

GOD'S PURPOSE: **REVEALING THE MYSTERY**

Before we look into the scripture passage we have just read, we need to backtrack. Before we consider God's purpose for us as a congregation we need to see Jesus. Verse 20 is a truly amazing verse about Jesus.

Jesus has reconciled to Himself all things.

Notice the scope, the magnitude of that work.

Jesus has brought peace to every domain by the blood of His cross.

It was not a work that was limited to this puny landmass we call earth.

The "all things" that He has reconciled envelopes everything on earth.

Jesus' reconciliation encompasses everything in the realm of the physical.

The "all things" that He has reconciled envelopes everything in heaven.

Reconciliation encompasses everything in the realm of the spiritual.

There is nothing that is beyond the reach of the cross.

Jesus died on the cross to reconcile the physical and the spiritual.

It is helpful to know what reconcile means.

It can mean to solve a dispute or end a quarrel.

It also means to make two apparently conflicting things consistent or compatible.

I try to reconcile all kinds of things like chocolate and exercise.

I can try to reconcile my checkbook when more goes out than comes in.

We try to reconcile things like our desires and God's will.

We try to reconcile world hunger and poverty and our selfishness.

We try to reconcile sinful lifestyles and God's word.

We try to make things that are incompatible with each other to fit together.

It's the proverbial attempt to fit a square peg into a round hole.

Some things just can't be reconciled.

But Jesus has done the impossible.

Jesus has reconciled the physical and the spiritual with one act.

Jesus' death on the cross enables us to live harmoniously with God.

Jesus has brought humanity and God together.

He has made it possible for us to be in fellowship with God.

He has made peace possible between the Creator and the creature.

And what makes this even more amazing are verses 21 and 22.

Paul brings everything into focus on you.

We need to put ourselves into verses 21 and 22.

He says, "And you!"

Let's resist the temptation to look over our shoulder.

Let's resist the notion that he is speaking to someone else.

Paul wasn't just limiting his thoughts to the Christians in Colossae.

Paul is talking to anyone who has been estranged from God.

Who of us can think we are excluded from that?

Paul is speaking directly to Glenn Reeder.

I was once estranged and hostile to God.

I was hostile toward God in my mind. (vs. 21)

I was, at one time, wanting to be my own master.

I was more interested in myself than I was in God.

I wanted things my way.

My heart and mind were ravaged with self centeredness.

I don't want to admit it but there are times I still think like that.

I like it when things go my way.

If I still think like that now how much more hostile I was.
Am I the only one here who admits I was once hostile in mind?
And not just hostile in mind but also in body. (vs. 21)

I was caught up with the desire to do evil deeds.

I have to be honest with myself.

If I can't be honest I exclude myself from God's amazing work.

It is a miracle that God can take my hostile life and make it holy.

It is a miracle that God can take my rebellious life and make it righteous.

It is a miracle that God can take my blemished life and make it blameless.

It is a miracle that God can take my sin-bent life and make it sanctified.

That is the depth of reconciliation.

He can set me apart for something holier and nobler.

His reconciliation leaves nothing unturned in my life.

All things that were different between my life and God are now harmonious.

But that is not the end, this is just the beginning.

Paul says my harmony with God is dependent on continuous faith.

Paul calls me to be stable, steadfast, and shiftless.

When I live that way something miraculous happens.

I no longer live for myself but everything centres around God.

When reconciled to God, I become part of the body of Christ.

Being part of the Body of Christ - the Church calls me to something.

It calls me to the same privileges that Paul was called to.

I I am called to complete Christ's afflictions

That is a part of our amazing purpose as the body of Christ.

We are called to complete Christ's affliction.

What is there left to complete?

What affliction did Jesus not experience?

"He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ... He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."
(Isaiah 53:3-4, 7)

How could Jesus have suffered any more at the hands of sinners?

His scourging, His mock trial, His crucifixion epitomized affliction.

There was no more brutal way to die.

"Jesus, who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:6-8)

In the Message Paul's thoughts are revealed this way.

"There's a lot of suffering to be entered into in this world - the kind of suffering Christ takes on. I welcome the chance to take my share in the church's part of that suffering. When I became a servant in this church, I experienced this suffering as a sheer gift, God's way of helping me serve you, laying out the whole truth." (Colossians 1:24-25 *TM*)

The words Jesus spoke to Paul on the Road to Damascus never faded.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." (Acts 9:4)

Paul did not think he was persecuting Jesus.

