

## Christ in you, the hope of Glory

Colossians 1:24 – 2:23

Let me ask you a question. Rhetorical question. No agendas. Not a question with any particular motivation behind it.

Let me just ask you. Do you feel 100 percent?

What I mean is - Is your tank fully charged? 100 percent full? Energy levels. General health. Vitality. Do you feel 100 percent?

Seems every time I turn on the TV...there's Rob DeCostella....asking me that question.

Do you feel 100 percent? I usually yell at the television. NO ...I say. No I don't feel 100 percent! Not even sure what that feels like. To be 100 percent.

I like to ask people. When I ask how you going. I say. How's your week been? Out of ten. So let me ask YOU THAT.... How's it been? And I actually want to know....We'll all say it together so you don't sound silly. After the count of three. Out of ten. How would you rate your week? One being terrible. 10 being perfect. Shout it out. One, two three. Seven.

Anyone say ten? You're a rare breed. I've asked that question to lots of people and from memory I can't recall anyone ever giving me a TEN. And I'm pretty sure there's only ever been about one or two nines. I said seven. Why'd I say seven? Well There was a funeral on Monday at Scotts Presbyterian for a family who'd lost their two year old daughter. Terrible news. Tuesday and Wednesday not too bad. Thursday....played squash....Ashley weeks/ got whacked in the leg with a squash ball. Still got the bruise to show for it. I had a migraine on Friday. .... Seven out of ten I think..is a realistic assessment.

Now don't get me wrong. I love life. Life's great. It's just that life's life. And life's not perfect.

I said before there was no motivation behind my question. Well.....I LIED.

Of course there was motivation. I was making a point.

And when Rob DeCostella asks – do you feel 100 percent?

It's not just a question. It's a sales pitch. He's creating a perceived need. Question – do you feel 100 percent? Most people will answer no. Then.... you can do what I do. Take these vitamin tablets. I won't mention the brand.

That's what all sales is about. All sales is about either highlighting, or creating. That need. It's about creating that empty space. That our product will fill perfectly.

They have to create that NIGGLING DOUBT...that you're MISSING OUT. And if you do it well. You can sell anything. You can sell fridges to Eskimos.

You might have a TV. You might even have a plasma. But are you watching TV in HIGH DEFINITION? You need to be. Or you're missing out.

They have to create that empty space in your life so it can be filled.

And as Paul writes to this young Colossian church. As he's urging them to continue in their faith in Christ. In what we're looking at this morning he's pointing out one unassailable truth. And that is. You Christians. Paul says. Are already... FULL... IN CHRIST.

And you don't need anything more. You are COMPLETE IN CHRIST

And if you and can get that. If you can grasp that reality. Then that is a powerful antidote, It's like an immunization against just about every kind of false teaching there is. Just about every distraction. Realising the great privilege it is to be in Christ.

I'll get you to jump down to chapter 2 and verse 8. This is Paul's warning. He says you have to be on guard. He says.

<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

And if you jump down to verse 16 of chapter 2 there's a bit of a run through of the kinds of things Paul's got in mind. They're actually religious sounding type things. Eating certain foods. Religious rituals like special days and festivals. Which sound like Jewish traditions. And Paul says they're shadows of the reality that's found in Christ.

And he goes on to talk about other religious sounding things. Visions and angels and experiences. And even harsh treatments of the body. But he says – those things are only verse 23 only give the appearance of wisdom. With their self imposed worship and their false humility. But they lack any real value in restraining sensual indulgence.

So for all their appearance. Their pretty useless.

But all over the world they're the sorts of things you see people getting into. The great religious pomp and ceremony. That maybe makes you feel like you've done your religious duty. The walls of the Christian bookstores are filled with people talking about their spiritual and angelic experiences. Which maybe make you feel a little unspiritual.

But Paul says. Again verse 8

<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Why not? The answer's there in verse 9.

Verse 9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

And that's the case whether you FEEL LIKE IT OR NOT. So don't be deceived.

Now, some people think Paul's lining up a particular group of people who are teaching heresies to the Colossians. Others think maybe he's just giving a kind of a general warning like when you tell the kids not to open the door to strangers.

