

Colossians Study

by Sandy Simpson

Introduction

(1) Colossians 1:1-2

Background

The City of Colosse

Colosse was a city of southwestern Phrygia in the Roman province of Asia (Asia Minor) in what is now Turkey. The city was situated on the Lycus River not far from where that river joined with the Meander River. Colosse was located about 125 miles east of Ephesus near the cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea. These two cities were 10 and 13 miles respectively northwest of Colosse, which was the oldest of the three cities. Originally Colosse lay on the trade route from west to east. This location made it an important city. But then the main road was changed and moved north near Hierapolis and Laodicea. These two cities then grew in importance and surpassed Colosse in wealth and prestige. Colosse declined to a relatively small, unimportant village. It retained its fame for its wool and its municipal independence under the Romans.

The Church of Colosse

Mission work in Colosse was done by a man named Epaphras. Paul called him his "dear fellow servant." Epaphras had probably gone to Ephesus where he heard the gospel of Jesus from Paul. Afterwards he returned to his home in Colosse to start a congregation there. He likely did so under Paul's guidance. The church of Colosse appears to have consisted of mostly Gentile converts. Philemon was one of its members, to whom Paul wrote the letter we know now as the Book of Philemon. The letter to the Colossians, like the letter to the Romans, was a letter addressed to a congregation which Paul had not established himself. Most of the members were unknown to Paul, as it appears from Colossians 2:1 in which he wrote: "I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally." Yet Paul enjoyed a close connection with the church in Colosse, which was located in the same Roman province of Asia in which Ephesus was the capital and where Paul had labored for more than two years. People from that entire area came to hear Paul, no doubt from Colosse as well. Furthermore, those who worked with Paul, as well as those who were converted by Paul's preaching, carried the gospel of Jesus to the entire area, for Acts 19:10 states: "This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord."

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The Date of The Letter to the Colossians

About A.D. 60 to 61

The Occasion for the Writing of the Letter to the Colossians

Epaphras, leader of the church in Colosse in Asia Minor (Colossians 4:12), came to Paul in Rome with good news and bad news about the church of Colosse. The good news was the gospel had born fruit among the Colossians (Colossians 1:6), who were continuing in the faith (Colossians 1:4) in Christ and in love for their fellow believers. The bad news was the Colossians were being troubled by a new teaching that was contrary to the gospel which Epaphras had been preaching to them. The new teaching claimed a profound knowledge apart from Christ (Colossians 2:8), an emphasis on following prescribed rituals (Colossians 2:16), the worship of angels (Colossians 2:18), and ascetic self-abasement (Colossians 2:18 and 20-23). The new teaching which included the worship of angels indicates that it invoked spiritual powers rather than calling on Christ in whom the fullness of God dwelt in bodily form (Colossians 2:9). The new false teaching in effect denied the total sufficiency of Christ for salvation and the completeness of Christ's atonement. The details of the new false teaching are difficult to describe, because Paul did not write about them point by point. Rather, Paul overwhelmed the false teaching and smothered it with the full and complete riches of Christ, his person, and his redemptive work—the Christ who is the true God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Savior and God/Man who reconciled by his blood the sinners of the world to God, and who is the power of the believers' faith. In Christ is found the real knowledge, fullness, and completeness. Thus Paul asserted that Christians have no need for human philosophy and wisdom to be complete. They are complete in Christ, in whom they have the divine wisdom of his gospel and the perfect, complete salvation. To deal with the new false teaching, Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians. Paul then dispatched his co-worker Tychicus to carry his letter to the church of Colosse (Colossians 4:7,8). Paul's letter was a circular letter to be shared with the other churches in the area, particularly nearby Laodicea (Colossians 4:16). When Paul dispatched his letter to the Colossians, he sent the slave Onesimus with Tychicus back to his master Philemon, who was a member of the church of Colosse. This may explain why Paul wrote a longer section on the slave/master relationship than on the other human relationships, and why Paul emphasized his readers should forgive one another as God forgave them in Christ.

Theme of the Letter to the Colossians

*"You have been given fullness in Christ," Colossians 2:10
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***Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
and Timothy our brother,***

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2 To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

Paul opens his letter to the Colossians by stating that it is he, Paul, who is writing this letter. Since Paul is not the person who planted the Colossian church, he needed to make sure they understood the authority he had to write the things he was about to teach them. He tells them he is “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.” Paul was made an apostle of Jesus Christ—the last foundational Apostle according to 1 Corinthians 15:7-9—when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-20). It was there Jesus Christ Himself made Paul one of the original Apostles, even though Paul calls himself the least of the Apostles.

Anyone who claims to be a foundational apostle today is lying. Foundational apostles were chosen and commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself by the will of God. They had a special place in the building of the Church, which is laid on the cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:6) and foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11).

1 Cor. 3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Only Jesus Christ can lay the foundation of the Church—no one else. There are false apostles today who state that they are laying the foundation of the Church, and this proves they are false apostles, just like there were false apostles in Paul’s time. Paul said that false apostles were those who claimed to be equal to the Apostles that Jesus Christ Himself chose.

2 Cor. 11:12-14 And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) today has taken over a majority of Christian churches, and it is headed by so-called apostles who claim the same or greater authority than the original apostles. Let me give you just a few examples.

C. PETER WAGNER – Head “apostle” of the New Apostolic Reformation

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“Apostles and prophets the foundation of the Church and, um, I identify as James, an apostle, as my function as a horizontal apostle to bring together the people of the body of Christ. Not only can I do it, I love to do it.... I’m the one that brings them together and, when I bring them together, things happen” (C. Peter Wagner, National School of the Prophets - Mobilizing the Prophetic Office, Colorado, CO, May 11, 2002, Tape #1).

TOMMI FEMRITE – “Prophet” under Wagner.

“It is time for the apostolic leaders of nations to rise up and proclaim into the heavenlies of the nations where they have apostolic voice and authority to speak and legislate in the heavenlies” (Tommi (9-12-01), cited in September 14th, 2001, Open Memorandum Addressing the Twin Towers War, From: C. Peter Wagner, Presiding Apostle, International Coalition of Apostles, P.O. Box 63060, Colorado Springs, CO 80962-3060).

MARTY CASSADY – “Prophet” under Wagner.

“We are no longer to ask God to do what he put us here to do. Rather, it is a time to make clear declarations that will change the atmosphere of our nation” (Marty Cassady [9-12-01], cited in September 14th, 2001, Open Memorandum Addressing the Twin Towers War, From: C. Peter Wagner, Presiding Apostle, International Coalition of Apostles, P.O. Box 63060, Colorado Springs, CO 80962-3060).

PAUL CAIN – Associate to William Branham, brought the Latter Rain to this time

“No prophet or apostle who ever lived equaled the power of these individuals in this great army of the Lord in these last days. No one ever had it, not even Elijah or Peter or Paul, or anyone else enjoyed what is going to rest on this great army” (Bob Jones and Paul Cain. “Selections from the Kansas Prophets,” audiotape (tape: 155C) <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/quotes.html>).

“Cain...said William Branham is the greatest prophet that ever lived” (Paul Cain, cited in “Unity at the End of the Age - Hearing the Word of the New Prophets,” Mike Oppenheimer, <http://www.letusreason.org/Pent32.htm>).

JACK DEERE – “Apostle” under Wagner

Jack Deere says that with the third wave would come endtime apostles and prophets who would “do greater works than the apostles, than Jesus, or any other Old Testament prophets” (Jack Deere, “Intimacy With God and the End Time Church,” Vineyard

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Christian Fellowship, Denver, CO, 1989, audiotape [session 2A]).

BOB JONES – One of the Kansas City false prophets

“The anointing of the endtime prophets and apostles will be ten times the anointing of Moses” (Bob Jones, “An Interview With Bob Jones by Mike Bickle,” Kansas City Prophets, Kansas City, MO 1989, audiotape).

ROD PARSLEY – Word of Faith teacher

“...there is an end-time Church coming greater than the Church of the Apostles, which will routinely heal the sick and raise the dead” (ROD PARSLEY: THE RAGING PROPHET “BREAKING THROUGH” HIS UNORTHODOX DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE, by G. Richard Fisher, <http://www.pfo.org/parsley.htm>).

RUTH HEFLIN – Deceased prophetess

*“We are called for this day and this hour. Born for it. Destined for it. It is a time greater than the Day of Pentecost. Greater than the period of the first-century church. The end time. The time of the culmination of all things. The day of fulfillment. The day that the Apostles longed to see. The day that we are not only seeing, but the day we are experiencing.... Angelic hosts assist us. Signs, wonders, healings, and miracles confirm us. All that has happened through the centuries has been geared for this hour” (Ruth Heflin, *Glory Harvest*, p. 406).*

MARK CHIRONA – False prophet

Speaking to Benny Hinn, Chirona stated “when Elijah handed you the rod, God was putting in your hand a new level of authority for the nations.... You are entering into a new age of the miraculous. There will be a sharpening, for the spirit of Elijah rests on you...” (Benny Hinn and Mark Chirona, TBN, Jan. 7, 2000).

KENNETH HAGIN – Father of Word of Faith

“The Church will do even greater things than even the Early Church did. It will have greater power, signs, and wonders than were recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.” (Word of The Lord Through Brother Hagin, Saint Louis, July 1997).

RICK JOYNER – Prophet associated with Wagner

Rick Joyner on the subject of the latter-day apostles and prophets who will be greater

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than the apostles and prophets of biblical times: "In the near future we will not be looking back at the early church because of the great exploits of those days, but all will be saying that He certainly did save His best for last. The most glorious times in all of history have not come upon us. You, who have dreamed one day being able to talk with Peter, John, and Paul are going to be surprised to find that they have all been waiting to talk to you." (Rick Joyner, The Harvest [Pineville, NC, MorningStar, 1990, 9]).

So, by biblical definition, according to Paul, those we have quoted above among many, many others are liars and actually servants of the devil. The original apostles were laid by Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone, as a foundation for the Church.

*Ephesians 2:19-21 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and **members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.***

The building of the Church, laid on the Cornerstone Jesus Christ and the foundation of the apostles and prophets, has been being built up since the day the Gospel started to be preached and people were being born again. Don't ever let anyone who claims to be building a new foundation for the Church deceive you. Today there are many movements which claim to be building a new foundation for the Church, including the NAR, the World Christian Gathering on Indigenous People's movement, and the Emerging Church. You can find information about these movements that are coming into the islands on my website at:

<http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com>

Paul was writing this letter from himself and from Timothy, who he intended to send to the churches to minister when he was unable to go. Paul was writing this letter to the Church at Colosse and the holy faithful brothers there. In Colossians 2:1 and 4:16, he also mentions that he meant it to be read by the nearby church of Laodicea. He sends his blessings to the churches by asking for God's grace and peace to be upon them. When the apostles visited homes, where churches met in those days, they were to proclaim peace to that house.

Luke 10:5-6 "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you."

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If there were Christians there, then their peace would rest on those in that house. If not, then the peace that the Lord Jesus Christ gives every believer because of the indwelling Holy Spirit would return to the Christian and not be in that house. This is still the same for us. There is a real peace that rests on believers that the world does not have, and cannot have, if they are not in Christ.

