

The Book of Colossians

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Colossians: Introduction

Today in our world, knowledge has increased greatly, in fulfillment of prophecy in Daniel chapter 12:

(Daniel 12:4 NKJV) "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

It has been determined that if you were to take the sum of all the technological advancements from the time of Adam up to 1990, it has doubled from 1990 to this present day. We can travel above the speed of sound, and communicate at the speed of light. We have smart bombs, satellites with ears, computers with artificial intelligence, the lowest computer on the market today has more computing power than what was on the Apollo rocket that went to the moon., all these things that intelligent people have created to make our society more learned. More people today than ever before are graduating High School and College. Yet, with all this increase in knowledge, there is a decrease happening.

In a study by Paul Robinson of Stanford University. He critiqued what education Television is doing to our children today. It is hurting the ability of children to learn because when kids go to grade school today their attention span is significantly diminished because their teachers can not compete with Big Bird, and Oscar the Grouch. The teachers can't teach in an entertaining way that they can teach the alphabet, and numbers, the resultant is the kids lose interest and space out. A child will play four hours of Xbox, and be bored in 10 minutes by his teacher or parent trying to teach them something.

We have moved from a "typographic society", to a "telegraphic society". Typographic, in that 40-50 years ago reading was the main teacher. People would dig into and pick for hours to learn; today with our information age, its telegraphic. Today the information is streamed to us in bite size pieces, all packaged so colorfully.

Children and adults are being drawn to the high polished entertainment of television and videos, (the audio and visual stimulus mixed together) than the words on paper. People can't keep their attention span today as they could years ago. We now live in a time people no longer read or listen for any extended periods of time. Everything today has to be quick, polished, and entertaining.

People laugh at me and think I am making a joke about going down to Washington DC to the museums, or to Gettysburg for a history walk. People have seen every Hollywood release, sit around and talk about entertaining gossip, know the plots on all the sitcoms, yet find it absurd to go study history of this great nation, or see talent displayed in the form of art and inventions.

Information is poured out upon us in volumes, so much so we have information overload, and for many people, they just accept the information as truth. With all the advancements in knowledge, because of all the stimuli that bombards us daily, there has been a tremendous drop in **truth**. People no longer think for themselves, but just absorb all that is being poured out upon them.

We can see today in the home. Parents are so worried about their children being happy. Look at today's children. They have computers on their desks, Internet connection, stereo on the shelf, and a television next to that – all in their own room. They have a closet full of Nike clothes with Reebok shoes. They get to choose what the family eats for breakfast and dinner. They come home from school, and immediately tunes into the television, or fire-up the Playstation.

Parents are so worried about meeting their kids wants, they no longer see what the needs are. Parenting has shifted from parents saying "I have to teach my child **truths**", to I hope they are happy, I hope they think well of me, I hope they are not upset or offended with me, what can I do

to please them and meet their needs. Parents have drifted from I need to teach my children truths, what is right and what is wrong, and this is what you need to know to prepare you for life properly.

It has spilled over to the church. People are having trouble today digging into the doctrine and truths. People today no longer want to engage the mind, and grasp deep truths, and to chew on the meat of the Word. Things have changed, really changed, from substance to stimulus.

People today are just not into the foundational stuff, so we have a church today with Christians who won't dig into the truths of the Word of God. The church in Colosse was facing the same thing, they were turning from the truth to stimulus. They were being invaded by untruths, and being caught up in touchy-feely philosophy. Heresy was creeping into the church, and Paul was writing to crush it with the truth before it got a foothold. In this letter to the church in Colosse and Laodicia (Col 4:16) Paul is going to deal with what they really need to hear. Paul is going to argue for the truth, for Colosse was in a battle over the truth. Paul wants them to be grounded in truth, and focused on the truth.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon told of the time when, in the glory days of Rome, during a severe famine in the North African colonies, Nero sent Roman galleons to the stricken area. When the starving people saw the ships on the horizon, they rejoiced greatly, saying, 'Caesar has sent the ships! They're on the way! There's hope for us!' And then Spurgeon recounted the tragic end of the story. For when the ships sailed in to port, the North Africans discovered they were full of sawdust to lay on the floor of the circuses Rome was exporting to the colonies. The people longed for food and got sawdust. They craved substance, but got a circus. Truly, what they needed in North Africa — and what we need as believers in our day is neither sawdust nor circuses but food: meat, doctrine, truth. And in Colossians, we get it.

Be careful,' Paul writes to the Colossian brothers and sisters.
'Know the truth - Be grounded in truth.'

In this wonderfully nourishing Epistle to the Colossians . . .

- In Chapter 1, he discusses the truth about Christ;
- In Chapter 2, the truth about the Crooks;
- In Chapters 3 and 4, the truth about the Christian

We see a clear division here just like we saw in Ephesians. Chapters 1-2 discuss doctrine (what we believe and why) and then 3-4 cover Duty (how to put this doctrine in action, in our daily life).

(Colossians 1:1 NKJV) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

(Colossians 1:2 NKJV) To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God

Since Paul will be addressing doctrine, he addresses himself as the “apostle of Jesus Christ”. So he is speaking with his apostolic authority.

Again not all are called to be apostles, evangelist, or prophets. But whatever God has called you to be – be all of that. God has called men and women to every vocation in life. Has he called you to be a student, a clerk, a doctor, teacher, missionary, Sunday school worker, whatever it is be all that you can be in what He has called you to – For it is His will. Paul will tell us later in this book:

*(Colossians 3:23 NKJV) And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,
(Colossians 3:24 NKJV) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*

Paul's first request for us as he prays for us is that we be filled with the knowledge of His will.

(Colossians 1:9 NKJV) 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;

We will only know the knowledge of His will, when we know the truth and obey the truth. We will study this more in the next study.

and Timothy our brother,

Paul calls him the beloved son in the Lord. Timothy a companion of Paul, no one understood and was in harmony with Paul as was Timothy. How difficult it is to find people who have the same commitment and dedication to the Lord. How beautiful it is when God brings like-minded people together for the purpose of personal holiness, and reaching the lost and dying world around them. In our last study of this book, we will see brethren who have come alongside Paul and are ministering the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse:

Now heresy is creeping up in the church, he is writing to correct some of these heretical ideas; yet he writes to them as, saints, faithful, and in Christ. Saints aren't perfect and need Biblical truths so not to get fooled by the enemy.

who are in Colosse:

Paul had never been to the church in Colosse and Laodicea, but most likely they were started as by-products of the church in Ephesus. Ephesus is only 75 miles from Colosse. This area was a meeting point of east and West because of an important trade route passed there. Colosse is about 25 miles southeast of Laodicea, it sat in the same circle as the seven churches in Revelation but it was not one of the seven. Today this would be modern day Turkey. This region was part of the Roman Empire, but the Greek culture was strong there, and there was a large Jewish colony there also. With this mix of Rome and Greek culture, it was a center for heathenism, paganism, and the mystery religion. This mystery religion, included the "exclusive spirit", in which they believed they had special knowledge that not everyone was privy to have (Paul refutes in Col 1:28). They had the "speculative creation" in which they said God didn't create the universe (Paul refutes in Col 1:15-19 and 2:18). And being so special, they felt they had a license to "unrestrained licentiousness" (Paul refutes this in Col 2:16,23 and 3:5-9).

So we have here a combination of Eastern philosophy, Jewish legalism, and the super spiritual. There was something for everybody, and this is what made it so dangerous. Paul brings the balance of the two dangers of being too ritualistic, or too liberal and philosophical.

Key verses:

(Colossians 1:27 KJV) 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:

*(Colossians 2:9 NKJV) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
(Colossians 2:10 NKJV) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*

*(Colossians 3:1 NKJV) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.
(Colossians 3:2 NKJV) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

There has always been the danger of adding something or subtracting something from Christ. The dominating thought in this epistle Christ is all. He is all I need; He is everything.

In this letter, Paul used the vocabulary of the false teachers, but he did not use their definitions.

He used these words in their true Christian meaning. As we study Colossians, we will find words such as *fullness, perfect, complete*. all of which were used by the gnostic heretics. Over thirty times Paul used the little word *all*. He also wrote about *wisdom* which was a key term in the gnostic vocabulary; he had a great deal to say about angels and spirit powers too.

His main theme was *the preeminence of Jesus Christ* (Col. 1:18; 3:11). There is no need for us to worry about angelic mediators or spiritual emanations. God has sent His Son to die for us! Every person who believes on Jesus Christ is saved and is a part of His body, the church, of which He is the Head (Col 1:18). We are united to Christ in a wonderful living relationship!

Paul did not begin by attacking the false teachers and their doctrines. He began by exalting Jesus Christ and showing His preeminence in five areas: the Gospel message, redemption, Creation, the church, and Paul's own ministry. The people to whom Paul was writing had become Christians because of the Gospel message brought to them by Epaphras. If this message was wrong, then they were not saved at all! Once he had established the preeminence of Christ, then Paul attacked the heretics on their own ground. In Colossians 2, Paul exposed the false origin of their teachings and showed how their teachings contradicted everything Paul taught about Jesus Christ. The believer who masters this chapter is not likely to be led astray by some alluring and enticing "new-and-improved brand of Christianity

But Paul did not think his task completed when he had refuted the heretics, for he still had some important words for the church. In Colossians 3—4, Paul explained the greatest antidote to false teaching is a *godly life*. Those who say, "I don't care what you believe, just 'as you live a good life" are not thinking logically. *What we believe determines how we behave*. If we believe that matter is evil, we will use our bodies one way; but if we believe our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, will live accordingly.

Wrong doctrine always leads to wrong living. Right doctrine should lead to right living. In the two concluding chapters, Paul applied preeminence of Christ to the daily affairs of life. If Christ is truly preeminent in our lives then we will glorify Him by keeping pure, by enjoying fellowship with other saints, by loving each other at home and being faithful workers, and by seeking to witness for Christ and serve Him effectively. Unless doctrine leads to duty, it is of no use to us.

The church today desperately needs the message of Colossians. We live in a day when religious toleration is interpreted to mean "one religion is just as good as another." Some people try to take the best from various religious systems and manufacture their own private religion. To many people, Jesus Christ is only *one* of several great religious teachers, with no more authority than they. He may be prominent, but He is definitely not preeminent.

This is an age of "oneness" People are trying to harmonize and unite many different schools of thought and come up with a superior religion. Our evangelical churches are in danger of diluting the faith in their loving attempt to understand the beliefs of others. Mysticism, legalism, Eastern religions, asceticism, and man-made philosophies are secretly creeping into churches. They are not denying Christ, but they are dethroning Him and robbing Him of His rightful place of preeminence.

