



COLOSSIANS FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON ONE: WHY WRITE THIS BOOK? 1:1-2

I. Background of Colossae and its church. An insignificant church in a fading town.

Herodotus, a Greek historian from centuries before the days of Paul, called Colossae a great city of the region of Phrygia. Yet by Paul's day the city had declined to insignificance economically and politically. While the city was mostly Gentile, there was a significant Jewish population as well. Colossae was about one hundred miles east of the city of Ephesus, which was one of the most significant cities in all of Asia Minor. It was located on the Lycus River along with the cities of Heirapolis and Laodicea.

There is no evidence that the apostle had actually been to Colossae (2:1). Paul planted churches in major cities such as Corinth, Ephesus, and Philippi where the gospel would naturally move out to the countryside. Evidently Paul's closest connection to Colossae would have been in Acts 19:10 where he worked for three and a half years at the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus where it is said, "from which all in Asia heard the word." It's reasonable to assume that that some in Colossae who heard the Apostle Paul in Ephesus had come back to their community and started a local congregation.

The church met in the home of Philemon, a person to whom Paul wrote a letter concerning his treatment of a slave named Onesimus. The local preacher's name appears to have been Epaphras (1:4, 7 and 4:12-13). Epaphrus had traveled to see Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome to give a report about the congregation and to tell Paul about the issues they were wrestling with in doctrine. So the both the Book of Colossians and the Book of Philemon were written to deal with issues confronting this area at the time.

**1 PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF
JESUS CHRIST BY THE
WILL OF GOD, AND
TIMOTHY OUR
BROTHER,**

**2 TO THE SAINTS AND
FAITHFUL BRETHREN IN
CHRIST WHO ARE IN
COLOSSAE:**

**GRACE TO YOU AND
PEACE FROM GOD OUR
FATHER AND THE LORD
JESUS CHRIST.**



II. Colossians Heresy, our temptations to add to the gospel, and keywords of the book.

Any discussion on the Book of Colossians will soon cover the Colossian heresy. While we are not told specifically what the false teaching was that permeated the church, clues show it was a mixture of early gnosticism, Judaism, and self-fulfillment. The church in Colossae, like many churches today, was tempted to add to the gospel message in order to make it more appealing. Those with Jewish backgrounds desired to add dietary laws, circumcision, and festival holidays of the Law of Moses. They said, “Yes we follow Christ, but we also follow the Old Testament Law.” Some of the Gentiles wanted to add asceticism, that is, physical abuse of the body to the gospel. By saying “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch,” (2:21) they strived to make themselves look more spiritual by adding to the requirements of the gospel. Still others claimed to have access to “secret mysteries” or deeper knowledge than the simple gospel provided. Seeking to set themselves up as teachers or gurus, they drew disciples to themselves in adding their own opinions and philosophies to the message.

The key verse of Colossians is 1:18 and the key words in Colossians are “all” (32 times), wisdom and knowledge (11 times), body (9 times), and fullness (2 times). In short the book comes down to the word used by Paul, “fullness” (1:19, 2:9-10). The message of Colossians in short is that “Christ is enough.” You don’t need to add anything to the saving message of Christ and you certainly don’t need to take anything away. Christ is the object of our faith, the image of the invisible God, the creator of all dominions, the head of the church, the firstborn from the dead, the reconciler of all things, the Savior on the cross, the treasury of all wisdom, the victor over sin and Satan, the exalted Lord over all, and the pattern of life in the church. We are saved through Christ and Christ alone.

III. First two verses: Paul’s authority and the need for grace and peace

As Paul begins the Colossian letter, he introduces himself as an Apostle. He had never been to Colossae and it was important for him to show them that he spoke with authority. In that day, just as today, people need to return to the Scriptures written by men of inspiration to know true doctrine and life in Christ. Then he says, “To the faithful brethren in Christ.” In the terrible atmosphere of the pagan city of Colossae these saints were holy Christians. They were in the world but not of the world. Then Paul salutes them with grace (a Gentile greeting) and peace (a Jewish greeting). Though they were one in Christ, the Lord’s Church in Colossae was composed of people from many backgrounds.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. COLOSSAE HAD A VIBRANT CHURCH IN A FADING CITY. OUR OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES MATTER MUCH LESS THAN OUR SPIRITUAL CIRCUMSTANCES.**
- 2. WE ARE SAVED THROUGH CHRIST ALONE. WE DO NOT NEED TO ADD OR TAKE AWAY FROM THE SIMPLE GOSPEL MESSAGE.**
- 3. THE LORD’S CHURCH IS ONE, YET IT IS COMPOSED OF MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS.**



COLOSSIANS

FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON TWO:

THE GOLDEN TRIAD 1:3-8

I. The Certainty of the Christian Life

As Paul continues his letter to the Colossians he mentions the golden triad of the Christian life: faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). The Colossian church was fighting against a heresy that was a combination of Judaizing teaching, of gnosticism, and of asceticism. To combat this false doctrine (and any false doctrine for that matter), Paul told them to focus on and follow Christ. Looking at the physical world, Christ is the creator and sustainer of the universe (Colossians 1:16, 18). In the spiritual world, he is the resurrection, the atonement, and the judge of all things (2:9-10). And because of these things, he is sufficient for any need that we have today. The church that conquered Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome was not an uncertain church that gave an uncertain message about her redeemer. The apostle does not say, "I think" rather he says "I know." Christians today must have confidence in the authority and doctrine of Christ. We must know what we believe and act on the belief with full confidence.

II. Faith, Hope, And Love

Paul begins in verse three with an expression of thankfulness. He appreciated their good treatment of their preacher Epaphras and also their faithfulness in Christ. As he gave thanks to God for them, he noticed through prayer what had brought about their allegiance to Christ. Their faith in Christ was foundational to their Christianity. ***Faith is a strong belief that causes action.*** It is necessary for every Christian, Hebrews 11:6. It is not a blind belief, but rather one focused on

3 WE GIVE THANKS TO THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, PRAYING ALWAYS FOR YOU, 4 SINCE WE HEARD OF YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS AND OF YOUR LOVE FOR ALL THE SAINTS; 5 BECAUSE OF THE HOPE WHICH IS LAID UP FOR YOU IN HEAVEN, OF WHICH YOU HEARD BEFORE IN THE WORD OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, 6 WHICH HAS COME TO YOU, AS IT HAS ALSO IN ALL THE WORLD, AND IS BRINGING FORTH FRUIT, AS IT IS ALSO AMONG YOU SINCE THE DAY YOU HEARD AND KNEW THE GRACE OF GOD IN TRUTH; 7 AS YOU ALSO LEARNED FROM EPAPHRAS, OUR DEAR FELLOW SERVANT, WHO IS A FAITHFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST ON YOUR BEHALF, 8 WHO ALSO DECLARED TO US YOUR LOVE IN THE SPIRIT.

God's history with mankind and evidence of present day activity. Secondly, their faith was shown in their love for all the saints. ***Christian love is evidenced when we place the needs and desires of others above ourselves, Romans 5:8.*** It is the proper practice of love that most makes us look like our savior. And thirdly, these brethren showed their faith by their ***holding to the hope that was laid up for them in heaven.*** Our suffering in the present day will all be worth it when we receive our heavenly reward. Hope is an eager anticipation that will cause us to cling closely to Jesus and remain motivated.

Holding to this Christian triad of faith, hope, and love will guard the Christian from false doctrine and from negligence in doing the things Christians should do.

When he says, "Which you heard before in the word of truth of the gospel," he is emphasizing a standard of truth that can't be changed. The world of biblical times was one that denied a standard of morality, much like our world does today. People who are selfishly in sin hate the truth and want to add to or subtract from it to fit their desires. But it is God's truth that saves mankind. Jesus personifies truth and his gospel is the truth that one day will judge this world. This gospel has gone to the whole world and has shown its effectiveness through the production of fruitful works.

III. You Can't Improve That Which Is Perfect

In the final few verses, the apostle reminds them of their preacher Epaphras and his ministry among them. These Colossian Christians had followed the simple gospel before the false teachers had entered into their assembly. He calls them to remember their former joy and fruit of love they had for one another. Paul is in effect reminding them that they need no additions to their doctrine since they were faithfully saved before those teachers arrived on the scene.

