

One Hope of the Gospel

I'm going to talk a little bit about Colossians 1:21-23, but mostly about verse twenty-three. Let's go there and read it, starting in verse in twenty-one:

Col 1:21-23 *"And you who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, (or engaged in wicked works), yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight, if indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast and are not moved away from the hope (or the expectation is more literal) of the gospel which you heard which was preached to every creature under heaven of which I, Paul, became a minister."*

Today I want to spend some more time talking about verse twenty-three. I will say a couple things about verse twenty-two and then I want to spend most of the time talking about verse twenty-three. The thing that's on my mind to talk about in verse twenty-two is this phrase to "present you holy and blameless and above reproach in his sight." This presenting here is often overlooked. It's a statement of purpose that is really important and I think that we don't really notice a lot of these purpose statements in Scripture because, frankly, we have a different purpose working in our heart. We have our own purposes for God, we have our own purposes for having a relationship with God, and so the scriptures that stand out to us are the ones that seem to align with our purposes for Him. We miss the scriptures that talk about His eternal purpose. We are really good at doing that and we've done that since the very beginning.

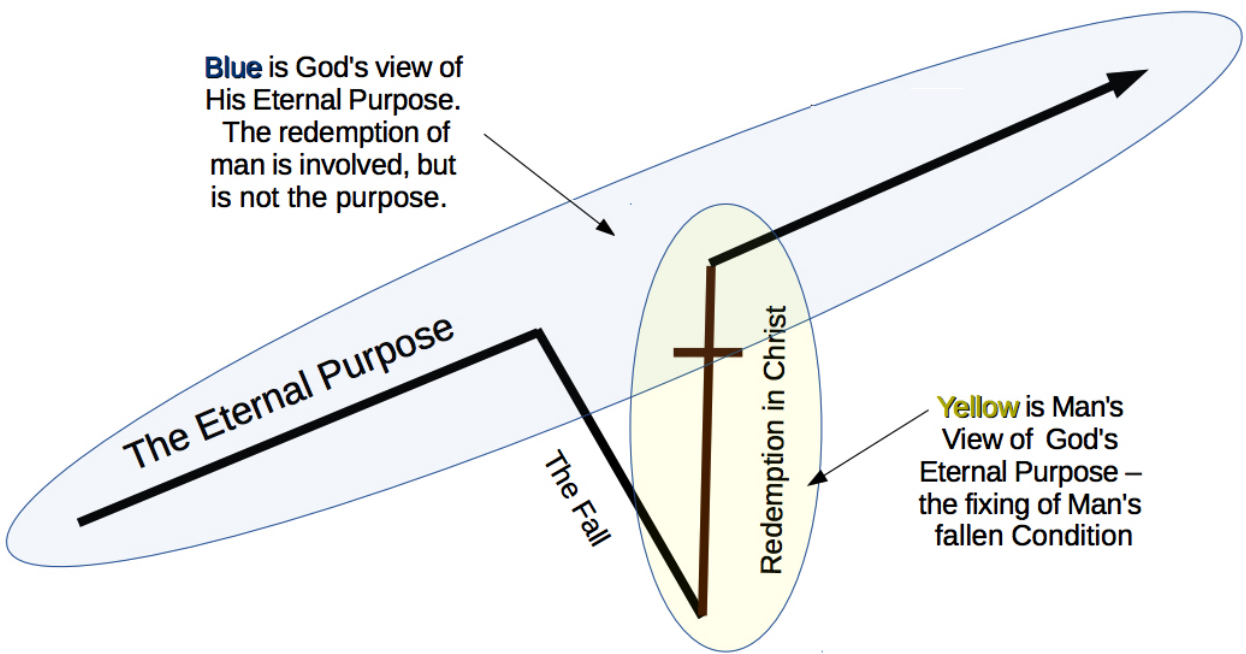
I think Israel gave us some really good pictures of that as they were on their way out of Egypt and probably even going back before that. It seems to me that fallen man (most of them) has always wanted to be religious, because there's a lot of benefit for the natural man to have religion. There is a benefit for the natural man to have a god, but not to genuinely know the truth, because the truth puts to death that man and gives the soul another life and another Man. There are a lot of benefits for Adam, or the natural man, that he finds in religion, and in creating his own purpose for God. He has lots of them. They have to do with things like self-righteousness, spiritual pride, feelings of wisdom, protection, blessing for his own natural pursuits, desires, safety, etc. Those are some of the many things that man gets out of religion. But the only thing that man (the adamic man) gets from the

