

(Colossians) the Mystery Revealed

by Brian Brodersen

Paul's ministry involves suffering for the sake of the body of Christ, and he rejoices in this suffering because it's for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Duration: 49:02

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:20, John 17:23, Acts 21:13, Ephesians 3:8, Philippians 3:8, Colossians 1:24-27

Topics: "Christ Centricity", "Gospel Assurance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the message of the gospel, which is the assurance of heaven through Christ in us. He highlights the importance of seeking the advancement of the cause of Christ above personal comfort, as exemplified by the apostle Paul. The preacher criticizes the man-centered focus of the church in the modern era and calls for a return to preaching about the unsearchable riches and greatness of Christ. He uses the example of Jim Elliott and his willingness to risk his life for the gospel to illustrate the mindset of a true disciple of Christ.

Transcript

Colossians once again, and we're going to be concentrating on chapter 1 verses 24 through 27 in our Bible study today. Colossians chapter 1 verses 24 through 27. Paul is speaking and he says this, I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body which is the church of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you to fulfill the Word of God the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations but now has been revealed to his saints to them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you the hope of glory.

Let's have a word of prayer. Lord as we consider this marvelous reality of Christ in us that is our hope of glory that is our confidence Lord for the future that is our guarantee of heaven Lord may we understand today just a little bit more about this wonderful Christian life and this marvelous thing called the new birth regeneration Christ living in us Lord illuminate us give us understanding Lord help us not to be content with dabbling on the surface but help us Lord to dig deep in you in Jesus name we pray amen.

Now Paul had just stated in the previous verse verse 23 that he was a minister of the gospel and as a minister of the gospel he said he rejoiced in his sufferings that were for the sake of the body of Christ this 24th verse has caused a lot of difficulty for commentators over the years it's a very difficult statement to understand where Paul made this statement that he filled up in his flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of

Christ and before we get into our exposition of the entire passage we want to take a moment and just try to understand what Paul is talking about here what does Paul mean when he says I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ well let us first clarify what he does not mean and I want to quote to you from a commentator that I wholeheartedly

agree with on this point he said it cannot mean that the Apostle thinks of himself as supplementing anything lacking in the Savior's atoning suffering that would be wholly contrary to his teaching about the completeness and sufficiency of Calvary's offering as it would also be contrary to the master's own triumphant cry it is finished so it's a difficult statement to understand but know this Paul is not saying that he is somehow somehow helping in the salvation of mankind through his own suffering that he's somehow adding to the atonement something that was lacking in it that would deny everything the New Testament teaches everything that Paul himself taught so what does it mean what is it that he's saying well I'm not sure and I don't have a problem with not being sure because men much

more capable than I am have not been sure either so if they're not sure then I can say myself I'm not sure but I think I'll tell you what I think I think it has something to do with the fact that when a Christian suffers for Christ's sake that Christ is actually suffering remember when Saul was on the road to Damascus on his way to arrest the Christians there he was of course persecuting the church and he was on his way to bring further affliction to them and Jesus arrested him on the road and said Saul Saul why are you persecuting me you see as the church was suffering and being persecuted Christ was suffering he was being afflicted and of course the Old Testament prophets said that in all of our afflictions he was afflicted with us so when his people were afflicted he is afflicted

Christ is suffering as long as his people are suffering and thus the afflictions of Christ in that sense are incomplete and will be until the age of suffering has ended so hopefully that will help you as you come across this verse it's been greatly misinterpreted by certain people and there have been those who have taught that Paul as well as the other saints and other people help actually in the whole redemptive process which is a total misinterpretation of the verse so moving on now here's Paul he's a minister of the gospel he says but he's suffering the ministry has inherent in it its difficulties the ministry is not easy street as some people might think you know there are some people who aspire to be in the ministry because of a misconception they come to church they see the pastor

