

# FULFILLING OUR PURPOSE

## Colossians 1:24-29

Nehemiah helped the Israelites of Jerusalem and surrounding area to understand their purpose. Not only was Jerusalem to be a special place, but the people were to be godly people demonstrating to others God's love, care and compassion.

When you come right down to it, isn't that why we are here? Yes we enjoy many things about our church. Our church means much to each of us. But in the end, we are here to touch our world with the story of Jesus.

The church at Colossae had a problem. False teachers were leading the young Christians to forget that they were saved by God's grace through their faith in Jesus Christ.

In essence this is what they were saying:

1. Salvation was for the chosen elite. It was not offered to all and there was no such thing as God's grace.
2. A holy God couldn't have anything to do with evil creation. Therefore He wasn't involved in our lives.
3. Because God is so far removed, mediating beings between people and God were needed (i.e., like belief in what angels do today).

It all wore the mask of Christianity. It didn't deny Christ—it dethroned Him. Jesus was not the only way of life, but was included in the ways. Paul's responded this way.

### 1. God loves everybody.

Col. 1:27a (NIV) "God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery. . ."

A small boy drew a valentine-shaped heart on the wall of the New York Public Library. Inside the heart he wrote this message: “Billy Smith loves everybody.”

Our message is a slight variation of Billy’s. It was written by God, not by Billy. Our message is found in the Bible, not on a wall. But the message is essentially the same: “God loves everybody.”

That’s the message that permeates the Scriptures. At the birth of Jesus the angels announced, “Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people...”

Our Lord commanded us to “make disciples of all nations.” He wouldn’t have said that if He didn’t love the people of all nations.

Mark said that we are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. All people, all nations, all the world—In other words the good news of Jesus Christ isn’t just for you and me and people like us—it is for everyone.

Vance Havner told of a church with a church sign that said, JESUS ONLY. One night a storm smashed out the first three letters so that now the sign said, US ONLY. Let’s make sure we are never an “Us only” church.

We must be a church for everyone, because everyone is who God loves. We must not fail to share the great universal love of Jesus.

Let’s not be one of those churches that thinks only of themselves, their needs, their convenience, their comfort—and forget what their job is as a church: to share Christ’s love with everyone.

Our mission is every person. This is precisely what the Apostle Paul is talking about. God’s saving grace was not just for the Jews, but for everyone—Jew and Gentile alike. The Messiah was not sent for Israel alone, but for all people, everywhere.

God loves everybody. He loves Blacks, Whites, Browns, Homosexuals, red-neck beer guzzlers, poor and rich . . . this ought to make you happy, because it means He loves you.

## 2. God loves you.

Col. 1:27b (NIV) “Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”

Paul had never been to Colossae. He didn't found the church, nor did he ever visit it. Nevertheless, look at what he wrote to the Colossian Christians.

First, Colossians 1:25(NIV) I have become its servant (the church) by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—

He didn't choose his ministry. It was not an honor sought after or he gave to himself. Nor was it given to him by other men. Instead, the Lord made him a minister.

Second, Colossians 1:26(NIV) the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

Yes, the Jews knew God loved them, but the mystery was that he loved Gentiles also. Gentiles are you and me.

The heart of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ died for all humanity. This was the mystery the Jews didn't understand—that Jesus Christ, God's Son, was the Redeemer for all who believed.

And what Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection was sufficient for salvation for everyone. That was certainly a blow to the false teachers.

Then he sums the Gospel up in v. 27. Colossians 1:27(NIV) 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. ...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Please grasp what this means. Jesus is not only the Christ of history; He is not only the Christ we read about in the Bible. He in us!

Our hope and assurance come from the “Christ in you!” The wonder of our faith is that the Christ of history and the Christ of the Scriptures—who lived, died, then rose again—dwells in us.

Through faith and commitment He enters our lives in personal and dynamic ways. Our personal Christ loves us.

He forgives our sins. He makes people right with God. He ushers us into heaven. Most important, He is available to all people everywhere. Only He can do all that!