The saving message of the gospel cannot be improved upon. While it is true that our methods of evangelism and our opinions on optional matters may change, we must never depart from the basic saving message of salvation through Christ.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. RATHER THAN GETTING CAUGHT UP ON THE RELIGIOUS FADS OF THE DAY (JEWISH PRACTICES, ASCETICISM, AND GNOSTIC THINKING) WE MUST FOCUS ON CHRIST.**
- 2. A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE WILL KEEP US FREE FROM FALSE DOCTRINE. FAITH IS A STRONG BELIEF IN GOD THAT MOVES US TO ACTION; LOVE IS THE PRACTICE OF PLACING OTHERS' NEEDS BEFORE OUR OWN; AND HOPE IS AN EAGER ANTICIPATION THAT MOTIVATES US TO CONSTANT SERVICE.**
- 3. WE SHOULD LOOK BACK TO WHEN WE OBEYED THE GOSPEL AND REMEMBER THE POWER OF THE CROSS TO SAVE.**



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LESSON THREE: FOREKNOWLEDGE TO LIFE 1:9-14

Paul's Prayer For The Colossians, 1:9-12

Paul usually began his letters with a prayer of thanksgiving for the recipients (except for the Book of Galatians). While these prayers are often brief, they are rich in information. Notice the links between thanksgiving in the section before this and the prayer in this passage. For example, "We give thanks to God" in verse 3 and then in verse 12 "giving thanks to the Father." In verse 4 "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus" then in verse 9 "Since the day we heard it." So the apostle is using language suitable for thanksgiving and in prayer. He thanked God for their love of Jesus Christ, verse 4, and then he thanks God for their love for all the saints, verse 5. So in effect, he thanks God for their faith, their love, and their hope. But we learn here that the Christian life is more than just faith hope, and love. We see here that knowledge is crucial as well. This knowledge of the mystery of the faith is encapsulated in Christ Jesus. He is the truth, the way, and the life. That truth (John 8:32) is found today in the Word of God (John 17:17).

The apostle was never one given to complacency. He constantly urged further growth in his letters, Philippians 3:14. We must never be satisfied in our Christian walk to the point to where we no longer desire to grow as a Christian. We must grow in knowledge and in practice.

9 FOR THIS REASON WE ALSO, SINCE THE DAY WE HEARD IT, DO NOT CEASE TO PRAY FOR YOU, AND TO ASK THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL IN ALL WISDOM AND SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING; **10** THAT YOU MAY WALK WORTHY OF THE LORD, FULLY PLEASING HIM, BEING FRUITFUL IN EVERY GOOD WORK AND INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD; **11** STRENGTHENED WITH ALL MIGHT, ACCORDING TO HIS GLORIOUS POWER, FOR ALL PATIENCE AND LONG-SUFFERING WITH JOY; **12** GIVING THANKS TO THE FATHER WHO HAS QUALIFIED US TO BE PARTAKERS OF THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS IN THE LIGHT. **13** HE HAS DELIVERED US FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS AND CONVEYED US INTO THE KINGDOM OF THE SON OF HIS LOVE, **14** IN WHOM WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

Being Fruitful in Every Good Work, v. 10

In this prayer, Paul uses the figure of a growing tree to show us the influence Christian living. As this tree grows it influences more and more of the world around it. Eventually, this tree will figuratively affect the entire world if it continues growing. In verse 9 we see the root of this tree is the knowledge of God's will. The heretics who were corrupting the church were in effect attacking the root of this Christian tree by spreading false knowledge. Many false Christians find themselves in such situations because they turn away from the simple gospel (preached by Epaphrus) and listen to those who say they know more or know better. That's why Colossians uses the word "fullness" so much. Ephesians 2:9-10 tells that in him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete (using the same root word as fullness) in him. Christ is all that we need to grow and to be fruitful, there is no need for an addition to the gospel of Christ.

In verses 10-14 we see the branches of the tree Paul mentions. Paul uses four participles that describes what it means to walk in the Lord. The first is "to be fruitful in every good work." Secondly "increasing in the knowledge of God. In verse 11 we see "Strengthened with all might to all patience, long-suffering with joyfulness." And fourth in verse 12 "Giving thanks to the Father." Having these four traits shows that our walk in Christ is healthy and growing.

Our Delivery Into The Kingdom, v. 13-14

Here we see the importance of being in Christ. It is in Jesus that we find every spiritual blessing, Ephesians 1:3. When we follow the gospel plan of salvation, the Lord adds us to the church. It is man-made false doctrine that we join the church of our choice. Instead through obedience we are added to Christ's church, Acts 2:47. The church is the world-wide Kingdom of God that was purchased with the blood of Jesus. This kingdom is greater than any man made empire, Daniel 2:44. Paul closes this section with a prayer of thanksgiving for adding us to Christ's church.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. CHRISTIANS ARE TO GROW IN FAITH, LOVE, AND HOPE. THE WAY TO GROW IN THESE THREE AREAS IS IN KNOWLEDGE.**
- 2. WE SHOW THAT WE ARE GROWING WHEN WE ARE FRUITFUL ONE VERY GOOD WORK, WHEN WE ARE INCREASING IN OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD, WHEN WE ARE STRENGTHENED IN OUR PATIENCE, AND WHEN WE DEVELOP A SENSE OF THANKFULNESS TO GOD.**
- 3. THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST ARE CONVEYED INTO THE KINGDOM, THAT IS, THE LORD'S CHURCH. WE ARE ADDED TO THE CHURCH WHEN WE OBEY GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION.**



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LESSON FOUR: CHRIST IS LORD 1:15-19

One evening after a busy day of ministry, Jesus told the disciples to travel with him in a boat in order to get some rest. But that night a raging storm churned up the sea into a fury. Afraid for their lives, the Apostles woke Jesus up asking, “Don’t you care that we are perishing?” Jesus got up and rebuked the wind. Immediately the seas and skies were calm. Awestruck, the apostles asked one another, “Who is this that even the wind and sea obey him?” Matthew 8:23-27. Decades later the Apostle Paul would write of the Lordship of our Jesus over creation, the spiritual world, and our redemption.

Lord Over Creation, 15-17

Paul’s defense of the Faith against the Colossians heresy is to look at the person and work of Jesus, who is “all and in all,” Colossians 3:11. Some believe this passage is a quotation of an early Christian hymn written by Paul or someone else because of its lyrical nature. It certainly reflects many concepts found in the Old Testament (Exodus 24:10, Numbers 12:8, Psalm 87:27, Proverbs 8:29-31, Ezekiel 1:26-28). Paul begins by noticing that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. This thought of “EIKON” refers to a perfect picture or representation of the original, John 8:19. As Jesus said in John 14:1-6, if we desire to see the Father we must view Jesus. This thought establishes the deity and absolute power of Jesus. In noticing that Jesus is the firstborn over all creation, Paul is not teaching that Jesus was created, for Jesus is eternal. Jesus created all things, Hebrews 1:2, so if Jesus was created he would have had to create himself which is an impossibility. The term firstborn

15 HE IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, THE FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION. 16 FOR BY HIM ALL THINGS WERE CREATED THAT ARE IN HEAVEN AND THAT ARE ON EARTH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THRONES OR DOMINIONS OR PRINCIPALITIES OR POWERS. ALL THINGS WERE CREATED THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM. 17 AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND IN HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST. 18 AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH, WHO IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD, THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MAY HAVE THE PREEMINENCE. 19 FOR IT PLEASED THE FATHER THAT IN HIM ALL THE FULLNESS SHOULD DWELL, 20 AND BY HIM TO RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF, BY HIM, WHETHER THINGS ON EARTH OR THINGS IN HEAVEN, HAVING MADE PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS.

here is looking to his authority as being in command of all things, Psalm 89:27. In verses 16 and 17 we see the sovereignty of Jesus by his work. By Jesus everything was created (physical beings and spiritual beings). These things were created through him and for his purposes. He is before all things and he is the one who sustains all things as well.

Lord Over The Spiritual Realm, 18

Jesus is the head of the first creation, but he's also Lord of the new creation. Paul moves from speaking of the physical creation to now discussing the salvation of mankind. What gives him the authority over the spiritual realm is the fact that he is firstborn from the dead, that is, the first to be resurrected for all eternity. As the head of the Church, Christ is inseparable from his church. You cannot have one without the other: Christ is the head and the church is his body. Christ also has ownership or authority over the church. He determines what it is and what it does. While this is a devastating argument against denominationalism (the head of the church is not in Rome, Salt Lake, London, or any earthly place). We also see that we must listen to Jesus over any earthly voice, Matthew 17:5. The headship of Jesus over his church also has practical implications. As Christians we are literally called to be "tiny Christs," that is, we are to follow the example and teachings of Jesus in everything that we do. Jesus is Lord over our minds, our hearts, our strength, and our lives. In all things Christ must have preeminence.

