

Paul's Purpose

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I find it interesting how the Christian books of today are totally different from the Christian books of yesterday. I've read Martin Luther, John Calvin, St. Augustine, and other very old writings. I've been reading A.W. Tozer and his books that I highly recommend. However, there is a difference between new Christian books compared to old Christian books. Sometimes I wonder if it's the motive behind why these books are or were written. Is it that the older writers were led by Christ to write on topics that were important during their day? Are books different today because it's all about making money or leaving a human legacy through books that are written? I guess we could say what is the motive to book writing? Is it to make money or make a name for oneself or is it led by the Holy Spirit? I'm not saying all new Christian books are bad, but most are from what I've read – just my opinion. What was Paul's motive in the letters that he wrote to the churches of his day? The Lord had chosen Paul to be His spokesperson to the Gentile Church of then and now. Paul shares with us today on what is his motive in writing letters, including Colossians, which we'll be looking at today.

So, let's turn to Colossians 1: 23 – 29 where we read this, ²³ But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's servant to proclaim it. ²⁴ I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church. ²⁵ God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you. ²⁶ This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people. ²⁷ For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his

glory. ²⁸ So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect^[a] in their relationship to Christ. ²⁹ That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me. (NLT – biblegateway.com)"

What was Paul's goal in writing these letters, including Colossians? Was it for money or did he know that his letters would still be read today which means his name would still be talked about today (pride)? First, Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to write these letters. Peter tells us this in 2 Peter 1: 20, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophets themselves or because they wanted to prophesy. It was the Holy Spirit who moved the prophets to speak from God. (NLT)" So, all the prophecy in the Old and New Testament comes from the leading of the Holy Spirit. Paul states this in 1 Corinthians 2: 13 – 16, "¹³ When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths.^[a] ¹⁴ But people who aren't spiritual^[b] can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. ¹⁵ Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. ¹⁶ For,

"Who can know the LORD's thoughts?
Who knows enough to teach him?"^[c]

But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ. (NLT – biblegateway.com)"

Yes, Paul can be hard to understand, but then we should be relying on the Holy Spirit to help us to understand what Paul is saying through the Holy Spirit. It comes down to faith. Do we really believe the Holy Spirit will help us to understand what Scripture says or do we fall back on the false teaching that if we can't understand it, it must be a mistake in Scripture or it is just fiction. This false teaching is growing quickly within the Church. Paul's motive was led by the Holy Spirit. So, when you are studying the Word of God, you better be praying for the leading of His Spirit within you so you can understand what is being read instead of relying totaling on Bible study notes or human commentaries. Study Bibles are

good in some cases, but we shouldn't totally rely on them for understanding Scripture. So, to bring this all together, Paul's motive for writing the letter including Colossians was and is Spirit lead.

Now, let's see how Paul narrows this motive down in Colossians. In verse 28, Paul tells us that wherever he and his helpers go, they tell everyone about Jesus. Paul is only doing what Jesus told us to do in Matthew 28 before He went into Heaven. We are to go make disciples for Jesus. So, Paul is telling everyone about Jesus and the gift of salvation that Jesus offers. This was the purpose of Paul's ministry and he was faithful to his calling from Jesus. Paul went on mission trips and he helped to form many new churches in the Gentile areas. Paul was faithful to Jesus. Jesus tells us in Acts 9 during Saul's conversion event, "For Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel" (NLT). If you turn on Christian TV today, this is all you see now. They show all of these organizations that are going out and telling others about Jesus. Colleges in America is one area that is being hit hard by these groups and that is a good thing. We can't shy away from telling others about Jesus. Many churches today have failed on that mission. However, there is another part of this story.

If we go back to verse 28 of Colossians, Paul continues by saying, "We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. (NLT)" Not only does Paul tell everyone about Jesus, but he also warns and teaches these people so they can be perfect in their relationship to Christ. Following Jesus doesn't just mean we tell others about Jesus, but we are also concerned about their spiritual development. If Paul told someone about Jesus and that person allow Jesus into their heart through the grace of Jesus, Paul didn't stop there. He would continue to reach out to them so they could develop a perfect relationship to Jesus. This is the other purpose of these letters from Paul to the churches. What does it mean to have a perfect relationship to Jesus? I looked up the Greek term Paul used here for the word "perfect" and the Greek term is "teleios" which means perfect, mature, finished, and full age (Strong's Concordance). Paul wanted the followers of Jesus to grow spiritually to maturity. He didn't want them to be always on milk, but to grow in the wisdom of God. This growing is also fulfilling the Great Commandment from Jesus, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. (NLT)" To be perfect or mature in your relationship with the Lord means growing

into the fulfillment of the Great Commandment. Many people run away from this term “perfect” because it sounds so impossible. John Wesley liked to use the word “perfection” in his sermons. He states this in the book, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection:

