

Hope

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[0 : 00] I'll be reading this evening from Colossians chapter 1 as we continue over these next four Sundays, this Sunday being the first Advent where we're concentrating on hope. And this is found in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 27. I'll read verse 27 is going to be our focus and of our attention. I'd read from verse 24 to 29 actually. Now hear God's word.

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, 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 the mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all my energy that he powerfully works within me. Verse 27 of course is our focus, is meaning that Christ in you, the hope of glory. Well we're going to stand and sing to our Lord and then we'll come back to that word next.

Well as we come this evening we will recognize hopefully that there is an overlap from this morning's message in the sense that we are concentrating on this idea of hope. The idea of biblical hope being a gift from God that causes us to hope in other gifts in the future, other blessings in the future. Hope is not something which causes us to focus on future gifts alone, it allows us to see that hope itself is a gift from God. So this morning we looked at how what hope is, how hope works. And we answered the very important question of who are you hoping in to receive what you're hoping for. So who are you hoping in to receive what you're hoping for. To hope for something is how the world hopes.

But nothing turns up because you're simply hoping in hope, it's wishful thinking. Someone has to make it happen. And we believe in a God who holds all things together by the power of his word. If we pray that we want it to be nice weather tomorrow, we pray to God for instance, but we don't hope that the weather is going to be nice tomorrow as if it's not in someone's control. We hope in God for the weather to be nice if we were to do that. The attention then is on God giving us hope that draws our attention to him and his ability to be able to fulfill all those other things that we are told to hope for in the word of God. That's essentially how hope works. Hope is a gift that leads us to other gifts that causes us to trust in God for all of them. Well this evening, hope in Christ is a future glory. Christ in you is the hope of future glory. Only a couple of weeks ago I preached on how men are made for glory.

Women are made for glory also. And we are to enter into this glory in the future while we get some of it now. But before we consider what it means for Christ in us to be the hope of glory, it might be worth just looking at this from an angle that you'll be familiar with, but I think it's worth just standing back and looking at this phrase from just a slightly different angle than we perhaps normally with.

[4 : 46] And that is that during the first advent, nobody was getting ready for Christmas. During the first advent of Christ, nobody's getting ready for Christmas. The whole idea of Christmas doesn't exist. They were waiting for Christ to come. They were waiting for the birth of the Messiah.

And when the promises are made and Mary understands what's happening and Elizabeth understands what's happening and there's rejoicing in the wombs and we know what's going to happen next because of the promises made, nobody's getting ready for Christmas. They've not got a list thinking, how are we going to get everyone around the table and what are they going to eat? No one's putting up decorations. No one is focusing on any of those things. Now, none of those things are bad. It's simply to draw our attention to the fact that Advent existed before Christmas. What we now know is Christmas is mingled with the idea of Advent. But Advent, but Advent,

biblically speaking, was before Christmas existed. And if you think about it, Christmas has been, for the most part of the world, designed by countries that are in their winter period. Okay? This is why if I ask you to think of an Australian Christmas, okay, you're not going to be thinking of the same things you think. You don't see an Australian Christmas on the advert.

You don't see Coca-Cola bringing out an advert of Christmas in Australia, okay, where cans of Coke are opened up on the beach. What you have is you have flashing lights in winter and you have snow and you have red and gold and a big man on the back of a truck wearing red with a white beard drinking a bottle of Coca-Cola. It seems as if winter, those countries that are in their winter period have designed Christmas to look like that. But if you go to another part of the world, say Australia, for instance, okay, Christmas dinner is down on the beach and surfing happens afterwards, okay? We are so wrapped up sometimes in a manufactured Christmas and that's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with any of those things that I've said, you know, colors, fruit, drinks, good times, rejoicing, having fun, snow, perhaps especially snow. You know, all of these are good things, but they're designed around man's idea of Christmas. And I guess what I'm asking you to do this evening, at least just for this evening, is to think about Advent without thinking about Christmas. To think about the first Advent without thinking about any of those things that are associated with a designer Christmas. And I'm not asking you to do that because I'm shunning those things, not at all. I'm simply asking you to do that because the first Advent was one where nobody was decorating anything, okay? No one was planning anything. It was simply a waiting period, a time of rejoicing, but it was a waiting period. When we think about Advent as it is presented in the scriptures, we end up with a people who are ruled over by the Roman Empire. They don't want to be ruled over. They're God's people who've been promised huge amounts of blessing and they're not receiving it.