As we study this exciting letter, we must heed Paul's warnings: "Lest any man should beguile you" (Col. 2:4), "Lest any man spoil you" (Col. 2:8), "Let no man therefore judge you!" (Col. 2:16)

How the Church Began:

Over time Colosse gradually turned into a small town, yet the church in this small town was important enough to merit the attention of the Apostle Paul. Thus an important application for us, a church is a church, an important whether it is 3000, 300, 30, or 3, cause the Lord is ministering all of them.

How did the Colossian church begin? It was the outgrowth of Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19; 20:17-38). So effective was the witness of the church at Ephesus that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). This would include people in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis

When we examine the persons involved in the prison correspondence of Paul (see Ephesians.,

Philippeans., Colossians., Philemon., **and** 2 Tim.), we can just about put the story together of how the Colossian church was founded. During Paul's ministry in Ephesus, at least two men from Colossae were brought to faith in Jesus Christ—Epaphras and Philemon (see Philemon. 19). Epaphras apparently was one of the key founders of the church in Colossae, for he shared the Gospel with his friends there (Col. 1:7). He also had a ministry in the cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea (Col. 4:12-13).

Philemon had a church meeting in his **home** (Philemon. 2). It is likely that Apphia and Archippus, mentioned in this verse, were respectively the wife and son of Philemon, and that Archippus (Col. 4:17).

There is a good lesson for us here: God does not always need an apostle, or a "full-time Christian worker" to get a ministry established. Nor does He need elaborate buildings and extensive organizations. Here were two laymen who were used of God to start ministries in at least three cities. It is God's plan that the Christians in the large urban areas like Ephesus reach out into the smaller towns and share the Gospel. Is *your* church helping to evangelize "small-town" mission fields?

So Epharatus was the Pastor or a leader of the church in Colosse, and he visited Paul while he was in prison. He related some of the dangerous heresies that were spreading the area of Colosse. So Paul is writing the epistle to correct these heresies that were becoming popular in that area.

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A love letter from the Father to His beloved children. The year was somewhere around 62-64AD and four messengers left Rome unobserved, each carrying a scroll, at the time just ink on paper, not realizing what they would mean to the world for the next 2000 years. Word's of hope, words of love, all from a creator outside our time domain, but active and interested in every little detail of our life. The four prison epistles: Tychicus was carrying the Epistle to the Ephesians over in Ephesus where he was the pastor or church leader. Epaphroditus was carrying the Epistle to the Philippians as he was the pastor in Philippi. Epaphras was carrying the Epistle to the Colossians. Onesimus was carrying the Epistle to Philemon. Philemon was his master and Onesimus, who had run away, was returning to him.

The four are companion epistles and together have been called the anatomy of the church. We can see that the subjects of these epistles cover all aspects of the Christian faith:

Ephesians is about the body of believers called the church, of which Christ is the head.

Colossians directs our attention to the head of the body who is Christ. The body itself is secondary. Christ is the theme. He is the center of the circle around which all Christian living revolves. Colossians emphasizes the "pleroma"; Christ is the fullness of God.

Philippeans shows the church walking here on earth. Christian living is the theme; it is being on the outside of the circle looking in where Christ is the center, and how we can have a mind like Him. Philippeans emphasizes the "kenosis"; Christ becoming a servant.

Philemon gives us Christianity in action. We would say it is where the rubber meets the road. It demonstrates Christinaity worked out in a Christ rejecting world.

We can see why these four documents have been called the anatomy of the church – they belong together to make a whole.

Grace to you and peace

Man will never have peace with God, until first they have accepted His grace, the gift of the cross. Man will never have peace in his life, until he first has peace with God.

End of Study: Colossians - Introduction

Colossians: Chapter 1

The Church Body at Colosse - 1:3-6

(Colossians 1:1 NKJV) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

(Colossians 1:2 NKJV) To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Colossians 1:3 NKJV) We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

(Colossians 1:4 NKJV) since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;

Paul is writing to correct some wrongs in the church, but he doesn't start with the Holy Ghost Gun, he starts with what is good, he starts with commending them on their faith, love and hope. This is a good point for us to glean, I think we so often can always point out the wrong in others, and forget to point out the good, thus missing the opportunity to encourage them and strengthen them before we correct them.

(Colossians 1:4 NKJV) since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;

(Colossians 1:5 NKJV) 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,

v.4: Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus . . .

The Church at Colossae was characterized by three qualities; faith, love and hope. These are the three marks of any solid church.

The **first** mark of a mature fellowship is faith. Because it is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6)

(Hebrews 11:6 KJV) But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

If a church gathers together without believing God is going to do great things, that church will not move into renewal, revival, or blessing. If people can go to church week in and week out, yet not believe that God can change their life, help their marriage, control their flesh, then they are not pleasing God and are a faithless church. If a church can sit in the midst of a lost and dying world, and believe that they can not make a difference, then they are not pleasing the Lord. God wants to move, God wants to work in people's lives – both inside the church, and outside the church through the people of the church.

We looked at several buildings over the past few days, and sometimes I catch myself saying what are you doing, why would anyone come.....then it always comes flooding back, "it's a venture in faith". A bunch of nobodies in Pasadena Maryland start a work and things start happening, everybody will know it was the Lord. I know the Lord loves the people in this county, and He wants to reach them, and touch them – and if it is not me (not us) it will be someone else.

I remember several years ago doing street ministry in California. We were done and heading back to our meeting point with the others who went – I think it was a Pizza Hut. As I came up, I saw a police officer putting a couple people in the back of his car, and I saw the friend of the two getting arrested just standing there (he was not being arrested). I suppose it was their night out for partying that got a little out of hand. As I approached, and the police car pulled off, I said I should go talk to him, then I said no he is not going to be in any mood to hear. So I walked into

the Pizza Hut, and when I came back out my one friend was out there sharing with him, and the guy was listening, hanging on every word. Now my friend wasn't cool (as the world would categorize), compared to the guy he was witnessing they were almost opposites. But it didn't matter with the Lord cause tonight was this man's night. The man had to call his sister or girlfriend to come pick him up, and as she pulled up, he ran to her car saying check this out (holding a tract) remember we were just talking about this stuff, come over and listen to him.

As I watched from a distance, God spoke to me, almost audibly. He said, if not you, then I use somebody else.

A simple definition of faith comes from Hebrews,
(Hebrews 11:1 KJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

That is truly what the beginning of a church is, it is hoping and believing in ministering to people you haven't even seen or met yet.

I believe God purposefully makes it difficult to establish and maintain churches, to weed out the faithless. God doesn't need another social club that uses His name for a tax break. God wants to build health clubs that restores bodies, and strengthens them.

If a church gathers together without believing God is going to do great things, that church will not move into renewal, revival, or blessing. I like what God has already done, can't wait to see more.

v.4: . . . and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

The **second** mark of a strong church is love — defined nowhere more clearly than by Jesus when He said,

(John 13:35 KJV) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

I love it when we all get together, smiles on faces, hugs, ahh we say, it is so good to see you. The breath of fresh air we are to each other in this world, in this week that sometimes feels like a drought.

(Psalms 133:1 KJV) A Song of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
(Psalms 133:2 KJV) It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;
(Psalms 133:3 KJV) As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

It is so beautiful when brethren get together to love the Lord and one another.

Ever see the day after Thanksgiving, 100's of people lining up outside of Walmart, Best Buys, just waiting for them to open. The world should be lining up outside churches just waiting for them to open because the church has what everybody wants – love. Our loving one another is the great unspoken witness to the world. The Omish have a saying, "if all else fails, use words."

I remember my first mission trip to Russia in 1995. We were teaching the Inductive Bible Study Method there over 4 day seminars. We had about 50-60 students and over 4 days you can imagine the relationships that were made. Well after the last day we had to catch a train to our next city late in the evening around 9-10pm. The station was about an hour away from where we taught, so we said good bye to everyone, had a graduation party...it was beautiful. Being American we could afford to rent a taxi to get us down there, so we get there, load our stuff onto the train, and then a couple people from the class show up. They walked, hopped several different buses, taking an hour to get there to say goodbye - all in the snow I might add. So we hop off the train and we out on the platform, and then here come another 10, another 20, I believe every last person came to say goodbye. It was so beautiful. So Pastor Ted said lets pray, as we say goodbye. So we all hold hands in this huge circle, and pray – there was barely enough room

for the rest of the passengers to get through the door of the train. I remember looking up, and snow was falling across the dim lights of the night, and then Igor starts to sing a praise song. So here is 50-60 people holding hands, singing praise to the Lord as the snow fell through the dim lights of the night. Then the most amazing thing happened, a Russian hockey team arrived to get on the same train. As they approached the platform, they all got in a single file line, big duffel bags filled with hockey gear, and slowly and quietly slipped by us to not disrupt what was going on. It was beautiful, then when we were done I turned to the train, and every window was down, and people were leaning out watching in silence. We were able to share the gospel that night with the woman who was the train conductor of our boxcar.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is, when brethren dwell together in unity.

v.5: For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

Finally, a solid Fellowship will have “hope in its heart”, which is constantly focused on the eternal. The absolute expectation of coming good, hope says, 'Sure it's tough down here, but this is the worst it's ever gonna be. The coming of Jesus Christ is nigh. Life is short. We're going to heaven!'

Hope, is proportionate to faith. The deeper your faith, the more the hope of heaven will be in your heart. The reason being, if you are not focusing on heaven then you will be focusing on earth, and the cares of the world will suck away the hope of heaven – cause your mind will not be thinking of heaven, but how do I get through another day here.

(Romans 10:17 KJV) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The deeper we grow in the Word, the deeper our faith will be, and the greater our eyes will be fixed on Jesus, and the clearer we will see Him high and lift up, seated on the throne – saying I have a place prepared for you, just a little while longer, finish what I've called you to do down there.

When you are in the Word, and have the hope of heaven, so much so that you can see Jesus seated on the throne as if you were right there.....you will overhear conversations in heaven.

It is interesting in Isaiah 6:8, the Lord said whom shall I send.

(Isaiah 6:8 NKJV) Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

(Isaiah 6:9 NKJV) And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'

Do you notice that the Lord wasn't talking to Isaiah, he was talking to someone else, Isaiah overheard the conversation. God told Philip to go Gaza (Acts 8:26), He told Peter to go to the Gentiles (Acts 10), yet here He is asking who can we send, who will go, and Isaiah responds. Isaiah was in the presence of the God, and he overheard the call, and realized there was nothing else for him to do but in conscious freedom say, here I am send me. God will not come to person with compulsions and pleadings in order we respond – ever. God may call, or He may let you overhear, but then He will allow the Spirit to work on your heart, and honor your freewill.

If we let the Spirit of God bring us face to face with God, we too shall hear things like Isaiah heard.

The hope of heaven will translate into our actions here on earth, and our actions for the King here on earth will translate us into heaven.

I firmly believe that a church, family, or individual who is focused on faith, love, and hope will be stable, solid, seasoned.

