HIDDEN TREASURES - *Beauty in the Ashes*

Colossians 1:28-2:3 (Part 1)

Introduction

PRINCIPLE: To understand life and to live life with purpose one needs to know Christ. The secrets of life are revealed in and by Christ alone. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The enemy will do all he can to keep you from knowing God intimately and trusting Him fully.

Two nuggets of truth from this treasure chest that relate to living in a world that promises affliction;

1) **In** afflictions we have fellowship *with* Christ
2) **By** afflictions we are made *like* Christ.

Truth, problem & solution: God's mystery, Christ Himself has reconciled us to Himself. Sin, ours, others and the sin in the world, hinder our enjoyment of this restored relationship as well as seeks to halt or hamper our sanctification. Therein lay the role of afflictions.

Deuteronomy 30:6 Promise God makes to re-orient one's heart to love Him, change their ways to become like His, to love like He loves and live.

We must seek to truly and intimately ***know God*** for we are changed by what we know. Our view of God shapes everything else.

We must ***know ourselves***. In and of ourselves we are not holy enough to spend eternity with a holy God. We must turn from oneself to God. Affliction is meant to draw us to God and expose our sin.

We must ***know the gospel*** – we don't get what we deserve (eternal separation from God in hell) but rather what we don't deserve (forgiveness and eternity in heaven) because Jesus willingly took what He didn't deserve (our sins and His Father's wrath). The gospel is not just a ticket to heaven but a way to live.

We must ***know our purpose*** on earth which is to grow in our knowledge of Jesus, help others know Him, serve with joy to honor and glorify Him and to yield to God's providence as He transforms us to become like Jesus.

After saving us, God's tool for shaping our hearts and drawing us to Himself is often affliction. **Hebrews 12:7-11**

Beauty Enjoyed – **In** afflictions we have fellowship *with* Christ

The Great Transformation - As recipients of faith God has done something in us and for us. He re-orients our hearts to be able to love Him and He progressively changes our propensity to love Him above and beyond self. The gift of faith which makes this possible has insurmountable worth – a most valuable treasure.

Seeds of Hope - As we have fellowship with Christ His resplendent beauty is increasingly revealed deepening our comprehension of the many *facets* of this hidden treasure holds…"Christ in you, the hope of glory". What is that hope but the expectation of triumph and victory.

As God is re-orienting us we have to dig deep to mine out that which has real worth & He intends for us to know. Therein lay the first role of affliction to draw you near to Christ.

Facet # 1 – Live by truth and not by feelings (Ephesians 4:17-24)

A. *Feelings make poor masters & desires cannot be our standard.* Think biblically about a desire, pray about it and make appropriate effort towards it but leave the result in God's hands even thanking Him for the challenge. Don't stop praying or trying; but don't allow not having it undo you or steal your joy.

B. *Run to your refuge.* Draw close to the One who can supply all you need. **Romans 8:28**

C. *See what is being exposed.* **Matthew 12:33**. Your trial will expose what is truly in you, what may be lacking and needful. Beware of temptation to harden your heart by demanding what you think you need, act sinfully and draw away from the Lord losing sensitivity to the Lord. **Romans 1:18-25**

D. *How is it you learned Christ?* **Ephesians 4:20** Remember it was by God's truth and His providence that led you to Christ.

E. *Don't follow feelings off the path.* We must learn to think correctly about life and our God who created us and saved us by His own sacrifice, because we inherently don't know how to even though we think we do. Draw near to our Lord and ask Him to help you see what He wants to teach you.

F. **Promise: Psalm 37:3-4** when we learn to biblically work through each situation we will know and esteem Christ more deeply seeing Him in new and clearer ways as well as prize Him as The One who satisfies like no other created thing.

G. *Result:* Your heart will find it more important and pleasing to be satisfied in and by Christ and doing His will. That satisfies. That is enjoying the beauty of knowing Christ.