truth, from the true gospel, is death!... and then a completely different life, which cannot glory in itself. That's not very interesting to most people, and so the gospel of the cross isn't very interesting to most. That's just kind of the way it is.

Getting back to this purpose statement, I see here what we've talked about before when we did that whole class on the eternal purpose of God, and I think there's 12 teachings in that series on the website if you missed it. We said the eternal purpose of God has to do with Him creating this corporate "thing"... which in some scriptures is pictured as a bride, or a harvest, or a kingdom, or priesthood, or the church. There are a lot of different views of this "thing" that God creates. He creates it in a very specific way, out the life of His own Son—of which Adam is a picture. God puts Adam to sleep and takes something of his very life (a rib) to create this perfect companion that receives his seed and bear his glory and His increase, and then gives her back to him. That's what I'm thinking of when I'm looking at this scripture here. It says Eve was given back to Adam and Adam said, 'This is bone of my bone. This is an increase of me. This is the increase of the seed that I am and there was no one found previously for that increase.'

So the picture of the gospel in the story of Adam and Eve is that the life of the one produced or formed the other, who became the recipient of that seed and the increase of that man, and then was given back to him. Eve's purpose was for Adam. I'm not trying to make a statement about gender equality here; I'm just talking about types and shadows of spiritual realities. Her purpose was because God said, 'It's not good that man be alone.' He wanted an increase of that man so when God created Eve, He didn't just create her and say, 'Now go run and jump in the sewer.' Or 'Do whatever you want, Eve, you can marry the gorilla or whoever is interesting to you.' No, He gave her back to Adam as the one who received and bore the increase of his seed.

What I'm trying to say is that there is purpose pictured for us here in this story, and that purpose is the exact same thing Paul is talking about here in Colossians. God put to death all the enmity in the body of Christ in order to present us to His Son. God created man for this incredible purpose to be joined to His Son, to receive His Son's seed, to bear His increase, and become the kingdom of His glory... but then man went and jumped in the sewer, so to speak. But now, the purpose isn't just to get Eve out of the sewer. I mean, the purpose of God isn't just to clean us up by forgiving our sins. That's about as far as the natural mind can understand the gospel: it's just to forgive our sins. Friends, there is much more to God's eternal purpose than just pardoning our transgressions. He created us with purpose, and He has never deviated from that purpose.



The diagram that goes along with this message has its weaknesses, but there's a line in a blue circle showing the purpose of God. It starts with creation and then man falls from glory, falls from purpose. Then, through the work of the cross, God brings man back up to continue His eternal purpose. Now, man thinks that the line in the yellow circle represents the only purpose of God. But this actually is the line that brings man back to the place where he can even enter into the purpose of God—the line in the blue circle. Do you see what I'm portraying here? Man also has a very, very small and man-centered view of this line in the yellow circle as well, which is another part of the problem. We don't understand the cross is the way that God actually gave us a new life and didn't just fix the old one.

What I'm trying to show with this diagram is that we think God's involvement with man is simply to restore him from the “sewer” to a clean state. We think this is the only eternal purpose of God—to fix man! And that's just one of the million ways that man makes himself the center of God's story and the center of everything, **when really Christ is the center and man was created for the glory of Christ.** God certainly cleans, redeems, forgives, newly creates, delivers, and defeats the enemy, but He does it to go on with His original purpose, which is to present us to the One whose life we receive and whose image we were created to bear. It's Eve handed back to Adam.