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Walking Worthy of the Gospel

(2) Colossians 1:3-12

Five young college students were spending a Sunday in London, so they went to hear the famed C. H. Spurgeon preach. While waiting for the doors to open, the students were greeted by a man who asked, "Gentlemen, let me show you around. Would you like to see the heating plant of this church?" They were not particularly interested, for it was a hot day in July. But they didn't want to offend the stranger, so they consented. The young men were taken down a stairway, a door was quietly opened, and their guide whispered, "This is our heating plant." Surprised, the students saw 700 people bowed in prayer, seeking a blessing on the service that was soon to begin in the auditorium above. Softly closing the door, the gentleman then introduced himself. It was none other than Charles Spurgeon. (Our Daily Bread, April 24)

Colossians 1:3 *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,*

4 *because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—*

5 *the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel*

6 *that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.*

Paul was always praying for the churches. Prayer is something that all Christians need to do, especially for other believers. Here are some reasons to pray for our brothers in Christ.

James 5:16 *Therefore confess your sins to each other and **pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.***

2 Thessalonians 3:1 *Finally, brothers, **pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.***

Colossians 4:3 *And **pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message,** so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.*

2 Thessalonians 1:11 *With this in mind, we constantly **pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act***

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prompted by your faith.

Paul was praying for them because of their faith, and the resulting love he heard they had for all the saints. We are to love our brothers in the Lord, and that is the evidence of our faith in Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

Where does faith and love come from? It comes from the hope we have “stored up in heaven.” What hope is that? It is the hope of final salvation, of eternal life, of seeing Jesus face to face.

Hebrews 9:28 ...so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

1 Peter 1:5 ...who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Titus 1:2 ...a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time...

1 Cor. 13:12-13 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Why did the Colossians have hope? Because they had heard the true Gospel. People cannot have faith, hope, or love if they have not heard the Gospel. What people who are not born again have is a false imitation of faith, hope, and love. Don't be fooled by those who claim you can be reconciled with God through your culture. The only way to gain a knowledge of faith, hope, and love is through hearing and believing in the Gospel and being reborn of the Spirit. There is no way to hear the Gospel unless someone is sent to preach it.

Romans 10:14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

The preaching of the true Gospel bears fruit. What kind of fruit? Is this

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just talking about how many people believed? Not entirely because, though more and more people were believing in Paul's day, the number was actually not very big in comparison to the non-believers. That is the way it will always be, because those who follow Jesus Christ will always be a "little flock."

Luke 12:32 "Do not be afraid, **little flock**, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

Matthew 7:14 **But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

Beware of those who try to claim that when you see many numbers of people claiming to be Christians, it is proof that God is working or that we are in some kind of end times revival. It may very well be proof that men are gaining many followers to themselves based on false teaching and false prophecy. Certainly when the Bible talks about good fruit it does include witnessing for Christ, and in the context of Colossians 1:6 that is what it is talking about. But what other kind of fruit does the Gospel produce?

James 3:17 **But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.**

Colossians 1:10 *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...*

Philippians 1:11 *...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

Gal. 5:22-23 **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

Against such things there is no law.

Paul said that the Gospel message was causing the Church to grow and it was evident in their midst. That growth was based on hearing the Gospel and understanding God's grace in all its truth. We must hear the Gospel, take it to heart (understand it), repent of our sins, and turn to the grace of Christ. You cannot be born again unless you understand the grace of Christ in truth. Those who think they are saved by the Law, or saved by their good works, do not understand the Gospel of grace. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. What this means is, only by the grace of God are we saved. It is not because we deserved to be saved, but because of the mercy of the Father who sent his sinless Son to die in our place, because the wages of our sin is death. Salvation is only obtained by believing. You cannot appropriate or accept the grace of God

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without belief—faith. You don't get saved without an act of the human will that submits to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to come under His grace.

Finally, it is only through Christ that people can be saved. There is no other sacrifice. Animal sacrifices are no longer accepted since the Perfect Sacrifice died for us. There is no other Gospel that can save, no Gospel in the stars or Gospel left by God in Gentile heathen cultures like Daniel Kikawa, Don Richardson, and others teach. The only way to salvation is to believe in Jesus Christ the God-man, the son of David, born a Jew, who died and rose again, and is seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. This is the truth of the Gospel that has to be accepted for a person to be saved. There is also no salvation without truth.

7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,

8 and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

The Gospel had been preached to the Colossians, not by Paul, but by Epaphras. He was a dear fellow servant and faithful minister of Christ. He had told Paul of the love of the Colossians for the body of Christ because of the Gospel. Again, we see that Paul and the apostles were men of prayer. They took literally the admonition from God to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). What were Paul and Timothy praying for on behalf of the Colossians? The same things we need to pray for each other.

(1) **They prayed that God would fill them with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.** This meant that they would study the Scriptures, and would know, through the Holy Spirit, what the will of God was for them, and that they might be wise regarding the deceptions of the world.

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(2) **They prayed that they would live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way.** They were praying that the Colossians would live a holy life, pleasing to God. The ultimate goal in the life of every Christian is to please God. The only way to please God is to be “in Christ” and to live according to His commands.

(3) **They prayed that they would bear fruit in every good work.** This is not talking about works salvation, but these are the deeds of a born again believer showing his or her faith.

*James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, **so faith without deeds is dead.***

(4) **They prayed that they would grow in the knowledge of God.** There is only one way to grow in the knowledge of God—to study the Word of God, and allow the Holy Spirit to apply it to your life.

*2 Timothy 3:16 **All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...***

(5) **They prayed that they would be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that they would have great endurance and patience.** We are weak, but He is strong (1 Cor. 1:27). We face all kinds of trials here, but we can face them with endurance and patience if we remain in Christ and in His Word.

(6) **They prayed that they would joyfully give thanks to the Father.** Our Christian lives should reflect our joyful thanks to the Father. This is why we give thanks for our food, why we often start and end our prayers with thanksgiving, why we can have a joyful attitude in a world that does not know true joy. Why do we give thanks? Because the Father qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. How did He do that? By sending His Son to die in our place and rise again from the dead as the firstfruit of our inheritance in heaven—that of being born again into a new eternal glorified body. The only way we are qualified to share in that inheritance is to be born again spiritually by placing our faith in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we can become saints in the kingdom of light.

*Revelation 22:5 **There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.***

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The Preeminence of Christ – Part One

(3) Colossians 1:13-17

Last lesson, we looked at what the Gospel means for us and why we need to walk worthy of the Gospel message. This lesson, we will look at the reason we should live in thankfulness and praise for what Christ has done for us.

Colossians 1:13 *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

First of all, we need to remember where we were when Christ found us and the Holy Spirit convicted us. We were rescued by Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 46:4 *Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.*

Not only did Jesus make us, He rescued us on the cross. He sustains us and the whole universe by His power. He carries us through every trial and circumstance of life if we continue to trust in Him. What did He rescue us from? We were all part of the kingdom of darkness.

Romans 3:23 *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..*

We all served a master other than Jesus Christ before we were saved, whether we knew it or not. That master was Satan.

2 Cor. 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

On the cross, Jesus Christ defeated sin, death, and the devil.

Heb. 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their*

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lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Romans 8:2 ...because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

John 16:11 ...and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

We were all once children of darkness, but now we have been made light in the Lord. Because of that, He deserves all our praise and thanksgiving.

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light...

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

In Christ, we have the only redemption from sin.

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace...

How was it possible for Jesus Christ to take away sin, death, and the power of the devil? There is only one Person who could do that, and now we will look at His qualifications.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

(1) Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. No one has seen God the Father. God is invisible to us since He is outside of time and space in the supernatural realm. But at the perfect time and place the Father sent the Son to be born of a virgin, and God then added humanity to the essence of His Son. It was then that one Person in God—Jesus Christ—became visible to the world.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

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Notice that Jesus Christ is called “God the One and Only.” This is an important verse to prove the doctrine of the Trinity. God is One God in Three Persons. No one can see the face of the Father and live.

Exodus 33:20 “But,” he said, **“you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”**

But when God the Father sent God the Son, people could then look on the face of God because God added the nature of men to Himself in Jesus Christ.

(2) You might ask, “but doesn’t the next phrase contradict the idea that Jesus Christ is God?” You might ask, “If Jesus Christ was born, how can He be God?” It might appear confusing to a person who does not understand what the word “firstborn” means.

The word “firstborn” means that Christ has dominion over all things, as the first-born in a family is heir and lord of all, so he is the *heir of all things*.

Hebrews 1:2 ...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, **whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.**

Notice that Christ is heir of all things because Christ created the universe. This means that Jesus Christ preexisted (existed before) this universe as God. The Bible also tells us that Jesus Christ is eternal.

John 8:58 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, **“before Abraham was born, I am!”**

The words “I AM” were spoken by God to Moses when Moses asked His Name. “I AM” means that God is not a created being, but an eternal being. Jesus Christ spoke these same words that no one else could ever claim.

The word for firstborn in Greek, with only the change of the accent, signifies actively the first begetter or producer of all things, the Creator. Also, the first-born, or the eldest son, among the Hebrews, had peculiar privileges. He was entitled to a double portion of the inheritance. It was a common thing among many cultures for the eldest son to succeed to the estate and the title of his father. In early times, the firstborn son was the officiating priest in the family, in the absence or on the death of the father. There can be no doubt that the apostle here was referencing the usual distinctions and honors conferred on the

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firstborn, and means to say, that, among all the creatures of God, Christ occupied a pre-eminence similar to that (Barnes New Testament Notes).

We know that this idea of firstborn is not talking about Jesus Christ being a created being because of what the verse says next. *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.* Jesus Christ created all things, thus He is the Creator God. This verse exhausts all things created everywhere, in every state, of lowest to highest authority. Jesus Christ created all things. This verse is absolute proof of the Divinity of Christ. We know from the Bible that God is said to have created the universe, and each Person in God also created the universe.

God (“What”) created the universe: Gen. 1:1

Father (“Who”) created the universe: Malachi 2:10; Matt. 25:34

Son (“Who”) created the universe: Colossians 1:15-16; Heb. 1:2; Matt. 13:35

Spirit (“Who”) created the universe: Psalm 104:30; Job 33:4; John 6:63

Verse 17 also tells us that Jesus Christ preexisted all things. He was before ALL things. That means there was nothing before the Son. We also know this about the Father and the Spirit, therefore God who is Father, Son, and Spirit existed before ALL things. Another amazing revelation is that Jesus Christ also holds all things together. As we already read in Isaiah 46:4, we know that God sustains all things. But now we learn that the Son holds all things together. Scientists have studied the atom for decades, but they still don’t know what force holds the atoms together that make up the universe. All they have to do is believe in the Bible and they will know what holds things together. When God stops holding things together, they simply run away—cease to exist.

Rev. 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.

At the time of the Great White Throne judgment, the old heaven and old earth will no longer have any use, and so God stops sustaining and holding them together—they go out of existence (*“there was no place for them”*).

The point of this explanation is to remind us of just how much Jesus did for us in adding human nature to Himself.

Colossians Study

The Preeminence of Christ – Part Two

(4) Colossians 1:18-23

Because of Jesus' sacrifice to become 100% human, yet continue as 100% God, as we previously studied, and because He died on the cross in our place for our sins and rose again, He also became the head of something new.