(Colossians 1:6 NKJV) 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;

End of Study: The Church Body at Colosse - 1:3-6

The Christian Benchmarks: the 7 Fruits – 1:6

(Colossians 1:6 NKJV) 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;

If it says the whole world, then I believe he meant the whole world.

The three marks of this solid church in Colossian; *faith, hope and love* led not only to maturity and stability of the believers but to fruitfulness as others were drawn into their midst.

Doctrinal truth must and will bear fruit. People ask all the time how do I know if am I in the will of God?, Jesus made it simple.

(Matthew 22:36 NKJV) "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

(Matthew 22:37 NKJV) Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

(Matthew 22:38 NKJV) "This is the first and great commandment.

(Matthew 22:39 NKJV) "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

(Matthew 22:40 NKJV) "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Loving the Lord and loving people are so intertwined, interwoven, that it is really impossible to distinguish between the two of them. When I love God, I naturally will love other people. When I find myself just loving on people, if I had the ability to see into heaven I would see the Father beaming, saying ohh you are blessing my heart. God wants to touch people and love on them not just in the Spirit, but physically through our bodies.

Ok that simplifies it, now how can I measure per say, how can I see if I am on track? The answer is, are you bearing much fruit.

(John 15:1 NKJV) "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

(John 15:2 NKJV) "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

(John 15:3 NKJV) "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

(John 15:4 NKJV) "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

(John 15:5 NKJV) "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

(John 15:6 NKJV) "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

(John 15:7 NKJV) "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

(John 15:8 NKJV) "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

(John 15:9 NKJV) "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

(John 15:10 NKJV) "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

(John 15:11 NKJV) "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

(John 15:12 NKJV) "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

(John 15:13 NKJV) "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

What is fruit? The Scriptures specify 7 types of fruit.

1. Hebrews 12:11 says that Righteousness is a fruit:
2. Romans 6:22 says that Holiness is a fruit:
3. Hebrews 13:15 names Praises as a fruit.
4. Galatians 5 describes the fruit of the Spirit
5. Colossians 1:10 labels Good Works a fruit:
6. Romans 15 calls Financial Giving a fruit:
7. Roman 1:13 says that Soul-winning is a fruit:

So we are to love the Lord, and love our neighbor. Each of the seven fruits cover both areas, but they also can be broken down more specifically on how they apply to one of the two.

I. Loving the Lord:

1. Hebrews 12:11 says that righteousness is a fruit:

*(Hebrews 12:11 KJV) Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable **fruit of righteousness** unto them which are exercised thereby.*

The first fruit to be born has to be the fruit of righteousness. Righteousness in its simplest definition means “right standing with God”. Our sin has been judged at the cross, and we can now approach the Holy God and be received by His loving arms.

How do we apply this daily, once we are saved? Righteousness once we are saved takes on another dimension, and that a continual contact with our Creator. Although we will never be separated from Him physically (damned to hell), sin in our lives will cause separation from fellowship with the Lord.

We were created to fellowship with God, sin soils our fellowship with Him:

(Revelation 4:11 KJV) Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

How do apply this daily, once we are saved. It is that continual right standing before Him – the confession of sin in our life. If I wrong someone, then there is a friction, a tension between us, until we clear this thing up. If I do not say I am wrong, and just go on my way thinking all is well, I deceive myself because next time I am in that persons presence, to them we still have something to clear up, and until we do we can not move forward in our relationship

(1 John 1:8 KJV) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

(1 John 1:9 KJV) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Confession means to “Agree with”. We agree that we have offended the Holy God. We agree His ways are right and we went against His ways in either thoughts or actions.

The joy of being clean and forgiven:

(John 15:10 KJV) If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

(John 15:11 KJV) These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

2. Romans 6:22 says that holiness is a fruit:

*(Romans 6:22 NKJV) But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have **your fruit to holiness**, and the end, everlasting life.*

(Ephesians 5:9 NKJV) (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),

Holiness means to be set apart.

Righteousness and holiness are so close, yet so different. Righteousness – Right Standing, once we are right, then we can be set apart for the Master both in fellowship and in use.

Your life begins to take on a new wholeness, not eroded by sin, not wiped out by the world. Holiness begins to grow in you, and a new wholesomeness begins to be worked out through you. Holiness means “purification”, and “sanctification”, we are set apart for God. An easy self-

examination is this, Lord how am I doing in terms of keeping your Word? Lord how different am I now compared to before I was saved.

(Romans 6:21 NKJV) What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

When I first got saved, for the first six months only me and the Lord knew I was saved. I was right before Him, but not set apart for Him. My lifestyle bore and shown no fruit.

Holiness is a healthy fear of the Lord. Loving the Lord will make you fear doing anything that would hurt Him.

(1 Th 4:7 NKJV) For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

(1 Peter 1:15 KJV) But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

(1 Peter 1:16 KJV) Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

The test is how am I doing in terms of being set apart from my old life, and old ways. Am I still doing the same things I use, am I an instrument in the Masters hand.

3. Hebrews 13:15 names praises as a fruit.

Giving thanks to the Lord is fruit in His eyes

*(Hebrews 13:15 KJV) By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, **the fruit of our lips** giving thanks to his name.*

Praises to God not only come in the form of worship, but during our prayer time of just giving Him thanks, also when we just tell people how great He is – and I'm not talking witnessing, but general conversation of my how good the Lord has been to me.

Pastor Malcolm told a story about a man that came to him and said, no offense Pastor, but your worship team just doesn't do anything for me. Malcolm said to Him, did you ever consider that worship isn't about you, it to Him and about Him.....he said ohh yea, thanks now I get it.

II. Loving our Neighbor:

4. Galatians 5 describes the fruit of the Spirit

The needs to loving relationships.

*(Galatians 5:22 NIV) But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

(Galatians 5:23 NIV) gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

If we do not exercise these fruits of the Spirit, exhibit these fruits of the Spirit, we are not loving our neighbor. We can justify it away – ohh he cut me off, ohh their dog dumped in my yard, ohh they took my parking space, I can't believe they just said that to me or about me, we can justify it away, but the fact is we are not loving our neighbor.

Forgive them Father, He said as He hung on the cross, for they know not what they do.

(Luke 23:34 KJV) Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

I ask you, how many of the fruit of the Spirit did Jesus display that day of the cross.

Love - *(John 15:13 KJV) Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

Joy - (Hebrews 12:2 KJV) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Peace – (Luke 23:43 KJV) And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Patience – (Matthew 26:40 NKJV) Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?
(Matthew 26:41 NKJV) "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Kindness – (John 19:26 KJV) When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!
(John 19:27 KJV) Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

Goodness – (John 3:16 KJV) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
(John 3:17 KJV) For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Faithfulness – (Matthew 26:42 NKJV) Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."

Gentleness – (Matthew 26:53 NKJV) "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:54 NKJV) "How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"

Self-Control – Instead of doing what was best for Him, calling fire down from heaven, never yelling out I'll be back, not jumping off the cross and saying who wants a piece of me, or jumping down and saying ok – I will prophecy – you hit me, you hit me and you. Instead of quitting, instead of saying forget it, Ray Bollas just isn't worth all this. I'm naked, I'm in pain, humiliated, he isn't worth it – Instead He said, It is Finished.

(John 19:30 KJV) When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

5. Colossians 1:10 labels good works a fruit:

(Colossians 1:10 NKJV) that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, **being fruitful in every good work** and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Serving others is a fruit, it is the natural outcome of Holiness. It is what Jesus demonstrated.

(John 4:34 NKJV) Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

(John 9:4 NKJV) "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.
(John 9:5 NKJV) "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Doing Good works can happen anywhere, we need not have to go far to do good works. At home, school, play, or the work place, we have plenty of opportunity daily to do good works.

Helping someone I might also point out, a piece of fruit has no say in who picks it or who eats it. And so too it is with us, we are to give our fruit away freely with no conditions attached. Helping someone and figuring they owe us one is not fruit, probably the greatest blessings come when we help someone who has no ability to ever pay us back, this includes the financial fruit too.

6. Romans 15 calls financial giving a fruit:

The church in Jerusalem, because of their persecution, was so poor, that the Apostle Paul was taking up a collection to take to them so that they might have money just to buy food.

*(Romans 15:26-28 NKJV) For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them **this fruit**, I shall go by way of you to Spain.*

I know sometimes it is hard to write that check, but we have to remember financial giving is a fruit. Sacrificial giving means to give to something greater than yourself.

It has been determined that if every believer tithed, then within one year every church building would be paid-off, and every hungry person in the world would be fed. Financial giving is a fruit.

7. Roman 1:13 says that soul-winning is a fruit:

Paul said “*I wish to come to Rome that I might have fruit among you*” - or, see souls saved. I believe this because of the context it is said; Paul immediately goes into that powerful verse on preaching the gospel

*(Romans 1:13 NKJV) Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might **have some fruit** among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.*

(Romans 1:14 NKJV) I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

(Romans 1:15-16 KJV) So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

And we can see the same in the context of Proverbs:

(Proverbs 11:30 KJV) The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

So are we fruitful, we have 7 benchmarks to examine ourselves by. I think it is a good idea to lay these 7 out in our devotion time each day and say “God how’s my fruit in these area, what type of fruit have I been producing? If little or none, then change me Lord; if lots, then Praise you Lord, lets do more.

1. Hebrews 12:11 says that Righteousness is a fruit:

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End of Study: The Christian Benchmarks: the 7 Fruits – 1:6

Paul's Prayer for the Body - 1:7-11

For context lets go back to verse three and start there.

(Colossians 1:3 NKJV) We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Ask anybody that works in the Post Office, address is everything. You can have great content in your letter, the right postage, even a return address, but the addressee is everything. Slow down in prayer time and start your prayer by focusing on whom you are praying to. For us the address means who am I able to call upon for help, who am I privileged to pray to. Problems can become so big in our life, that all we can see is our problem. From the waking of the morning there it is, and the restlessness of night they will haunt you in your sleep. For as vast as our God is, our problem can be so overwhelming to us that it blinds us from seeing his power. Address is everything, it puts the power before the problem.

(Colossians 1:4 NKJV) since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;

Do you notice what Paul says here, He prays for what is good in their life. I encourage you to do the same thing. When you hear something good about someone, pray for them. My tendency is to pray for those I hear are hurting or back-sliding. That is needed indeed, but it's also vital to pray for people who are doing well because the enemy will inevitably launch an attack against them in order to destroy their witness and tear down their testimony. Be like Paul. When you hear or see someone doing well, thank the Lord for him and intercede on his behalf to keep them strong and doing well.

(Colossians 1:5 NKJV) 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,

(Colossians 1:6 NKJV) 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;

(Colossians 1:7 NKJV) as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf,

(Colossians 1:8 NKJV) who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

I like Epaphras. He goes around speaking good things. He says, 'I have good news about great things happening with those guys in Colossae.'