Lord Over Redemption, 19-20

Now bringing this to the context of Colossians, Paul says it pleased God that the fullness dwells in Jesus. This word fullness has strong implications in the Old Testament (God's fullness filled Ezekiel's Temple (Ezekiel 44:4). In other words, there is not room for anything else beyond God. The Colossian heresy was the belief that something else was needed to complete our salvation beyond what Jesus provided. Whether it was asceticism, Judaism, or gnostic heresy these false teachers were demanding the Colossian brethren add to the gospel. Paul responds that it pleases God that Jesus is the complete method of salvation for us today. He reconciles or makes peace between us and God, he rules all things in heaven and earth, and he accomplishes this through the blood shed on the cross. We are saved through Christ alone.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. THE ONLY WAY TO GOD THE FATHER IS THROUGH HIS SON, JESUS. IT IS HE WHO CREATED, SUSTAINS, AND WILL ULTIMATELY JUDGE ALL THE WORLD.**
- 2. JESUS IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH. THERE IS NO PERSON LIVING TODAY OR IN THE PAST WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS. THAT'S WHY WE MUST GO BACK TO THE BIBLE TO LEARN ABOUT SALVATION, THE WAY IN WHICH GOD DESIRES TO BE WORSHIPPED, AND HOW GOD DESIRES FOR US TO LIVE TODAY.**
- 3. THE FULLNESS OF ALL THINGS IS FOUND IN CHRIST. WHILE MANY PEOPLE TODAY DESIRE TO ADD TO THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST IN ORDER TO LOOK OR FEEL MORE SPIRITUAL, JESUS CHRIST IS ALL WE NEED.**



COLOSSIANS FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON FIVE: FROM ENMITY TO FRIENDSHIP 1:21-23

In Luke 15 we read a parable of the Prodigal Son. This passage speaks of a young man who rejects his family and tells his father to give him his inheritance. Going to a foreign land, he sullies his family's reputation and wastes his fortune. Finding himself lusting after the food of animals, he determines to go home and live life as a slave. Yet when he arrives home, his father runs and greets him. Rather than disciplining his child, he gives him a robe and returns him to his place in the family. The teaching of this parable is found in this passage as we see the God who created and sustains the world, show special love to the very people who have rejected him. He restores us to himself through the blood of the cross.

Reconciliation, v. 21-22

Before those sinners who are accountable have come to Jesus, they are aliens and enemies of the Lord. Our sins alienate, or separate us, from the Lord, Isaiah 59:1-2, Romans 6:23. We are enemies of the Lord because his holiness is antithetical to our selfish and worldly mindset. Ephesians 2:11-14 is a similar passage to what we are studying that reminds us that while we were "Gentiles in the flesh" that is, before we came to Christ, we were "aliens and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." But Paul continues, "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Just as the prodigal father in the parable ran to his son to restore him, so God has extended to us reconciliation through the cross of Christ to present us holy and blameless, above reproach in his sight.

21 AND YOU, WHO ONCE WERE ALIENATED AND ENEMIES IN YOUR MIND BY WICKED WORKS, YET NOW HE HAS RECONCILED 22 IN THE BODY OF HIS FLESH THROUGH DEATH, TO PRESENT YOU HOLY, AND BLAMELESS, AND ABOVE REPROACH IN HIS SIGHT— 23 IF INDEED YOU CONTINUE IN THE FAITH, GROUNDED AND STEADFAST, AND ARE NOT MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL WHICH YOU HEARD, WHICH WAS PREACHED TO EVERY CREATURE UNDER HEAVEN, OF WHICH I, PAUL, BECAME A MINISTER.

The word reconciliation means to make people who are enemies to be friends. It means to create common ground between two people so that they can build a new foundation of friendship. Christ has created common ground with the Christian by wiping away the former life of sin and selfishness in order to create a new identity that is acceptable to himself.

A Call To Faithfulness, 23

There is a doctrine started by Augustine and developed by Calvin called the Impossibility of Apostasy, or more commonly 'Once saved, always saved.' This doctrine holds that Christians cannot sin in such a way that they would ever be lost. That is, once a person becomes a Christian, he will never be in danger of losing his salvation due to his actions. Not only is this doctrine foreign to Scripture, it is dangerous to the Christian. The entire Book of Colossians is written to warn the brethren of that city against the danger of losing their identity as Christ's church. The Colossian heresy was actively opposed by Paul because it endangered the congregation. Verse 23 of chapter one begins with the word "if." Paul tells the brethren that they are no longer aliens and strangers from God "if" they continue in the faith. "If" they are grounded and steadfast in the basic doctrine of Christ. And "if" they are not moved away from the hope of the gospel. Moving beyond the false doctrine of once saved, always saved, Paul is here in context encouraging the brethren to settle themselves in Jesus rather than following the philosophies and opinions of mankind. When we remember that it is Jesus that saves us, we are freed from the opinions and temptations of people who desire to judge us and change us.

To The Whole World, 23

The end of verse 23 is very interesting when it says the gospel has been preached to every creature under heaven. Some take that to mean when this book was written, the gospel had already been preached to every person living in that day. It is important for us to not discount the evangelistic fervor of the early church. While we see the amazing growth of the church in the Book of Acts, we remember that this account only tells us of the work of a few of the apostles (Peter, John, James, and Paul) and not all the works of all the apostles. Early Christian traditions speak of Apostles who went to many different foreign lands and had great success in carrying out the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15. Many members of the early church who were not Apostles also were very evangelistic as well, Acts 8:1-4. But most likely, what Paul is communicating in this passage is the fact that the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus preached to every person the power, love, and plan of God. Rather than literally informing every person living in that day, the message has been sent out to every person—living in the past, present, and future—the power and the grace of God.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION IS THAT THE ALL POWERFUL GOD HAS LOVED US SO MUCH THAT HE PAID THE PRICE (THE BLOOD OF THE CROSS) SO THAT WE CAN ONCE AGAIN BE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM.**
- 2. WE MUST CONTINUE TO BE FAITHFUL TO THE LORD IN ORDER TO REMAIN SAVED.**
- 3. THE CROSS ONCE FOR ALL SHOWS THE MESSAGE OF GOD'S LOVE FOR HIS CREATION.**



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LESSON SIX:

CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF
GLORY 1:24-29

In 2 Kings 7 Ben Hadad, King of Syria, gathered his army and laid siege to Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. When the people in the city ran out of food it came to the point where a horse's head would sell for 80 pieces of silver. In this time of panic and suffering, Elijah told the king, "By this time tomorrow, a measure of flour will sell for a shekel and two measures of barley will sell for a shekel." While this prophecy seemed impossible to be true, God was at work. There were four lepers who lived near the gate of the city. Realizing they would be dead soon anyway, they decided to go to the Syrians to beg for food. When they arrived at the camp they saw it was empty. The Lord had caused a great sound (like that of a charging army) to be heard at the camp so that the Syrians fled for their lives. The lepers gorged themselves with food and hid silver to come back to in the future. Yet, after a while, they said to themselves, "We do not do well, this day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace." A missionary of a past generation said, "The greatest crime in the desert is to know where water is and not tell it." Paul understood the power of the gospel and the need to proclaim it to every person.