Colossians 1:18 *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

Christ became the head, as He is head in all things, of the Church. Born again believers make up the Church, with Christ as the head. We also see the word “firstborn” being used again. Remember that firstborn means preeminence, or the order of importance. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who is God.

God

1 Corinthians 6:14 *By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.*

Father

Romans 6:4 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as **Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father**, we too may live a new life.*

John 5:21 *For just as **the Father raises the dead** and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.*

Spirit

Romans 8:11 *And if **the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead** is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

Son

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John 10:17-18 *“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. **No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.** This command I received from my Father.”*

So we can see that, yet again, the One God in Three Persons raised Himself from the dead. This is a mystery, but we have to understand that though Jesus Christ died physically, He did not die spiritually as some false Word of Faith teachers assert. The remission of sins is from Jesus Christ’s physical death on the cross, not a spiritual death. It is impossible for God, who is eternal, to die spiritually. Look ahead to verse 22.

Colossians 1:22 *But now he has reconciled you **by Christ’s physical body through death** to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—*

So, because of Christ’s miraculous raising from the dead, Christ now has supremacy over all things, whether old or new, such as the Church, sin, and death.

**19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,
20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.**

The Son always has the fullness of the Godhead in Himself from eternity past. So this is not really talking about eternity past. It is talking about Jesus Christ who was incarnated as a human being having the fullness of Deity because God the Father decreed it. Remember that, though God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Son put Himself in submission to the Father, and the Spirit put Himself in submission to the Son.

Luke 22:42 *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet **not my will, but yours be done.**”*

John 15:26 *“When the Counselor comes, **whom I will send to you from the Father**, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”*

John 16:13-14 *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. **He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me** by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.*

Through Christ, all things have been reconciled. The debt has been paid.

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This does not mean that all men will be saved. It simply means that the wages of sin have been paid by Jesus Christ, and that now we have to choose to serve Him and accept the free gift of salvation, or reject Him. Jesus made peace with the Father through the shedding of His blood as the ultimate perfect once-for-all sacrifice for sin.

Now there is one problem in this verse that I did not find addressed in the commentaries. It is really not a problem, but I believe that I have one idea about what this it is talking about when Paul states that Christ was reconciling all things to Himself, *whether in heaven or on earth*. Obviously those angels who chose to serve God at the rebellion of Satan do not need redemption, nor can the angels who followed the devil gain redemption since they have already been judged. I believe this is, at least in part, referring to the old Testament saints. Those who believed in God and were faithful, offering animal sacrifices for their sins under the Old Testament Covenant and before, were sent to a place called Abraham's bosom—a holding place. When Christ died, He went to this place to tell the Old Testament saints about what He had done.

*Ephesians 4:8-9 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, **he led captives in his train** and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except **that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?**)*

Jesus descended into Hades, both the bosom of Abraham part and the part of Hades set aside for those on their way to hell. When He left Hades, He led captives in His train, meaning He emptied out Abraham's Bosom and took those saints to heaven.

*1 Peter 4:6 **For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.***

So Jesus was redeeming the Old Testament saints in Abraham's Bosom after telling them of what He had done to redeem mankind, since they had believed in God through faith and were looking forward to the Messiah. But Jesus also preached this same message to the disobedient people in Hades awaiting judgment.

*1 Peter 3:18-20 **For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of***

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Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water...

I believe part of the answer to Christ reconciling things in both heaven and earth is that He reconciled the saints in Hades and took them to the third heaven—Paradise—to be with Him after His death. But there could be more to this statement that we do not even know. Remember, Scripture was revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit, and some things still remain a mystery to be revealed later.

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

We used to be completely alienated, cut off, from a relationship with God. No man can call God his Father truthfully until he is born again and justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. Not only were we living in sin, we were living in rebellion. We were enemies of God. Don't let anyone fool you into thinking you have enough good in you to be accepted at the judgment of God. We were all enemies of Christ by nature and by choice. This is the human condition. We were without God and without hope in the world. But then, Jesus Christ reconciled us to the Father through His physical death on the cross. There are false teachers out there today who say that Christ's physical death did not save us.

*"Jesus had to go through that same spiritual death in order to pay the price, because if it had of been any prophet of God that had died for the last couple of thousand years before that could have paid that price. **It wasn't physical death.** Anybody could do that" (Kenneth Copeland, "What Satan Saw on the Day of Pentecost" (Kenneth Copeland Ministries, audio tape #020022).*

*"Why did He need to be begotten or born? Because He became like we were—separated from God. Because He tasted spiritual death for every man. And His spirit and inner man went to hell in my place. Can't you see that? **Physical death wouldn't remove your sins.** He's tasted death for every man. He's talking about tasting spiritual death. Jesus is the first person that was ever born again. Why did His spirit need to be born again? Because it was estranged from God" (Kenneth Hagin, "How Jesus Obtained His Name" (Kenneth Hagin Ministries, audio tape #44-H01).*

This is heresy of the worst sort, yet TBN features Kenneth Copeland who

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was a student of Kenneth Hagin. Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, and many other Word-Faith heretics on TBN have also made similar statements. The verse we just read completely destroys their argument.

When we are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and born again, we are then holy in the sight of the Father, without blemish, and free from accusation. We will not be judged if we are found to be “in Christ.” That means we are under the blood of Christ, we are born again because of His sacrifice for us, and we are seen as holy because Christ is holy. Outside of Christ there is no holiness in the sight of God, no cleansing, no freedom from accusation. There is no other way to be saved except through Christ.

Acts 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

As usual there is a qualifying statement attached to the end of this wonderful passage on salvation. Many Christian teachers today would like to ignore this part and emphasize the salvation Christ has bought for us. They would like to pretend that the matter ends there. But remember that salvation is by grace alone THROUGH FAITH ALONE in Christ alone. Now faith enters the picture.

***IF you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.** This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.*

If...this is a little word that always qualifies and adds to what has come before. There is one more criteria for salvation—that is our faith. This is not to say we can save ourselves. There is no salvation outside of faith in the grace of Jesus Christ. But we must CONTINUE! This is repeated over and over again through Scripture, so it is a wonder that many Christian teachers ignore it. We must keep ourselves in God’s love.

*Jude 1:21 **Keep yourselves in God’s love** as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*

We must keep the faith.

*1 Timothy 3:9 They must **keep hold of the deep truths of the faith** with a clear conscience.*

*2 Timothy 1:13 **What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of***

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sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

We must persevere in sound doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:16 **Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.**

We must overcome by faith.

1 John 5:4 *...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. **This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.***

We are to add to our faith.

2 Peter 1:5 *For this very reason, make every effort to **add to your faith** goodness; and to goodness, knowledge...*

We must strengthen our faith by continuing to meet together to study the Word.

Hebrews 10:25 **Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**

Romans 15:4 *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, **so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.***

We must be prepared to defend the “faith once for all delivered to the saints.”

Philippians 1:16 *The latter do so in love, **knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.***

2 Corinthians 10:5 *We **demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

If we move away from the truth of the Gospel, either by our own choice or by following false teachers, we have believed in vain and the Gospel is of no use to us.

1 Corinthians 15:2 *By this gospel you are saved, **if you hold firmly to the***

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word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

Paul proclaimed the saving Gospel message to the Gentiles. We must follow what he preached, and be careful not to accept a different Gospel.

*2 Corinthians 11:4 For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, **or a different gospel from the one you accepted**, you put up with it easily enough.*

*Galatians 1:6 I am astonished that **you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—***

I must warn you that there are many who are preaching a different Gospel today. The New Apostolic Reformation, Third Wave, Word of Faith, Emerging Church, World Christian Gathering on Indigenous People movement, and many other popular so-called Christian movements today are preaching a different “gospel.” They add and/or take away from the true Gospel message and make it something other than the true Gospel. Those who preach “God loves you and has a purpose for your life,” without preaching about sin and repentance, are preaching a false gospel. I heard someone from Texas say they call these kinds of churches “feel good” churches down there. Good description. Remember that your salvation depends on your continuing in your faith. Don’t let anyone steal your prize. Skipping ahead in Colossians we read:

*Colossians 2:18-19 **Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize.** Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. **He has lost connection with the Head**, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

Colossians Study

A Mystery of Christ

(5) Colossians 1:24-2:3

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—

26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

Paul suffered to bring the mystery of Christ to the Gentiles. His list of sufferings in Second Corinthians 6 is hard to imagine.

2 Cor. 6:4-10 Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Most of us will never suffer this much for our faith. But Paul did, because he knew that to truly spread the Gospel message there will ALWAYS be opposition. In fact, Paul makes a rather unusual statement, that, “*I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.*” What Paul is not saying here is that Christ's death on the cross was lacking. Matthew Henry, a famous Bible commentator, explains this verse this way:

Both the sufferings of the Head (Jesus Christ) and of the members are called the sufferings of Christ, and make up, as it were, one body of sufferings. But Christ suffered for the redemption of the church; we suffer on other accounts (for other reasons); for we only slightly taste that cup of afflictions of which Christ first drank deeply. A Christian may be said to fill up that which remains of the sufferings of Christ, when he takes up his cross, and after the pattern of Christ, bears patiently the afflictions God allots to him (lets him suffer). Let us be thankful that God has

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made known to us mysteries hidden from ages and generations, and has showed the riches of his glory among us. As Christ is preached among us, let us seriously inquire, whether he dwells and reigns in us; for this alone can warrant our assured hope of his glory. We must be faithful to death, through all trials, that we may receive the crown of life, and obtain the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary).

Paul was willing to endure the cross of carrying the mystery of the Gospel to the Gentiles in order to build up the body of Christ. This is the call for any missionary who would give up their life so that others may be saved. I wonder how many in this generation have that kind of commitment? I'm afraid I don't see that much anymore. The great missionary efforts of the 19th and early 20th centuries are over. At this point, few Christians are willing to give up their lives or be persecuted for the cause of Christ in reaching the Muslims, for instance. What is so different about reaching the Muslims who will not tolerate Christians, and the Romans who put Christians to death?

Paul was commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself to carry a special revelation to the Gentiles. That is what is called "the mystery" here. There are a number of mysteries mentioned in the New Testament revealed to the Apostles that had been hidden in the past, or only partially revealed.