That's the first Christmas. That's the first Advent. God is making promises to these people and has made them. And some of them have happened and some of them are yet to happen. It was a time where people really had to trust God for their daily bread. It was a time where people were living under, as I said, the occupation of a foreign nation, dictating where they could go and what they would do, not on a large scale, but the census being one of them. And so the first Advent was not a time where people were necessarily rejoicing in the country of their origin. There was great dictatorial thrust put upon them. Mary and Joseph have to go off and register themselves and all of these kind of things don't look like the type of thing that you want to be doing, heavenly pregnant and that.

It wasn't an easy time. And so Advent, as it is presented to us in the scriptures, is where everyone is sat hoping, waiting, is this the Messiah? And of course, Simeon, in particular, was promised that he would not see death until he saw the Messiah, that he would not see death until he saw the Savior. And of course, his promise was fulfilled. He got to see Jesus.

[9 : 52] And that's how people were waiting. That's what people were hoping for. That was what occupied their mind and their heart. And I guess, you know, we can't go back there because it's already happened.

But I just want us to think about Advent from that point of view, if we can. Here, as we consider Advent in the light of Christ in us being the hope of glory, those hopes never go away. People were hoping for Christ to come. And when Christ came, many of those hopes were fulfilled. And yet many more are yet to be fulfilled. So hope doesn't disappear at the first coming of Christ. In fact, it reinforces many of the other hopes that we have for the things that God has promised concerning the future, as we saw in Romans this morning. You know, because God has kept promises, we know that he will keep promises moving forward. Christ in you, then, the hope of glory is hugely important.

Hugely important. Especially the little word in. It's the fulfillment of how God is going to keep his promise. No promise is kept to you outside of your relationship with Christ. The word in is word meaning union. By virtue of your union with Christ, you get to enjoy all the blessings in Christ. Christ in you and you in Christ means that you will enjoy these future blessings. The other thing here is that what determines our hope is not the things that we can do, but it's actually determined by the one who made the promises in the first place. Remember the question, what are you hoping in to receive what you're hoping for? Who are you hoping in to receive what you're hoping for? And the promise here is, Paul answers, it is Christ in you is the hope of glory. In other words, to phrase it slightly differently, Christ in you is God's guarantee of that future glory. You have the guarantee

within you, in Christ, being in Christ and Christ in you, guarantees you, guarantees you, Paul is saying, of that future glory. Everything that is going to come only comes to you in Christ Jesus. This is how he phrases it. Christ in you is the hope of glory.

The mystery that Paul refers to here is the unfolding plan of God. That God's people, the Jews, were expecting the Messiah to come. And then Paul is saying, yes, but he wasn't just coming for the Jews. He's coming for the Gentiles also. And it's true that he was coming for the Jews, but not only for the Jews. Paul does acknowledge in Romans 1, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. God made the promises to the Jews, but the Gentiles are included. And Peter reflects this beautifully where he says that you, as Gentile believers, have been born again into a living hope. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

[13:16] You have been born again into a living hope. Hope, as we saw this morning, is a recognition that something is missing. But it's also a promise that you will have it at some point. Hope means we have to wait.

Hope is an acknowledgement we don't have it yet. The idea of Christ in us, then, being the hope of glory is how God guarantees that hope, is how God stirs us up to remember, day after day, I have a better future to look forward to than the present that I'm currently living in. And as I said, it's not hard for men or women throughout the generations to say extravagant things of visions and dreams and pump people up. But what happens is, where are all those visions and dreams now? Where's the fulfillment of them? And many of them die with people. And that doesn't mean that you shouldn't be necessarily future-orientated and having great visions of the future. My point is, is that they should be God's visions for the future. They're the ones you ought to be getting excited about. That those dreams and that God promises will happen, they're the things that should really light the fire in your belly and get you going and pick you up in the morning. They're the things that cause us to rejoice at the fact that the future is going to be better than the present. Not something that someone says that can stir someone up emotionally. No, our focus is on the fact that when God gives the gift of hope, imagine hope as a gift like a basket. And God fills that basket. He is telling us what we need to hope for. Because he's the one who's going to fulfill it. So God gives us it. He fulfills it. He fills up the content of it. Let me just point this out then, that if Christ is, Christ in us is the hope of glory, just to be absolutely clear, and I'm sure you understand that already, but just to be absolutely clear, if we were to reverse it, what we're saying is this, there is no hope outside of Christ.

That's how serious it is. There's no hope outside of Christ. I want you to think then just of family members who aren't saved. There's no hope outside of Christ. Your friends, perhaps those who are not your friends, your next door neighbor, or the ones further down the road, there's no hope outside of Christ. We need to, of course, bring them before God in prayer. We need for what happened to us to happen to them. You know, God's promise to the, not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles also, well, they're our next door neighbors. They're the people who we know and we walk with and work with.