This is a short little sentence Paul says in Colossians 1, but Ephesians 5 goes on in a little more detail about it. In verse 25 where Paul is talking about the shadow of this in natural relationships he says, “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her (here's the purpose part) that He may sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of the water of the Word that He might present her to Himself as a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing that

she may be holy and without blemish.” That's a couple longer verses there describing this same reality he's talking about here in Colossians chapter 1.

Now, there are problems and weaknesses with this diagram here. The restoration is more than just the restoration to the original also. It's not just bringing Adam back to a state of sinlessness. There's a whole lot beyond just getting man cleaned up and back on the train. The diagram here serves only one purpose and that is to show that man focuses on his own cleaning or redemption as the very center and heartbeat of what the gospel is. We often don't think much about Christ and the eternal purpose of God, and think only of ourselves, and our personal benefit.

Let's go onto this next verse: “If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard...” There's a contingency here. If you go back a little bit, 'to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight if you continue in the faith, (or in faith really), grounded and steadfast and are not moved away from the only hope of the gospel, (the only expectation of the gospel...)' We can't really say much about this verse without understanding what faith is, so let me quickly review.

What is faith? You can't really continue steadfast and grounded in faith if you don't know what faith is. It is, however, very easy to continue in beliefs because beliefs are just your own thoughts. You create them and you want to continue in them because they are simply whatever you think. Continuing in a belief is something totally and 180 degrees opposite than continuing in faith. Beliefs are the things that you think are true based on your own natural ideas, thoughts, or conclusions. They are what you've been taught, what you've added up, and your own rational conclusions about things. Faith, however, is the mind of Christ. You could call it a kind of believing, but it's given to you by God. **It's His light and His view working in your soul in such a way that you see what He sees and you abide in that light and view. Christ is the author and finisher of faith. Man is the author and finisher of his own beliefs.** Again, it's easy to continue in beliefs because you want to. They don't really touch your life except in the ways that you want them to, and when you want them to, unless you've been forced into someone else's beliefs. But at least here in the States, and in most free countries, your beliefs correspond to your desires. Whatever you want to think is true, that's what you believe! It's really that simple. Whether that's atheism, Christian fundamentalism, or whatever is convenient to the things that you like, the things that you want to believe and the things that you want to live according to, that's what you believe. And just as soon as someone convinces you about a different way of life that you like better, that's when you change your belief! Or you change your church because there's another pastor down the street that says it more like your personal preferences or ideas. It's very pleasing to the flesh to be an atheist for a number of reasons. You can justify anything you want to do, you can rationalize that there's no real standard or objective truth and that's convenient to the flesh of some people. It's also very convenient to be involved in any number

of versions of Christian religion for the reasons we were talking about earlier.

Someone needs to go out there and blow a trumpet and just tell people that human beliefs are nothing. Religious conversations go like this: 'You have your beliefs, I have mine. We all have our beliefs. They are all true. They are all false. It doesn't matter, just as long as you tolerate my beliefs.' But beliefs are just man's opinions, man's ideas. Faith is the light of Christ shining in the Spirit-born soul.

You can find a pastor, a book, a theology, or people that will tell you exactly what you want to believe, and you can stick with them and you will stick with them as long as you believe those things. It's only when you change your mind that you have to change your pastor or church. I hope that seems really silly and far from being a spiritual reality but sadly it's not. It's super easy to change your beliefs and your church. But faith doesn't allow any of these carnal luxuries. You can't change true faith...like you would a belief. Faith changes you!

Faith doesn't let any of your beliefs remain. Faith kills them and it keeps on killing them which makes it hard, in a sense, for the man that loves the flesh and darkness to stay in the faith, to continue on in faith, to continue the fight of faith, to finish the race of faith, to continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, not moved away. The true faith of God shows you a light that Adam cannot walk in and it kills what you believe. It totally makes irrelevant what you believe. It takes your beliefs and shows them to be out from the wrong man, in the wrong light, and for all the wrong reasons. That's what faith does. That's what the light of Christ does.