Facet # 2 – The nearness of my God is my good (Psalm 73:28)

A. *Why and where do you run?*
B. *Draw near in honest prayer.* We may come to Christ and express our struggles openly and transparently without anger and blasphemy. **Job 42** Although Job wrestled with heart-wrenching questions he never crossed over to a settled state of blaming God for his suffering. In **verse 5** Job expresses how he came to know the Lord in bolder, overwhelming ways although his questions were never answered. His heart remained faithful to God – to the same Lord he had trusted from the beginning.
C. *What's true about God?* We need to look at our situation through biblical lens to gain a more accurate view of our heavenly Father. Don't judge God's heart based on His providence alone.
D. *Getting close improves spiritual vision.* Afflictions make what you know real.
E. *Faith is tried and we learn to trust.* Learn to seek His help and trust Him as you recognize and apply His attributes and promises to each situation.
F. **Promise: James 1:12** Faith which has been tested and proven real will receive the crown of life.
G. *Result:* What satisfaction to be approved of by God, what security to know because you have peace with God you may lie down in safety and peace because you dwell and depend on Christ alone? Therein lay the beauty of being known by Christ.

Beauty Perfected – Suffering and Still Trusting

A. *Receiving afflictions message.* As our faith is tried we learn to trust the One who gave Himself so that we might truly live. Once we understand and practically discover the value of Christ in us all of life's situations – good & bad – take on new meaning because we have learned to see them for the purpose for which they were ordained.
B. *Embrace its blessing.* In order to know Christ intimately and trust Him fully we must view our afflictions (and all things for that matter) as a means to grow our understanding and appreciation of this mystery – Christ in us. That is the divine reason they are sent our way. When we learn to embrace them they will no longer threaten to separate us from Christ but draw us to Him. Then the first part of affliction's mission will have been accomplished in our lives.
C. *Abide hard by the cross.* **2 Peter 3:18** Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Seek to know Him and His sufferings more deeply than your love will increase as well as your understanding of His love toward you.
D. *The way down and in is up.* Ask *for growth in the grace: the grace of faith – to believe the* promises more firmly, *the grace of love* – that your love may grow deep and wide

and practical, and *the grace of humility* – seeking to know more of your own nothingness.

E. *Hope becomes real.* As grace grows you downward in humility and upward having nearer approaches to God in prayer and intimate fellowship with Jesus you can expect to have triumph and victory over your trials because your hope will grow as you grow in intimate knowledge of the "Hope of glory".

When Trials Come – Keith & Kristyn Getty

When trials come, no longer fear
For in the pain our God draws near
To fire a faith more worth than gold
And there His faithfulness is told

Within the night I know your peace
The breath of God brings strength to me
And new each morning mercy flows
As treasures of the darkness grow

I turn to wisdom not my own
For every battle you have known
My confidence will rest in You
Your love endures; your ways are good (2x)

When I am weary with the cost
I see the triumph of the cross
So in its shadow I shall run
Till you complete the work begun (2x)

One day all things will be made new
I'll see the hope you called me to
And in your kingdom, paved with gold
I'll praise your faithfulness of old (2x)

Beauty Revealed- Part 2

By afflictions we are made *like* Christ

Col. 1:28-2:3

A) I am paradox

Diagnosis: I am a paradox because I am devoted to self

Remedy: Rid self of self

Prescription: Afflictions

"God by affliction, separates the sin He hates so deadly-from the soul He loves so dearly"

Romans 5:3-4 Suffering develops in us, qualities of Christian character, which cannot be developed any other way.

B) The paradox of suffering

The **paradox** of suffering is that to benefit from these *messengers* of God's, one needs to receive them not with eyes of sense but with the eye of faith.

Suffering's mission and aim is; more purity of soul, greater revelations of God's face, more love to Christ, deeper joy in the heart, holier living, and fresh strength for obedience and all duty.

C) The paradox of sight

Holy wisdom that an *eye of faith* gives enables us to be humble and patient rather than proud and impatient under afflictions dispensation. This wisdom teaches us to consider the truth of **Ecclesiastes 7:13.**

1) Whatever *crook* there is in our lot, it is of God's making.
    a) Acknowledge the author of our *crook* is Creator God and Governor of our life.
    b) Who can straighten what God has made *crooked*?
    c) Everyone's lot has *crooks*.
    d) The *crook* in the lot came into the world by sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." So our being alive alone is a great mercy.