Filling up the Afflictions of Christ, v. 24

Verse 24 is one of the more controversial passages of the Book of Colossians. Here Paul speaks of "filling up in his flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ." This

24 I NOW REJOICE IN MY SUFFERINGS FOR YOU, AND FILL UP IN MY FLESH WHAT IS LACKING IN THE AFFLICTIONS OF CHRIST, FOR THE SAKE OF HIS BODY, WHICH IS THE CHURCH, **25** OF WHICH I BECAME A MINISTER ACCORDING TO THE STEWARDSHIP FROM GOD WHICH WAS GIVEN TO ME FOR YOU, TO FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD, **26** THE MYSTERY WHICH HAS BEEN HIDDEN FROM AGES AND FROM GENERATIONS, BUT NOW HAS BEEN REVEALED TO HIS SAINTS. **27** TO THEM GOD WILLED TO MAKE KNOWN WHAT ARE THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF THIS MYSTERY AMONG THE GENTILES: WHICH IS CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY. **28** HIM WE PREACH, WARNING EVERY MAN AND TEACHING EVERY MAN IN ALL WISDOM, THAT WE MAY PRESENT EVERY MAN PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS. **29** TO THIS END I ALSO LABOR, STRIVING ACCORDING TO HIS WORKING WHICH WORKS IN ME MIGHTILY.

passage can be misunderstood if we think that it means Christ came short in providing what is needed for our salvation. The Bible teaches plainly that Jesus' death on the cross is the only payment needed for our sins. The theme of this epistle is that Christ saves us, no one else. It is Jesus who said from the cross, "It is finished." What Paul is writing here may be better understood by looking back at the conversion of Paul in the Book of Acts. While Saul of Tarsus (Paul) was traveling down the road, the Lord appeared to him and asked, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Saul had never actually or personally attacked Jesus during his earthly ministry. Yet when Saul persecuted Christians who were of the body of Christ, Saul was in effect hurting Jesus. Now Paul looks back at that statement and sees that teaching and maturing Christians is an opportunity of helping Jesus. Therefore in this way, Paul rejoiced through his sufferings, knowing that the eternal reward for himself and his disciples was more than worth the pain.

The Stewardship Given By God, v. 25-26

Paul is working against the heresies present in the Colossian congregation. Many of these people are following Jewish tendencies, ways of earning salvation through extra works, and ideas of gnostic or extra doctrines. Against these Paul declares that he is a minister with a stewardship from God. The word for stewardship is one that points to a treasure that should be delivered from one person to another. In a sense, Paul is saying that we have been given a gift (the gospel) that needs to be shared with other people as well. The mystery hidden from ages and generations is that God's Son would come to earth to die for our sins and would be raised from the dead. This resurrection would create the church, a body of God followers composed of every tribe of mankind in the world. Paul felt a strong responsibility to carry this message and to make it plain that this is the only way to salvation for every person.

Christ in You, The Hope Of Glory, v. 27-29

The ultimate goal of God is to save you. Each person who hears the gospel must personalize it to see that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. The riches of the glory of this mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory. But the message is to more people than just me and you. Paul said he preached, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom. We have an obligation to obey God's gospel and to tell every single person the message of salvation as well. Our goal should be to present every person perfect in Christ Jesus. The plan which has been put into action through all history and just recently revealed to us through the gospel is that God wants everyone to be saved.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. CHRIST'S DEATH FOR US IS THE PAYMENT FOR SIN. WE ARE SAVED THROUGH THE GOSPEL.**
- 2. WE MUST ALWAYS LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL PEOPLE.**
- 3. GOD HAS WORKED THROUGH ALL CREATION AND HISTORY TO BRING THE GOSPEL TO US.**



COLOSSIANS FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON SEVEN:

BEWARE THE FALSE TEACHER 2:1-5

Safety From Apostasy, v. 1-2

After the Apostle “Doubting” Thomas had confirmed to himself Jesus had been resurrected, Jesus told him, “Blessed are those who haven’t seen and yet have believed,” John 20:29. Jesus had in mind all of his disciples who would come in later times and would believe without directly seeing and hearing the Savior. These disciples would have to believe based on the testimony of those who were eyewitnesses. In a similar way, Paul is writing to the Colossian brethren whom he had never seen personally. Locked up in a Roman prison, he is working to strengthen the faith of those who are far away and whom he has never met. The great conflict happening in Paul’s mind is not the impending punishment or physical difficulties he was currently enduring, it was his desire to reach every person with the gospel, Colossians 1:29, and to encourage those who had already obeyed to fortify and strengthen them in faith. Paul’s concern and goal for the brethren is expressed in three ways. **First of all, he desired to strengthen the saints through loving instruction.** He wanted to see a balance of love and truth in the Colossians. Some brethren focus on love to the detriment of truth while others coldly focus only on the truth. Faithful Christians preach the truth in love, Ephesians 4:15. They preach truth but preach it in a way that reflects Christ’s concern for the lost and hurting. **Secondly, the Apostle states that he would like to see the Colossians have full assurance in their understanding.** They needed to be sure of truth to which they had adhered. In a day of people who claimed there were many avenues of truth, Paul taught them that they needed to be certain in their faith, John 14:6. This certainty would leave them fortified against these false teachers. **Thirdly, the apostle’s**

FOR I WANT YOU TO KNOW WHAT A GREAT CONFLICT I HAVE FOR YOU AND THOSE IN LAODICEA, AND FOR AS MANY AS HAVE NOT SEEN MY FACE IN THE FLESH, **2** THAT THEIR HEARTS MAY BE ENCOURAGED, BEING KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE, AND ATTAINING TO ALL RICHES OF THE FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING, TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD, BOTH OF THE FATHER AND OF CHRIST, **3** IN WHOM ARE HIDDEN ALL THE TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE. **4** NOW THIS I SAY LEST ANYONE SHOULD DECEIVE YOU WITH PERSUASIVE WORDS. **5** FOR THOUGH I AM ABSENT IN THE FLESH, YET I AM WITH YOU IN SPIRIT, REJOICING TO SEE YOUR GOOD ORDER AND THE STEADFASTNESS OF YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST.

desire is to be sure these Christians had a full knowledge of full Christ. The term “full assurance” is written to combat the false teachers who claimed there was a deeper knowledge apart from Christ. There is one mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) and one Savior (2 Corinthians 5:21) and that is Christ. No person or thing, no matter how great they claim to be, can do anything equal to or more than Christ.

The Source of Wisdom and Knowledge, 3

Verse three tells us that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ Jesus. Colossians 2:3 is considered by many people to be the key verse of the entire book because it reminds us that everything that is needed is found in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 1:3. Romans 11:33 states, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!” This mystery or treasure is the fact that Jesus saves people from their sins. More than that, Jesus unifies his people across racial and social lines, Galatians 3:28. God’s ultimate plan stated in Genesis 3:15 is fulfilled in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Resisting the Deceiver, 4-5

Paul is warning the brethren of these false teachers so they wouldn’t be deceived by their persuasive words. False teachers oftentimes use their charm and eloquent words to hide false reasoning. Instead of working to please God, they revel in large crowds, self promotion, and money. Many people today consider their preacher to be one of three things. Some desire a preacher to act as a priest. The priest stood in the house of God performing religious ceremonies such as sacrifice or receiving offerings. There was little relationship and the knowledge of the person was only within the house of God. Some desire their preacher to be an academic professor who teaches a subject and amazes the crowd on his deep grasp of a subject. Thirdly some see the preacher as an entertainment figure who uses Christianity and the Bible as props as he entertains the audience. A true understanding of a preacher is one who by speech and example brings others closer to Christ. He must be a man who puts all emphasis and attention on Jesus rather than himself. **A mark of a mature congregation is in the satisfaction in focusing on the Word of God and the gospel message.**

The word used in Colossians 1:4 for deceive or beguile literally means to “set aside” and is also used in the Greek Translation of the Old Testament for the relationship of Jacob and Laban. Jacob worked seven years for the beautiful Rachael. In Genesis 29:22 Laban instead gave Jacob his daughter Leah who was not as beautiful. In short Laban promised Jacob one daughter and then by fast talking and trickery gave him another. Paul is warning the Colossian brethren that these false teachers are offering higher knowledge and greater spirituality but they can’t deliver on their promises. We must place our trust in the gospel and not in the persuasive words of these teachers.

Paul closes this section out by reminding the brethren that while he is far away, he feels close fellowship with them and he rejoices in their good order and steadfastness in their faith in Christ. He is confident that they will continue to grow and to remain faithful to the simple gospel.