he stands up and speaks they think I could do that they assume he probably plays golf a couple days a week and maybe chats with a few people here and there says a prayer once or twice and you know sits around studying and so forth and and they say hey I'd love to do that you know that sounds like a great way to get on in life well we have to admit there are ministers they don't deserve the title because the title actually means servant but there are people who are called ministers who do live like that but that certainly is not what the ministry is about that's not an accurate description of the ministry what Paul talks about here is an accurate description of the ministry suffering for the sake of the body of Christ there's there's always going to be an element of suffering for those who

are going to serve the Lord because we're serving the Lord in a world that's against him and so that in and of itself will create a hostility many times a difficult environment in which to work and there will be persecutions and things of that nature but none of that can detour the person who really knows the Lord and so Paul says I rejoice in my suffering which is for the sake of the body of Christ it didn't bother Paul to the extent that he was ready to just give up and say I'm not going to do this anymore no he was committed he was going all the way even though it was a difficult road and the idea behind the statement here that he

rejoiced is really the idea that he was thrilled he counted it a great privilege to be involved in this thing called the church and to actually be one who

could work alongside of God for he referred to himself as a co-worker with God and to Paul that was the greatest privilege in all the world and if he needed to suffer in the context of that then that was fine with him just to be part of this thing he counted it a tremendous privilege and so he rejoiced in his sufferings which were for the sake of the body of Christ it was for the extension and edification of the church that he suffered you see it Paul just decided not to be an apostle his suffering would have ceased almost everything that he had to endure was related to the fact that he was an apostle any list for us in various places in his epistles all of the hardship that he went through he talks about the beatings the stonings the shipwrecks the deprivation of food and clothing and

sleep and all of those kinds of things being considered the scum of the earth the off scouring of all things but yet all of that could have been alleviated had he just simply said I'm not going to be an apostle anymore I'm not going to do this but yet he never did do that he chose to suffer much like Moses before him who we are told chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches in the treasures of Egypt Moses waited all out he said I can stay here in Egypt I can rise to the throne I can inherit all of the glory of Egypt or I can go out into the wilderness with these million or so crybabies and babysit them for the next several years he chose the latter because he esteemed the reproach of

Christ more valuable than the treasures that are in Egypt he realized that there was a day of reckoning coming and so although Paul could have walked away and said you know I don't need this kind of suffering he counted it a privilege to be able to extend the kingdom to be able to edify the church he was willing to go through difficulty and in that he teaches us three things number one he teaches us that we are to seek the advancement of the cause of Christ above our own personal comfort now we don't do that naturally that's not the natural tendency the natural tendency for us as human beings is to seek out our own personal comfort but when we come to Jesus Christ and when we realize who he is and all that he's done for us and we fall in love with him which is easy to do when you see him

for who he is then you conclude that whatever it takes whatever it cost it doesn't really matter it's all worth it in the long run you think of a man like Jim Elliot and the men that he was associated with these men who were willing to risk their lives for the gospel sake they had a burden to take the gospel to the Alca Indians and the Alcas were known as a very brutal tribe bloodthirsty tribe and they were well aware of the fact that it could result in persecution it could even cost them their lives but as you read the journal of Jim Elliot you see that he was ready to give up his life he said I do not seek a long life but a full life like yours Lord Jesus he wanted to fulfill the will of God and he was willing to leave his comfort zone he was willing to suffer if need be to get the

gospel out and so he and his friends they went down to meet these people and to bring them the Word of God and they lost their lives for it they were all martyred and yet it was worth it to them and it was worth it to Paul he was willing to put his personal comfort behind him for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ and that's a lesson that all of us need to take seriously the Lord calls us at times to put our personal comfort behind us to not seek that that isn't that isn't the objective that isn't the goal of the Christian life to be personally comfortable here in this world it's to advance the kingdom of God that's the goal and and sometimes that that results in difficulty for us it results in an uncomfortable situation but sometimes we think that if it's uncomfortable it couldn't