The Gospels

Matt. 13:11 *He answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the **Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven**, but to them it is not given.*

Mark 4:11 *And he (Jesus) said to them, "You (the 12 apostles) have been given the **Mystery of the Kingdom of God**, but to those, the ones outside, everything is given in parables...so that seeing, they may see and not perceive, and hearing, they may hear but not understand."*

Revelation

Rev 1:20 ***The Mystery of the Seven Stars** that you saw on my Right and the Seven Golden Lampstands...The Seven Stars are Messengers of the Seven Assemblies, and The Lampstands are The Seven Seven Assemblies.*

Rev 10:07 *But in the Days of the Voice of the Seventh Angel when he intends to trumpet, and would be completed in Time **The Mystery of God**...like he proclaimed to his Slaves the Prophets.*

Rev 17:05 *And on The Forehead of her a Name having been written...a **Mystery**...**"Babylon The Great, The Mother of the Prostitutes"**...and "of the Abominations of the Earth."*

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Rev 17:07 *And the Angel said to me, Why did you marvel? I will tell you **The Mystery of the Woman and of the Beast...***

The Epistles

Rom. 11:25 *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this **mystery**, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until **the fulness of the Gentiles** be come in.*

Rom. 16:25 *Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my **gospel**, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery**, which was kept secret since the world began.*

1 Cor. 2:7 *But we speak **the wisdom of God in a mystery**, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:*

1 Cor. 4:1 *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of **the mysteries of God.***

1 Cor. 15:51 *Behold, I show you **a mystery**, **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.***

Eph. 1:9 *Having made known unto us **the mystery of his will**, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself...*

Eph. 3:4 *Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in **the mystery of Christ...***

Eph. 5:32 *This is a great **mystery**, but I speak concerning Christ and the Assembly.*

Eph. 6:19 *And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the **Mystery of the Gospel...***

Col. 1:26-27 *Even the **mystery** which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints, to whom **God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles;** which is Christ in you, the hope of glory...*

Col. 2:2 *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of **the mystery of God**, and of the Father, and of Christ...*

Col 4:3 *Withal praying also for us, that God would open to us a door of utterance, to speak **the mystery of Christ**, for which I am also in bonds...*

2 Thess. 2:7 *For **the mystery of iniquity** does already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

1 Tim. 3:9 *Holding **the mystery of the faith** in a pure conscience.*

1 Tim. 3:16 *And without controversy great is **the mystery of godliness:** God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

The mystery of Christ and the Gospel to the Gentiles is mentioned particularly in Romans and Colossians. This mystery was that, through Jesus

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Christ, God was making a new covenant which included salvation for the Gentiles. This idea was alluded to in the Old Testament in a number of places, but most Jews disregarded God's plans to reconcile Gentiles.

Genesis 18:18 **Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and *all nations on earth will be blessed through him.***

Galatians 3:8 **The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."**

This means that, through the seed of Abraham—that is, Jesus Christ—the whole world would be blessed as were the sons of Abraham—Israel. Now the time had come for this word of the Lord to come into being. Paul was the first person to completely realize this revelation, this mystery, and God then also revealed it to Peter and the other Apostles. No longer would this mystery be hidden from the world, but would be proclaimed all over the world.

27 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.

The riches of this mystery are that Jesus Christ would come and live in everyone who believes through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11). This was something that was unthinkable and unheard of in the world from Babel onward. The Holy Spirit rarely indwelt or filled anyone outside of Israel with few exceptions. God is YHWH, the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All other nations did not worship God, nor did they have a relationship with Him. All peoples of the earth, outside of Israel, could know that there was a Creator, and possibly understand that His nature was One in Three by observing creation and human nature, body, soul, and spirit.

Rom. 1:20 **For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.**

But there was no way for men to have a relationship to the Father because ALL men had corrupted the knowledge of God and were worshipping idols, which are demons.

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Rom. 2:21-25 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.*

Rev. 9:20 *The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk.*

1 Cor. 10:20 *No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons...*

Eph. 2:12 *...remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*

But now, because of salvation and the indwelling spirit, the hope of glory was open to Gentiles. The hope of glory is the hope of eternal life, the hope of a new heaven and earth, the hope of treasure in heaven, the hope of being with Christ in perfection for eternity. None of these things were available to the Gentiles before Christ, and now Gentiles had to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of their sins, and obey the law of Christ to experience that hope of glory. There is no other way, no other religion, no other supreme being, no other idol, no other sacrifice, no one else but Jesus Christ alone who can offer the hope of glory.

28 *We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.*

29 *To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*

Paul was preaching the Good News and discipling people from many nations, teaching them with wisdom in order that they might be wise themselves.

2 Tim. 3:14-17 *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All*

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Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Paul taught the Word of God and reasoned with people from the Scriptures.

Acts 17:2 *As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days **he reasoned with them from the Scriptures...***

Paul's goal was to present those he was discipling as a gift to the Lord Jesus Christ, presenting them perfect in Christ. The word for perfect is *teleios* in Greek which can mean: *Brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness, perfect, full grown, adult, of full age, mature.* So this is not talking about human perfection, it is talking about perfection in Christ, being finished, complete, mature, and full grown. We have dealt with this subject many times, but Christians must grow to maturity in Christ.

Heb. 5:14 ***But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.***

Eph. 4:13 *...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God **and become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Jam. 1:4 ***Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.***

Paul was not just going to preach the Gospel in a big crusade, and then leave town. Paul made sure any new converts were disciplined and brought to maturity, whether by himself, Timothy, Ephaphras, or other leaders in the Church.

Colossians 2:1 *I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.*

2 *My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,*

3 *in whom are hidden ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Paul had a heavy heart for those at Colosse and Laodicea because they had not met him personally. But Paul wanted them to know that his purpose was to encourage them, and that they would be united in love. Paul was an

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example of his own instruction to Timothy:

2 Tim. 4:2** Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; **correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction.

Paul wanted the Colossians to have complete understanding of the Gospel and the truth of God's Word so that they would fully know the mystery of God, namely Christ. Where do we go to learn of the mystery of God? We go to His Word and the Holy Spirit. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge come from God. There is no true wisdom outside of the one true God, the "I Am," YHWH. There is no wisdom in false religions. True wisdom from the Word can bring us to believe in Christ and thereby be saved. No other religion will do that. Remember, we just read that the Word of God can make a person wise unto salvation.

***1 Cor. 3:18-20** Do not deceive yourselves. **If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise.** For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."*

Colossians Study

Let No One Steal Your Prize

(6) Colossians 2:4-12

In Palau before shore-to-shore tide nets were outlawed, we used to wait to see when a local fisherman who often sold fish to the schools would set up his nets. He would begin to set his nets up at high tide, stretching out from the beach almost to the reef, and then back to the beach again, running perhaps 500 feet or more down the beach. He would often start his setup in the middle of the night and word would spread among the youth regarding when he had started setting his nets and where. We would then get up long before dawn and wait for low tide. We would bring a spear, sometimes tri-tipped, and a fish line for our catch. The youth would then assemble on shore and wait for the word from the fisherman that we could begin to collect the trapped fish. Usually we had to wait until the fisherman's boys had speared the sharks and larger fish. Then he would finally give the word, and the mad rush would begin. We would all run out and try to be the first to spear as many fish as possible, even though we would have to give the fisherman our entire catch, and he would dole out just enough for each person to take back to their families. One early dawn we had all rushed out and found that there was an especially large group of rabbit fish trapped in small tide pools. Three of us boys were around the same tide pool spearing fish when we all spotted a particularly large rabbit fish dart into some weeds. We all rushed over to that spot, and I was the first to throw my spear. Unfortunately, my friend, at the same moment, had stuck his foot into the tide pool to feel around for the fish. My spear went right through his foot. I was so worried about someone stealing my prize that I had not been careful about watching for his foot in the early morning light. We got him back to the school nurse, removed the barbed spear, and he was treated. I was surprised that he was not really angry with me, but I think he realized that it was partly his fault.

Now you may think that this is a silly story to illustrate not wanting anyone to steal your prize. Fortunately, this is not what this study is about, so no one needs to be afraid I will spear you. Paul says that the Colossians needed to be careful not to let anyone steal their prize, that is, the mystery of the Gospel.

Last lesson, we looked at a mystery that was revealed by Paul to the Gentiles, namely that, through Christ, God the Father was reconciling not

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only Jews, but Gentiles, to Himself through the cross. The Gentiles could now hear the Gospel message and, if they were convicted by the Holy Spirit, repented of their sins, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as their only and perfect sacrifice for sin, they could be saved. We learned that in Christ we, as Gentiles, are now privileged to know ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that were, beforehand in the ancient world, largely hidden from us by our sin and worship of demonic idols. But there have always been and, until the return of Christ, will always be false teachers who, by what they teach, end up destroying the Gospel message of grace through faith in Christ Jesus.

4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.

There were false teachers traveling around in Paul's day with all kinds of false teachings in order to try to get followers and monetary support for themselves. There were a number of teachers, apparently, who were degrading the Gospel message by fine sounding arguments. The arguments they made sounded good on the surface, but were not backed up with the Word of God. Today we have the same problem. Be careful of what you may hear on Christian TV today. Sometimes they have fine sounding arguments, but you have to check what is being said against what the Bible says. Christians can actually be deceived by false arguments. For instance, there is a method of false teaching today called the Hegelian Dialectic with praxis or "diaprax" which many false teachers are using to convince people with their arguments. What they do is set up opposites to then try to bring you to their conclusion of the truth somewhere in the middle. If you agree to this new truth, then you have given up your own beliefs to them, and been effectively brainwashed. Let me give you an example of how they do this:

First, they use an illustration that does not really fit the subject they are talking about. Brian McLaren, one of the promoters of the Emerging Church, did this recently. His illustration was of one hundred days of rain in Honduras that washed away a bridge and even changed the landscape, and because of that, they had to make new maps. McLaren then states that 100 days of rain represents the new way of thinking in this postmodern world, and Christianity needs to make new maps to deal with this change. He is stating that Christianity needs to be changed to fit the "new" ideas of the world. He then uses the Hegelian Dialectic by stating that Christianity has always had a hard time meeting the needs of people, and that it is no longer effective today. This is his Thesis. He then gives his Antithesis when he says that some Christians want to get rid of maps altogether. He

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then comes back to his main point which is that Christianity needs a new map, that we need a new kind of Christianity to lure people into the churches. By the time he gets done with this fine sounding argument, the people in the video are ready to accept his new ideas. They are then led to discuss what has been presented without disagreeing with it. But this argument is based on a number of false ideas.

- 100 days of rain making new maps in Honduras has nothing to do with Christianity.
- Christianity has always been effective in reaching people as long as the Gospel message is presented.
- The duty of Christian leadership is to disciple the nations and change their false worldviews into biblical ones.
- Those who want a new map, or want to throw the map out all together, are really very much alike. They disdain the Word of God as the highest authority in all matters of Christian faith and practice.

So if you look closely at Brian McLaren's arguments, you will find them hollow and without biblical basis. Yet he is one of the main leaders of a huge movement called the Emerging Church, and his book "A Generous Orthodoxy" is their new "bible."

This is just one example of what a fine-sounding argument can do in the churches. The bottom line is that many Christians can be deceived and taken away from a true faith in Christ by these lies.

5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Paul contrasts the false teachers and what they do with true Christianity. Though Paul is not around to help the Colossians, they have been standing firm in their faith, rejecting false teachers. They also conduct themselves in an orderly way in their meetings. You will notice that false teacher's meetings are often full of disorder. All you have to do is watch TBN or many other shows on TV (which I do not advise) to see disorder. People who call themselves Christians rolling around on the floors, shouting at the top of their lungs, acting like total nutjobs. Ever since the Toronto Blessing and Brownsville Revival, this type of disorder and lack of self-control has been evident in many churches. This is because it is not the Holy Spirit but another religious demonic spirit that has been set loose in the churches—the "Zeitgeist," if you will. Those who receive this

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demonic spirit show by their actions that they are not filled with the Spirit because they lack self-control and other fruits of the Spirit. They also follow false teachers and false prophets, and they spread their false doctrines themselves. Those who do these things are not true believers—they are false brethren who are deceived and need to repent and return to Christ and Scripture. True believers stand firm in their faith and conduct themselves in an orderly way.