He did not think he was adding to Jesus' affliction and suffering.

He was breathing threats and murder against the disciples.

And yet what we do to the Church we do to Jesus.

If we bite and devour one another, we bite and devour Jesus.

Any time I afflict a disciple of Jesus, I afflict Jesus.

Paul is saying we are not to add to Jesus' affliction.

We are called to absorb into ourselves His affliction.

We are to have the mind of Christ as we think of each other.

We are to have the same love of Christ for each other.

We are to put others ahead of ourselves.

When we relate to others as Christ did we complete His affliction.

We are demonstrating that Jesus' death was not in vain.

The purpose of the Church is not the pursuit of comfort.

The purpose of the Church is not a quest for a good feeling.

The purpose of the Church is to complete Jesus' affliction.

It is to reveal the joy of Jesus in the midst of suffering.

Quite frankly I don't see a lot of that going on.

I see a church that is complacent in the face of people's plight.

I see a church that scrutinizes who will be loved unconditionally.

I see a church that is self-absorbed.

I see a church fixated on the question, "What is in this for me?"

Does any of that sound like, **"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is the church."**

Am I a Soldier of the Cross? By Issac Watts

Am I a soldier of the cross, A follower of the Lamb?

And shall I fear to own His cause Or blush to speak His name?

Must I be carried to the skies On flowery beds of ease?

While others fought to win the prize, And sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood?

Is this vile world a friend to grace, To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight, if I would reign Increase my courage, Lord!

I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, Supported by Thy word.

Thy saints, in all this glorious war, Shall conquer, though they die;

They view the triumph from afar, And seize it with their eye.

When that illustrious day shall rise, And all Thy armies shine

In robes of victory through the skies, The glory shall be Thine.

~Dr. Isaac Watts

II In verse 25 Paul reveals something else I am called to complete.

I am called to complete the message of the Gospel.

I am to make the word of God fully known by living it out.

I am to live out the message.

That was the problem with the Pharisees.

They told people how to live with God while failing to live with Him themselves.

They were whitewashed tombs.

They looked safe and attractive on the outside but were full of death inside.

They were a cup polished on the outside and filthy on the inside.

They portrayed hypocrisy.

How do we make the word of God fully known?

How do we communicate in such a way that people can't help but hear?

It has to be by Christ in you, the hope of glory (vs. 27)

We must live the life of Christ transparently.

Mystery is fed by hypocrisy.

That is why the mystery was hidden for ages and generations.

And it has been hidden during periods of history since Jesus.

That is what contributed to the dark ages.

That is why a reformation was necessary.

We unveil the life of Christ by sharing our hope.

The Church is to be the bodily demonstration of Jesus' presence.

God, through the Church, the body of Christ, has brought together all people.

Jews and Gentiles embrace each other in Christ.

There are no distinctions in Christ.

That is the great message we are called to communicate.

It isn't communicated fully by preaching and sermons.

The Gospel is communicated fully by living and loving.

The message falls on deaf ears if it doesn't bubble up from Christ within.

How can we offer living water if we haven't first received it?

III Paul reveals one more area of life I am to complete.

I am called to complete you.

You are called to complete me.

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

It is not enough to share the Gospel of Christ for new birth.

Our work is not complete with evangelism.

We cannot be content to bring people only to a place of salvation.

We are to present every man mature in Christ (vs. 28)

To be mature means to be complete.

Paul elaborated on this with the Ephesians.

"until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ. ... God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love." (Ephesians 4:12-16)

What better place to experience this completeness than the Communion Table?

We experience completeness when we are one at one table with the Lord.

Sharing Jesus' broken body and shed blood brings us to completion.

In communion is experienced what Paul testifies to in verse 29.

"For this I toil, striving with all the energy which He mightily inspires within me."

"Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can." (John Wesley)

"Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember you cannot serve him alone; you must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." (John Wesley)

The strength to serve and complete is not our own.

It is what Christ mightily inspires within me.

Jesus has made peace by His blood on the cross (vs. 20).

He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death (vs. 22).

Music Video - When I Survey by Isaac Watts