be the Lord all the Lord would never want me to be in those kinds of circumstances well why not where did we ever get that idea certainly not from reading the scriptures you see we have to be careful that we keep a biblical understanding of things Paul counted it a privilege to suffer and he set aside his own comfort in order to advance the gospel secondly Paul shows us that we ought to endure sufferings because they concern the good of others more than ourselves you see Paul said this he said I suffer all things for the sake of the elect that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus Paul knew that there were great numbers of people out in those Gentile cities that the Lord had appointed for salvation and he felt compelled to go and to call them to eternal life but he knew

that it would it would cause hardship for himself but he was willing to do it for the sake of the elect so that they can hear that they can come into the saving knowledge of Christ that I've experienced I'm willing to suffer you see the only way you can do this is if you have a heavenly vision the only way you can do it is if you see this life for what it is it's temporary it's passing quickly you can't hold on to it but heaven is forever heaven is eternal heaven is the place that Paul set his heart and because he set his heart on heaven he was willing to suffer affliction he would suffer all things for the sake of the elect that they might obtain the salvation in Christ and so he teaches us that it's worth it it's worth it in order that others might come to know the Lord and then thirdly

that we are not to take care for the flesh or to serve the flesh he said in my flesh I'm I'm filling up the afflictions that are lacking in Christ so he wasn't afraid to put his own life on the line so to speak and as we read through the pages of the New Testament we find that there were many people like that Paul spoke of certain people who had risked their own necks for the sake of the gospel he talked about those who had labored to the point of death not considering their own lives that they might meet the needs of others he's describing the kind of Christians that we all need to be in that were called to be and so he said he rejoiced he didn't complain he wasn't angry at God because of unpleasant circumstances and sufferings he said I rejoice in my suffering it's for the sake of the

body of Christ it's to advance the kingdom of God and I'm willing to do that he just counted it a privilege to be part of what God is doing and you know truly if we really understand who Jesus is and what the Lord has for us whatever it takes it what a privilege what a privilege I read the story of a of a missionary who is in Africa a woman who was a doctor and who had been down there ministering for many years and in in the revolt that took place she became the object of persecution and there were several occasions where she was in line to be executed the Lord delivered her from each one but on one particular occasion as she was there in line to be executed a young man stepped in and tried to intercede for her and help her and they took this young man and they began to brutally beat him

before her and in the midst of this brutal beating she for just a moment felt that she had been forsaken by God she couldn't understand why this was going on and she said that suddenly in the midst of this whole thing the Lord spoke to her and reminded her of something that she had said to him twenty years ago she was willing to go anywhere and do anything and to bear reproach for him and the Lord spoke to her and told her that she was not suffering in this young man was not suffering for their own sake but for his sake and she said she was suddenly overwhelmed with a sense of privilege to be there and to suffer for the name of Christ you see that's how Paul was he thought it was just an incredible privilege you remember Peter and John as they were arrested and they were taken and they

were flogged and then they were released it said when they were released they they went back to their company rejoicing that they were able to suffer for his namesake are we willing to do that are we afraid of

any kind of persecution someone might say something about us that would hurt our feelings or something like that Paul counted it a privilege I rejoice in my sufferings which are for the body of Christ of which I became a minister so he said he was a minister of the gospel he says he is a minister of Christ and now he says that he is a minister of the church the word minister means servant he is a servant of the church according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you to fulfill the Word of God so he's a servant of the church and he's been given a responsibility the

word stewardship gives the idea of the entrusting of a great responsibility so Paul's been given a responsibility and that responsibility is to bring to the church the Word of God in all its fullness to bring to the church the Word of God in all its fullness the King James version translates the word stewardship dispensation Paul was appointed by God to dispense among the Gentiles the knowledge of Christ so you see this is the responsibility of the minister those who are appointed as ministers of the church their responsibility is to bring to the church the Word of God in all its fullness if every man who claimed to be a minister was doing that the world would not be in the condition that it's in the church would not be in the condition that it's in society at large is greatly affected by