1 Cor. 14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,

2 Thess. 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,

7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

We are to continue to live in Christ since we have received Him. We are not to walk away from that faith as a result of being deceived by false teachers. That is the context of this passage. To continue in Christ, we need to be rooted and built up in Him. That means first, we need to be saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That is the root of our faith. Then, we are to continue to be built up. Trees don't just stop at the root. If you stop at the root, there will be no tree, no branches, no leaves, and no fruit. The Bible is clear that God expects to see fruit from those who are born again.

*Rom. 7:4 So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, **in order that we might bear fruit to God.***

*John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. **If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.***

We also need to strengthen our faith in what was taught to us in the Word of God by way of the Apostles.

2 Tim. 1:13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

2 John 1:9 Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

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Those who continue are not only rooted, built up, and strengthened in their faith, but are also overflowing in thankfulness.

Heb. 12:28 Therefore, **since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe...**

1 Thess. 5:18 ...**give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

A sure sign of a Christian who is rooted, built up, and has a strong faith is that they are always thankful to the Lord. Thankfulness is the logical outgrowth of true faith.

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Paul repeats his admonition again from verse four. Any time you see things repeated in Scripture in the same few verses, it is for added emphasis. We are the ones responsible to make sure that no one takes us a prisoner through empty, hollow, deceptive ideas. We must guard ourselves in the faith. Later on we read in Colossians:

Col. 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, **being watchful and thankful.**

2 Pet. 3:17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, **be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.**

I want to take this opportunity to warn you again about the false teachings of Daniel Kikawa, YWAM, Richard Twiss, and many others of the *World Christian Gathering on Indigenous People* movement (WCGIP) or *First Nation's Movement* that is coming on strong here in the Pacific islands and elsewhere in the two-thirds world via YWAM. Why am I warning you specifically about this group? Because they are trying to take indigenous peoples, especially Christians, captive through “*deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*” This is a perfect example of what we are studying. Daniel Kikawa's book *Perpetuated in Righteousness* and Don Richardson's rewritten book *Eternity in Their Hearts* are two of the guiding books of this movement. But these books are un-biblical—in fact, they are blasphemous because they are endorsing cultures making up their own mythologies about their former gods, and going back to worshipping them in the name of the true God, claiming they have always known God. But as we saw before in Romans one, they use

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one verse and ignore the context. The context is that the knowledge of God was corrupted in ALL Gentile cultures. They all had a supreme being, in fact, almost always a supreme father and mother, or a number of supreme beings like the Hawaiians. But the Bible is clear that the supreme beings of the nations are also not the LORD God, as in the case of Amen (Amon) of Egypt (Jer. 46:25), Hadad of the Arameans (1 Kings 20:28), Marduk of Babylon (Dan. 3:16-18), and many other "detestable" gods (Lev. 18:30; Deut. 7:25, 7:26, 12:31, 18:9, 20:18, 27:15, 29:17, 32:16; 1 Kings 11:5, 11:7, 14:24; 2 Kings 16:3, 21:2, 21:11, 23:13, 23:24; 2 Chron. 15:8, 28:3, 33:2, 34:33, 36:14; Ezra 9:1, 9:11; Prov. 21:27, 28:9; Isaiah 1:13; Jer. 4:1, 7:30, 16:18, 32:35; Ezekiel 5:9, 5:11, 11:18, 11:21, 12:16, 14:6; Malachi 2:11). By teaching these ideas, the WCGIP is bringing people who have just come out of unbelief back into slavery to false gods (2 Peter 2:18-21), and teaching things they ought not to teach (Titus 1:9-14). As those in Paul's day were spreading Jewish myths, today the WCGIP is spreading Gentile myths instead of the true Gospel. So "see to it that no one takes you captive" in this and other deceptive ideas that are being spread around the world by a number of groups, including the New Apostolic Reformation and Emerging Church. If you want more information on these false theologies, use the following URLs for research:

<http://www.apologeticscoordinationteam.com/wcgip.html>
<http://www.apologeticscoordinationteam.com/idolatrybook.html>
<http://www.apologeticscoordinationteam.com/ipmdvd.html>

My organization is called the Apologetics Coordination Team or ACT for short, meaning we are taking our words into action and confronting these false ideas and false teachers directly in the churches. Please be a person who stands for the truth wherever God has put you!

***9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,
10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over
every power and authority.
11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful
nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with
the circumcision done by Christ...***

Why do we stand firm against false teaching? Paul reminds us again. Because Christ came to earth and added human nature to His Divine nature, becoming the God-man. Because of that, we have been given the fullness of Christ, and must not exchange that full cup for a half empty one. In the fullness of Christ, we have His power and authority to confront false demonically-inspired teachings like those of the WCGIP.

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This is because Christ is the Head, the Firstborn, over all creation and the Church. We have been set aside, sanctified, and circumcised in Christ. Circumcision in Israel was a sign that they had been set apart as God's people. Christ circumcises us Christians—followers of Christ—in spirit by the Holy Spirit. How did Christ do that? The next verse is very important.

12 having been BURIED with him in (Spirit) BAPTISM and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Being buried in Christ is the same picture we have in water baptism by immersion. When you go down fully into the water, it is a testimony to something that has already happened spiritually. When you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, He buried your old nature and crucified it to the cross because you confessed your sins and repented of them. What happens in the same motion is that you are raised to new life in Christ, out of burial to eternal life. This verse is talking about spirit baptism, but it helps us understand that when you are saved you are baptized in the Spirit. It is all part of the same process, not two different things as some false teachers teach. There are separate fillings of the Holy Spirit for service in the church and in witnessing to the lost, but there is only one baptism that happens when you are saved.

*Rom. 6:3 Or don't you know that **all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?***

*Gal. 3:27 ...for **all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.***

*1 Cor. 12:13 **For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.***

These are all verses you can use to refute those who say you may be a Christian and be saved but not have the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to be buried in Christ and raised in Christ without the baptism of the Spirit. Only those who have the Spirit are born again.

*John 3:5 Jesus answered, **"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."***

This means that every person must have two births to be saved. The first birth is our physical birth where we spend nine months in the womb—in the water and born of water when a woman's water breaks and she gives birth. But no one can be saved unless they have had a second birth—been

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born again. This second birth is by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, there is no being born again without being born of the Spirit, buried in Christ, and raised in the newness of life with a new self, having been baptized in the Spirit.

Colossians Study

Let No One Imprison You with Legalism

(7) Colossians 2:13-23

Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

15) and having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Forsaking the World

"I am in earnest about forsaking 'the world' and following Christ. But I am puzzled about worldly things. What is it I must forsake?" a young man asked. "Colored clothes, for one thing. Get rid of everything in your wardrobe that is not white. Stop sleeping on a soft pillow. Sell your musical instruments and don't eat any more white bread. You cannot, if you are sincere about obeying Christ, take warm baths or shave your beard. To shave is to lie against Him who created us, to attempt to improve on His Work." Elizabeth Elliot commented on the above dialogue, "Does this answer sound absurd? It is the answer given in the most celebrated Christian schools of the Second Century! Is it possible that the rules that have been adopted by many twentieth-century Christians will sound as absurd to earnest followers of Christ a few years hence?" (Elizabeth Elliot, "The Liberty of Obedience", Nashville, Abingdon, 1968, pp. 45-46).

The point is that rules not set down by God, but are of men, are often legalism. We have to be careful to live in the freedom of Christ without making rules of men that enslave people and actually deny salvation by grace.

Gal. 2:4 This matter arose because **some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.**

Gal. 5:1 **It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**

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Be very careful because there are many traps out there to steal your prize. There are traps like the trap I talked about in the last lesson of empty ideas that are not biblical. There is also the trap of legalism. The Jews themselves had fallen into a trap, and Jesus was continually rebuking the religious leadership of Israel for their hypocrisy and legalism.

Pharisaic Laws

In contrast to the two commands of Christ (to love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself), the Pharisees had developed a system of 613 laws, 365 negative commands and 248 positive laws.... By the time Christ came, it had produced a heartless, cold, and arrogant brand of righteousness. As such, it contained at least ten tragic flaws.

- (1) *New laws continually need to be invented for new situations.*
 - (2) *Accountability to God is replaced by accountability to men.*
 - (3) *It reduces a person's ability to personally discern.*
 - (4) *It creates a judgmental spirit.*
 - (5) *The Pharisees confused personal preferences with divine law.*
 - (6) *It produces inconsistencies.*
 - (7) *It creates a false standard of righteousness.*
 - (8) *It became a burden to the Jews.*
 - (9) *It was strictly external.*
 - (10) *It was rejected by Christ.*
- (Outlined from "Fan the Flame", J. Stowell, Moody, 1986, p. 52.)*

But Paul writes: *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. This means that Christ cancelled our obligation to keep all the Laws of the Jews and has written the Law of Christ—the law of grace—on our very hearts.*

*Jer. 31:33 "This is the covenant I will make **with the house of Israel** after that time," declares the LORD. **"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."***

Rom. 2:14-15 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

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So the law of Christ is now written on the hearts of those who believe. Christ “*disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*” This is often used in reference to demonic authorities, who do play a part in spreading legalism, but in context it is directly addressing the human authorities in Judaism who were the lawyers of the Law. They had added all kinds of requirements that God had never required and, in so doing, had made the Law itself ungodly. God will write the New Covenant, the law of Christ, on the hearts of Jews and Gentiles who believe in His Son, starting with the two that sum up the whole Law:

Luke 10:26-28 “*What is written in the Law?*” he replied. “*How do you read it?*” He answered: “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself.**” “*You have answered correctly,*” Jesus replied. “**Do this and you will live.**”

But there are those false teachers, just like the Jewish religious elite in Jesus’ day, who want to enslave people in regulations.

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

17 these are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

The word “therefore” means we have to look at what came before. Because Christ took away the Law, nailing it to the cross, and writing His Law on our hearts, don’t let anyone try to tie you down with ungodly regulations such as what you eat, drink, what festivals you attend, which day of the week you worship, etc. There are many cults that do this. There are also many churches, that have yet to be designated a cult, that are doing and teaching this kind of stuff. Today the Seventh Day Adventists try to enslave people by telling them they can only worship on Saturday, not eat meat, etc. The Catholics enslave people by telling them they have to follow certain rituals to be saved. Word-Faith and Third Wave teachers claim you have to have a second baptism, and that they will give it to you by the laying on of hands, at which time you must also speak in tongues. The WCGIP get churches to reintroduce many cultural customs into the churches which have the effect of putting burdens on their churchgoers that they cannot bear and which steer them away from doing what they should be doing. All the false religions of the world have regulations they put on their followers that have nothing to do with what God requires. The reality of what is required for obedience to Christ is found in Christ.

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That is grace. We are to love one another, love our neighbor, and most of all, love Jesus Christ. Out of love for Christ all things follow.

18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.