They need to know about Christ being the only hope. Now, of course, we've looked at this at length over years of, you know, knowing Christianity, and even before that gospel encounters, the importance of making sure the word is known, but Christ is the only hope. In relationship with Christ, I have a very dear Nan who I love very much, but I know my Bible well, okay? No one's perfect, but I know my, you'd, hopefully, you'd want me to know my Bible well. But there, but she thinks that when she passes from this life and goes to God because she thinks she's going there to meet God on favorable terms, that being a good person is equivalent to relationship with Christ. And it isn't, is it? Relationship with Christ, in Christ, Christ in you, is the only hope of glory. And outside of that relationship, there is no hope. Okay? These are, the gospel's never easy to preach.

[17:46] It's never easy to declare to someone who has other ideas, but it is the truth. And we wouldn't want anybody to die believing lies, dying in ignorance. That, that is not what we want to happen. We want them to be set free by the truth. As we move on then, we need to consider one other thing about hope, hope. And that is hope is knowledge. And what I, the reason I mentioned this is because Paul is saying that this is the mystery revealed. You finally arrived at Christ.

Everything that God has promised is being made known to you in Christ. And Paul is making known Christ to you. He, his emphasis is on hope and the mystery being revealed, leading us to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, of course, not everything, everything in Christ, every hope in Christ is fulfilled, but not every hope is fulfilled in history. Okay, let me say that again. I said it this morning in a slightly different way, but every hope is fulfilled in Christ, but not every hope is fulfilled in history. Not

every hope is fulfilled in time. Every promise of God is yes and amen in Christ Jesus, but not in time. That means we look forward to things that are coming. But Paul's point here is that Christ is the very cornerstone, the very pinnacle, the very foundation of anything that God tells you to hope for. Now, I'm not dealing, as you can understand, like this morning I didn't, with personal hopes. You ought to have them. And if God has promised certain things in scripture, for instance, that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, and then we go ahead and take it and people can be saved, if we look at the blessings that God has given us and we say, well, we want these blessings as well, we want the salvation of family members, we want, you know, reconciliation in heaven and earth, the things that you've promised, we say them as though we mean it. We're not, God, I'm struggling. No, we take God at his word, and we use that knowledge to build our prayer life, that everything is foundational on Christ Jesus.

So we are willing to recognize, we're willing to admit that we don't have everything yet, but we must acknowledge that there's more to come. We don't give up, and that means throughout time, I don't know if you've noticed, but the church has got bigger. Did you notice that, that from the very first day of the church, the church has grown? Have you, have you looked in the world, have you seen how many Christians have gone to glory? Does that not encourage you that God is keeping his promise?

Does that not encourage you that God is doing great things? Does it not encourage you that we have the gospel going out to the ends of the earth and hopefully getting there with greater ease every day?

Does that not encourage you? Well, that, that's the kind of thing that Paul is saying here. He wants to make known Christ in you, the hope of glory. So we don't live a life of escapism. We don't, we don't want to escape from this world. We, we want to be around as long as possible to see as many of these things come to fulfillment. I mean, that's my desire. It's not going to happen. I recognize, just like you, I have a fixed amount of days on this earth, but what I would really like is not to have a fixed amount of days on this earth and be around long enough to see all the promises that God made to take place in front of my very eyes. But it doesn't. Some of us get to see at the time of Christ's birth. Imagine being there. Imagine being there at a time where Christ's promise of the Messiah is being fulfilled in your very presence before your very eyes. Being at the cross, of course, you wouldn't have understood the cross in the same way you do now. Being at the resurrection and seeing

Christ after he died. Imagine that being promised and then seeing it with your own eyes. That's the knowledge of hope. That's what it means for God to build hope. But I want to qualify this slightly with the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes. And I, I say this a lot, at least to myself. Okay. It's not that I talk to myself, but I say this a lot to myself. Look, it's not what I feel, which is the problem. [22 : 30] It's what I know. Because it's what I know that causes me to feel what I do. Okay. It's not what I feel, which is the problem. Christians should know by now that feelings are fluid. They're empty.

They're full. They're half full. They're half empty. They're half full. Whatever the case may be, they're fluid. They have no real measurement. And Solomon, being wise, of course, is able to point this out.

I'm paraphrasing now, but his effective statement is, look, it's not what I feel that causes the problem. Now, don't tell me how you feel. Tell me what you know. That then I can, then we can move, then we can minister to one another. And so Solomon says, look, it's not what I feel, which is the problem. It's what I know that causes me to feel this way. It's a paraphrase on Ecclesiastes 1.18, where he says, for in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases in knowledge increases in sorrow. In other words, he understands that in this fallen world, that the more you understand, the more painful it is to understand all of that. It brings a certain kind of sorrow. But the same applies in reverse. That's the blessing. The more I know, the more I will feel differently. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Because of what I know, I now feel differently. Okay? I want to talk about how I feel about Christ in me, the hope of glory, but I cannot talk about how it makes me feel. I cannot talk about how that hope encourages me for the future, unless I actually know it in the first place.