2) How *crooks* came.
   a) Some have lasting effects.
   b) Sometimes there's a train of *crooks.* Our response can be like Asaph to nearly give up faith until he "went into the sanctuary" in **Psalm 73.**
   c) Sometimes one *crook* is removed in time for another following close on its heels.
3) The nature of *crooks.*
   a) Disagreeable to our mind and natural inclination for us here on earth but they are straight in heaven. If we would approve ourselves to God, by walking by faith, not by sight, we would quiet ourselves in the will and purpose of God. Not insisting that it should be according to our mind. **Key to our Response**
   b) Unsightliness- no *crook* seems to be joyous but grievous in appearance and we must not give way to our thoughts to dwell on our lot and keep it too much in view.
      Faith will discover under a very unsightly outward appearance a hidden sightlines in the *crook* perceiving the suitableness of it to the infinite goodness, love and wisdom of God on our behalf by which it comes to take pleasure. The *eye of faith* can perceive beauty intended from the *crook* that the *eye of sight* cannot. **Another key to our response.**
   c) Unfitness for motion- "make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." Don't hold on too tightly to desires. Pity and help those whom have not grasped this lesson – it is rare when one does in the midst of a *crook*. Don't be too quick to assign the reason for one's *crook* is sin as in Job's case. **Key to our response toward one another.**
   d) Aptness to catch hold and tangle. Beware of where one's mind goes when in a state of fretting. **Hindrance to a right response.**

D) The <u>paradox</u> of our response

What is our responsibility in our sanctification with regard to afflictions? How do *the eyes of faith* teach us, enable us to respond?

Biblical Endurance – an inner man activity that expresses itself externally. A process where a believer progresses **in** the process of growing in Christ-likeness **in** and **by** the pressure not **out** of it. It's your view of God practically working out in your life. It's the gospel at work making you *complete in Christ.* It's God's promises at work.

Biblical Endurance is reading your experiences through God not the reverse. It moves your thinking somewhere-toward hope. It enables the believer to focus on their responsibility and privilege of becoming more like Christ rather than on its unpleasantness.

It is not being a C.A.T. – coping, accepting and tolerating. It is not passive but active.

Who is active? You and God

-God teaches you how to use your faith. **Hebrews 12:2 Romans 8:35-37**
-God teaches you how to have Him central in your thinking **2 Corinthians 5:9**
-God teaches you to draw close to Him by prayer
-God teaches you to use biblical principles victoriously
-God teaches you the truth of His promises
-God teaches you how to view yourself, Him and others and your circumstances
-God teaches you to live promoting His kingdom rather than yours **John 4:34**
-God teaches you how to comfort and encourage others **2 Corinthians 1:3-6,9**
-God teaches you how to live beyond your senses of feelings **2 Cor. 5:7; Gal.2:20;5:6**
-God teaches you how to have true joy, thankfulness and hope **Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Cor. 10:13**
-God teaches you to bring Him glory rather than steal it.

Romans 8:28-29 An energetic good God is at work causing all things to be used by the believer for good, that good being growth in Christ-likeness for the glory of God.

E) The **paradox** of the result

1) Christ will have preeminence in your life!
2) You will pursue *biblical endurance* because you recognize you as a Christian, are the most endured of all people. **John 8:31-36**
3) Ability to *sing in the fire*
   Understanding and believing that when you receive the gift of faith you begin a life-long process of conformity into Christ's likeness. You understand your human role while the divine purposes are being worked out within and for you. While we are here on earth the Spirit directs us to the Son and His work in opening our *eyes of faith* to see Christ's glory **2 Corinthians 4:6** and while He is transforming us into His likeness **2 Corinthians 3:18**. Our response is one of gratitude, humility, and worship.

   Yes, if we are the Lord's when we endure affliction we must and we are able to *sing in the fire* because we know and believe *beauty does come from the ashes* of affliction as we anticipate, hope and look towards Christ being formed in us.