Karl Barth was invited to deliver one of the distinguished lectureships at a theological seminary in the East, and while he was there a group of ministers and theologians and dignitaries of one kind or another sat down with him in a kind of question-and-answer period. Someone asked the question, "What is the most profound thought that you know, Dr. Barth?" This is what he said: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." (Love, Of God, The Most Profound Thought, 2206)

### 3. Proclaim this good news.

Colossians 1:28a (NIV) "We proclaim him..."

The false teachers said that God didn't have any use for every man. The idea that God was also the God of the Gentiles was unacceptable.

It was incomprehensible to them that they were to love Gentiles. Why share God's love with Gentiles? God was the god of the Jews only.

Not only that, the false teacher taught that the knowledge necessary for salvation was so involved and difficult that only a chosen few could get it.

God is saying to us that our great mission is to proclaim Christ to every human being. This is the heart of our church's task. We must be committed to take the Gospel to every one.

Through our lives and our words, we care for people; we are compassionate; we love the unlovely and serve the hurting. And we share the good news of Jesus.

This is what love does. God loves everybody and He doesn't want any person to be lost.

But, because of His love and grace, He gives every person the privilege of choosing their path. Jesus emphasized the two roads of life—the straight and narrow road, which is the way of life.

And the wide and easy road that leads to destruction. Many can walk on it loaded with baggage, yet without sacrifice.

And although this road leads to hell, it is not marked "hell" because Satan will never admit to lost people where the road ends.

The people on that road are so busy enjoying the ride they never give any thought to what lies at the end. Our job is to be a flagman on the road to destruction crying out the warning, "Danger ahead!"

Being a Christian is not just a matter of right or wrong, good or bad, sweet or sour. Being a Christian is a matter of life and death, of heaven and hell.

We cannot be content merely to be saved ourselves. We must devote ourselves to sharing with every person. Paul summarized his ministry in Ephesus by saying, “For three years I never stopped warning everyone day and night with tears” Acts 20:31).

## 4. Teach every Christian.

Colossians 1:28b (NIV) “...admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom... Teaching is discipleship. The lost need to be saved, but the saved need to be taught. Salvation is an instant event. You ask Christ to be your Savior, and He enters your life at that very moment.

The problem in Colosse was they were not grounded in the fundamentals of faith.

Some Christians are “mushroom” or “squash” Christians. Mushrooms grow overnight. Squash grows in a few weeks. Their spiritual pilgrimage goes through two phrases: salvation, and stagnation.

Some Christians settle into a pew, where they sit and sour until the second coming. Let’s be “redwood” Christians. Mighty redwoods develop over hundreds of years. The difference in lasting value is indisputable.

J. B. Gambrell once said, “Conversion is the end of the Christian life—but it is the front end.” We must never be content merely to lead people to salvation. Instead, through teaching, we must transform saved souls into saints, servants, and soldiers.

## 5. Rejoicing in heaven.

Colossians 1:28c (NIV) “...so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” “Perfect” doesn’t mean we are able to make people perfect. Only God can do that. But we can have a major impact in making people complete or mature in Christ.

When you read this in its literal meaning, “So that we may present” means to stand beside, or to recommend, or to substantiate.

On the day we stand before Christ, wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could stand along side every person who became a Christian because of this church’s ministry . . .

And put our arm around each one and say, “Father, this is Bill (or Mary, Joe, Susan). We helped him come to faith in You. We taught him, as a church family, all the things You commanded.

“He has matured in the faith. He has achieved his full potential spiritually. Today, we present him to you perfect and complete.”

Now, notice what Paul says in v. 29. “To this end (presenting perfect in Christ) I labor, struggling with all His (Christ’s) energy, which so powerfully works in me.”

What a profound thought! If we would only take the time, we could see that life is special because our heavenly Father loves us.

## Application:

Through God’s love and our faith in Christ we link our life with Christ’s strength and energy. This makes it possible for us to rise above our human limitations, and complete our mission to present to every person the indisputable fact that Jesus Christ is the only hope of the world.