And to be honest. ....we just don't know. There's been lots of speculation about it. Was there a Colossian Heresy at all? If there was....what was it?

And I guess you can speculate as much as you like. But in the end. I don't think you can be sure. What you can be sure of though, is this. What we do know...is this.

We have an enemy. Who is very very good, at deception. Who started with Adam and Eve and created that niggling doubt in them. That there must be something more. Our enemy doesn't have a pointy tail and horns and a red suit. Our enemy is a slick operator. He's a salesman. Who will use whatever he can. To create that niggling doubt. That somehow You're missing out.

And Paul says whatever it is. And however it LOOKS. And however it makes you FEEL. If it's not Christ. It's deceptive and its empty.

Now we're at verse 24.

Let me just sum up...the letter so far. Thank God he says Paul says... that the word of truth. That the gospel of Jesus. Is bearing fruit and growing in you and all over the world. As people hear about the hope of heaven. The inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. God's rescue from the kingdom of darkness....into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

This son through whom the everything was made. Who is before all things. Who holds all things together. The head of the church. Who's supreme over all things.

And...Who's blood was shed on the cross. So you could be forgiven.

Don't forget Paul says.....Once you were alienated. Now you're reconciled. If you continue Paul says. If you continue....Established. Not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.

This is the gospel you heard verse 23. And of which I, Paul have become a servant.

Verse 24.

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

What's he getting at there? Talking about the people who suffered so the Colossians could hear about Jesus. And maybe he's thinking about those things in Acts. Stephen who was stoned to death. For speaking about Jesus. The people he even , himself arrested in his rage against Jesus. Before his conversion. I rejoice in what was suffered for you Paul says. What's he getting at. Is it a guilt trip? Is this like when your mum says I slaved over a hot stove for you, so you'll eat those veges?

What's he getting at? Well I'm pretty sure from what he says in other places that he doesn't enjoy suffering. Either his own or anyone else's. But he's saying this. The message about Jesus is SO VALUABLE. That I rejoice in the pain of the cost in bringing it to you.

It's a statement of WORTH.

SLIDE

Last year in there was a 250 kilometre foot race across some of the toughest terrain in China....Called the race of no return. .And six guys from Perth entered the race. They called themselves the Prendivilles. Because there were four brothers from the Prendiville family plus two ring ins. And the Prendiville team went into this grueling race THE POINT WAS...to raise money for melanoma research. That was the goal.

Some of the course got up to 3000 metres in altitude. Temperatures up to 45 degrees celcius. Rocky, harsh terrain. Some places so remote that the only mode of transport is by donkey.

These six guys had a team motto – make pain your friend.

I think it's something Mr Miyagi said in Karate Kid.

They suffered altitude sickness, blisters, groin injuries, uncontrollable vomiting, nausea, dizziness. One of the guys even had to have a drill through the base of his toenail to pop a blister.

But their mantra....because of the value of what they were doing. Their mantra....was – make pain your friend.

And Paul's saying even more than that. The good news is THAT GOOD. That he says. I rejoice in what was suffered for you.

And I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions.

In other words. I gladly take on board the suffering necessary... that HAS TO TAKE PLACE. For the good news about Jesus to keep growing. And reconciling people to God. It's that valuable.

Some things are worth the PAIN.

And this is one of them. And as Paul goes on..... I want you to see if you can pick up on the language of richness and fullness, and completeness. As he talks again on what it is they have. What it is YOU HAVE. If you're a follower of Jesus.

And we'll scan from verse 25. Paul says. God's commissioned me to present to you the word of truth in all it's fullness. Verse 26. The mystery that's been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them. And it seems like maybe he's talking about the Jewish Christians here. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the HOPE OF GLORY.

The glorious riches of this mystery. He's just been talking about Jesus. Painting this picture of the one who made all things, for whom all things were made. Who holds all things together. In whom God was pleased to dwell in his fullness. Now he says. Here's the mystery.

Christ in you, the hope of glory.

This is not what you attain to. This is not what's at the top of the mountain, that only the super religious. The super determined can achieve at the end of the pilgrimage. This is the promise for every Christian.