19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

As in the days of Paul, there are many teachers today who delight in false humility. Tommy Tenney, a Oneness Pentecostal, went out and made a big show of washing the feet of John Arnott of the Toronto Blessing, Paul Crouch of TBN, and many others. This was a big show in order for them to accept him even though he teaches that God is not Triune—and it worked. Benny Hinn walks on stage in a white suit, the utter focus of attention in his crusades, then claims to be bringing glory to God. This is false humility. TBN false teachers claim to be giving money to the poor while they are becoming rich, and they brag about their giving in front of millions of people in order to look humble. In Paul's time, there were also people teaching Christians to worship angels. This is still common practice today. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Jesus Christ is really the Archangel Michael. The Catholic Church "venerates" (read "worships") dead saints and angels. One of the biggest problems we have today is the third point by Paul. *Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.* The problem is one of seeing angels or Jesus Christ or God or whatever, and then coming up with a big story about a vision they saw in order to make people think they are super holy and to sell books. This is a very old problem and continues today. There are millions of Christians being taught to pass around stories of visions and dreams, when often it can be proven by comparing what they say to the Bible, that they are going into detail about things that their unspiritual minds have made up with idle notions or even demonic visions they have had. This problem goes all the way back to the Old Testament.

***Jer. 14:14* Then the LORD said to me, "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. **They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds.**"**

I want to be clear about this issue from a biblical perspective. Paul says that people who do these things have *"lost connection with the Head, from whom*

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the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow." This is serious business. I have seen many people lose their connection to Christ and His body by claiming they have special revelation of angels, that they have special rules given them by God, or that they are humble when they are really full of pride. Be careful of false humility. Often I have seen people like this take control of churches because they are the ones who at least claim they spend many hours fasting and praying. But this is just a ploy to get people to listen to them and their visions and dreams that are really delusions of their own minds. Be careful of people who have a religious spirit but are leading you into false teaching and false prophecy.

20 *Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:*

21 *"Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"?*

22 *These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.*

23 *Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

If you are buried in Christ and you nailed your sins to the cross with Him, why are you continuing to submit to worldly rules? This is not talking about submitting to the rules of an orderly society which we need to do. This is talking about religious rules that are supposed to make you more holy. All these kinds of religious rules that substitute for the grace of God are useless and will pass away. They are destined to fade away, as in the opening example I gave of second century school rules. We need to follow everlasting rules set down by Jesus Christ, written in the Word and on our hearts through the Spirit. *Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom.* Human religious regulations appeal to our human nature because we always want to find a way to save ourselves without God. But they do not work. They are not wise at all but foolish. *With their self-imposed worship...* we think we are worshipping God with these things, but really it is self imposed worship, worship that God has not asked for or required, in fact, it leads us away from Christ. Be careful of those who require these regulations because of *their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body.* The fact is that they themselves cannot even keep their harsh code. In fact, you will often find that *they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.* It has been my long experience that those who impose strict legalism in the churches have the most problems in their churches with issues of sin—in particular, sexual sin. That is because our spirits are meant to

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belong to Christ, not to legalism. Under any form of legalistic law we always end up rebelling, and especially the leaders who teach these things.

Colossians Study

Keep Seeking the Things Above (8) Colossians 3:1-11

Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny (Frank Outlaw).

We, as believers, are to set our hearts on things above, not on earthly things. Be careful what you desire and talk about because those things will become a part of you.

Colossians 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

In our study of Philippians, I dealt with the issue of what you put into your mind and life is what will come back out.

*Phil. 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think about such things.***

Since we have been raised up to new life in Christ, being baptized in the Spirit, we need to set our hearts on things above.

*Luke 12:34 **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

To set our hearts on things above, we must put off the old self and put on the new self with the help of the Holy Spirit.

*Eph. 4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, **to put off your old self**, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to **put on the new self**, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Our treasure is in heaven right now, and that is, Christ Himself. He is

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seated at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us continually.

Rom. 8:34 *Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

We are also to set our minds on things above. Your heart is representative of your desires, your motives. Your mind is about what you believe. So we are to set our hearts and minds on things above—that is, on Christ. Not only that, but we died to our old self in Christ, and we are hidden with Christ in God. That means our sins are hidden in Christ's death so that we may have fellowship with the Father. Our sins are hidden as long as we remain in Christ. Outside of Christ, we are under judgment.

1 John 2:27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

Heb. 3:14 *We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.*

4 *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Christ has now become our life, if we are true believers. All other concerns, desires, dreams, issues, problems, laws, cultures, family, or plans are to now take second place, in fact, they are to become subject to our life which is Christ.

Phil. 1:21 *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

When Christ appears, when He returns to earth a second time, He will come as King of kings. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11). Those who have believed in the Lord unto salvation during their life, will then appear with Christ in His glory. The rapture will occur, first for those who are dead, then for those who are living, and then Christ will return to earth to rule and judge. The Bible tells us that we will return to rule and judge with Him.

1 Cor. 6:2-3 *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And*

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*if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? **Do you not know that we will judge angels?** How much more the things of this life!*

Rev. 19:14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

Most commentators believe this army is the elect because, in a number of other places in Revelation, they are the ones who are wearing white robes. They are also mentioned as coming with the Lord Jesus at His second coming in Revelation 17:14.

Rev. 17: 14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

Because our hearts and minds are set on things above—on Christ in heaven, in the Rapture of the saints and in the second coming where we will come back with Him and reign and judge the nations—we then need to do something. We need to put to final death our old self, our earthly nature. We do this in preparation for Christ's return. We must put to death *sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry*. Notice that it says that greed is idolatry. You might comment, "But I thought idolatry was the worship of idols, false gods, demons?" Well you would be partly correct. But there is another type of idolatry that is far more dangerous, in some ways, for us today. That is the idolatry of covetousness, envy, jealousy, and greed. So much of our world today, and now also so much of the church, is focused on greed. We are taught to want more, more, more. This becomes a habit, then a lifestyle, then it produces death because we are worshipping at the altar of our greed. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and idolatrous greed is one very bad kind of evil. More than almost any sin, it is a sin that gets us to place our hearts and minds on things below, not above. We need to remember often and always that, because of these types of sins, God will judge the world, and we do not want to be under God's wrath. To escape that wrath, we must die to our old greedy self, and that means we need God's help in Christ. We used to walk in those ways before we believed,

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but it is an even worse sin to walk back to the ways of the world after you know the truth.

2 Pet. 2:20-21 *If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ **and are again entangled in it and overcome**, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.*

8 *But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.*

9 *Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices*

10 *and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

So we must rid ourselves of these things we used to do, think, and say. Of course we cannot rid ourselves of sin, but we can confess those sins and ask for God's help us turn away from them, once and for all. Things to watch out for that we don't slip back into are *anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language from your lips, and lying*. These types of sins are common to us all, though each of us struggle with certain sins more than others. Some may have problems with anger and vengeance. Others may have problems with unforgiveness. Some may have trouble gossiping and slandering people behind their backs, and others may have trouble with cursing and dirty language. I think we all have trouble with lying, but perhaps some more than others. So we have to be quick to repent of these things and nail them to the cross. This is what it means to take up your cross daily and follow Christ. We pick up that cross and put our old self to death daily. We follow Christ in the new self to victory. Our new self is being renewed in the image of the Creator, that is, Jesus Christ Himself. We, as Christians, are literally in the process of being molded into what God always intended the human race to be. But we must submit to the Potter if we are His clay. He can then mold us into the shape He wants us to be, and that shape always ends up looking like the Son.

11 *Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

Are any exempt from these things? No. Not Jews, not Greeks, not Gentiles of any kind. All must be born again and then put off the old self daily and follow Christ in the new creation. There are no more differences

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when we are in Christ. Christ is all and is in all. That means that Christ should mean everything to us because He is living in us. Does He mean everything to you?

Colossians Study

Put on Love (9) Colossians 3:12-17

Love Was the Motivation

Love reaches for the hurt and takes bold steps without self-interest. It can accomplish unbelievable things merely because it is so void of self-interest. Some time ago, a teenager, Arthur Hinkley, lifted a 3,000-pound tractor with bare hands. He wasn't a weight lifter, but his friend, Lloyd Bachelder, 18, was pinned under a tractor on a farm near Rome, Maine. Hearing Lloyd scream, Arthur somehow lifted the tractor enough for Lloyd to wriggle out. Love was the real motivation. (Calvin Miller, "Rethinking Suburban Evangelism," Leadership, 1988, p. 68)

Given that someday, probably soon, we will be Raptured and return at the second coming with Christ, Paul gives us all some very practical advice on how to put on the new self. He has already talked about putting off the old self, but he gave the Colossians a picture of how we ought to live as believers.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

We, Gentile and Jewish believers alike, are now all God's chosen people. God loves His chosen people just as in the Old Testament He loved His chosen people, the Jews. The reason He loves us is that we have been made holy in Christ. We are not yet holy in life as the Lord is still working out His salvation in us while we are being sanctified, but in terms of eternal life, God sees us as holy because of His Son. But though we are justified if we are indeed saved, we must put on the new self. That means we are to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. These are some of the fruit of the Spirit. Those who lack these traits are either disobedient Christians who need to repent and follow Christ, or they are unbelievers. If they do not pass the test of Faith and fruit, then they need to examine themselves to see if they are in the Faith (2 Cor. 13:5). Only God knows for sure. But, when we are Christians, we still have to put our faith into action. That means that we put on the new self in the character traits of Jesus Christ.

13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may

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have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

One very big issue for Christians is that, in putting on the new self, we need to learn to be forgiving of others. This is perhaps one of the hardest lessons to learn in life, especially for some people. I am always amazed that Christians will repeat the Lord's Prayer without thinking about the consequences of their prayer.

Luke 11:4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

But do we? If not, we are praying a dangerous prayer. We must not lie to the Lord. We expect Jesus Christ to forgive our sins, yet often we are unwilling to forgive others who sin against us. But we must learn to forgive. We need to forgive others even if they do not forgive us, or if they do not confess their sins. It is our duty to forgive as the Lord forgave us. I wrote another set of lessons on the subject of forgiveness in my book *Lessons in Forgiveness*.

14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Most of all, we must put on love. This does not mean that we put on an act of love or pretend to love. It means that we put on the new self, submit to the Holy Spirit living in us, and love one another. This passage is especially talking about our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. We are not to love the world (1 John 2:15), love money (1 Timothy 6:10), love false teachers, love false prophets (2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1; Mark 13:22), love heresy (Titus 3:10), or love evildoers (Psalm. 52:3; Luke 13:27). What we need is love for one another in the Church because love is what binds us together in perfect unity. When you love someone, there is a bond there that is not easily broken. The old song goes:

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above. We share each other's woes, our mutual burdens bear; and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear. It goes on: This glorious hope revives our courage by the way; while each in expectation lives, and longs to see the day. From sorrow, toil and pain, and sin, we shall be free, and perfect love and friendship reign through all eternity. (John Fawcett, 1782)

Our love comes from the eternal love of Jesus Christ in the Triune Godhead and the love of the Holy Spirit living in us. When we bow the knee to Christ and obey Him by loving one another, then we look forward

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to the perfect love that we will experience throughout eternity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

As members of the body of Christ, we are called to be at peace with one another. For that to happen, we have to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. We need not get anxious or worried or frustrated. We just rely on the Lord and treat one another with love.

*Matt. 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and **I will give you rest.** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

*Heb. 12:14 **Make every effort to live in peace with all men** and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

*2 Cor. 13:11 Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, **be of one mind, live in peace.** And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

We are to add thankfulness to letting peace rule in our hearts.