I want to be like Epaphras — talking about how great someone is behind his or her back, for not only does this please the Lord, but it has an impact on me as well. How? To a very real degree, you are who I say you are when you're not around. You see, if all of you leave here tonight and, on your way home, talk about what an idiot I am, I will become that person to you the next time we meet. Talk negatively about me, and, even if those things are not totally true, that's what I will become in your sight. On the other hand, if you speak well of a person behind his back, that is the way you will tend to view him. The next time you see him, you will approach him with an entirely different mindset than if you had come down on him.

The power of words is awesome. For that reason, we must be very careful. Gossip good stuff. That's what Epaphras did.

(Colossians 1:9 NKJV) 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;

Although Paul had never been to Colosse, what he heard about the believers there caused his heart to rejoice and to respond by praying continual blessing upon them. This letter was written at the same time the Ephesian epistle was written, around 64AD – during Paul’s first imprisonment, yet he is praying for others.

Again, Know the things of this prayer, and you will know truth; the truth was under attack at Colosse, just as it is today in our society. These are the important issues. These are the issues of eternity. So if you want to know how to pray for your kids, grandchildren, parents, or husband — listen to Paul pray.

5 points to Paul’s prayer:

- 1. filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;**
- 2. that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him**
- 3. being fruitful in every good work**
- 4. increasing in the knowledge of God;**
- 5. strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power for all patience and longsuffering with joy;**

1. filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Now last study we saw that the will of God is for us to love the Lord and our neighbor. We also saw the seven fruits to use as a benchmark to see how we are doing. Now here in Paul’s prayer we see Paul praying specifically that the people in Colosse will be filled with the knowledge of God’s will.

The general will of God for all His children is given clearly in the Bible, Love the Lord and thy neighbor. The specific will of God for any given situation must always agree with what has already been revealed in His Word. The better we know God’s Word, the easier it will be to determine His specific guidance in daily life.

Knowledge means to become fully acquainted with.

Understanding means, “mental putting together.” It is the melding of the heart and mind. It is moving knowledge from your head, into your heart – letting the two become one. It is spiritual understanding, for only the Spirit of God can bring the two together.

We can know not to do something, we can know it is wrong, but without spiritual understanding we will not see His purposes in saying to do or not to do something.

Wisdom is the application of that knowledge and understanding in our lives.

There is a place in prayer to say help me understand what this means to me, help me to apply it to my life, reveal to me what I don’t see so I can change it.

This word “filled” means to be controlled by. When we are filled with anger, we are controlled by anger. When we are filled with the spirit, we are controlled by the Spirit. Paul’s prayer here is that the believer would be controlled by the full knowledge of God’s will.

This word “filled” carries the idea of being fully equipped. It was used to describe a ship that was ready for voyage. The believer has in Christ and His Word all they need for the voyage of life.

(Colossians 2:9 NKJV) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
(Colossians 2:10 NKJV) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Paul didn't pray for them to seek visions or wait for voices, he prayed that they might get deeper into the Word and have all wisdom necessary for making decisions and living to please God.

I use to chat with a brother in Louisiana. We talked long hours about his divorce and his wife's remarriage. He said He wanted her back, but she didn't want him, sad situation. Well one day he comes to me all happy saying I had a dream last night that me and my wife got back together. He said I believe it was a vision from the Lord, I went to my Pastor (church of several hundred) and He said it is confirmation. As much as I wanted to make him happy, I said no, that is not from the Lord. God would never give you a vision of something that is contrary to His Word. God said you shall not covet thy neighbors wife. He would not give you a passion for another man's wife, even if she use to be your wife. A few hours later he came back, he said your right, that dream doesn't line-up with the Word.

Again, the specific will of God for any given situation must always agree with what has already been revealed in His Word.

Parents pray this prayer for your children. That is what Paul is doing here, he is praying for his spiritual children. Pray this for new believers, and weak believers, and pray this for believers that are doing well so they continue to do well.

(Colossians 1:10 NKJV) that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

2. that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him

There is a place in prayer to say help me understand what this means to me, help me to apply it to my life, reveal to me what I don't see so I can change it. So I can become fully pleasing to you!

Fully pleasing – not partially, mostly, almost all, no “fully” pleasing. The word percentage means amount less than a whole. What percentage are you pleasing the Lord.

This word for pleasing, *areskeia*, ar-es'-ki-ah, is not found anywhere else in the NT but here. It means, “a preference of the will of others before our own.” This is a powerful word, it is a powerful prayer.....consider that in your daily prayer, and the power it will carry long into the day.

3. being fruitful in every good work

It says every, not some, or mostly, but every good work.

Good work, this is not a good ministry, but life. It means what is right and proper for me to do in each circumstance. This is truly the WWJD verse.

Now we are going to notice a progression here. Wisdom, to walk, to work. The sequence is important. I cannot work for God, unless I am walking with Him; but I cannot walk with Him if I do not know His will. The believer who spends time daily in the Word and prayer will know God's will and be able walk with Him and work for Him.

As we obey God's will in our life, we can work for Him and bear fruit. We will not just occasionally serve God; but we will be fruitful in every good work. Christian service is the result of Christian devotion. The work we do is the outflow of the life we live. It is abiding in Christ that we can produce fruit. Everywhere Jesus walked “good works” happened. If we are walking with Him, then it will be natural that “good works” happen again.

Now in reference to our daily ministry, daily we should say Lord my life is yours, I want to be your servant today, I want you to lead me by your spirit, I want you to overrule any wrong decisions, Lord just take control of my life. We thus just yield ourselves to the Lord, and as the day unfolds, it becomes a progressive revelation of what God has purposed and planned for me. Each day will be what He has planned for me that day, and when you cum the days together, and the years together you can see what the will of the Lord is for you in the grand scheme.

Just this past weekend on a trip to Florida, I end up sitting next to a young man from Israel on the plane. We spent two hours talking about the Old Testament, exchanged phone numbers and will be meeting for lunch. Now that morning I didn't wake-up saying Lord sit me next to an Israeli so I can witness to him. Rather God will just put things in your day, and it becomes His will for your life.

Now, daily our lives can become the progressive revelation of God's will in our life, but yes there are times when we have to make tough decisions – where should I live, where should I work, whom shall I marry. Besides the progressive revelation, we also see God work by telling us to take a step of faith and he will show us the next step after we take the first. Our problem is that we want God to give us His will first, and then we will decide if we want to go along with that.

God told Phillip to go down to Gaza, a desert place. Now where he was in Samaria God was doing great and mighty things through him and in his ministry. Phillip had reason not to go, he was in the midst of a successful evangelistic campaign. He could have rationalized that it was really what the Lord wanted, and that he was hearing wrong – after all He would never call me out of this great revival. Had he not gone to Gaza he would have never gotten the next instruction, go up to the chariot. We never get the second order because we never heed the first order – go to Gaza. Is there a Gaza in your life today, has God called you to do something but you haven't heeded the call, then you need to go to your Gaza, WHATEVER IT IS.

(Acts 8:26 NKJV) Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.

(Acts 8:27 NKJV) So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,

Besides progressive revelation and God calling us to take the first step, there are times when God clearly calls people out. In Acts when the Lord separated Paul and Barnabas, they were "ministering" to the Lord. The word for minister can be applied in two ways, praise and worship, and religious service. I suggest to you that it was both. For in the context they were ministering before this time, and then during a time of worship, God called them out. So if you are waiting to hear from God on something, then be active in your wait, serving Him, and prayer and worship.

(Acts 12:25 KJV) And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

(Acts 13:1 KJV) Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

(Acts 13:2 KJV) As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

(Acts 13:3 KJV) And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

(Acts 13:4 KJV) So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

And finally, if what you want to do does not contradict the Word, time has not erased that desire, you have a peace about it (not a feeling), if godly counsel sees nothing wrong, then you know what – choose one and go with it. If there is no sin involved, then go do what you want, because if you are loving the Lord, and loving your neighbor – then God will be in it. We care more about where we live and work than God does. He can use you anywhere, as long as He can speak to you.

Whatever God puts before you that day, be fruitful in it.

4. increasing in the knowledge of God:

Point one was knowledge of His Will, how we are to live. This point is Knowledge of Him, His very being.

Why is it that we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, and don't receive it all at once (when we get saved), because if God showed all of Himself to us at once, our little minds couldn't comprehend it all and we would have a mental meltdown.

Can I suggest something here, notice here, this is a progressive prayer. First we are filled with the knowledge of His will. This in turns leads us to walk worthy, as we walk worthy we naturally produce the fruit of good works. As we walk with the Lord, serve with the Lord, we will also naturally increase in the knowledge of the Lord. The reason people who serves grow in the knowledge of the Lord is because they see God work and believe. Their faith grows because they say I've seen God do this in others lives, I know He can do it in my life.

Besides seeing His Power in Action, as walk with Him and face the challenges of doing good works, we will see a need, and have a burden to know Him more. Challenges cause you to dig deeper in your prayer life and study life.

(Ephesians 4:11 KJV) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

(Ephesians 4:12 KJV) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

(Ephesians 4:13 KJV) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

(Ephesians 4:14 KJV) That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

(Ephesians 4:15 KJV) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

We mentioned the three marks of a mature church, thus the same three marks of the mature believer, faith, love and hope.

(Romans 10:17 KJV) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

A mark of maturity is faith. God at various times will show us our faith, not to test you for He is omniscient, He knows where you are at, but He will test you to show you where you are at – where your faith is. As your faith grows, the farther you will step out. I'll give ten percent and watch God meet all my needs. I'll take my hands off this situation, and watch God handle it. Or, it may be that the test shows you how weak you really are. God will show you how overrated you are, either in your mind or by your peers. We so often think we are such people of faith until a situation that requires faith comes, and we crumble. We don't seek the Lord, we let fear control us, or we try to handle it in the flesh and everything falls apart. As our knowledge grows, so will our faith

Increase in the knowledge of God, and you will withstand any heresy, and walk through any trial.

(Colossians 1:11 NKJV) strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

5. strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

all might, dunamis, doo'-nam-is. Same word used in Acts 1:8.

(Acts 1:8 KJV) But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Notice the tie here, we are strengthened through His power. He doesn't ask us to be powerful in ourselves.

See the progression of this prayer – strengthened with might. First we are filled with the knowledge of His will. This in turn leads us to walk worthy, as we walk worthy we naturally produce the fruit of good works. As we walk with the Lord, serve with the Lord, we will also naturally increase in the knowledge of the Lord. The reason people who serve grow in the knowledge of the Lord is because they see God work and believe. Their faith grows because they say I've seen God do this in others lives, I know He can do it in my life. Then as I see His power, I am strengthened, because His power isn't some story I read about, but saw experienced in real lives.

Patience and Longsuffering. It's a long haul brethren. But it is to be with Joy. Suffering with joy. Every see people suffer with those suffering faces. They will depress you.