In other words, the light judges. The light of Christ judges you. It judges your beliefs and crushes them. I've never had the light of Christ confirm one belief I've ever had, even the beliefs that were true. I mean, the light killed and is killing everything that I thought, and assumed, and imagined about things I knew were true, and it's very much still a work in progress in my heart. Statements like 'Jesus died on the cross' I've known to be true since I was five. But with every experience of faith I've known in my heart, the light has completely redefined and destroyed everything I thought about that statement: what it means, why He did it, what it's for, what did it accomplish, etc.. Faith doesn't let my beliefs continue about the cross of Jesus Christ. It shows them to be vain imaginations. That's what they are.

So faith shows you a light that Adam cannot abide in. Your soul can abide in that light, but only in the ever increasing freedom from Adam and the realization of a completely different light. Faith shows you the cross, that's what it does. It shows you "I've been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me and the life that I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God." The life that I live, is the life that faith sees! The life I now live is not the life that was crucified at the cross, but

the life that faith recognizes and sees which is not I, but Christ who lives in me. And that's what the cross will always show you. It shows you a reality in Christ where Adam has been crucified, judged, and cut away. You have to face that, know that, and walk forward in that view.

You have to stay in that view to remain in the faith and if you don't, then your faith quickly turns into beliefs and memories. Memories... that is another way to say beliefs. It's a memory of what you once saw to be real. You can live in the darkness of memories and still maintain true things as beliefs, but faith won't let you do that. Light won't let you do that. You can't hold onto faith in your mind. Faith doesn't live in your mind. That's like trying to put manna in your bucket for tomorrow. You can't hold it from yesterday, it has to be a present eating. There's a present eating of it and it's only good for today. If you put it into a container then you've killed it. You'll get worms in it. That's how it works. If you put faith into your brain and make it a belief system, a statement of faith, all these things that man does to kill it, Man kills it because it's constantly trying to kill man. **We have to either be killed by faith or we have to kill faith by making it a belief, or a memory. One of those two things is going to happen in your soul. You are either going to kill faith, kill the living view of Christ in your heart that comes in His light by His Spirit so you can live and continue in your own ideas, plans, and purposes, or faith is going to kill you and is going to leave one Man alive in your soul: 'not I, but Christ.'** Friends, I promise you that one of those two things is going to happen.

The continuing in faith, grounded and steadfast, which Paul is talking about here is not continuing the faith, or continuing in your religious creed. It is literally 'continuing in faith'. It is not continuing in the form of Christianity that you know. No, it's a faith of which Christ is the author and finisher. It's a faith that has substance and evidence to it. It's a faith that is bigger than believing and it's not just maintaining your beliefs. Somebody says:

—'Oh yeah, I continued in faith my whole life.'

—'What does that mean?'

—'I've always been a Christian and I've always gone to the same church.'

No, that's not continuing in faith! Continuing in faith has to do with staying in a light and there's progressive growth, but it's a light that's never letting you live, it's always judging you. It's always showing you to be judged by the cross. I will tell you exactly what light does because I'm going to quote the words of Jesus: "Here is the judgment. Light has come." That's the judgment! Light has come but men love darkness and they hide from the light. They hide from the light because they're evil. That's why they hide from the light and the light will always show you that. He doesn't say some men are evil or some parts of men are evil, He says, 'If you know how to give good gifts to your

children, how then can you, being evil, know how to give good gifts and your Father in heaven would not?'

You are evil by nature, by birth, sons of wrath by birth. There is this nature, this principle of sin, that is the governing reality of every human being's soul by their first birth. And there's another principle of life that becomes the governing reality, a reality established by new birth, which becomes the increased governing of a heavenly King. And light shows you the new King. Light shows you David. Darkness shows you Saul. Light shows you a king that is going to kill everything in the land. Darkness shows you a king that is going to try to save the best for himself. Or like Saul did, save the best and offer it up to God, which is even worse.