*Heb. 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, **let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe...***

*1 Thess. 5:18 ...**give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.***

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

There is only one way to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. That is to be in the Word, reading the Word, taking the Word to heart, asking the Holy Spirit to help us understand the Word, and putting the Word into action. We are also to teach the Word. That means Christian leaders are to teach the Word to the churches, and parents are to teach the Word to their children. As we come together to worship the Lord, we come together for teaching in the Word so that we may gain wisdom. We help one another by admonishing, encouraging, even rebuking at times, according to the Word. As we fellowship in the Church, we also sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs based on the Word. Unfortunately today we don’t have very good songs in many churches. They sing the

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same songs over and over again that have little use in teaching the Word, understanding the nature of God, or for worship. The older hymns, especially the Psalms, were much better. We must be careful to guard the fellowship of the body of Christ against those who would teach things “beyond what is written” (1 Cor. 4:6). Those who do not admonish with wisdom that comes from the Word, but instead use worldly thinking and sing songs that are not correct biblically, or cause people to get into the rhythm instead of the message, are not advancing the cause of Christ.

Finally, we are, again, to do all this with gratitude in our hearts. Gratitude is an emotion that leads us to thanksgiving. When we think of everything Christ has done for us, it leads us to true worship.

17 and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Everything we do in biblical Christian churches is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many verses talk about worshipping God by His name. This basically cancels out the arguments of the WCGIP that we can worship former false gods by their names thinking about them as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But Christians do EVERYTHING in the name of Jesus Christ.

*Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, **in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.** And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

*Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. **In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.**”*

*Acts 16:18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, “**In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!**” At that moment the spirit left her.*

*Phil. 2:10 ...that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth...***

Don't let false teachers take you away from true worship in the name of Jesus Christ.

Finally, notice that Paul repeats for the third time that we need to be thankful. We give thanks to the Father through the Son. The Son is our Mediator—our Intercessor—in heaven between the Father and us. Everything we do goes through the Son. Because of this, we can approach our Father, or “Abba” (Papa, Daddy), because we have a relationship to His

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Son. When we have a relationship to the Son, we become sons ourselves.

Rom. 8:15-18 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but **you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, <"Abba,"> Father.** "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. **Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.**

Because of that sonship, we can be thankful to God.

Colossians Study

Whatever Your Position, Serve the Lord (10) Colossians 3:18-4:1

You're Going to Die

A man went to the doctor after weeks of symptoms. The doctor examined him carefully, then called the patient's wife into his office. "Your husband is suffering from a rare form of anemia. Without treatment, he'll be dead in a few weeks. The good news is, it can be treated with proper nutrition." "You will need to get up early every morning and fix your husband a hot breakfast—pancakes, bacon, and eggs, the works. He'll need a home-cooked lunch every day, and then an old-fashioned meat-and-potato dinner every evening. It would be especially helpful if you could bake frequently. Cakes, pies, homemade bread—these are the things that will allow your husband to live. "One more thing. His immune system is weak, so it's important that your home be kept spotless at all times. Do you have any questions?" The wife had none. "Do you want to break the news, or shall I?" asked the doctor. "I will," the wife replied. She walked into the exam room. The husband, sensing the seriousness of his illness, asked her, "It's bad, isn't it?" She nodded, tears welling up in her eyes. "What's going to happen to me?" he asked. With a sob, the wife blurted out, "The doctor says you're gonna die!" (Source unknown)

This is an amusing story about a wife's unwillingness to serve her husband to illustrate the point of being a good servant. If we are good servants to the Lord, then we will also serve others. That starts with our marriages, our families, and finally, the workplace. Paul is now getting to practical ways in which we can put on love from the last lesson. You can't just know about putting on love in your head. It must also be translated into action in a very real way in our lives. When a couple gets married, they promise to love one another "until death do us part." But then the marriage begins and things get a little more difficult. There are days when disagreements happen where you get angry, walk away, or have a reaction that could even cause division in a marriage. But the Bible says that wives are to submit to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives. If both are doing this, then there would be far less problems in marriages.

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Wives should submit to the God-given authority of the husband as head of their household. This does not mean they should not stand up for what

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is right and try to convince their husbands to live according to the will of God if they are not. But they must also realize that the God-created order of things is that the husband is to be head over the family.

Eph. 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

With women's liberation, or even in matriarchal or matrilineal societies where the women are in control, such as traditionally in Palau, this is a very hard lesson to learn for women. But we have to realize this way of doing things is not just something Jews made up. It comes all the way from the creation of the world.

Gen. 2:22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

Woman was made from man, not man from woman. Woman was made as a helper for man.

Gen. 2:18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Two things. It is not good for man to be alone, and so God made a helper for him—a woman. Women need to be helpers, not leaders of men. The leadership roles are what men were created for. What woman was created for was to be a helper. This does not mean that women cannot lead in their own sphere of influence, such as among other women or with children, but women are meant to be helpers. Yet this is one of the biggest problems today. Men have given up leadership to women, and women have taken leadership from men. But the Bible says that all women must submit to their husbands. If they are not doing that, they are not obeying the Lord. So with the command for women to submit to their husbands, we can understand one difficult passage of Scripture:

*1 Cor. 14:33-35 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, **women should remain silent in the churches.** They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.*

Much has been made of this passage, and women just don't like it. But it stems from the God-created order of things. In the church at Corinth,

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they were having many disorder problems in their church services. One of them was that women were asking questions and disrupting the service. This was an embarrassment because women were to submit to their husbands. So Paul tells them not to speak in church, but to ask their questions at home with their husbands. This passage does not preclude women from speaking in church if the Church authorities ask them to, and their husbands agree. But it is an issue of authority. We know that women, when agreed to by the male leadership of the church, can teach.

Titus 2:3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.

Paul stated that older women do teach. Though there is gender distinction made with regard to offices of the church (no female foundational apostles, the overseer is to be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:12) there is no such distinction made with regards to prophets, teachers, evangelists, church planters, missionaries or the gifts of the Spirit.

Luke 2:36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage...

Acts 21:8-9 Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

1 Tim. 2:9-10 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

Rom. 16:12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

Acts 16:40 After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.

It is clear from the Bible that women had the gift of prophecy, the gift of helps or helping others, and even the gift of evangelism, because Lydia was instrumental in starting the church at Thyatira. But women need to submit to their husbands, and to the male leadership of the church.

Heb. 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

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Notice that both men and women should submit to the male authority of the churches, because it says “they keep watch over you as men who must give an account.” So we can now understand that the issue of First Corinthians 14:33-35 is an issue of authority. Paul states the same case, but in a more understandable way, in First Timothy.

1 Tim. 3:11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

I found out this bit of interesting information.

Because a woman's vocal cords are shorter than a man's, she can actually speak with less effort than he can. Shorter vocal cords not only cause a woman's voice to be more highly pitched, but also require less air to become agitated, making it possible for her to talk more with less energy expended. (Sparks, quoted in Homemade, Dec., 1984.)

In a Harvard study of several hundred preschoolers, researchers discovered an interesting phenomenon. As they taped the children's playground conversation, they realized that all the sounds coming from little girls' mouths were recognizable words. However, only 60 percent of the sounds coming from little boys were recognizable. The other 40 percent were yells and sound effects like "Vrrroooooom!" "Aaaaagh!" "Toot toot!" This difference persists into adulthood. Communication experts say that the average woman speaks over 25,000 words a day while the average man speaks only a little over 10,000. What does this mean in marital terms?... On average a wife will say she needs to spend 45 minutes to an hour each day in meaningful conversation with her husband. What does her husband sitting next to her say is enough time for meaningful conversation? Fifteen to twenty minutes—once or twice a week! (Gary Smalley and John Trent, "Husbands and Wives").

No wonder women tend to talk more than men!

So women must be careful to submit and be silent when it comes to allowing their husbands to take leadership. Women need to pray for their husbands and help them, if they are both Christians, to serve the Lord. Women can be the greatest helpers for men. Men very much need women because men need a lot of help! Which brings us to our next verse.

19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

Men can tend to be self-centered and, if things are not going their way, they tend to lash out in physical ways, which is their tendency. But a believer should not react like this, particularly for a man to treat a woman with harshness. Men need to learn the meaning of love, to get out of their

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self-absorbed mindset, and learn to be sensitive to their wives. They need to learn to listen. They need to lead with fairness and love. Most husbands already know that harshness does not work in a marriage. Both husband and wife end up miserable. Men also want to lead but don't want to help. They think helping is only the job of the woman. But helping is also part of loving. Here's a funny story to illustrate this point:

A minister who often helped his wife with the housework finally protested when she demanded that he help wash the dishes. "This isn't a man's job," he said. "Yes it is," she said. "Look up II Kings 21:13." This is what he read, "...and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down" (Pendleton, Winston K, ed. "Handbook of Inspirational and Motivational Stories, Anecdotes, and Humor").

Be careful about trying to get out of work when your wife knows the Bible! But, seriously, men need to practice love in their families, for their wife first, and then also for their children. That leads us on to the next verse.

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

From my perception, this is one command of Scripture that is being broken today by many young people who claim they are saved. It is expected that the children of unbelievers would not obey their parents, but the problem this is addressing is children of believers. Society today encourages kids to be untruthful, hide things, steal, lie, etc. We must be careful to teach our kids that these values are of the world, not of the Church. Children are under the authority of their parents in everything. Notice that it says "parents." The children are under the authority of the parents, as the wife is under the authority of the husband, as the husband is under authority of Christ. This is God's way. When any link in this chain of command is broken, then disorder, and finally chaos, becomes part of the home. We need to look at what the Bible says about parenting:

- *Parents must teach God's truth (Deuteronomy 4:9; 32:46).*
- *Parents must lovingly discipline children because they are immature and need guidance (Prov. 22:15; 29:15).*
- *Parents should not exasperate their children (Ephesians 6:4).*
- *Parents' wise decisions bring blessing to their children (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).*
- *Parents who are godly teach their children to obey (Ephesians 6:1; 1 Timothy 3:4).*

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- *Parents who faithfully train their children can be confident that their efforts are not in vain (Prov. 22:6) (JDB, Our Daily Bread, Sept.-Nov. 1997, page for October 12).*

An amusing story is told about a young man.

A friend often told me about the problems he had getting his son to clean his room. The parents would tell him to clean his room “now” and the son would always agree to tidy up, but then wouldn’t follow through. After high school, the young man joined the Marine Corps. When he came home for leave after basic training, his father asked him what he had learned in the service. “Dad,” he said. “I learned what ‘now’ means” (Contributed by Jan King, “Humor in Uniform,” Readers Digest, May, 1996, p. 174).

This illustration is a good one for both parents and children. The sooner we learn to obey authorities, the less pain we will experience later in life learning that lesson. Many children today do not learn to obey their parents and end up hurt, in prison, or dead. It is better for the parents to make sure the children learn the lesson of obedience early so that they will avoid dire consequences. In the Old Testament, sons who continually disobeyed were actually to be taken out and stoned.

Deut. 21:18-21 ***If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard.” Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.***

I am not advocating we practice what the Jews were doing during the time of the Mosaic Law. Today we are to be sure that our children understand the consequences of disobedience—that disobedience can lead to imprisonment, drug and alcohol abuse, even death. Children need to take these things to heart and obey their parents because it pleases the Lord. All Christians need to do what pleases the Lord.

21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Story: *My father would not have been particularly interested in a book about*

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fathering, although he did like to read. One day when he was reading in the living room, my brother and I decided we could play basketball without breaking anything. When I took a shot that redesigned the glass table, my mother came in with a stick and said, "So help me, I'll bust you in half." Without lifting his head from his book, my father said, "Why would you want twice as many?" (Bill Cosby).