the church if the church is weak and anemic the church is sick and powerless then that's going to be evidenced in society the church has no testimony you remember Jesus said that the church is the salt of the earth but if the salt loses its savor so the church is to be the the preservative in society society has a tendency to rotteness the church is to preserve it our society is rotting to a large degree the church is at fault it's because the failure of the church it's because those who claim to be ministers of the church are not taking seriously the responsibility of bringing to the people the Word of God and all its fullness that's what a minister is supposed to be doing and I marvel at how few ministers are actually doing that they're bringing to God's people anything and everything

but the Word of God so often and I don't understand it they feel that they've exhausted the Bible we've already looked into that we've studied that we've preached that now we move on to something else Paul he spoke of the great privilege he had of bringing to the Gentiles preaching to them the unsearchable riches of Christ if any minister thinks that he's exhausted the Word of God he needs to go back and reconsider Paul said that the riches of Christ are unsearchable you could never exhaust them but what's happened today is man has turned away from the Bible because those who are supposed to be the ones who are bringing it to the people have turned away from it and have been giving out philosophy and man's wisdom and man's doctrines and things like that and neglected the Word of God it's

a sad day we live in a time when in the church man has become the focal point God is no longer the focal point we have what is called a man-centered theology which is really an oxymoron because theology is a study of God but somehow we've reduced the study of God to man and I guess it probably stands to reason since man thinks he's God and has always wanted to be God that was the very thing that Eve was seduced by the temptation to be God but that's what's happened in the church today at the end of the 20th century the church has become man-centered we don't hear about the unsearchable riches of Christ we don't hear today too many sermons on the glory of Christ and the greatness of Christ and we don't have a presentation of Christ that is so compelling that we want to say I want to leave

it all but you see that's how the Apostles understood the Lord that's how Christians throughout the ages under have understood the Lord how could Paul the Apostles say things like this he was on his way up to Jerusalem and his friends were afraid for his life and they were begging him they were saying Paul don't go don't go they're going to arrest you they're going to kill you Paul and Paul said why are you saying

these things and breaking my heart I'm not only ready to be bound in Jerusalem but I'm ready to die if need be for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ how many people are willing to say that today as Christians is that where our thinking is I don't think so and the problem is we have a man-centered church not a Christ Center Church but you see Paul said that he was entrusted with

this great responsibility and the great responsibility was to bring to the church the fullness of God's Word fulfill the Word of God is more accurately translated to bring the Word of God in all its fullness that's what Paul was called to do and that's what any minister who is worth the title is to be doing is supposed to be doing and so those who claim to be ministers but are not doing that are not ministers of the church at all but they're serving themselves and sadly there are many of them today to give you an idea of how prevalent this whole man-centered thing is the number one selling book in the Christian market is also the book that has been the number one bestseller on the New York Times number one bestseller list it's a book called chicken soup for the soul and there's a sequel

to it I think it's called a second helping of chicken soup and it's probably going to go on endlessly this book is the number one selling book in the Christian market and it is written by two men who do not claim to be Christians but they are motivational speakers and self-esteem experts this is the number one selling book in the Christian market today if you wanted to write a book on the magnificence of Christ on the unsearchable riches of Christ if you wrote a book and sent it to some of the top publishers in the Christian book industry today they would send your manuscript back and say we have no use for this it won't sell books about God don't sell books about people do books about how to do it better how to help yourself out how to love yourself more those are the things that sell in

the church today books about God rarely sell there are a few publishers that will even publish a book that is truly Christ-centered because they know there really isn't a market for it but you see I think that that all goes back to the failure in the churches the failure in the pulpit to exalt Christ to paint him in all of his glory and splendor so that people want to know more about him it's a sad day in the history of the church but Paul was a minister a servant to bring to God's people the fullness of God's Word the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations but now has been revealed to his saints so this this mystery this thing that has been hidden with God throughout the past ages but has now been made revealed to his saints now the word mystery when you come across