I use to run the 440 back in High School Track, at Elizabeth Forward HS. It was 440 yards of grueling pain and suffering. You see one lap around the track is 440yds. You couldn't sprint the whole way, but nor could you run anything less than a near sprint. 440 yds of grueling pain. For me the middle was the worst part. At the start I have the excitement (this could be the day I set the record), the finish I can see the end (yes it is almost over), but the middle – it was the middle (at that point I really didn't care about records and awards, all I cared about was not embarrassing myself by heaving in front of 1000 people). I was too far in to quit, and ohh I have such a long way to go. I am dying here, and I am only half way done.

Well the same can be true in a sense of our Christian Walk. In the beginning we have all this excitement. Maybe I'll be the next Billy, or now that I'm favored of the Lord He will bring me that dream mate, or if God be for me, who can be against me – hmmm little did we know that Satan the world, and the flesh would be against us, at time we would even question if God was for us. In the End, hopefully we should say "Soon and very soon, I'm gona see the King". But it is this middle part, it is long, and yes sometimes even grueling. Lord we need strengthened with all might, according to your glorious power to make it through.

It is not talent or training that guarantees us victory, it is perseverance. By perseverance the snails reached the ark.

It is always too soon to quit – Charles Spurgeon.

- 1. filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;**
- 2. that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him**
- 3. being fruitful in every good work**
- 4. increasing in the knowledge of God;**
- 5. strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power for all patience and longsuffering with joy;**

End of Study: Paul's Prayer for the Body - 1:7-11

Christ the Head of the Body - 1:12-23

Know this truth.....

The truth about the Christ. If you don't know the truth about Christ, then you will never know the truth about your life.

Lets start in verse 12. Verse 12 is not a petition of this prayer, but a thanksgiving. Believers don't need to ask for these things, we already have received them upon salvation. Our prayers should always include thanksgiving. A believer who is filled with the Spirit, the Word and watching in prayer will prove it by attitude of appreciation and thanksgiving for all God has done.

(Colossians 1:12 NKJV) giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

(Colossians 1:13 NKJV) He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

If you are going to race in the Daytona 500 this year you have to qualify (meet the requirements) beforehand; you can't show up on the day of the race and enter. Most always we say it is through the Son that we have access to the Father; but notice something here (it is so beautiful,) it is the Father bringing us into the Son's kingdom.

(Colossians 1:12 NKJV) giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

(Colossians 1:13 NKJV) He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

The Scriptures are so true and perfect. Why is it the Father bringing us into the Son's kingdom here in this verse? because this epistle is about Christ, about Him being the Head of the body. We see this beautiful union between the Father and the Son – and the Spirit in the background leading and guiding people in and to the truth about the Christ. Twenty-six times in this epistle Christ is mentioned, 6 times the Father, and only one time the Spirit.

(John 6:44 KJV) No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

(Colossians 1:13 NKJV) He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

(Colossians 1:14 NKJV) in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

What have we to be thankful for? Man's greatest problem is sin – a problem that can never be solved by a philosopher or a religious teacher. Sinners need a Saviour, and here is what our Savior has done for us:

v.13 – Delivered Us: means “rescued from danger.” The sword of God's judgment was hanging over our heads. Also, we were delivered from the authority of Satan and the power of darkness.

v.13 – Translated Us (Conveyed Us -KJV): this word was used to describe the deportation of a population from country into another. IE, the Jews were moved from Israel to Babylon. Jesus has translated us from Satan's kingdom of darkness and hate into His kingdom of light and love.

v.14 - Redeemed Us: this word means “to release a prisoner by payment of a ransom.” Satan's accusations are futile for the debt of our sins have been paid in full. Jesus is the ultimate Special Ops Warrior. He stormed the gates of Hell and released the all the prisoners that were/are loyal to Him. He is a Warrior, He is the Mighty God.

v.14 – Forgiven Us: this word means “to carry away” or “cancel a debt”. Redemption and forgiveness go together. Satan can not find anything in the files that will indict us, the files have been purged clean. If Jesus has a file cabinet, then every folder in it is empty. Now if satan has a file cabinet, his accusation files, there may be a folder with your name on it, but the contents are empty because Jesus purged your files, deleted your records of wrongs. I go on to wonder, if there is a Lambs Book of Life, I wonder if there is a Wolf’s Book of Death; if so your name wouldn’t be in there either. If satan has an accounting system, a database (probably Microsoft, cause sometimes I think he helped design it), then next to your name it would read, “Paid in Full”, then next to everyone else it would say, “played the fool.”.

Ohh how important to remember thanksgiving before you pray.

Breakout of the next few verses:

Verses 15-19 issue is the deity of Jesus Christ.

Verses 20-22 the issue is the death of Jesus Christ

(Colossians 1:15 NKJV) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

These false teachers were very confused about creation. Same holds true today doesn’t it

People have lots of ideas about what God is like.

The Hindu says, 'God must be loving, benevolent, and gentle. Therefore, He must be a cow.'

The American Indian, watching an eagle soar endlessly and majestically upon the wind currents, says, 'God is an eagle.' The ancient Egyptian sees the awesome power of the sun and says, 'God is Ra. God is the sun.' Each culture speaks a partial truth, but all miss the total picture because they're blind. And so was all of humanity. So what did God do? He came and dwelt among us in the Person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when I want to know what God is like, I don't have to try and figure out His nature — I can study the life of Jesus Christ for He alone reveals God in totality. He alone is the 'image of the invisible God.'

the firstborn over all creation.

'The firstborn of every creature' doesn't mean first in chronology, but first in priority. Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults will use this verse to erroneously say that, because Jesus was the firstborn, He was created, and therefore not eternal. But such is not the case, for God refers to Jacob and Ephraim as firstborn (Jeremiah 31:9), even though both had older brothers, illustrating the fact that the Greek word, 'protokos', translated 'firstborn', doesn't speak of chronology but of priority. Solomon was not the first born of David’s children, yet he was named the firstborn (ps 89:27). Isaac was born after Ismael, but was first in priority (Gen 17:19). Jacob was born after Esau, but was first in priority.

(Jeremiah 31:9 KJV) They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

(Psalms 89:27 KJV) Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

(Genesis 17:19 KJV) And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

(Genesis 17:20 KJV) And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

(Genesis 17:21 KJV) But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

(Genesis 25:25 KJV) And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

(Genesis 25:26 KJV) And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

(Colossians 1:16 NKJV) 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.

This, gang, is the secret of life. Jesus is not the created one, He is the Creator.

(Revelation 4:11 KJV) Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

What does that mean? It means this day is made for Him and the only way it will work is if I live for Him because, in so doing, I will be fulfilling the only reason I was created

'I don't like that,' you might say. 'I don't like the implications or the restriction.' And the Lord would say to you, 'Tough. That's the way life works. And when you live your life to know Me, you'll find your life working. But if you don't you're sure to crash . . .'

I could say, 'I'd like to see the city tonight. So I'll just rev up my car, drive off the Key Bridge, hit the accelerator, and fly over the city. It'll be great!' But the fact is, my car was not made to fly. So too, people say, 'I'm going to fly high and live for myself.' But they crash because they weren't made for any other purpose than to glorify God. *That's why they exist. All things were made by and for Jesus — the Firstborn, the Preeminent One.*

(Colossians 1:17 NKJV) And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

That word consist means “to hold together”

There's an interesting law of science called Coulomb's Law of Electricity which very simply says like charges repel. If you have a magnet in your right hand and a magnet in your left hand, and you push the positive ends towards each other, they push away. Opposite charges attract; like charges repel. But here's a great mystery: In the nucleus of the atom, protons are packed together which are *all* positive-charged particles.

What keeps these positive-charged protons from repelling like the magnets? What holds them together? Science doesn't know. You can study Quantum Physics and learn lots of hypotheses and theories, yet to this day, it's a mystery to scientists — but not to believers, for Scripture tells us the real answer. It is Jesus Christ Who holds all things together. And the day is coming when, suddenly, He will let go . . .

(2 Peter 3:10 KJV) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

(2 Peter 3:11 KJV) Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

This was written, of course, before man knew anything about nuclear physics or about things being dissolved instantaneously. But now we know if the 'atomic glue' which holds the atom together were to suddenly disappear, everything would dissolve in zillion-degree 'fervent heat' accompanied by a 'great noise' so powerful and quick it wouldn't even be heard.

(Isaiah 65:17 KJV) For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

Everything will vaporize, evaporate as if it never existed. Not only that, but in heaven, even the memory will be taken away. Think about that next time you're hammering, painting, fixing your house. Of course, we should be good stewards of the things with which God has blessed us, but

we must have the right perspective, always remembering that the things of this earth are temporary. My favorite escape clause when everything seems to stink is “its all gona burn.”

By *Him* all things are held together — not just physically, but in my life personally. My emotions, my family, my mental stability — He holds it all together. I forget that sometimes.

So a day or two pass by and I've spent no time with Him, and it seems like everything starts falling apart in my life; it is because I am not letting Him hold all things together in my life.

My marriage is falling apart – when was the last time you prayed with her husband. The kids just don't respond to me – when was the last time you walked and talked to them about the things of the Lord.

Things fall apart, and I fly off the handle whenever I take myself out of His custody and say, 'Lord, that's MY thing. That's MY situation, MY problem, MY challenge. I'LL deal with it!' No. By *Him* all things are held together. By *Him* all things consist.

(Colossians 1:18 NKJV) 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.

Others have risen from the dead — like Lazarus, and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7). Even in the Old Testament, there was the widow's son in the day of Elisha (II Kings 4). But they all died again. Jesus alone has priority, has preeminence, is the Firstborn from the dead because He alone rose never to die again.

that in all things He may have the preeminence.

It is the Father's intent that in all things the Son should have preeminence over each day you begin and every decision you make. He wants preeminence over you, your family, and every detail of your life, every decision you make.

(Colossians 1:19 NKJV) For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,

The word translated “fullness” is the Greek word “pleroma - play'-ro-mah”. It was a technical term in the vocabulary of these false teacher at the time. It meant “the sum total of all the divine power and attributes.” Paul uses their term against them, applying their word to describe Christ. He uses their lingo they can relate too, but shows them where they should truly relate it too.

Do you feel empty? Well all the fullness is in Jesus. All fullness is in Jesus. Therefore, the closer I am to Jesus, the fuller I will be as a man. Conversely, the further I pull away from Jesus, the emptier I'll feel inside. All of creation centers around Jesus, is held together by Jesus, points to Jesus, and finds its fulfillment in Jesus.