Notice that the fathers are mentioned twice in this Colossians passage, whereas the wives and children only once. This should tell you something. It illustrates that the fathers bear the greatest responsibility in the home, as men do in the Church. I lay the blame for the way many women act today, in the disgusting things they wear, their demeanor, and actions, on men. Men should be taking their responsibility. But just as Adam should have stopped Eve from eating the fruit, now Adam is the one the Bible names as the one at fault. Men need to take their leadership role seriously and lead. But men can be harsh with their wives, and also with their children. Women tend to reason with children. Men tend to yell or hit. But yelling at your kids only makes them bitter against you. They can become discouraged and not want to obey, and it will be your fault as the father. Sometimes women can yell at their kids, also, which is the same problem. But men usually just want peace and quiet and for the chaos to stop, and the way they often deal with it is likely the way their father dealt with things. That is to physically put a stop to it. To hit, to yell, or to threaten. That is not pleasing to the Lord at all. There is a time to spank your children, but not in anger. It must be done in love. If you have to spank a younger child, tell them you are doing it because you love them first. That way you will likely not do it in a harsh way, and the child will understand the basis for the punishment. Don't punish in anger because your child will pick up on this, and bitterness, discouragement, and anger will grow.

Here is an encouraging story that talks about the godly influence of mothers, but it can also apply to fathers.

Many godly men of the past have been richly blessed by what they learned from their mothers. Consider the biblical characters Moses, Samuel, and Timothy. The influence of their mothers experienced by these spiritual leaders bore rich fruit in their lives. Think also of men like Augustine, John Newton, and the zealous Wesley brothers. Their names would probably never have been written in the pages of history if it hadn't been for the godly women who raised them with the law of love and a Christian witness which were their daily guide and inspiration. Susannah Wesley spent one hour each day praying for her 17 children. In addition, she took each child aside for a full hour every week to discuss spiritual matters. No wonder two of her sons, Charles and John, were used of God to bring blessing to all of England and much of America. Here are a few rules she followed in training her children:

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- (1) *Subdue self-will in a child and thus work together with God to save his soul.*
 - (2) *Teach him to pray as soon as he can speak.*
 - (3) *Give him nothing he cries for and only what is good for him if he asks for it politely.*
 - (4) *To prevent lying, don't punish for sins that are freely confessed, but never allow a rebellious sinful act to go unnoticed.*
 - (5) *Commend and reward good behavior.*
 - (6) *Strictly observe all promises you have made to your child.*
- (H.G.B., Our Daily Bread, May 8)

These are some good ideas to practice by fathers and mothers in raising their children.

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Today we do not have slaves, but in Paul's day slaves were commonplace. People were bought and sold into slavery for money. Yet Paul stated that, as a believer, one must obey the authorities over him or her. This applies to governments as well as earthly masters. This does not mean that we go against God's commands in order to obey them, since God comes first, but in all other things we are to submit to authorities. Notice that Paul says to obey them in "everything." We are to obey earthly authorities over us in reverence for the Lord. We are to obey them even when they are not watching us. This especially applies today to the workplace. Employees need to conduct themselves with integrity, knowing that God is watching, even if the boss is not. We are to be a witness to the world as those who, when given a task, work hard at it with all our hearts. This is a witness to men even though we are to do it for the Lord. God is the one who gives the rewards, even though we get temporary earthly rewards sometimes through obedience and hard work. However, we must not focus on earthly rewards, but rather on how God sees what we are doing. We are going to inherit eternal life and all the rewards that go with it as God's children, but we must remember that it is God we are serving always, and we need to obey Him by obeying earthly masters. There is a time and place when earthly masters ask you to do something wrong, that you must refuse.

*2 Cor. 8:5 And they did not do as we expected, but **they gave themselves***

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first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.
Acts 5:28-29 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

Leaders in the churches are to be honored and not overburdened by the rest of the flock unless they are disobeying the Lord or teaching false doctrine. Then other biblical standards apply (1 John 3:7, etc.). But we need to obey our employers, our state and federal laws, etc.

25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

God assures us that it is not our place to try to make things right that our masters do wrong. Sometimes we cannot change ungodly laws and actions of our government. Be assured that God sees all, and anyone who does wrong will be repaid. "Vengeance is mine," says the Lord, and you had better believe it. We should stand up for what is right, but when matters are beyond our power to change, we must live a godly life ourselves and rely on the fact that God is the judge.

4:1 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Finally, masters are also to be fair to their slaves because they have a Master who is in heaven. Those who are in authority, who are Christians, have a very important responsibility. They must emulate the Master in heaven. That means they do what is fair and right as far as they are able. They do not take advantage of people or of their position. Politicians are not to take advantage of their position to lord it over people and steal money. The same thing applies to pastors and leadership of the churches. They are to use their position as a witness to the world and as a way to help those under them and those less fortunate.

Colossians Study

Practical Spiritual Principles

(11) Colossians 4:2-18

Prayerlessness Poem

*I knelt to pray but not for long,
I had too much to do.
I had to hurry and get to work for bills would soon be due.
So I knelt and said a hurried prayer, and jumped up off my knees.
My Christian duty was now done my soul could rest at ease.
All day long I had no time to spread a word of cheer.
No time to speak of Christ to friends, they'd laugh at me I'd fear.
No time, no time, too much to do, that was my constant cry,
No time to give to souls in need but at last the time, the time to die.
I went before the Lord, I came, I stood with downcast eyes.
For in his hands God held a book; it was the book of life.
God looked into his book and said "Your name I cannot find.
I once was going to write it down...but never found the time"
(Anonymous)*

Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

As Christians, we are to be devoted to prayer, following the example of Jesus Christ and the Apostles like Paul. As we pray, we are watchful for opportunities to pray for people, watchful for tricks and schemes of the enemy against us and other believers, and watchful in prayer.

*2 Cor. 2:10-11 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. **For we are not unaware of his schemes.***

Luke 21:36 "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

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Prayer is a privilege and an obligation of the Christian where we communicate with God. It is how we convey our confession (1 John 1:9), requests (1 Timothy 2:1-3), intercessions (James 5:15), thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6), etc., to our holy God. We are commanded to pray (1 Thess. 5:17). Some personal requirements of prayer are a pure heart (Psalm. 66:18), belief in Christ (John 14:13), and according to God's will (1 John 5:14). We can pray standing (Nehemiah 9:5), kneeling (Ezra 9:5), sitting (1 Chronicles 17:16-27), bowing (Exod. 34:8), and with lifted hands (1 Timothy 2:8) (Source unknown).

*Prayer is more than asking things from God. It is an exercise in the worship of God, to extol His name and to offer thanks for all His benefits. The child of God is assured that in prayer he is approaching a throne of grace, not a throne of judgment (Heb. 4:16). The Christian enters the divine presence in the name of Christ (John 14:14, 16:23). If he prays under the control of the Holy Spirit, he will offer petitions within the will of his Heavenly Father (Romans 8:26, 27). Prayer should be made in faith and with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2). The prayer that Christ taught His disciples, known as the Lord's Prayer, is a model to guide His followers concerning proper principles and goals of prayer (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4) (E. Schuyler English, in *Our Daily Bread*).*

One thing we should often be praying for is that our leaders and those sent as missionaries will have the opportunity and boldness to proclaim the Gospel.

*Eph. 6:18-20 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, **be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.***

We need to pray that they will also proclaim the Gospel clearly. It is very important that the Gospel message be explained correctly. Too many preachers are careless with the Gospel and invite people to make decisions based on an incomplete Gospel message presentation. This is dangerous and wrong.

5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

Outsiders often feel like they are not a part of the group or not even welcome. As Christians, we need to welcome outsiders, being wise about how much we allow them to influence others until we know what they really believe. We need to make the most of every opportunity to witness

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for Christ, so we need to be sure to make outsiders feel at home. Some churches do this well; others do this badly. I have been to churches where people treat you like you have been there for years with friendship and warmth, and I have been to others that treat you like you are an outsider, not part of their own little group or clique. That is wrong.

6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Our conversation, given the fact that we are to be salt and light in the world (Matt. 5:13-16), should be full of grace, full of truth, and always ready to give an answer for the faith that we have in Christ.

1 Pet. 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

Why? Because our Savior is the Author of grace and truth.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.

8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.

9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)

11 Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.

We learn about some important people at the end of this letter. Tychicus was a faithful fellow servant of Paul and he and Onesimus were coming to Colosse to deliver Paul's letter. *Tychicus was an Asian by birth. His name means "fortunate," and is the same as the name "Fortunatus" in Latin. His name is also*

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mentioned in First Corinthians 16:17. It is said that this Tychicus was one of the seventy disciples, and was afterwards bishop of Chalcedon. Onesimus was actually from Colosse. He had been Philemon's servant, ran away from him, and was met with and converted by the Apostle Paul. Philemon is about Onesimus. According to the Apostolic Constitutions, he was afterwards bishop of Beyrboea; and some say he suffered martyrdom under Domitian. Aristarchus was in prison with Paul, who was also there for preaching the Gospel. This man was a man of Macedonia, and a Thessalonian. Mark also had plans to come to Colosse. His name was John Mark, whose mother's name was Mary, said here to be sister to Barnabas. He is the same Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark. Jesus or Justus (which is the same name root as Joshua in Hebrew) and Mark were the only Jews who were working with Paul, and they were apparently a big help to him. We see here that there were many besides Paul who were working to spread the Gospel among the Gentiles.

12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

14 Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.

15 Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

17 Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Epaphras was a native of Colosse and likely planted the church there. Epaphras was a prisoner in Rome also. We learn that Epaphras was also a man of prayer. He was praying, like Paul, that the Christians in his home church would stand firm in the will of God, be mature, and fully assured. When you stand firm in the will of God and grow to maturity in Christ, your assurance of salvation grows—your faith grows. Paul wanted to make sure that Epaphras got his seal of approval to be working with the Colossians. Luke, the doctor who wrote Acts and the Gospel of Luke, was there to send greetings. Demas was also there. This is the same Demas who later forsook Paul and is written about in Second Timothy 4:10. Apparently the things of this world took Demas away, and Paul had to warn Timothy and the churches about him later. Paul also extends his greetings

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to the church at Laodicea.

Actually, the person with the house church there was probably a man by the name of Nymphas, not a woman, since that name is a man's name, and most of the earlier manuscripts say "at their house." But there was a thriving church in Laodicea at that time. Remember that some 30 years later, though, John had to write a very serious letter to the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:14-22. The Laodicean church, a lukewarm church that thought it was rich materially and spiritually, but was actually wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked, became a symbol for the end times church which is in that condition today. Paul was hoping to encourage the Laodicean church with his letter to Colosse which was to be passed on to them.

Paul tells Archippus to complete the work he had received in the Lord. *Archippus is a name common among the Grecians. This person the apostle calls his fellow soldier, in Philemon 1:2 and who was, at that point, the minister of the Gospel at Colosse because his fellow minister or co-pastor Epaphras was in Rome in prison.* The work he had to complete was the work of building up the church at Colosse in the absence of Epaphras.

Paul closes the letter by signing it and asking them to remember him while he was in prison in prayer. He then extends the grace of God to them in a blessing.