COLOSSIANS FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON EIGHT: CHRIST AND PHILOSOPHY 2:6-10

Walking In Christ, 2:6-7

Paul commands the Colossians to walk in the Lord in the same way that they received him. The word walk is used in Scripture to describe our lifestyle or aim, 1 John 1:7, Ephesians 5:2. He wanted these brethren to get back to the basics of the gospel. If they had remembered the things Epaphras had taught them in the beginning, they might not have been so troubled by the “wise men” who had come with charming words and enticing speech and had been drawing them away from the fundamentals of the faith. They needed to be firmly rooted in and built up and established in the original teachings they had heard so they had a base that kept them from falling away. Instead of searching for a new way in their frustration or boredom, they should remain thankful for the simple message that had been delivered to them. We live in a time when the Word of God has largely been forgotten in any kind of depth. It’s a world in which churches are filled with pulpits that provide little more than entertainment. And a watered down gospel will create little more than watered down Christians. If the Colossian brethren had been rooted in their faith and had grown mature as Christians, they wouldn’t have been as susceptible to these false teachers. So many of our troubles in Christian life come from our failure to embrace the Word of God, and furthermore, there are many kinds of people who are always telling us that we need the truth that comes from them. Christians today need a steady diet of

6 AS YOU THEREFORE HAVE RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE LORD, SO WALK IN HIM,

7 ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN HIM AND ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH, AS YOU HAVE BEEN TAUGHT, ABOUNDING IN IT WITH THANKSGIVING.

8 BEWARE LEST ANYONE CHEAT YOU THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND EMPTY DECEIT, ACCORDING TO THE TRADITION OF MEN, ACCORDING TO THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD, AND NOT ACCORDING TO CHRIST. 9 FOR IN HIM DWELLS ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY; 10 AND YOU ARE COMPLETE IN HIM, WHO IS THE HEAD OF ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER.

God's Word so they can continue to grow. It is difficult to get mature Christians for fall for false doctrine.

The Dangers of Empty Philosophy, 2:8

Once again Paul lists the three types of false teaching that were attacking the church in his day: the gnostics (philosophers), the aesthetics (people who multiplied rules in their self denying nature), and Judiazing teachers (those following the traditions of men). These false teachers were in effect trying to cheat these Christians from their place in the heavenly realm. Their focus was on the basic principles of the world (power, money, reputation) and not according to Christ. The word cheat (or spoil in other translations) contains the idea of a pirate or raider taking captives away from their home to use for their own purposes. That's what the Colossians heretics were seeking to do these brethren with their empty philosophy.

It is valuable at this point to examine the concept of philosophy. The word originally meaning "love of wisdom," points to the way in which we choose to see the world. Wisdom is taking the knowledge that we have and using it in a certain way. The Stoics and the Epicureans of Acts 17, could use the same set of facts in life and see very different things. Stoics generally saw life as something to be endured while epicureans saw life as fleeting and something to be taken advantage of while possible. Christians have a different world view that the world. To the perverse, all things are perverse but to the pure all things are pure, 2 Samuel 22:27. When your view of the world does not include Christ as Lord, your manner of wisdom or philosophy will view things in the wrong way. But when you see all things through Christ, your wisdom will show by the fruit you produce. So in Colossians 2:8, Paul is warning against viewing the world in the way of these false teachers rather than living the way Christ has called us to live.

Christ Over All, 2:9-10

Verse nine begins with the word "for" because it is a result of the verses that proceed it. In contrast to the empty philosophies of these false teachers, Christ stands as the fullness of God in bodily form. Jesus lived as man showing us his power, love, and true wisdom, Hebrews 4:15. The Colossians heretics had pushed a doctrine that said Christ was not enough, more needed to be added to him to make these disciples complete. Paul responds that Christ has all fullness. As a matter of fact, verse ten uses a Greek word for full as it speaks of complete in a way that shows Christ is more than enough for our salvation. No angel or spiritual being is needed to bring us a further gospel or to complete us in a way apart from what Christ has done. Christ is the head of all powers and principalities. There is no one greater than Christ.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. WE MUST BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST IN ORDER TO OBEY THE GOSPEL.**
- 2. THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAN IS NOT WRONG. BUT OUR WORLDVIEW MUST FOCUS ON CHRIST.**
- 3. WE MUST SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**



COLOSSIANS

FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON NINE:

UNITED WITH CHRIST 2:11-15

Buried With Christ, v. 11-12

Our relationship to the Lord Jesus is really the key to understanding what happens to us in our salvation. The term “in Christ” occurs about 164 times in the New Testament. If you add the phrases “In him” or “in whom” we have 200 more. In other words, our relationship of being “in Christ” is central especially in the writings of Paul.

In biblical thought there are two kinds of people: those who are in Christ and those who are not. Just as Noah’s Ark saved only those who were in the ark, and just as only those whose houses were covered in Blood during the Passover we saved from death, so also only those who are in Christ are saved.

We are not saved by works of man, by sincerity, by our religion, or by our family name. We are saved if we are in Christ, Galatians 3:27, Romans 6:3-4.

In the Old Testament, circumcision served as a defining point of Jewish men and Gentile men. In obedience to God, the Jewish man had his flesh removed to show his relationship with God. In the same way today, baptism for the forgiveness of sins serves as the defining marker for those who are in Christ and those who are not.

Baptism is not some magical rite that causes salvation due to water or man’s work. It is the working of God that brings salvation to us through our obedience. We are baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16), for the forgiveness of our

11 IN HIM YOU WERE ALSO CIRCUMCISED WITH THE CIRCUMCISION MADE WITHOUT HANDS, BY PUTTING OFF THE BODY OF THE SINS OF THE FLESH, BY THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST, **12** BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM, IN WHICH YOU ALSO WERE RAISED WITH HIM THROUGH FAITH IN THE WORKING OF GOD, WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD. **13** AND YOU, BEING DEAD IN YOUR TRESPASSES AND THE UNCIRCUMCISION OF YOUR FLESH, HE HAS MADE ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM, HAVING FORGIVEN YOU ALL TRESPASSES, **14** HAVING WIPED OUT THE HANDWRITING OF REQUIREMENTS THAT WAS AGAINST US, WHICH WAS CONTRARY TO US. AND HE HAS TAKEN IT OUT OF THE WAY, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS. **15** HAVING DISARMED PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS, HE MADE A PUBLIC SPECTACLE OF THEM, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM IN IT.

sins and to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16), to be joined to the body (1 Corinthians 12:13), to be clothed in Christ (Galatians 3:27), to accompany Christ in the work of his resurrection (Romans 6:3-4), and once again to be saved (1 Peter 3:21). This is not the work of man but it is God's work brought to fruition in our lives through our obedience. As Ephesians 1:7 says, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

Made Alive With Christ, v. 13

In our past, though we were guilty and dead in our sins, God made us to be alive together in heavenly places. Ephesians 2:1-10 summarizes this as the story of God's grace: we were dead in sins, we are made alive together in Christ, we are now his workmanship to do good works. Christianity is more than just an improvement of habits and lifestyle, it is a radical change a person undergoes as he puts the old life to death and is transformed into a disciple who lives solely for Jesus. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things are passed away and all things are made new, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Victory in Christ, v. 14-15

Jesus wiped out the written code, a business term meaning a certificate of indebtedness written in the debtor's own handwriting. In the context of this passage, Paul sees this as the Old Testament regulations that some false teachers in Colossae were still requiring people to follow. When a person turns to Jesus, the Old Testament and old religious creeds are no longer applicable. The Old Testament can still teach (Romans 15:4), but we are today not under the Law of Moses. The old things were nailed to the cross and have been fulfilled through Christ's work.

A second temptation provided by the false teachers in Colossae was the worship of angels as equal to Christ. Paul speaks of these false angels and powers and says that Christ has made a public spectacle of them and triumphed over all things. This word picture comes from the Roman practice of stripping a general of an enemy army and parading him through the streets of Rome to show absolute dominance. In other words, Christ is not just better than the angels and the false doctrines these teachers were espousing, he dominates them and shows himself to be the true King of Kings. The Colossians were wrestling with false teachers who claimed Christians needed to return to Old Testament Law, to seek salvation by their own works, and that they needed to follow other spiritual beings than Christ. Paul's response is that we are saved through Christ alone. When we are baptized in him, our past is done away with and all things that oppose us are defeated through Christ's death, burial, and

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. THE TERM "IN HIM" IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PHRASES FOUND IN SCRIPTURE. IT REMINDS US OF THE DIFFERENCE OF THOSE WHO ARE "IN CHRIST" AND OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT.**
- 2. BAPTISM IS THE WORK OF GOD THAT MEN UNDERGO IN ORDER TO BE SAVED. WE ARE SAVED THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST.**
- 3. CHRIST IS LORD OVER ALL PEOPLE AND THINGS. WE MUST FOLLOW HIM.**



COLOSSIANS

FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON TEN: LIBERTY IN CHRIST 2:16-23

Almost every religious group creates traditions or taboos over time. These are rules that are not rooted in the Scriptures but are still enforced because the majority of people think it's a good idea. Over time, these taboos can be treated as doctrines that determine the faithfulness of those who practice them or who don't. Some examples of these could be the practice of dressing up for Sunday services in a tie and suit coat. Or perhaps women wearing dresses rather than pants for the Sunday morning services. Some place strong emotional value on whether it is right or wrong to see a movie in a theater or to play cards. In Colossians 2:16-23 Paul discusses the principle of Christian liberty and the necessity of sticking to the Scriptures to determine our code of conduct.