In the same sermon I observed (Wesley talking about old sermon he did), “Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment”. It is not only ‘the first and great command’, but all the commandments in one. “Whatever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise”, they are all comprised in this one word, love. In this is perfection, and glory, and happiness: the royal law of heaven and earth is this, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” The one perfect good shall be your one ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake, - the fruition of Him who is all in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even a union with Him that made them, the having “fellowship with the Father and Son,” the being, “Joined to the Lord in one spirit.” One design ye are to pursue to the end of time – the enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. – John Wesley

John Wesley was like Apostle Paul in that he didn’t just stop at telling others about Jesus. If someone allowed Jesus into their heart through the grace of Jesus, Wesley would continue to help them to grow in that relationship so that they would enjoy that perfect love for the Lord we all should strive for in this life. This is fulfilling the Great Commandment and we should all pray for each other so that we all can enjoy such love. Why did Martin Luther write the small and large catechisms? The small was for the common people and the large was for the pastors and teachers. Luther wrote these so that the people could grow in the love for their Lord and Savior. Why did John Calvin write the Institutes of the Christian Religion? So that the people could grow in their love for Jesus. These men knew that if one didn’t continue to grow in love for Jesus, something else would happen. Do you know what that could be?

If we go back to Colossians again, Paul tells us this in verse 22, “As a result, he has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. But you must continue to believe this truth and stand in it firmly. Don’t drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. (NLT)” This translation uses the word “drift”. Another translation uses the terms “move away”, but I like the word drift. Paul is

telling us that a believer can drift away from their faith and many times they don't realize it. You see, if we stop growing in our love for Jesus, we have a good chance in drifting away from Jesus. Last Summer, I was involved in two boat rescues on Lake Redman. The Park as a Ranger boat stationed inside a boat house at the boat launch area. Now, I'm not a good boat guy. I know how to start the engine and turn it off, but driving one is a different story. After both rescues, I had to put the boat back into the boat house. To do this, one has to turn the boat on an angle and get the boat into a narrow opening without crashing into the side. So, one must turn the boat while at the same time turn down the engine to the right speed to get into the opening. If one goes too fast, then there is a good chance of crashing into the side walls of the boat house. If one goes too slow, the engine is not producing enough strength to withstand the water current. So, every time I got the boat lined up, slowed the engine down and as soon as I looked forward again, the boat was already drifting away from the boat house and at a bad angle. In one second, the boat was already drifting away. After I notice there was a crowd of people forming to watch me trying to get the boat in, I just gave the engine more power and crashed into the side wall of the boat house. I got it in and I didn't sink the boat so I was good. However, I was amazed how strong and easy it was for that boat to drift away. Paul, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley all knew how easy it is for people to drift away from their first love of Jesus and they knew people needed to work on their love for Jesus. You see, perfect love includes those who are striving for that perfect love. Jesus tells us this in Matthew 5: 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (NIV)" Part of that mature love is having a hunger and thirst to achieve it. If we don't have this hunger and thirst for the love of Jesus, we can drift away from Him because of all the things that are always pulling at us that keeps us away from Jesus -like the concerns of this life. We can become more concerned about the things of this life and start to drift away and before we know it, we've become just like everyone else who doesn't love Jesus with all their strength. Following Jesus means we keep our eyes open and our minds clear so we can continue in allowing the Holy Spirit to continue cultivating our love for Jesus until our visitation on this earth is done. So, I think for us today, we must ask ourselves, is our love for Jesus growing or is it the same as it was from the beginning. If it's the same, then there is a good chance we have drifted away and don't even realize it. Have you drifted away from the love of Jesus?

I end with this pray from Paul to the Ephesian Church:

Ephesians 3: 17 – 19

¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Does this describe you, if not, ask Jesus to help you to have the hunger and thirst for His love and allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life so you can enjoy this love as Jesus wants you to.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001

Wesley, Rev. John. *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.* Kessinger Publishing: New York