So light, the true light, is a judgment, and it comes and it cuts between two men, two lives, and two worlds. It doesn't actually do the cutting, but it shows you the cut. It shows you the judgment. It makes you face it, and face it you will in the light or you will turn that light into a belief system, into a religion. And you'll run around talking about doing good and whatever else, but you won't stay in the light

The light makes everything of the Adamic man want to run for cover. That's what it does. It makes me think of that verse in Isaiah: "The Lord alone will be exalted in His day." That is to say, 'in His light.' And man will go hiding in the rocks from the light of that day and will say, 'Fall on me and crush me! Don't make me face this light! Don't let me face this day! Who can stand before the day of the Lord? It's a great and terrible day, who can stand there? Only one Man stands in the day of the Lord and you're either found in that man with nothing more than that man, or you're not found. Or you're found resisting that Man.

I know that sounds hard. I just know that's what I've seen in faith and I know that's why I feel like sometimes saying, 'Who in the world really wants to continue in faith?' I will just say to whoever is listening right now—do you really want to continue in faith? Because I think very few people do. I mean my own heart struggles all the time. I'm the one trying to share in this class and I know my heart fights against faith. I know my heart wants to run and hide in the darkness. I know that. Hopefully I want to continue in faith, but I'm not dumb enough to think I'm a sure bet myself.

Faith demands the loss of everything that I've called life. I'm not saying this is impossible, but it's a narrow path. Continuing in faith is the same thing as being willing to lose your life. I'm saying you can't be a true disciple unless you hate your own father, mother, even your own life and are willing to let the light kill those things in your heart. That's what I'm saying. I'm just saying what Jesus said, but we somehow don't pay much attention to all the times that Jesus said, 'You can't be my disciple unless you hate your life. You can't put your hand on the plow and look back and be fit for the kingdom of

God. You just can't do it.' It's not an 'I won't let you'. It's an impossibility; you can't do it.

So who in the world wants to continue in faith? Where are those people? I know a lot of people who have tasted or seen something of faith, but are you satisfied with a small view of faith? Do you want to move forward? Do you want to continue steadfast and grounded in the faith? Everyone says they want to continue in faith, but I don't know that everyone really does. I'm speaking out from myself here, so in other words, I'm not looking outside of myself to point the finger at other people. I know these things exist in me. I know that I am these things by nature. **If I can be really blunt with you, everybody says they want to continue in faith and I would like to say to you the only heart that continues is a heart that has truly lost hope and expectation in everything else.** If you have hope in something else, if you have expectation in the wrong creation, in the wrong man, and if you hold onto that hope and expectation, you're not going to continue in faith. **Faith will whittle your soul down to one expectation or you'll find an exit ramp in this journey.** Faith will whittle your life down to one single thing. It's the one thing that Paul did. What did Paul do? He tells you what he did. What was his life like? You don't have to guess, he says it: 'This one thing I do. I let go of everything that's behind the cross and I seek to lay hold of everything in front of it. In other words, I let go of one man and one creation and I put those things behind me. Not the past; he's not talking about yesterday, but the things that are behind, cut off, removed, and judged by the cross. The things that are before him, the things he's in the presence of, is that he's laying hold of one life and letting go of another. That's all he did, that one thing. Jesus said the same thing about Mary: (my paraphrase)

'Martha, you're doing a lot of stuff. You're trying to serve Me, but you know what? Mary has chosen the only thing, the only one thing. She has one expectation. You've got a few here. Martha, maybe one of your expectations is to know Me, but you've got a lot of other ones as well. You've got expectations to please all these guests, to please Me by doing all these things. You've got other expectations, Martha, but Mary isn't doing anything except for the one thing. And she has one expectation, one hope.'

If your hope is set in anything else, take this as a promise, warning, or however you want to take it: If you don't let the Lord whittle your heart down to one hope, then you're going to do something other than stay firm in the faith. Faith only shows you one hope. Faith only brings you to one expectation; it doesn't show you a bunch of stuff. So what are you hoping for right now? I mean right now, this second. What is today about in your heart? What's life about? What are your goals and expectations? I can't escape the fact that in the light I only see one thing. When light is shining in my heart every other hope seems like a distraction, a danger, and a detour at best. At best.