Let no one judge you, v. 16-17

There appeared to be in Colossae false teachers who urged Christians to return to the rituals of the Old Testament. The dietary laws, festival periods, and Sabbath keeping were items in the Old Testament that pointed to the work and character of Christ. Christ's life and his death, burial, and resurrection fulfilled the Old Law so that we are no longer bound to it today, Matthew 5:17, Galatians 3:24-25. It should be remembered that Paul oftentimes subjected himself to the traditions of the Jewish faith in order to not be a stumbling block in his evangelistic efforts. In order to reach the Jews, he oftentimes would act like a Jew, 1 Corinthians 9:20-22. But Paul also was certain to let people know that we are no

16 SO LET NO ONE JUDGE YOU IN FOOD OR IN DRINK, OR REGARDING A FESTIVAL OR A NEW MOON OR SABBATHS, **17** WHICH ARE A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME, BUT THE SUBSTANCE IS OF CHRIST.

18 LET NO ONE CHEAT YOU OF YOUR REWARD, TAKING DELIGHT IN FALSE HUMILITY AND WORSHIP OF ANGELS, INTRUDING INTO THOSE THINGS WHICH HE HAS NOT SEEN, VAINLY PUFFED UP BY HIS FLESHLY MIND, **19** AND NOT HOLDING FAST TO THE HEAD, FROM WHOM ALL THE BODY, NOURISHED AND KNIT TOGETHER BY JOINTS AND LIGAMENTS, GROWS WITH THE INCREASE THAT IS FROM GOD.

20 THEREFORE, IF YOU DIED WITH CHRIST FROM THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD, WHY, AS THOUGH LIVING IN THE WORLD, DO YOU SUBJECT YOURSELVES TO REGULATIONS— **21** “DO NOT TOUCH, DO NOT TASTE, DO NOT HANDLE,” **22** WHICH ALL CONCERN THINGS WHICH PERISH WITH THE USING—ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENTS AND DOCTRINES OF MEN? **23** THESE THINGS INDEED HAVE AN APPEARANCE OF WISDOM IN SELF-IMPOSED RELIGION, FALSE HUMILITY, AND NEGLECT OF THE BODY, BUT ARE OF NO VALUE AGAINST THE INDULGENCE OF THE FLESH.

longer under the Law of Moses because of the work of Christ in fulfilling the old way. We are only judged by those who think they have authority over us. The judge of all things is God. In this passage Paul is encouraging these Christians to see that God's opinions matter much more than the feelings of fellow people. The Apostle says for us to remember that Christ is the substance of all things and he is the one we must please.

Let no one cheat you, v. 18-19

Paul says let "no one cheat you" which is an athletic reference to judges who watch and rank athletes. Oftentimes the referees or judges of an athletic contest do not participate in the rigors of the game and yet they still determine who wins and who loses. There is a sense in which we must strive to not be disqualified in our race in Christ, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Timothy 3:8. But these references look to true moral failings and not a lack of following human rules. The false teachers in Colossae were cheating the church members out of the peace of Christian living by ranking members and causing discord. Paul includes four areas used as distractions from true Christian living that were being exploited by these false teachers. The first area was asceticism, a term referring to self denial. These are acts of false humility with extreme practices which appear noble but are not required by God. Secondly, Paul speaks of the worship of angels. We are to worship God alone, Matthew 4:10, Revelation 22:9. Many false teachers of that day taught that alternative messages of God were given by angels. Thirdly, Paul refers to visions that taught a different gospel than what the Apostles' taught. God is not a God of confusion. Therefore all things must be in agreement to what we read in the Scriptures. Finally Paul speaks of the pride or vainly puffed mind of these teachers who sought to raise disciples after themselves, Acts 20:30, 2 Timothy 4:3. Rather than follow the teachings of men, Christians need to hold fast to Christ who is the head of the church. It is only through Christ we receive spiritual nourishment and hope for eternal life, John 14:6.

Let no one subject you, v. 20-23

The ascetic believed that a higher spirituality was gained by adding regulations to the doctrine of Christ and by abuse to the body. They thought in a sense by building a wall around yourself, Satan had no way to attack. Therefore they added rules about what could be eaten, what could be enjoyed, and what could be said. Even though those rules were found nowhere in Scripture, they supposedly showed that the person practicing them was more religious than the people who did not practice them. Paul discourages this line of thinking by reminding his readers that the things of the world are not spiritual in nature. That is, money is not sinful but the love of money is sinful. Food is not sinful but gluttony is sinful. Sex is not sinful, but sex outside of God's plan for marriage is sinful. It is not the physical elements of the world that bring sin, it is the misuse of them. Extra-biblical rules against these things have an appearance of wisdom, or humility but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. GOD IS OUR JUDGE, NOT MAN. ALTHOUGH WE ARE TO NOT BE A STUMBLING BLOCK TO OTHERS, WE MUST REMEMBER TO WHOM WE TRULY BELONG.**
- 2. ADDING RULES TO THE GOSPEL BEYOND WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH ROB CHRISTIANS OF THEIR PEACE AND JOY FOUND IN CHRIST.**
- 3. THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD ARE NOT SINFUL. BUT OUR MISUSE OF THEM CAN BE SINFUL.**



COLOSSIANS

FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON ELEVEN: OUR LIFE CHRIST, 3:1-11

In this section of the letter, Paul uses the analogy of physical death to describe our relationship with Christ. When our body dies, we leave behind our mortal remains and our spirit travels to be with the Lord. No one takes their physical body with them to the spirit realm, it must be left behind. For those who are Christians this is a glorious time because paradise is a wonderful place. This reality of what happens at our death is an illustration of what must happen at our conversion to Christ. When we obey the gospel, we must leave behind the old habits and selfishness of sin and we must now live fully for Jesus. Our purpose for living and the fruit of our actions is a clear change when we are placed in Christ. In our spiritual lives we must continually put to death the elements of sin that rise in our lives and must constantly make sure that we are living in accordance to our spiritual nature.

Seeking Christ, v. 1-4

Paul begins Colossians 3:1 with the phrase “if then” or “therefore” to show a transition in the letter. Just as in the apostle’s other letters (Romans 12:1, Ephesians 4:1, and Philippians 4:1), Paul begins with a doctrinal section and then transitions to an application section. Both the doctrine and application sections of the book are inspired by the Holy Spirit and important

1 IF THEN YOU WERE RAISED WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST IS, SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. 2 SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON THE EARTH. 3 FOR YOU DIED, AND YOUR LIFE IS HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD. 4 WHEN CHRIST WHO IS OUR LIFE APPEARS, THEN YOU ALSO WILL APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY. 5 THEREFORE PUT TO DEATH YOUR MEMBERS WHICH ARE ON THE EARTH: FORNICATION, UNCLEANNES, PASSION, EVIL DESIRE, AND COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS IDOLATRY. 6 BECAUSE OF THESE THINGS THE WRATH OF GOD IS COMING UPON THE SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE, 7 IN WHICH YOU YOURSELVES ONCE WALKED WHEN YOU LIVED IN THEM. 8 BUT NOW YOU YOURSELVES ARE TO PUT OFF ALL THESE: ANGER, WRATH, MALICE, BLASPHEMY, FILTHY LANGUAGE OUT OF YOUR MOUTH. 9 DO NOT LIE TO ONE ANOTHER, SINCE YOU HAVE PUT OFF THE OLD MAN WITH HIS DEEDS, 10 AND HAVE PUT ON THE NEW MAN WHO IS RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO THE IMAGE OF HIM WHO CREATED HIM, 11 WHERE THERE IS NEITHER GREEK NOR JEW, CIRCUMCISED NOR UNCIRCUMCISED, BARBARIAN, SCYTHIAN, SLAVE NOR FREE, BUT CHRIST IS ALL AND IN ALL.

for the Christian to understand and to follow. It is necessary for us to understand the “why” (doctrine) and the “how” (application) of our Christian faith. Paul will show us, beginning in chapter 3, what it looks like to live out the Christian life. In other words, what does it mean to be a Christian and how does the Christian act?