I like what Pastor John said, It's all about Jesus. Some people compartmentalize their Christianity like a Swanson's TV Dinner. They've got their recreation section, their relationship section, their financial section, their hobby section, and their Christian section. So on Sunday they concentrate on church; Monday through Friday on money; evenings on relationships, and Saturday on sports and hobbies. But ultimately, they find it frustrating and ineffective because God intended our lives not to be TV dinners, but chicken pot pies - all stirred together, so that when we're skiing, we're praising God for the beauty around us; when we're at work, we're praying, 'Lord, help me use this as a point of ministry'; when we're with family, we're seeking not a break *from* service, but an opportunity *to* serve. It's all mixed together. It is not compartmentalized. It is everywhere you go, everything you do, it is Jesus.

People are depressed today because they don't get this. If you continue to 'TV-Dinner' it, you're going to be depressed and discouraged. But it won't be because God is punishing you. It will

simply be the result of your failure to understand that Jesus holds all things *together*, that in Him all fullness dwells.

This is the key to life: All things were made by me, and for me, and I hold all things together, and in me is the fullness you are longing for. God has given you the secret of life, and it is so simple anyone can grab it. So in all we do, we say ok Lord I want you to be the focus of it, and included in it.

Verses 15-19 issue is the deity of Jesus Christ.
Verses 20-22 the issue is the death of Jesus Christ

(Colossians 1:20 NKJV) 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. (Colossians 1:21 NKJV) And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled (Colossians 1:22 NKJV) in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight;

What does 'reconcile' mean? Reconcile simply means "to be off." Simply this: If I said to you, 'Meet me at McDonald's at 7:45, and don't be late,' you would probably say to me, 'What time do you have right now?' — and we would reconcile our watches. In other words, we would come to a common ground; we would align ourselves one with the other so we wouldn't be off.

Notice Paul says we are reconciled to God — not He to us. God didn't change His watch. No, we were the ones who were messed up and out of sync. But Jesus came to reconcile us to the Father.

(Colossians 1:23 NKJV) 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.

Now remember the context of this epistle. The truth was under attack, cults were moving in, people were being turned. Paul writes to correct heresy – and he give a stern warning.

Because of Jesus' work on the Cross, we can be presented to God as holy and blameless if we *continue* on in faith. Therefore, I cannot in good conscience assure a person who walked forward at a crusade twenty years ago, or who was baptized six summers ago in the amphitheatre but has not kept on with the Lord, that he will be presented to the Father as being holy and blameless.

Look at the definition of the words used here:

If - eige, i'-gheh; if indeed, seeing that, unless, (with neg.) otherwise:--if (so be that, yet).

Continue - epimeno, ep-ee-men'-o; to stay over, i.e. remain (fig. persevere):--abide (in), continue (in), tarry.

Grounded - themeloo, them-el-ee-o'-o; to lay a basis for, i.e. (lit.) erect, or (fig.) consolidate:--(lay the) found (-ation), ground, settle.

Settled - hedraios, hed-rah'-yos; (to sit); sedentary, i.e. (by impl.) immovable:--settled, stedfast.

Away - metakineo, met-ak-ee-neh'-o; to stir to a place elsewhere, i.e. remove (fig.):--move away.

which was preached to every creature under heaven,

Paul reminds us that God makes Himself known to *every* creature. Creation around and conscience within the heart of every man are continual messages to people that there is a Creator. God is fair, and will judge each man fairly, according to the knowledge given him (Romans 1-2).

End of Study: Christ the Head of the Body - 1:12-23

Christ in You, the Hope of Glory – 1:24-27

Know this truth.....

Last study was that everything is centered in Him, He is to have preeminence (first priority) in all things of our life, and only through Him will we have fullness. Those are powerful statements, but how does that work practically in my life, how do I claim those things and enjoy all that comes with them.....the answer is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

(Colossians 1:24 NKJV) 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,

Wait a minute, Paul. Are you saying what Jesus did on the Cross is incomplete, that the reason you suffer is to fill up or complete that which He began on the Cross? It's a tricky verse because it is the basis for the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, which states that there must be a continuance of suffering, particularly by those who have not fully embraced the work of the Cross.

Is that what's being said here? No because in the verses 17-18 says that Christ is the center of all things, He holds all things together, and in Him alone is fullness. And, in verses 20-22 says we are reconciled, made blameless through His death. So clearly in the context of this chapter that is not what he is saying. That is why verse-by-verse teaching is so important so you read in context.

The suffering of Paul was not a redemptive suffering:

(1 Timothy 2:4 KJV) Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

(1 Timothy 2:5 KJV) For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

(1 Timothy 2:6 KJV) Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Paul's suffering was the fulfillment, of what God said would happen to Paul when he started to minister in the name of the Lord (the next study will cover Paul the minister to the body).

(Acts 9:15 KJV) But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

(Acts 9:16 KJV) For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Paul is saying it is not the completion of, but rather conformity to Christ's suffering . . .

(Philippians 3:10 KJV) That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

This mistake we make is in thinking that the ultimate God wants of us is the sacrifice of death. What God wants is the sacrifice **through** death, which enables us to do what Jesus did, that is, sacrifice our lives. Not—"Lord, I am ready to go with You . . . to death" (Luke 22:33). But—"I am willing to be identified with Your death so that I may sacrifice my life to God."

(Luke 22:33 KJV) And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

It is a matter of loosening the bands that hold back our lives. Those bands are loosened immediately by identification with the death of Jesus. Then we enter into a relationship with God whereby we may sacrifice our lives to Him.

It is of no value to God to give Him your life for death - only. He wants you to be a "living sacrifice"—to let Him have all your strengths that have been saved and sanctified through Jesus (Romans 12:1). This is what is acceptable to God.

(Romans 12:1 KJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

(Romans 12:2 KJV) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Again, I stress, Paul is saying it is not the completion of, but rather conformity to Christ's suffering

Make us like You, Lord,' we pray, and the Lord says, 'OK, but it cannot happen without suffering.' Suffering does some amazing things . . .

First, suffering draws us closer to Christ..

It must allow be remembered that God Himself left the throne, became man, and suffered the same things we do. He understands rejection, death of a loved one, to be hungry, cold, tired, stressed, unemployment, friends who leave ya, friends who turn on you.

Precious people, God will allow suffering in your life in order that you can relate to Him in a deeper way than you ever did before. But if you get thrown by it, you miss the opportunity for the fellowship of His suffering.

You can say, Lord, when that loved one past away, I can relate to what it must have been like for you to give you only Son.

Last week I sat with a mother in North Arundel hospital who had just lost her 19 year old son in a traffic accident. She asked why would God allow this to happen, where was God, and where is He now. I told her God is here now, His everloving arms are holding you right now, receive Him, because the Heavenly Father knows what it is to lose a son, for He gave His only begotten Son freely on the cross for your and mine sin, and prove no greater love for us. He knows what you are going through. And when we suffer a loved one death, we know He can relate, and we can somewhat relate to what the Lord Himself suffered.

I can remember when I lived in Louisiana and I was in a car accident. I had to take my precious Alex to the emergency room, ambulance ride and all. She had a major gash over her eye, and my heart would break when I looked into those beautiful six years old blue eyes. She was so innocent, so gentle and loving. The doctor came and said we will have to use stitches to close it up. I'll never forget the look on her face, those beautiful eyes saying Mr Ray you won't let them do that, please don't let them do that she cried. My heart broke, and I said Alex I'll do what ever is best for you. So they wrapped her in a blanket to keep her still, injected the needle to numb the area, and she cried a cry that would break any fathers heart, and I wasn't even here dad. All the nurses were even crying, nobody could stand to see her in that pain. I remember her holding my hand throughout the surgery, and so many times I said ohh Lord if only it were me, if only I could take her place and her pain. At that moment, I had just a glimpse of what it must have be for God the Father to watch Jesus suffer that day on the cruel Roman cross.

You can say, 'Lord, when I lost the election for study body president because I was a Christian, I felt a tiny bit of what You must have felt when they said, 'We will not have this man rule over us. Away with Him.'

You can say, 'Lord, I was dating him for years and he told me to pack sand. Now I can relate to how You must feel when people You love turn their back on You time and time again.' You can be a friend of God in a deeper way if you embrace suffering.

Secondly, suffering produces assurances in our hearts.

Suffering is a promise to all believers.....note, I say all believers:

(John 15:20 KJV) Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

(2 Timothy 3:12 KJV) Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

If you're not suffering, guess what. It means you're not living godly. It could even mean you're not a Christian. So when you suffer say, 'Thank You, Lord! This is great! I know I'm one of Yours because they're beating up on me just like they beat up on You.'

Thirdly, suffering promises rewards in heaven.

(2 Corinthians 4:17 KJV) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

I promise you, when you get to heaven, you won't say, 'It wasn't worth it! I suffered through cancer without murmuring. I accepted it as a way to bring You glory, Father — but now that I'm in heaven, it isn't so hot. No. When you get there, you're going to say, 'My goodness. I made such a big thing about my deal on earth. But it was nothing compared to this! Even though I murmured, cried, and maybe even cursed, You loved me enough to allow suffering in my life. Thank You, Lord.'

What are some of those rewards in heaven? Next point:

Fourthly, suffering results in the salvation of others.

In Acts 28, Paul writes about a snake, which fastened its fangs onto him. The islanders looked at the serpent hanging from his hand and thought, 'This guy's a murderer. That's why the snake has bitten him.' But when Paul didn't fall down dead and instead shook the snake off, the barbarians changed their minds, saying, 'He's a god.' And Paul used the opportunity to say, 'I'm not a god — but God in Christ Jesus lives inside me.'

Why does God allow suffering? Because it gives you the opportunity to show the barbarians who are very skeptical about us the reality of faith. When your spouse leaves you, when the child is taken Home unexpectedly; when the doctor says, 'It's malignant', when the boss says, 'you're through' — people expect us to fall down dead. But you have the chance to shake it off and embrace the suffering. And if you make that choice, cynics change their minds about Christians because they see the reality of your faith.

Finally, suffering silences Satan.

(Job 1:20 KJV) Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

(Job 1:21 KJV) And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

(Job 1:22 KJV) In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

Job lost everything — his health, family, and wealth. Satan took everything but his wife — and even she said, 'Curse God and die.'. But Job wouldn't, and Satan was defeated once again.

(Colossians 1:25 NKJV) 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,

(Colossians 1:26 NKJV) the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

(Colossians 1:27 NKJV) 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.

Here it is folks, the answer to all our failures and frustrations, and it is not a mystery, it is Christ in YOU.....

When you come across the word, 'mystery' in your Bible, understand this: It doesn't mean something which cannot be known, but rather something now made known which was previously incomprehensible. *That's* the idea of biblical mystery. It's something that was talked about previously and prophesied historically, but was unable to be understood practically until the veil was lifted spiritually

The mystery is Christ living in you, not just telling you what to do.

I spent hours upon hours listening to the audiotape and reading the book my parents gave me that year - 1972. I was playing little league baseball, where I desired to bat over .300. The audiotape and book was of Pete Rose the major league record holder of most hits, it was also the year after my baseball hero, Roberto Clemente of the Pittsburgh Pirates had died in a plane crash – in his last week of playing Roberto reached the 3,000 hit milestone.