So I know it, and then I experience God's encouragement through what I know. That's the knowledge of hope. Well, as we move on to considerations, I just want to reflect again on just how important it is to consider our relationship with Christ. That all of these hopes that I'm speaking of,

all of these feelings, that what I know leads to what I feel, is only possible in Christ and Christ in you. When Paul says, Christ in you, the hope of glory, such a significant statement. It's such an embracing statement. It fills you with encouragement the moment he says it. In other words, what he's saying is this, that in the backdrop of the mystery of making Christ known to the world, he's saying that God is absolutely purposeful in bringing men, women, boys, and girls into Christ. God has a definite purpose in making people believers, followers of Christ, followers of Christ. Why? Because he has a future. The only way God can give a future to someone is if he gives Christ to them. Okay? The only way we can have the future that we have is if we have the relationship with Christ. So here's the considerations. I want you to notice

Paul's backdrop, which is why we read from verse 24. He says something quite striking. He says, 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. That's striking. But what he means is this, or rather not but what he means, what he means is this. He's not saying that there is anything lacking in Christ's sufferings. But he's simply saying that because Christ has ascended to the right hand of the Father, his church now suffers. And if you were to take this back to Paul's conversion when he was called Saul, and Christ came to him in a vision, and Christ appeared before him. And do you remember the words of Christ to Saul? He said, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Well, Paul was out on the road killing Christians. He was afflicting the church. He was causing the church to suffer. But Jesus takes that suffering on his body, the church, personal. And he says to Paul, why do you persecute me?

[26 : 58] And now Paul, understanding the theology of that, reverses it and understands that as a Christian, now going out into the world proclaiming the gospel and suffering for it, that it fills up, as it were. In other words, because Christ is no longer here, but his body is, we now continue in those sufferings. And then out of that suffering, out of the reality of that suffering and that pain, he comes to the conclusion. Christ in you, in us, together, is the hope of glory.

Paul is a minister of hope, in many ways, because he's a minister of Christ Jesus. He's a minister that proclaims the gospel of the future, because he's a minister who proclaims the accomplishments of Christ in the present. In other words, he's answering the question that we asked this morning, who are you hoping in to receive what you're hoping for? And the answer is Christ only.

Here's the exhortation then as we close. In many ways, Christmas causes us to think about the opposite of what Advent should be causing us to think about. Christmas, unlike Advent, causes us to look backward on what has happened. But Advent was never about causing the people to look backwards. It was always there to cause the people to look forwards. So we have Christmas, and we remember when Christ was born. And we tend to keep looking back to that, and there's nothing wrong with that. But when Christ came, the first Advent, it leads us to the second Advent. Christmas leads to Easter. The first Advent leads to Easter. In other words, when God is fulfilling his promises at the first Advent, we were to go, what's next? What's to come? Right now that Christ is here, what else is going to happen? Well, the kingdom of God has come. The forgiveness of sins is about to happen through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the cross. In other words, as the first Advent happened, people were looking forward. But Christmas causes most of us to look back at his birth. Nothing wrong with that. But sometimes it can affect the Christian in a way where they only look back. And they forget to look forward to the promise that God has made. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

If I can add a word, not to change scripture, but just to put it in its direction, Christ in you is the hope of that future glory that you do not yet have, but one day you will. So here's the final thought.

Peter uses that phrase beautifully when he says that you, if you're in relationship with Christ, have been born again into a living hope through, he says, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[30 : 05] How is Peter answering the question? Well, one, hope is a gift from God. And secondly, that only in Christ are those hopes fulfilled. It's all from God, Peter's saying. Paul is saying exactly the same. Advent leads to Easter. It's all from God. Now, if you're sat here this evening feeling that you don't have hope, hopefully you've understood by now that you need to, as I said this morning, talk to your heart.

Losing the feeling of hope is not losing the reality of its existence. Feeling that you have no hope, losing the feeling that there is no hope, what you have lost there is the feeling. What the way to get that feeling back is to be reminded of the knowledge. For the knowledge of hope leads to the feeling of hope. But it's the knowledge of hope that leads us to the reality that that future hope is a, leads to

a future glory. So we remember this, and with this I'll finish.
All of our hopes are fulfilled in Christ. All of them. But not all of our hopes are fulfilled right now.
Amen.