



Growth Sheet

Christ the Hope of Glory

Colossians 1:24-29

What Is God's Plan to Make Me Mature?

The Colossians knew that their spiritual life began when they responded to the gospel (Colossians 1:3-8). But Paul wanted them to understand more about this good news; specifically, he wanted them to understand his personal role in bringing it to them. After all, Paul suffered a great deal. Did his suffering undermine the value of his message? Did it cast a shadow on the power of the gospel to bring them to true maturity?

With this question in mind, it makes sense why Paul wants to explain the personal sacrifices he has made to spread the gospel. His suffering—far from undermining the value of the gospel—shows that the gospel is supremely valuable. In fact, in view of the value of the message he has been preaching, he is able to say that he *rejoices* in his suffering (1:24).

So, from the perspective of Paul as a suffering but joyful messenger, this section shows us God's plan to make his people mature. We will identify four truths about this plan, and together they reinforce this central appeal: *discover the maturity that comes from Christ alone*.

Here are the four truths about God's plan to make us mature.

1. What This Plan Costs—Suffering (1:24-25)

In a way that may sound strange to us, Paul links his sufferings with the sufferings of Christ: "I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (1:24). To be clear, Paul is *not* saying that there was anything lacking in Christ's work to save people (see 1 Peter 3:18). Instead, he is saying this: just as it took Christ's suffering to bring about our salvation, so it will take more suffering (on the part of believers) to bring the good news about that salvation to others. This agrees with what Paul writes elsewhere, for example in 2 Timothy 2:10: "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (see also 2 Corinthians 6:4-10). The fact that Paul is able to *rejoice* in these sufferings means that whatever he is suffering *for* must be supremely valuable.

2. When This Plan Was Revealed—Hidden for Ages, Now Revealed (1:26)

Paul wanted the Colossians to know that this plan was not his personal innovation. Rather, it was what God had planned all along. Yet in the past it had been a mystery in this sense: it was not fully understood until Jesus came to die for people's sins and rise again.

3. What This Plan Is—Christ In You, The Hope of Glory (1:27)

Paul plainly states what this plan is: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27). For those who believe in Christ, it can be said that he is *in them*; and because Christ is *in them*, they can have the hope (guaranteed expectation) that he will bring them to glory. In other words, because of their relationship with Christ, they will become everything God intended them to be. The word “glory” here fits with what we know from Romans 8:28-30, that God’s final plan for those in Christ is that they be “glorified”—that is, become perfectly like Christ.

4. How This Plan Works—Proclaiming Christ (1:28-29)

Since Christ is *in us*, we want to know more about what this means—just as if we were given an enormous sum of money, we would want to know how to access it and how to properly use it. This is why Paul was committed to proclaiming Christ, a task that involves both warning and teaching. The goal of proclaiming Christ in this way is to “present everyone mature in Christ” (1:28). Such an enormous and worthy task will take hard work, but mere human labors aren’t enough. So Paul explains that he “struggles with all [Christ’s] energy that [Christ] powerfully works within me” (1:29).

Discussion and Application

1. What words and ideas come to our minds when we think about *suffering*? Notice that Paul was able to write, “I *rejoice* in my sufferings.” What made Paul think so differently about his suffering? What truths from this and other Scripture passages can change our perspective on suffering as well? (See also Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18).
2. What kinds of things do people tend to put their hopes in? How is this different from the hope here in Colossians (1:27, see also 1:5 and 1:23)?
3. The “glory” Paul speaks of in 1:27 is the same as the “glory” in Romans 8:18 and 8:30. It refers to God’s ultimate goal for every believer to be “conformed to the image of his Son.” Suppose you lived with this as *your* goal for your life. What kinds of things would matter *more* to you? What kinds of things would matter *less*?
4. Paul says that he proclaims Christ by *warning* and *teaching* (1:28). Why do you think these two activities are important? If you have time as a group, look through the rest of Colossians and identify what he is *teaching* about Christ, and the kinds of things he is *warning* the Colossians about.
5. While none of us is the Apostle Paul, we *do* influence each other for good or bad. How can Paul’s goals for the Colossians shape our goals for those around us (see 1:28-29)? What kinds of things must we say if we will help others become more mature in Christ?