Christ in you. The hope of glory. End of story.

Now I think that's a kind of a twofold mystery. In one sense, it's like a secret. Like the secret ingredients of coke. Or the Colonel's eleven secret herbs and spices. God's people knew they could never be good enough. Righteous enough. They had no idea how God would keep his promises of blessing to the world through Abraham.

But this mystery is revealed in Christ. IN the person of Jesus, God came in the flesh. And lived in obedience and fulfilled the law. And died in the place of sinners.

That's the mystery revealed.

But.... it's still a bit of a mystery isn't it. I mean Christ IN YOU? Is that something you're supposed to be able to feel? And if that's the case. Shouldn't I explode if that's true? It's a mystery. But Paul says it's the objective reality of believers. Christ in you. The hope of glory.

How do you get much fuller and richer than that?

And Paul says Verse 28 we proclaim HIM.

Admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Now the NIV has done a great job at smoothing that sentence over so it doesn't sound too repetitive. But in the greek there's this word panta, which means all. And Paul uses it four times here. And he literally says.

And him we proclaim, admonishing ALL MEN, and teaching ALL MEN with ALL WISDOM. So that ALL MEN would be presented COMPLETE, or perfect.

In other words. Paul says here's our target audience. He says the gospel is limited to everyone on the planet. Men and women. Corporate executives. Housewives. Council workers. Doctors, Kings and Queens, politicians, city people, country people. Hindus, Muslims, atheists.

Doesn't matter who you are. Completion. Fullness comes from being united with Christ by faith in his blood. God's glorious riches aren't gold or silver or cars or shares. True riches. And true wisdom. Are located in Christ.

And Paul says to this end I labour. Struggling with all his energy which so powerfully works in me.

Start of chapter 2. I want you to know how much I am struggling for you. And for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I tell you this so that no-one may deceive you by fine sounding arguments.

If you've understood what you have in Christ. You won't be phased. By the appearance of things. Or by how you feel. Do you see the danger in relying on how you feel? You'll be up and down like a yo yo.

Jump down to verse 6. Here's the key verse in Colossians. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Do you see what he's getting at? Point is. You might be tempted by any of those other things. Things that have the appearance of being religious. The appearance of being great things.

Maybe you feel like you're incomplete because you haven't had some great religious experience. You think you need to hear God's voice. Or see an angel. Or punish yourself because you know just how far short you fall of being a perfect person.

If you had to write down on a piece of paper. If you had to give a score out of 10 of your relationship with God. I wonder what would you give yourself. Because if we're going to take what Paul's saying here on board. He's saying. If you're a Christian. You rate a 10. And if you don't see yourself that way. What you're seeing is an empty cup that somehow you're trying to fill. When Paul says we ought to be people overflowing with thankfulness because of that fullness we already have in Christ. Do you see the difference? It's the difference between working because you need to. And maybe someone who's retired and working because they want to. They've already got all they need.

Let me say two things to finish.

One. If your looking for fullness, and completion in life. You know where you need to come. You need to come to Jesus. You can jam pack your life full of stuff. You can jam your head full of knowledge. You can have a phd in quantum physics. But all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in this person Jesus God's Son. The truth – is found in Jesus. And hope. And forgiveness. And grace. And wholeness. Doesn't matter Who you are.

Second. If you've come to Jesus already. Be careful about placing too much stock in how you feel.

You might have had a bad week. Doesn't change anything. You're full.

You might not feel 100 percent. Your health might be down the gurgler. You might even have clinical depression. You might not feel forgiven. But none of that detracts from the objective reality that if you're in Christ. You're rich beyond your wildest dreams.

Do you feel 100 percent? As a follower of Jesus. The answer may well be no, I don't. Because life can be hard. And maybe you've got all sorts of different expectations of what life should look like if you're a Christian. And you might have those niggling doubts...that you're missing out.

Paul says people who go looking for religious experiences. Are no longer relying on Christ. In fact he says they've lost connection with the head. They're like a headless chook running around all over the place.

But the objective reality is Christ in you, the hope of glory.