it in the New Testament it's a word that means something that can only be known by revelation and something that has now been revealed in other words a mystery according to the New Testament is something that you could not discover on your own but that God has revealed the message of the gospel is something that man could have never discovered on his own could have never invented one of the strongest arguments for the divine authorship of the gospel is the fact that no man ever would have thought of it it is so contrary to human thinking it's so unlike all of man's reasonings about salvation and about God and about spiritual things if you were to line up the Bible with all the other religious literature in the world you would find that there is a drastic difference between it and all

of them now many people think that there there is such you know a similarity between all these religious writings that they're all essentially saying the same thing the only way you conclude that could conclude that is if you just have a surface knowledge of the Bible well there are certain things that the Bible says that other religious books say also about moral conduct and behavior and things like that there are similarities there but that's where the similarities are and nowhere else see the Bible although it does talk about moral conduct that's not the primary focus of the Bible primary focus of the Bible is Christ and his

redemptive work for man on the cross and the grace of God that brings salvation to people that's the that's a primary theme of Scripture moral conduct is a

secondary theme because it is a result of something else so you see when you compare the biblical revelation with the other religious writings you find that you really can't compare them the Bible stands all alone because this is something that man could have never imagined never dreamed up in all of his wildest dreams that God the creator of all things would humble himself take upon himself a human body come and die in the place of a rebellious world and then offer salvation to them upon their accepting of it this is something that no man could have ever imagined that the Gentile world this world that had lived in paganism heathenism lived in the realm of idolatry for century after century that now Christ would come and take up residence in them the Jews themselves couldn't believe that

this was the great mystery that the Jews themselves had a hard time handling that Christ would work among the Gentiles that the Gentiles could actually have a same standing with God that we the faithful Jewish people have had they couldn't handle that message see that's how unlike man it was even God's people didn't understand it but that was the message that God was going to do a work among the Gentiles that he was going to go to that massive people that had for years been steeped in idolatry in every vile and abominable practice living against God and God was going to offer them complete forgiveness and total reconciliation to the extent that Christ himself would take up residence in them and that's the message of the gospel Christ in you the hope of glory Christ in you the hope of

glory the hope of glory is another way of really describing the assurance of heaven glory is a reference to the glorified state which is heaven now how can we be sure that we're going to get to heaven that's a good question people wonder am I gonna go to heaven how do I get to heaven there's only one way to get to heaven and that is through Christ Christ must be in you Christ is the hope of glory now when we speak of Christ in you we're not talking about the Christ consciousness we're not talking about a spark of the divine in everyone now there's a lot of that thinking going on today Christ is in everyone they say there's a Christ consciousness there's a spark of the divine and I could see a person with new age bench really jumping on this whole idea of Christ in you oh yes Christ in you

the Christ consciousness no we're not talking about the Christ consciousness of the new age movement or of an Eastern mystical idea we're talking about Jesus Christ the carpenter from Galilee the one who was born of the Virgin Mary the one who suffered under Pontius Pilate the one who died on the cross for the sin of the world and rose again from the dead that's the Christ in you that we're talking about Jesus Christ who dwells in our hearts by faith you see this is the hope of glory this is the only hope of glory there is no other possibility of attaining heaven apart from this Christ in you is the hope of glory the Gentiles that was the only hope they had they certainly had no hope in their past accomplishments because their their previous condition as we've already seen was that of

being enemies of God and alienated from him so they couldn't look back to the past and hoping anything and they obviously had no power to do anything in the future to change their condition the only hope for them was Christ the only hope for any man is Christ apart from Christ there is no heaven there cannot be heaven he is the hope of glory so we're talking about Jesus Christ we're talking about the gospel this is the glory of the gospel and this is what sets it in a place all by itself listen Christ the second person of the Holy Trinity God the Son along with the Father by the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts and transforms us from the inside out and abides with us to bring us safely to glory that is the message of the New Testament we're not talking about anything less than