I listened to the audio, followed in the book the way Rose pivoted his feet. I watched the way he snapped his hips. I watched the way he kept his arm behind him until the chest broke through the 'glass wall' before it came through and snapped those wrists. Truly, it was a thing of beauty! But although I listened and watched a hundreds of times, and although I tried an equal number of times in the batting cages to duplicate what Rose did, I never came close.

So too, a lot of Christians are looking at the film loops. They study the Scriptures by the hour, which is wonderful, but it will ultimately lead to frustration until they understand the mystery. You see, if Pete Rose could have left that audiotape and taken up residence within my body, I would have planted my feet just right, have pivoted my hips perfectly, , snapped my wrist just right, and batted to be the all-star I desired so much to be.

'*This is the mystery,*' writes Paul. '*This is what I'm coming to share with you. It's not you being like Christ. It's Christ in you, showing you how to pray, what to do, and how to spend your time as He writes His will on your heart,*'

(Jeremiah 31:31 KJV) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

(Jeremiah 31:32 KJV) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

(Jeremiah 31:33 KJV) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

(Jeremiah 31:34 KJV) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

It's not imitation.

It's impartation.

It's Christ *in* us — the hope of glory!

Perfection in Christ is singular, based not upon anything we can do, but upon all He has done — not upon our works, **but upon His work in us.**

End of Study: Christ in You, the Hope of Glory – 1:24-27

Paul the Minister to the Body – 1:23-2:3

Know this truth.....

The enemy and the world will say to us, that we can't really make a difference in this world. Jesus said wrong, the truth is one person can, and you are one person.

(Colossians 1:23 NKJV) 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.

(Colossians 1:24 NKJV) 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,

(Colossians 1:25 NKJV) 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,

(Colossians 1:26 NKJV) the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

(Colossians 1:27 NKJV) 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.

(Colossians 1:28 NKJV) Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Notice here in verse 28, **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.** Paul wants them to be perfect, perfect here means mature. He wanted to bring them to maturity in Christ

Verse 28 Paul sums up Pastoral Ministry, as he wants to bring people to maturity in Christ: he warns, and he teaches.

Warning and teaching; The role of the preacher is to comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable.

Although not all serve in the Pastoral sense as we see it, a man behind the pulpit who we seek counsel from. Truly we all serve in the Pastoral role in our lives. Husband's Pastor their homes, Wives pastor the children, maybe even more than the husbands do. Christians should bring Pastoral leadership in the workplace (warning and teaching, ministering to the hurting). We all serve in this role

Paul preached, he warned, his life was to present every man perfect in Christ. Always the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible, Acts 20 gives the best commentary on this extra ordinary Minister.

(Acts 20:17 NKJV) From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

(Acts 20:18 NKJV) And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,

(Acts 20:19 NKJV) "serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

(Acts 20:20 NKJV) "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

(Acts 20:21 NKJV) "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

(Acts 20:24 NKJV) "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

(Acts 20:25 NKJV) "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

(Acts 20:26 NKJV) "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

Verse 26, he is innocent of blood. The KJV says "pure". The word katharos, kath-ar-os'; means clean (lit. or fig.):--clean, clear, pure. - Paul is saying I've done all I could do, I can only present, the rest is up to them - it is their decision. My conscience is clear.....

Now precious people, should someone you know perish without knowing the Lord, it is not your fault; they made their own decision. We see the biblical example:

(Acts 18:5 KJV) And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

(Acts 18:6 KJV) And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

If your family or friend was sleeping on the couch, and the house caught on fire, you would be considered a nut case if you went around the house straightening the pictures up rather than waking them because you didn't want to wake them and risk upsetting them because they were resting. Don't wake up someday and wish you would have said something, you are one person remember! The cleansing is for our sake, our peace of mind of knowing we did all we could do.

I remember my friend Harold T., we worked at the space center together. I shared the gospel with Harold, and I do not know what his decision was on it. One day Harold, was slow in mind, and late in age, walked out onto the railroad track, put his thumbs on his suspenders, and waited for the train.....the only possible comfort I could get was knowing that I shared with Him.

But my memory will never forget Rich, he was a VP type at the space center, I'd say hello as I passed him on the site, small chitchat. One day I was leaving late, and he was out at the picnic table across the way smoking. I felt the Lord say go share with him, I blew it off, said I'd do it tomorrow. Well tomorrow came and I was sitting at my desk when word came to me, Rich had a heart attack that morning.....I knew salvation was his decision, but I knew the Lord wanted to reach out to him and show God's love to him, and God had chosen me to be that vessel. As I have said before if I chose not to be used, God will use someone else, but I'll miss out on being used by the one who created the heavens and earth, and would actually be willing to use me for His glory.

Continuing On:

(Acts 20:27 NKJV) "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

Verse 27, the whole counsel of God. Folks don't get on pet peeves, end times, abortion activists, gay agendas, give them the whole counsel. Verse by verse, because the whole counsel always brings to the central theme, and central message, God loves you, and demonstrated it on the cross. That is what gets people saved, and that is what will change lives, not being an activist for your cause, however just and true it is; if you leave the whole counsel out, you will miss the central message, and so will they.

When I lived in Florida they had this big thing, all the churches were suppose to boycott Disney because they supported Gay Rights. Now how are people going to see the love of Christ through a boycott? To them all they see is anger and hatred, and condemning people. Give them the whole counsel, and in it they will see the central message and the central theme, so it will be warning balanced by love.

(Acts 20:28 NKJV) "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

(Acts 20:29 NKJV) "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

(Acts 20:30 NKJV) "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Verse 29-30, his teaching and warning was to protect them from the wolves. It is heart breaking to watch satan chewing people up and then leaving them lay in the gutter. It is not a matter of I

told you so, but a matter of a heart that breaks to see people hurting unnecessarily. There is so much suffering in the world (illness, unemployment, loved ones lost), it hurts so much to see people suffer for something that could have been avoided. If only they would have listened to the whole counsel of God.

(Acts 20:31 NKJV) "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

(Acts 20:32 NKJV) "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

(Acts 20:33 NKJV) "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

(Acts 20:34 NKJV) "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

(Acts 20:35 NKJV) "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

(Acts 20:36 NKJV) And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

(Acts 20:37 NKJV) Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,

(Acts 20:38 NKJV) sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Verses 31-33, he warned night and day – with tears. He pleaded with people, and it was never for gain. Check your motive of why you share. Is it pride because you want people to get saved so they quit thinking you are a nut, is it because a saved spouse or child will make your life more enjoyable....ohh we can go to church together and talk about the Lord, or is it because your heart breaks at the thought of them spending eternity in hell. You need to examine your heart to see why you plead, because it will make a difference in your witness and prayer for the lost.

(Colossians 1:29 NKJV) To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

It's His working in me, and His workings in me are mighty. Yes, Paul labors and strives, but he points out that it is not him, but the Lord working in him. Folks ministry can be tough at times, we will be tired, it will be agonizing, but that doesn't mean God is not into whatever work it is you are doing. Paul himself said he ministered with tears. Look at the words used here:

Labor/Work - kopiao, kop-ee-ah'-o; to feel fatigue; by impl. to work hard:--(bestow) labour, toil, be wearied.

Striving according - agonizomai, ag-o-nid'-zom-ahee; to struggle, lit. (to compete for a prize), fig. (to contend with an adversary), or gen. (to endeavor to accomplish something):--fight, labor fervently, strive.

But Paul gives the key, it is through God's power, not ours. Jesus agonized in the garden, but He kept ministering, for it was the joy that was set before Him that he finished the work God called Him to.

(Hebrews 12:2 KJV) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Today so many people are quitting the ministry cause things are tough. I've been told, the Priest at the OT Temple wore linen garments, in typology it means you are not to be sweating in the ministry, if you are sweating then you are in the flesh.

So many people are quitting the ministry cause things are tough. If they are not tough, then I'd be worried. If I were Paul, at which point would I quit and say, I must be in the flesh; God's not supporting this ministry:

(2 Corinthians 11:24 KJV) Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

(2 Corinthians 11:25 KJV) Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;
(2 Corinthians 11:26 KJV) In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;
(2 Corinthians 11:27 KJV) In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.
(2 Corinthians 11:28 KJV) Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

On fourth and goal at the one, I always expected severe opposition from my opponent. Christian, it is fourth and goal on the one-yard line, eternity is at stake, of course the enemy is going to be throwing everything he has against you. He will cause disruption in your family, child rearing, mission trips, and ministries inside and outside the church. Keep working, agonizing if need be, but don't quit.

Back to Colossians 1:29:

(Colossians 1:29 NKJV) To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Let his power work through you. When the Lord is working in us, there is an efficiency thing that is going on. It is His energy working in us

To His Working - where we get our word Energy. *energeia*, en-erg'-i-ah; efficiency ("energy")--operation, strong, (effectual) working / **Which work** -. *energeo*, en-erg-eh'-o; to be active, efficient--do, (be) effectual (fervent), be mighty in, shew forth self, work (effectually in).

in me mightily - en, en; a prim. prep. denoting (fixed) position (in place, time or state), and (by impl.) instrumentality (medially or constructively), i.e. a relation of rest (intermediate between "in,"

It is an energy to continue against all the oppositions and struggles.

We will struggle against opposition, but here in lies the key to not striving in ourselves:

Mom and Dad, that which you will most effectively communicate to your kids is that which works in you. Sunday School teacher, youth worker, home group leader — what will ultimately be fruitful in your ministry is that which has personally been worked through and lived out by *you*. So many ministries lack power because they are based on sharing concepts which are true but lack impact because they haven't been worked out in the life of the teacher.

Gang, I'll tell you what to share with your kids, neighbors, Bible study group, or third-grade Sunday School class: Share what works in *your* life. It's not how much you know, it's how well you know what you know. Has what you're teaching been worked through you? Has it become a part of you? When I have a week of solid prayer and morning devotion, I am walking in power because I am so intimately close to the Father. When someone tells me they are struggling, I share with them the power of prayer and devotion with the Lord and how you will be drawn close to Him.....those words just flow from me, they impact people because they can see it works for me. When I tell them how I've committed to putting my wife's needs before my own, and how beautiful our marriage has become, they can see it. How at my job I go to work to serve the Lord first, not worrying that boss man recognizes me, they can see the peace peace I have, and know that it is something I've worked out in my life.

If you share only what you've heard from others, your teaching will be dry. However, if, like Paul, you share that which 'worketh in you mightily', your teaching will be anointed because it will truly be Christ *in* you, ministering the hope of glory. You just minister what works, and as God brings you into deeper maturity with Him, you will share more of what works for you. You will never be striving in your flesh, it will be the things of the spirit naturally flowing from you. The striving will

be the opposition of the enemy, and that is a good thing, cause you will know you are on the right track.