For the first ten verses of this section, Paul grammatically uses the declarative and imperative tense (standing and state) to describe who we are as Christians and what we are to do. That is, the declarative tense describes who we are in Christ: we are dead (v. 3), we have been raised (v. 1), we are with Christ in heaven (v. 3), we have taken off the old self (v. 9) and have put on the new self (v. 10). The imperative tense shows what we are to do as a result: we set our hearts on Christ (v. 1-2), we put to death the actions that belonged to our earthly nature (v. 5), and we put away practices that characterize worldly people (v. 8). This passage is also summarized in Romans 6:1-13.

Putting Old Man To Death, v. 5-9

Old habits don't die easily. We can think of it like a modern horror movie about vampires or zombies (neither of which really exist) where the zombies keep coming back to life no matter how many times they are killed. They may lie dead on the ground for a few minutes or hours but then they come back to life when no one expects them to. When we obey the gospel we declare the old man of sinfulness dead and we become a new creation in Christ. Yet the old ways will continue to try to come back into our lives. Continually there will be temptations of fornication, uncleanness (sexual sin), evil desires, and covetousness. We must continually put these temptations to death. Each day there will be within us a desire to be angry, to want revenge, to be mean to others, to not be godly and to lie. But we must flee these temptations and make sure Christ rules our lives. We must not compromise with the old man or pretend the old man does not exist. The old way of sin must constantly be put to death.

The New Man in Christ, v. 10-11

Just as we change out of dirty clothes and put on new and fresh clothes each day, Paul says we are to put away evil practices in our lives through repentance and walk in the light of God. Our walk in Christ renews us in the knowledge that we are created in the image of God and that we should live that way. Part of the joy in Christ is that that we are no longer in a world of division but we are now placed in a world of blessed equality in Christ. No longer are we judged according to our race, or our social status or our past. We live fully for Christ and find our identity in him. The old ways are done and now we live in the new kingdom of Christ.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. OUR SPIRITUAL DEATH TO SIN MUST BE AS DRAMATIC AND AS CERTAIN AS WHAT PHYSICAL DEATH LOOKS LIKE. WE MUST DIE TO SIN AND LIVE FOR CHRIST.**
- 2. THE ACT OF DYING TO SIN IS NOT ONLY A ONE TIME OCCURRENCE. IT IS A DAILY SACRIFICE OF PUTTING THE LORD FIRST IN OUR LIVES AND REMOVING ANY TEMPTATION.**
- 3. CHRISTIANS SHOULD STRIVE DAILY TO LOOK MORE LIKE JESUS IN OUR THOUGHTS, ACTIONS, AND DREAMS.**



COLOSSIANS

FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON TWELVE:

CHRISTIANITY IN VIEW, 3:12-4:1

The Christian Attitude, 3:12-15

Here Paul tells the Colossian brethren what Christianity should look like in everyday life. It is important to discuss very important doctrines concerning the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the doctrine of salvation through obedience to Christ, and the importance of staying away from sin. But it's also necessary for us to recognize that our faith must be tangible even outside the church buildings where we gather on Sundays. After Paul has covered what Christians should 'put to death' earlier in chapter three (fornication, greed, anger, filthy language, and lying) he now tells them what to "put on." In Luke 11:24-25 Jesus tells a parable of a man who cleansed himself of an evil spirit. After that spirit wandered the earth, it returned to find the house unoccupied. Therefore it brought with him seven other spirits to make the situation worse than it was before. The point Jesus is making is that it's not enough to stay away from bad things, rather we must add the Christian graces to our life as well. The things we are to put on in verses twelve and thirteen all have to do with how we treat other people. We are to be kind, humble, patient, and forgiving. Above all these things we are to put on love (1 Corinthians 13:13) and let God's peace rule our hearts. When Christians have attitudes like these, outsiders will be attracted to the gospel and insiders will be motivated to even greater service.

The Christian in Worship

It has become popular in some circles to claim Colossians 3:16-17 has to do with every day life rather than corporate worship. The reason for this is to negate the clear teaching here that

12 THEREFORE, AS THE ELECT OF GOD, HOLY AND BELOVED, PUT ON TENDER MERCIES, KINDNESS, HUMILITY, MEEKNESS, LONGSUFFERING; **13** BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, IF ANYONE HAS A COMPLAINT AGAINST ANOTHER; EVEN AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU, SO YOU ALSO MUST DO. **14** BUT ABOVE ALL THESE THINGS PUT ON LOVE, WHICH IS THE BOND OF PERFECTION. **15** AND LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE IN YOUR HEARTS, TO WHICH ALSO YOU WERE CALLED IN ONE BODY; AND BE THANKFUL. **16** LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM, TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER IN PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, SINGING WITH GRACE IN YOUR HEARTS TO THE LORD. **17** AND WHATEVER YOU DO IN WORD OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM. **18** WIVES, SUBMIT TO YOUR OWN HUSBANDS, AS IS FITTING IN THE LORD. **19** HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES AND DO NOT BE BITTER TOWARD THEM. **20** CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN ALL THINGS, FOR THIS IS WELL PLEASING TO THE LORD. **21** FATHERS, DO NOT PROVOKE YOUR CHILDREN, LEST THEY BECOME DISCOURAGED. **22** BONDSERVANTS, OBEY IN ALL THINGS YOUR MASTERS ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, NOT WITH EYESERVICE, AS MEN-PLEASERS, BUT IN SINCERITY OF HEART, FEARING GOD. **23** AND WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT HEARTILY, AS TO THE LORD AND NOT TO MEN, **24** KNOWING THAT FROM THE LORD YOU WILL RECEIVE THE REWARD OF THE INHERITANCE; FOR YOU SERVE THE LORD CHRIST. **25** BUT HE WHO DOES WRONG WILL BE REPAID FOR WHAT HE HAS DONE, AND THERE IS NO PARTIALITY. **4:1** MASTERS, GIVE YOUR BONDSERVANTS WHAT IS JUST AND FAIR, KNOWING THAT YOU ALSO HAVE A MASTER IN HEAVEN.

our singing in church should be by voice (acapella) rather than accompanied by the instrument. But the context of Paul's letter and the discussion of the word of Christ, the act of teaching and admonishing, and the nature of the songs show clearly that worship during the time of church gathering is what is being referred to in this passage. Paul is telling the Colossian brethren to focus during worship by allowing the Word of God to dwell richly or to make a home in our hearts. When we are bored or distracted in worship we are much more susceptible to false teaching and discouragement. Singing is one of the most enriching acts of worship and Paul is telling the Colossians brethren to focus on the teaching and admonishing that are found in the words. Technically a psalm is a newly composed song, a hymn is a song of praise, and a song is a recounting of the mighty acts of God. Whatever we do in our worship period needs to be authorized (done in the name or according to the authority) of Jesus.

The Christian Home

Perhaps it is in the home that our Christianity shines the brightest. It may be easy to look religious for a few hours each week in a church building, or to appear to love Jesus in a workplace setting where people do not know us well. But those who are in our family know the true measure that Christianity has taken in our hearts. As he did in Ephesians 5:22-6:4, Paul gives specific instructions as to how we are to treat one another in our family. Wives are told to submit to the husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Of course, all Christians are to submit to the Lord, to government, and to the leaders of the church. Ladies are commanded have their husbands be spiritual leaders in the home. Many times this takes a great deal of humility and also training for the men (1 Peter 3:1-6). Many times men in the home do not have a spiritual heart and this can make this process very difficult. But as much as is possible (as fitting in the Lord), we need to create our homes to reflect the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Husbands are commanded to love their wives and not be harsh toward them. The concept of love here is rooted in sacrifice and meeting the needs of others before seeking to meet our own needs. The call and role of a husband is one of sacrifice, desire to understand, and to lead by example. Children are called to obey their parents. Our view of our parents in many ways will shape our view of God. And fathers are called to lead their children in love and example, not in harshness and abuse.