God himself taking up residence within the life of a man is there anything in all the world like this there's nothing like it nothing that could even be compared with it there's no teaching that even comes close to it there's no teaching that comes close to it there is that teaching that there is the spark of the divine in every one of us that we're all born with a with a spark of deity but there is no truth to that there's nothing to support that that comes from a pantheistic concept that everything is God the trees are God the sky is God the waters are God and you're part of the whole creation so you're God also but there's no distinction between God and his creation it's all one in the same but the Bible teaches that there is God and then there is his creation which is separate and

this transcendent God has condescended to man and has come and has by the Holy Spirit taken up residence in the hearts of those who have surrendered to him this is what the New Testament teaches let me give you several passages that state this from both Jesus and the Apostles Jesus in John chapter 14 verse 20 he's speaking to his disciples and he says at that day you will know that I am in my father I am in my father and you in me and I in you in John 17 23 he's speaking to the father in prayer he says I in them and you in me that they may be made perfect in one I in them and you in me you see God dwelling in us Christ in you the hope of glory Romans 8:10 Paul said and if Christ is in you the body is dead because of sin but the spirit is life because of righteousness if Christ is in you in

verse 9 of chapter 8 he said if any man does not have the spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ 1st Corinthians 3:16 Paul said do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you 1st Corinthians 6:19 or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God and you are not your own 2nd Corinthians 13:5 examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith test yourselves do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you unless you are disqualified Galatians 2:20 Paul said I have been crucified with Christ it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me 1st John 4 for John speaking he

said you are of God little children and have overcome them because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world see each one of these passages are teaching that this is what the Christian experience is Christ in you God comes and lives in you that's the miracle of the gospel that's what sets this gospel apart from everything else there's nothing under the Sun like it there's no religious system that compares to it there's no philosophy that can match it there's nothing else that can even come close to it God will come and take up residence in the life of a man and that's what gives him the guarantee of heaven and nothing else can do it and apart from that there is no heaven Christ in you is the hope of glory Jesus said if any men obey my words he said I and my father will come

to him and we will make our home in him you see that's what happens the moment we submit to Jesus Christ as the authority the moment we surrender our lives to him he and the Father by the Holy Spirit come and they make their home in us all of this is so phenomenal when you when you get just a glimpse of the glory of this you can understand what motivated Paul you can understand why he was so thrilled to be part of this all that I could actually be involved in this have you ever been involved in something that you just you just thought it's such a privilege to be involved in you know something you're you're involved with great people and you're doing a great thing and it's just wonderful and you stop I think man I can't believe I get to do this what a what a privilege what a privilege to

be involved every one of us as Christians if we understand who Christ is and what it is that God has done oh I can't believe that I'm allowed to be involved in this what an absolute privilege I'll tell you I feel that way

I feel that way regularly Paul express that again back in Ephesians I am who am the least of all the Saints to me this privilege was given that I should preach among Christ preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ well you know people feel sorry for Christians all those poor Christians weak people have to trust in God poor people have to go to church and they have to give money after witness and they feel sorry for us oh please don't feel sorry for us it's the greatest privilege in all the world to be a servant of Christ to be part of his family and

it's the only hope that any man has Christ in you is the hope of glory apart from Christ there's no glory there's only judgment there's only judgment apart from Christ there's glory in Christ we are going to be glorified together with Him someday in heaven but apart from him there's no glory there's judgment only it's only in Christ that there is life it's only in Christ that there is hope is Christ in you is Christ in you, how can you know?

Well, there's a real simple test that we can take, and our answer to these questions will really show us whether or not Christ is in us.

Think about these things seriously, and answer them truly. Do you love God? Do you love God? Not the God of your own devising, the one that agrees with everything that you think ought to be, but do you love the God of the Bible? Do you delight in obeying His commands? Is it a joy to do what the Lord has commanded you to do? Do you love the Word of God? Do you delight in hearing it taught? Do you enjoy meditating on it yourself? Do you love the people of God? The people of God, do you love them? Do you delight in the congregation of the saints? Do you have that desire to be together with God's people? Do you desire to worship Him when an opportunity comes to express to God your thanks and your praise? Do you have a desire to do that? Do you commune with Him in prayer? Do you like to speak with God in prayer? Do you hate sin? Do you long to be free from it? Do you desire to be holy? Do you love God? You see, if Christ is in you, then these things will be true of you. Because when Christ comes and dwells in us, He puts His desires within us.

