttermost, he is your representative. And to your uttermost, he is the perfect penitent. And so the Bible describes, that's why Jesus is called the firstborn from the dead.

He's called the one by which you enter into his body, because he's done it all, and you receive it by faith. Listen to verse 23. We'll read verse all of it, and you see the flow of the argument.

And you, verse 21, who once were alienated, which is another word for far away, and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death. Why?

Why? What's the purpose? In order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. When I appear before God, I won't say, God, I'm a good person.

You've got to accept me. And all I can say is, I am not. The line between good and evil God goes right through me. And in and of myself, there are big parts of me that have always wanted to push you away.

[33 : 11] And I can only stand before you because there was one who lived my life, the life that needed for reconciliation. He did it for me. And the price that is owed and has to be paid, he paid that for me out of love.

It's the only basis I have. And because Jesus is perfect and because he's God, the sacrifice and the payment is total.

Present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. In English, if indeed it sounds as if it's, now you've got to actually live a perfect life.

But in the original language, there's no way to translate it very. In fact, interestingly enough, if you translate it non-literally but thought for thought, if you go back and read the New Living Translation, the New Living Translation is easier to understand here because the original language, it doesn't really translate into English very well.

It's not conditional. It's just saying, so George, how do you live your life? You don't live your life as if, okay, Jesus dies for your sins and now you're made right with him.

[34 : 20] Get the tattoo, get the t-shirt, get the hat. But now what you need is now you need to learn Anglican liturgy or now you need to learn how to live in the victory.

Now you have to learn how to speak in tongues. Now you have to learn how to say the rosary. Now you have to learn how to take these courses about how to be a successful parent and all this and all that.

And, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, of course this is all important because that's how you start. But now, no, no, what the text is saying, all of your growth keeps going back to this one thing that's been done, this one thing for you to understand that the line between good and evil runs down right the center of you and you can't fix that.

And God in the person of his son provides the perfect penitent, the perfect life that you could not live, everything that had to be done for reconciliation, even though it should have been done for you by you, he does for you because you cannot do it for yourself.

And now he will, with unstoppable, unfailling power, when you have put your faith and trust in him, he will present you faultless and blameless in the very presence of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever.

[35 : 34] It's all because of him. Always remember this. I'm going to read the next bit, and I have just a couple of minutes, and I just want to leave you this one fundamental idea and this one little tiny phrase to remember.

Just, you know, normally I'm supposed to do a little transition. Just stay with me. Look at verse 24. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. See, this is the other thing which is so wise about the biblical account of hope, is that not only is it talking about hope in the midst of the fact that you are you, but it's, and you'll always be you, but that hope is, there's this certain hope of glory that also is able to be a hope for glory in the midst of suffering.

Paul's writing this from jail. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you to make the word of God fully known, and the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of his mystery, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. That's the phrase. I'm not a fan of tattoos.

If you want a tattoo that will last, Christ in you the hope of glory. Christ in you the hope of glory.

[37 : 11] Christ in you the hope of glory. Christ in you the hope of glory. See that language about the afflictions, this is the thing, Christ in you, it's that when you put your faith in Christ, Christ is in you, and you are in Christ.

Christ suffering upon the cross was all, it's a once for all suffering that pays the price and reconciles you to God.

But because you are now in him and he is in you, it means that when you suffer in a sense, he is suffering, and that suffering will go on until Jesus comes again. And there's that ongoing suffering that Jesus experiences because his body is here on earth, and we suffer as part of his sufferings. When we suffer, it's him suffering because it's not us facing these things alone. What is it? Christ in you the hope of glory. In fact, actually, if Andrew, if you could put up the point, since I wrote one, Christ in you the hope of glory will shape your lesser hopes.

So this is the thing. I'm going to talk about this more in a couple of weeks, when we're going to talk more fully about the means of grace. How is it that this hope shapes your entire life?

[38 : 26] Christ in you the hope of glory. I think back eventually when people will go to restaurants again, and you'll go to a kids-friendly restaurant.

One of the things they do in a kids-friendly restaurant sometimes is they give a kid like a piece of paper with some activities on it. And one of the things that's often on the activity sheet is a maze. And so I don't know where some of the young kids are.

I don't know when it happens, but kids will say, oh, there's a maze. And they, they start to, to try to figure out the maze. And of course, they make all these mistakes that eventually looks like a big jumble, but eventually they figure out eventually how to get from the beginning to the end of the maze.

But what does happens to a kid at some point in time in their life, something happens to a kid. You know what they figure out? You start at the end. And if you start at the center, you're able to figure out the path perfectly.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. In the means of grace, you begin at the end. You begin at the end. [39 : 33] And if in fact, it's not just a matter of trying to live a perfect life, but it's in fact that you're not doing this all by yourself, but now Christ is in you.

And you're not only trying to do it all by yourself, because you're part of a congregation where there's others, that Christ is in them, not counting our merits, but pardoning our offenses. Then part of how it is that you begin to live a completely and utterly transformed life is first that you always remember the gospel, and you remember that Christ in you is the hope of glory, and you begin at the end.

See, that's what helps you to do hard things. That's what helps you to acknowledge that you've done wrong to begin to help in a relationship.

That's what allows you to ask for help. That's what allows you to go and share the gospel with somebody, even though they might end up thinking that you're doing something really wrong. If you begin with the end, and if you begin with the end, and you know at the end there is where all people are equal, and there's love, and there's mercy, and there's goodness, and that's the glory.

There's this glory of this relationship. It's what gives you the strength to begin to consider doing hard things by facing maybe prejudice, or discrimination, or injustice, or making changes in the workplace, or changes in society, or changes in your family.

[40 : 53] It's the more the end, the hope of glory, grips you. It starts to help you take those small steps. Helps me to take those small steps.

Will this conversation to fix this relationship maybe end really, really, really badly? Yes. Is my identity dependent upon it?

Is my salvation dependent upon it? Is God's final word about me dependent upon it? No. That's been said. Christ in me, the hope of glory. And if Christ is in me, I have someone with me to take that hard step.

And if the hope of glory, that glory is the final word about me, maybe I can try to do that hard thing. Please stand. Andrew, if you could put up the general thanksgiving, I invite you to join with me in praying this prayer as a way of closing the service.

It's the general thanksgiving. It's usually one of the very final prayers you say if you do morning or evening prayer. And it's just a wonderful entranceway and reminder and summary of much of the book of Colossians.

[42 : 05] Say it with me. As a prayer, not just say it with me, sorry, pray it with me. Pray it with me. Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we are unworthy servants to give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all people.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life. But above all, for your inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ for the means of grace and

for the hope of glory.

And we beseech you, give us that due sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth your praise not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory, world without end.

Amen. Father, I ask that the Holy Spirit would move mightily in our lives and help us to grow in the knowledge and certainty of the gospel, knowledge and certainty that Christ is in us by faith, and our hope of glory is secure.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.