I know that you don't start with one expectation. You start with a bunch of carnal expectations for God. But God has had one expectation even before the creation of man. God has an inheritance in

this, the inheritance that He has in the saints, mentioned in Ephesians 1. He's desired something. Now, you get born of His spirit and you don't know His Spirit any more than a newborn baby knows his natural life, and the only thing you can do is nurse. The only thing you can do is drink milk, that's it. But if you grow, what needs to happen in your soul is that you start to lose the hundreds and thousands of personal ways that you pull on God towards the flesh. That's what you do; you yank on Him towards your flesh. And that's what the Israelites started to do in the wilderness. God was a means to their end. What good is a God that doesn't give me water right now, or more food groups, or more anything? They didn't understand that God had His own expectation and purpose for them. They didn't care. And He was okay with that at first. I mean, He didn't like it, but He started to reveal Himself to them and show them what true desires and fulfillment was. He gave them bread from Heaven, water out of a rock, freedom from snakebites, an intercessor, a high priest—all these pictures of Christ. Everywhere they went He showed them Christ and yet they wouldn't enter into the land that was created for His glory. He said:

'Okay I don't have another expectation for you. I put up with your grumbling the whole time in the wilderness. I put up with your rebellion and all this stuff and brought you over here to bring you into this land and fill this land with the glory of God and as surely as I live, I will continue with my expectation. I will fill up this land with the glory of God. I don't have another idea for you. And if you won't enter into my expectation, then you will do circles and die.'

And you can be sitting there circling in the wilderness and talking about how great the Promised Land is and how real God is, and yet you're the one that won't even go in. You're the one that still has another expectation. You have another hope. Faith doesn't show you the wilderness. It always shows you the Promised Land. It shows you a life in Christ where He is glorified and His increase cuts off all uncircumcised flesh. And His kingdom is established in one place and everything is brought to it. Everything is established there.

I guess that's what's been on my heart. I just feel like to be rooted and grounded in faith is to let the Lord take your soul, teach it, and drive you forward as you keep your eyes on the cloud. As you fix your eyes on those things above, He takes your life, and in terms of desire, expectation and focus, it gets smaller and smaller and smaller. And yet it gets bigger and bigger and bigger. Not in variety, but in substance and experience in Life. But the variety and all the different things that make up your Christian life get smaller and smaller until you're left with this one hope, this one expectation.

What is that one hope? What is that one expectation? It's Christ in you, the expectation of glory. It's the expectation and hope of all that is in you, which is Christ, becoming all that you have and all that you know. It's the expectation of finding all things in Christ, of experiencing all things in Christ, knowing Christ as all things made unto you, as knowing Christ as life, light, wisdom, truth, and

everything that He is. That's what faith does. It makes only one thing make sense to you anymore. It leaves the whole rest of the world looking absurd. If I know anything at all, if I've seen anything in the light, I can tell you that I've seen that. I've seen that there's a light that is a Man, that is Jesus Christ Himself, and He shines in your heart, and when He does, He leaves the only thing that makes sense, that seems real, that feels relevant, and that has any purpose or expectation. He leaves this one thing there and everything else grows in its absurdity in your heart. That's what He does. Everything else gets more and more empty, vain, and absurd. Natural life and the natural creation seems like a shadow at best that man has perverted for his own gain and own glory, but it wasn't created that way. It was created as a shadow. It was always a shadow. Natural things are never more than a shadow, but man has put his own expectation in those shadows for his own private purposes and then we drag God into that and try to make God bless it, protect it, and keep it. The whole thing is just so ugly, but faith won't show you that whole thing. Faith will show you the one expectation, this one thing that's necessary, "this one thing I do", and the rest of the world, the rest of life, just gets so absurd. You don't get depressed about it because you can't see the absurdity about it without seeing the awesomeness of what the light shows you. It's in the perspective of the light that everything else looks absurd.