

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Nov. 9: Paul desires 'good things to run wild' in hearts_110303

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Paul desires 'good things to run wild' in hearts

Colossians 1:24-2:5

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G.K. Chesterton in his book "Orthodoxy" commented: "And the more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for the good things to run wild."

Paul names four things in Colossians 2:2-3 that Christ delivers to the heart, things that run wild when Christ fills the soul—comfort (a Spirit of help), love (Christ's sacrificial love), riches of assurance, treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul identifies with the struggle of the Colossian church. He yearns for the

church to acknowledge God's good things, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (1:27). The hope of glory provides inspiration in the struggle and eternal assurance for future days. Paul never strays far in these verses from "Christ in you." Christ's work in his people builds lives as well as Christ's church. Apart from hope, the good things of God merely survive rather than run wild. What good things did Paul address?

Comfort

Paul's theme of comfort comes through the work of God's Spirit based upon the suffering of Christ (1:24). Christ bridges the gap between our imperfections and his perfection. His suffering on our behalf for our sin qualifies him to understand and to comfort the sufferings in our lives. Christ's comfort instills hope that in turn encourages believers in the crisis of life and ministry.



Paul desires God's comfort to run wild in their lives. Paul never loses sight of the personal nature of God's suffering or the indispensable ministry of comfort for the church to the local community. There is no church without Christ, and there is no church without a Christ-centered mission to the local community.

Sacrificial love of John 3:16

Another good thing Paul wishes to run wild is Christ's love. Love anchors the gospel. Love ministers through the servants of Christ. Love unites the church in purpose and mission (2:2). Christ's love brings the church together, holds the church together, and effectively ministers through the church.

Paul's concern is expressed as he struggles (literally, “agonizes”), concerned and longing to see the Colossians (2:1). The tender pastoral heart of Paul creates an inner agony whereby he might minister to them Christ's love. He also longs to instruct them in the bonds of Christ's love that can hold them together when the world seeks to pull them apart. Love conquers all. Paul wanted God's love to run wild in the Colossian church and for it to impact the community.

Riches of assurance

The Gnostics who denied Jesus' humanity sought to undermine the gospel with philosophical sophistication. Paul aimed for simplicity—Christ's love.

In the simplicity of the gospel that Paul taught, he created assurance, not doubt, in reference to Jesus (2:2). Assurance meant Christ was certainty in a world of uncertainty. The assurance of Christ led to a right knowledge (literally, “gnosis”), based not upon speculative philosophy, but upon the simple cross of Christ along with his resurrection (1:23-29; 2:2-3). Paul purposed the gospel so it would produce truth and certainty in an abundance (John 10:10) of spiritual wealth supplied by Christ. One feels the early church experienced a world of doubt and confusion. Paul wanted the good thing of Christ's assurance to run wild in them.

Paul addresses the fact that life cannot be put in a box or set to a fixed formula. The Christian lives by faith (1:23) and practices faith surrounded by the mystery of God (2:2). Describing “Christ in you, the hope of glory” as the mystery of Christ meant that in serving Christ there is always more of him to know and so much more to seek in relationship. Paul moves toward focusing on spiritual roots and spiritual growth (2:7-10).

The mystery of Christ does three things—gives us pause to pray; keeps us seeking Christ to know him more; and produces a humility of dependence

and trust in God because we do not have every aspect of life perfectly placed like pieces of a puzzle or solved like a mathematical equation. The mystery of Christ runs wild when insight into him deepens.

Treasures of wisdom and knowledge

Growing spiritually means gaining insight into the treasure of Christ (2:2-3). His treasure comprises two things: (1) wisdom, the right application of knowledge in practical living; and (2) knowledge, the right understanding of truth as it relates to Christ's suffering. Paul combated worldly wisdom and knowledge. This treasure changed Paul, transformed the Colossians and empowered the church.

In fact, Paul ministers this treasure (1:25). He gains insight into Christ by God's word and encourages others to gain insight by announcing this treasure to others (1:28). How did Paul deliver the treasure of Christ? He did it three ways: (1) preaching: "to proclaim far and wide" (A.T. Robertson); (2) warning or correcting wrong thinking and application of knowledge; and (3) teaching, the step-by-step process of making disciples through disciplined individual instruction about Christ and his church. All in all, Paul earnestly desired for the hope of glory as God's primary good thing to run wild in the people, the church and the community.

Question for discussion

- ◆ What do you want to run wild in your heart?

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