He changes us, as I said earlier, from the inside out, and He gives us a new heart. He gives us a new mind. He gives us a new outlook.

He gives us new desires. Is Christ in you? Do you delight in these things? Are these things the things that please you? You see, so often we think of a Christian as a person who just has the absence of certain negative traits or qualities or vices. We say, oh, that person, they must be a Christian because they don't do certain things.

There are many people who don't do certain things who are not Christians. You see, a Christian is not identified only by what he does not do or by what she does not do, but a Christian is more accurately identified by what they do do, by the fact that they love God, that they do delight in His commandments, that they delight in hearing His word, that they enjoy the congregation of the saints and worshiping the Lord. You see, that's the real evidence that Christ is in us.

It's that positive evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, the desires for the things of God. Is Christ in you today? If He is in you, then you can be sure that you will have these kinds of desires. If He is in you, you have confidence in glory.

You can know for sure that He will keep you to glory. He will guide you and lead you into eternity. You're safe in Him.

If you have none of these characteristics, if these traits are not manifested in you, then I think you can conclude safely that Christ is not in you, but yet Christ is willing to be in you if you will yield to Him, if you'll surrender to Him. You see, Christ coming into you is not a matter of you simply saying, oh, I believe in Jesus, or, oh, yes, Christ, come in. I've got nothing better to do this afternoon, so why don't you come in? You know, there's a much too casual mentality that's developed among people in this time, that they're going to take Christ, they're going to receive Him, add Him to the many other things in life.

But you see, Christ doesn't come in at that. Christ comes in the moment you surrender to Him. You surrender to Him.

You yield. You recognize that He's the Lord. You recognize that you've sinned, that He died for you.

And you surrender, and you say, Lord, I give up. I've been at war with You. I hold up the white flag.

Lord, come in. Take over. Control this, this life of mine.

You see, that's when Christ will come in. And when He does, you'll know it, and you will have then that hope of glory, Christ in you, the hope of glory. Many of you know that hope today.

And I want to encourage you to go deeper with Christ, not to be content with a surface relationship with Him, but to go as deep as you can, and to know that you'll never go as deep as you can, because we're talking about the unsearchable riches of Christ. Get into His Word. Dig deep into it.

Realize that this is all you need. Sometimes we set aside the Word of God. We think we need something more.

Oh, I've read that already. Let me read this book now and see what this person has to say. How could we be so foolish? We have not begun to scratch the surface of who Christ is.

God help us not to be man-centered, not to be focused on self, but to focus on Him. And as we do, that hope of glory will just increase in our lives, that confidence of heaven, that longing for, that desire to be there with the Lord. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You for this glorious hope, this wonderful reality of Christ in us, the hope of glory. And Lord, may we who possess that now, may we just grow deeper and deeper into this relationship with You. May we just grow deeper and deeper into this relationship with You.

And Lord, for those that do not have Christ in them, as Paul stated, if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. Lord, may those today who do not have Christ in them, may they surrender today. May they realize it's more than just saying a quick prayer.

It's more than saying, I believe. But it's surrendering and allowing Christ to come in and take charge of the life. Then and only then is there the hope of glory.

Help those who need to surrender today to do that very thing. In Jesus' name, amen. Let's stand together.

If you'd like to surrender your life to Christ today, there are men and women up front that would love to pray with you to that end, that you might leave here today yielded to the Lord and having the hope of glory, Christ being in you. May the Lord bless you and enrich you and may you go forth this week to delve into the depths of Christ and to come to a deeper understanding of what a privilege it is to be called sons and

daughters of God. God bless you.

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