The Christian Workplace

Slavery was very common in the Roman Empire, even among those who were members of the Lord's church. Slaves were also considered to be a part of the family which is why these instructions are included here. Slavery is wrong because it views people as disposable and as property. When we recognize that all people have souls and are made in the image of God, slavery will disappear (study the Book of Philemon). Colossians 3:22-4:1 can be applied to today's times as teaching for people who are in difficult working situations. Many people have bosses that mistreat the employees or work for companies that view their workers as capital and not people. In this situation Paul instructs the brethren to focus on God (fearing God, as to the Lord, receive the reward from God, your master is in heaven). When we see that our work is not done only for earthly salaries but is instead a reflection of our trust in God, we will see the true value of our occupation.

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. CHRISTIANITY IS MORE THAN JUST NOT SINNING. OUR FAITH LEADS US TO ACT MORE LIKE CHRIST EVERY DAY AND IN EVERY SITUATION.**
- 2. OUR WORSHIP SHOULD FOLLOW THE TEACHINGS OF SCRIPTURE. OUR WORSHIP IS A GIFT TO GOD, NOT ENTERTAINMENT FOR OURSELVES.**
- 3. CHRISTIANS MAY FIND THEMSELVES IN DIFFICULT PLACES IN THE HOME AND WORKPLACE. WE SHOULD ACT LIKE CHRISTIANS EVEN WHEN IT IS HARD TO DO SO.**



COLOSSIANS

FULLNESS IN CHRIST

LESSON THIRTEEN:

PAUL'S CLOSING WORDS, 4:2-18

Focus on Prayer, 4:2-3

Paul's humility is seen in his focus on prayer. Our prayer lives are a gauge of our level of reliance and faith in God. Six times in the New Testament we see that we should be "devoted to" or "persevere" in prayer (Acts 1:14, Acts 2:42, Acts 6:4, Romans 12:12, Ephesians 6:18, and Colossians 4:2). In Paul's mind, prayers should not always be about what we want or need, they need to be filled with thanksgiving for our blessings and the gospel. But Paul also sees the need to pray for needs as well. As a matter of fact, Paul requests prayers for himself, Ephesians 6:18-20. If Paul as an Apostle of Christ and a man led by Spirit in his work felt the need for prayers on his behalf, imagine what our attitude should be today? Paul's request for prayer focuses on him finding open doors to preach to people and for wisdom in how to approach those people.

Focus on Outreach, 4:5-6

In a congregation that is dealing with false teachers and troubles, Paul emphasizes the importance of patience and grace. Being aware of how things look to outsiders is important. Recognizing that time is limited is also important. We must wisely live in a way that makes the best use of our time. We also must season our speech (with salt) so that when we speak to others it accomplishes good and not bad.

2 CONTINUE EARNESTLY IN PRAYER, BEING VIGILANT IN IT WITH THANKSGIVING; **3** MEANWHILE PRAYING ALSO FOR US, THAT GOD WOULD OPEN TO US A DOOR FOR THE WORD, TO SPEAK THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST, FOR WHICH I AM ALSO IN CHAINS, **4** THAT I MAY MAKE IT MANIFEST, AS I OUGHT TO SPEAK. **5** WALK IN WISDOM TOWARD THOSE WHO ARE OUTSIDE, REDEEMING THE TIME. **6** LET YOUR SPEECH ALWAYS BE WITH GRACE, SEASONED WITH SALT, THAT YOU MAY KNOW HOW YOU OUGHT TO ANSWER EACH ONE. **7** TYCHICUS, A BELOVED BROTHER, FAITHFUL MINISTER, AND FELLOW SERVANT IN THE LORD, WILL TELL YOU ALL THE NEWS ABOUT ME. **8** I AM SENDING HIM TO YOU FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE, THAT HE MAY KNOW YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES AND COMFORT YOUR HEARTS, **9** WITH ONESIMUS, A FAITHFUL AND BELOVED BROTHER, WHO IS ONE OF YOU. THEY WILL MAKE KNOWN TO YOU ALL THINGS WHICH ARE HAPPENING HERE. **10** ARISTARCHUS MY FELLOW PRISONER GREETES YOU, WITH MARK THE COUSIN OF BARNABAS (ABOUT WHOM YOU RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS: IF HE COMES TO YOU, WELCOME HIM), **11** AND JESUS WHO IS CALLED JUSTUS. THESE ARE MY ONLY FELLOW WORKERS FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD WHO ARE OF THE CIRCUMCISION; THEY HAVE PROVED TO BE A COMFORT TO ME. **12** EPAPHRAS, WHO IS ONE OF YOU, A BONDSERVANT OF CHRIST, GREETES YOU, ALWAYS LABORING FERVENTLY FOR YOU IN PRAYERS, THAT YOU MAY STAND PERFECT AND COMPLETE IN ALL THE WILL OF GOD. **13** FOR I BEAR HIM WITNESS THAT HE HAS A GREAT ZEAL FOR YOU, AND THOSE WHO ARE IN LAODICEA, AND THOSE IN HIERAPOLIS. **14** LUKE THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN AND DEMAS GREET YOU. **15** GREET THE BRETHREN WHO ARE IN LAODICEA, AND NYMPHAS AND THE CHURCH THAT IS IN HIS HOUSE. **16** NOW WHEN THIS EPISTLE IS READ AMONG YOU, SEE THAT IT IS READ ALSO IN THE CHURCH OF THE LAODICEANS, AND THAT YOU LIKewise READ THE EPISTLE FROM LAODICEA. **17** AND SAY TO ARCHIPPUS, "TAKE HEED TO THE MINISTRY WHICH YOU HAVE RECEIVED IN THE LORD, THAT YOU MAY FULFILL IT." **18** THIS SALUTATION BY MY OWN HAND—PAUL. REMEMBER MY CHAINS. GRACE BE WITH YOU. AMEN.

Verses two through six contains a simple plan for evangelism that every Christian can be involved in. First we must be a people of prayer (verse 2-3) both for ourselves and for those who preach the gospel. Secondly we must watch ourselves in the way we act (verse 4). While other people may not understand the reason why we live as Christians, we must not give them reason to doubt us or question us because of our actions. Hypocrisy will drive people away from Christ. Next we must recognize the fleeting nature of time (verse 5). We must not allow ourselves to be comfortable with people being lost spiritually. We must always live in light of a coming Day of Judgment. Fourth, we should watch how we speak to other people (verse 6). Our language shows the condition of our heart, Luke 6:45. And lastly we should season what we say. We should shape our speech specifically for each person to whom we reach out. Different people season their food in different ways. In the same way, while the message of the gospel is the same, our method of reaching out will change depending on the background and personality of each person (Compare Peter's sermon in Acts 2 to Paul's sermon in Acts 17).

Focus On Relationships, 5:7-14

Christianity is about relationships. Of course there is the vertical relationship we have in Christ and the Father, but there is also the horizontal relationships we have with the brethren. No man lives only to himself, Romans 14:7. Our lives are richer when we share things with one another. Paul oftentimes mentioned these relationships in the last chapters of his letters. These passages give us insight to the personality and life of the Apostle. The first two people mentioned by Paul are Tychicus who is returning with this letter. Also by the side of Tychicus is Onesimus, the slave of Philemon, a member of this congregation. Very likely, the Book of Philemon was also delivered to the congregation at this time. Paul also includes greetings from Aristarchus and Mark, and Justus. It's interesting to see Paul's relationship with Mark (Acts 15:38-39, Philemon 1:24, 2 Timothy 4:11). Paul also sends greetings from Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (2 Timothy 4:10).

Focus on the Word, 5:15-18

In the First Century church, the reading of God's Word played a central part in worship, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, Psalm 119:105. We see here that books of the Bible written to specific congregations were to be shared among all the churches. That's why it's profitable for those in North America to read the Book of Galatians, Thessalonians, Colossians, and the others even today. While some parts of these letters are specific in context and time to these churches, Christians today will learn from these books what God desires of us today. We no longer have the Epistle from Laodicea. That's because God did not see fit for it to be preserved for us. It likely repeated what we already have or it did not contain the things that apply to us in our present day. Paul closes his letter to the Colossians with the same message he began with in Colossians 1:2: "grace be with you."

TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS LESSON:

- 1. PRAYER IS VITAL TO CHRISTIAN LIVING. WE SHOULD CONTINUALLY GROW IN IT.**
- 2. WE MUST CONSTANTLY FOCUS ON EVANGELISM. THIS IS A MAJOR PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH. EVERY MEMBER SHOULD BE INVOLVED.**
- 3. CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS ARE VITAL FOR US. OUR CHOICE IN FRIENDS REVEAL OUR CHARACTER.**