(Colossians 2:1 NKJV) 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,
(Colossians 2:2 NKJV) 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,
(Colossians 2:3 NKJV) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul wants to come and teach them so that they may grow in understanding and knowledge, and that they be knitted together in love.

Here is my ministry philosophy – Win, Disciple, and Send. Win people to the Lord, teach them the Word, and then send them out to win, disciple, and send themselves. It is the great multiplier effect.

Let's suppose that you and four other friends decided to spend the next 20 years of your lives reaching the world for Christ. You got your heads together, plotted your strategy, and laid out your plan. Each of you would commit yourselves to a plan of spiritual addition, setting up meetings or personally to share Christ with at least 25 people every day, for 20 years. That means that you would collectively share Christ with nearly one million people. Now that would be some kind of accomplishment.

But reaching one million people is never going to reach the world, so you decide to find a different strategy. Each year you and your four friends would select two individuals whom you would disciple, training them to feed themselves from the Word, showing them how to share their faith and how to minister to new Christians. At the end of one year each of your disciples would be ready to disciple two more Christians.

However,

- There would now be 15 of you involved in discipleship ministries—not a big crowd, but it's a start.
- if each of you trained two more for a year, you would then have a total of 45,
- the next year 135,
- and the next year 405. You would have developed a multiplication network.
- In ten years there would be 295,000 in your multiplication network. (Note – in the addition process we would have been at 500,000, but hold on)
- In fifteen years you would have 71,744,535
- and in 21 years over six billion— the present population of the world!

Now, not everyone is going to become a multiplying disciple at one-year intervals. God works uniquely in everyone's life. And of course there will be dropouts. But the point is still well made. If you want to reach people with the message of Christ you will want to do it through multiplication. It's God's idea (Genesis 1:27; 2 Timothy 2:2).

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul gives us a clear picture of how we can begin to be spiritual multipliers.

(2 Timothy 2:2 NKJV) And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Our ministry of multiplication really begins when we apply the first words of 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things you have heard from me."

1. Personal Spiritual Growth

To be one who is giving out to others we first need to be taking in spiritual food ourselves. In other words, to be a disciple, you need to be discipled. You need to be learning from someone who is leading you. In 2 Timothy 2:2 we have four generations of spiritual multiplication. Paul is the first, Timothy is the second, faithful men are the third, and others are the fourth. Multiplying spiritual training from one generation to another had to begin with Paul and the specific things he taught Timothy. Are you learning? Just think if you could pass it to your children, and they pass it on to theirs.

What are the three most important things you would teach your disciples? What works for you, what do you want to impart to your spouse, kids, those the Lord would have you disciple?

For me:

1. Inductive Bible Study
2. The 5 P's of evangelism
3. ACTS - prayer

As we said earlier, share the things that are working in your life. If you have something that really works for you, then find others to pass it on to. It may work for them too, for a season or a life time, but before you can give it out, you have to first work it out in your life.

2. Pass It On

The second part of 2 Timothy 2:2 is this, “these things [that you have learned] entrust to faithful men.”

The dictionary tells us that entrust means to invest a trust or a responsibility; to commit as if with trust or confidence. In this verse Paul is not talking about just casual communication from one Christian to another. He is talking about building leaders—people who will be entrusted with communicating the most critical message in the world, and that requires trust and faithfulness.

If you had the cure for cancer, who would you trust with the message? Why?

Paul is not talking about men and women who are just faithful believers, but faithful in the sense of trustworthy, true to one's word, loyal, can be relied upon, thorough. So when Paul is talking about entrusting faithful men, he is talking about investing his time in people who are loyal. These people will take what they have learned and pass it on to others.

Paul was talking about people who were not quitters, but those who would stick with the job. Make time for them, go out of your way for them, invest in them and watch the Lord work.

3. Develop Leaders

The third thing Paul tells Timothy is that he is to enlist faithful ones “who will be able to teach others also.”

When Paul tells Timothy to invest his life in able men he is talking about people who will someday be able to lead, leaders of multiplication. Who is an able person?

First, he is someone who has ability, but not unique abilities. Leading is something we can all do, whether we are leading large numbers of people or just a few. We don't have to be exceptionally gifted.

Second, he is a person who is learning from God's Word, in order that he can pass it on to others.

Third, an able person is one who is growing in character. This is primarily what Paul is talking about when he uses the word “able.” “These things commit as a trust to trustworthy men who are of such a character as to be adequate to teach others also.”

Character includes such things as honesty, humility, faith, confidence, teachable, and selflessness. Qualities like this grow as we grow spiritually. It is character that makes us faithful.

The purpose, then, of your multiplication ministry is to build up others and train them to do what you are doing. Leadership x leadership = the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

What is in it for you? Christ in you the hope of glory. The more God uses you, the more he will be working in you, and you will be brought into maturity, more and more. Your marriage, your children, your relationship will be richly blessed because of Christ in you the hope of glory.

End of Study: Paul the Minister to the Body – 1:23-2:3

Colossians: Chapter 2

Christ the Answer to Man's Philosophy – 2:1-13 *Philosophy – the Battle in the Mind*

In this wonderfully nourishing Epistle to the Colossians:

- In Chapter 1, he discusses the truth about Christ;
- In Chapter 2, the truth about the Crooks;
 - Christ the Answer to Man's Philosophy
 - Christ the Answer to Man's Rituals
- In Chapters 3 and 4, the truth about the Christian

This book, like Ephesians has two clear splits in it. Chapters 1-2 are doctrine – what we believe and why, and 3-4 is duty – how then we should live.

In the first fifteen verses of this chapter we see that Christ is the answer to Man's Philosophy. The remainder of the chapter will show He is the answer to Man's Ritual. Paul will warn us of the crooks who will rob us of our peace and joy.

Paul is writing to warn of these "crooks" who were trying to rob the believers of their joy and freedom in Christ finished work on the cross.

Paul is writing this church in Colosse because the truth was under attack, they were being hit with all kinds of untruths. There were all kinds of add-ons going around Colosse. Man's philosophy that totally took away from the gospel, or man's philosophy that added onto the gospel - some were so close, others way off, but in either case it took away from, and diminished Christ work on the cross.

God doesn't condemn knowledge, but the wisdom of this world. He is not calling us to be anti-intellectual. To be uneducated, and ignorant in sciences, history, medicine, etc, but to watch that the wisdom of this world doesn't sneak into our understanding of these things and distract us from the fact that

(Colossians 1:16 KJV) For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
(Colossians 1:17 KJV) And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Let me preference this teaching with this: if there is cancer, broken bones, blindness, etc, then that would also mean that there is mental illness, and that illness needs to be treated just as a broken bone would need treatment. If a doctor has diagnosed you with a chemical imbalance, then by all means get on the medication. But be careful that they don't overmedicate you.

Along that same thought, there is wrong teaching or a self-condemnation that Christians are not capable of depression. That is totally wrong, if your are capable of experiencing joy and exhilaration, then you would also be capable of experiencing depression and anxiety. There are things in life that fill us with joy, and things in life that depress us. Christians we have to recognize and accept that in ourselves and just as importantly, in others.

However I am troubled to hear and see the ever-increasing number of believers who are pouring their money and time on unbelieving psychologists and psychiatrists when their problems are specifically dealt with in the Bible. Folks, if your car breaks down, I wouldn't tell you to read your Bible. I would tell you to read an automotive manual. If your arm breaks, I wouldn't tell you to read your Bible. I would tell you to go to a doctor or read a medical manual. But for matters of the heart and soul, I would implore you to read your Bible, for it alone contains the answers you need.

Before you allow someone to medicate you for depression or anxiety, I ask you this, how has your prayer life been, and the reading of the word. Before you go and see them, take care of the basics. Make sure that it is not spiritual warfare. Make sure it is not because you have not covered yourself with prayer and the word. I recommend this, two weeks of solid prayer and the word, and then see if things have changed.

Too often man's philosophies are used to distract or divide from the true power available in Christ. Here is the problem with man's intellectual philosophy, these men are so smart, that they don't believe in Jesus Christ, therefore what power do they have to offer you to make you well in matters of the soul and heart. And counsel that doesn't include Christ is not only anemic, it is foolish according to the Lord:

(1 Corinthians 1:17 KJV) For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

(1 Corinthians 1:18 KJV) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

*(1 Corinthians 1:19 KJV) **For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.***

(1 Corinthians 1:20 KJV) Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

(1 Corinthians 1:21 KJV) For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Plato (400BC), the great philosopher, said the unfilled desire in his heart was a divine word that would come to him and make all things plain and clear, he called the desire – Logos. Socrates (400BC) said to Plato, it may be Plato that the deity can forgive sins, but I don't see how. Profound enough to see the need for sins to be forgiven, but not how a holy God could. He saw the dilemma but missed the solution.

In verse 8 Paul tells us to beware — of the philosophy and traditions, and trips the world values,' warns Paul. 'They're vain; they're empty; they don't work.'

Bases of Philosophy

Philosophy is based on what man thinks, the way man thinks something works. Philosophy according to Webster's dictionary means "a system of principles for guidance in practical affairs; aka – *a philosophy of life*. A philosopher is one who is deeply versed in philosophy. But I find it interesting, the verb philosophizes means "to speculate or theorize, usually in a superficial or imprecise manner. With philosophy, you just talk and talk, but you never get anywhere, you just keep talking

Paul encountered philosophizers in Athens there on Mars Hill. It says these philosophers spent their time in nothing else but to tell or hear some new things.

(Acts 17:16 KJV) Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

(Acts 17:17 KJV) Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

(Acts 17:18 KJV) Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

(Acts 17:19 KJV) And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

(Acts 17:20 KJV) For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

(Acts 17:21 KJV) (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

Lets break man's philosophy into 3 major categories:

- philosophy of false religions

- philosophy of false teachers
- philosophy of man's intellect

Philosophy of False Religions:

False Religions are they that totally reject our God of the Bible and Jesus Christ. False Religions: Buddhism, Islam, New Age.

Why do men add-on?

1. If Jesus is preeminent (first in priority) then that would mean that they are not. Therefore their pride will not allow that, and thus they seek a philosophy that will draw men to them.
2. Secondly, quite simply, they say we will not have this man rule over us.

(Luke 19:13 KJV) And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

*(Luke 19:14 KJV) But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, **We will not have this man to reign over us.***

Philosophy of false teachers:

False teachers and cult religions take the bases of Jesus and the Bible, then they add their slant onto it. Many are so close, but just add one thing to it, that pretty much is what was happening at Colosse. They will say they are Christians, we just have a deeper understanding or some special revelation.

- Mormonism – you too will be a god. – Jesus and Satan are brothers, and Jesus death on the cross does not bring full atonement, you got to be a good Mormon too for salvation.
- Jehovah's Witnesses – the 144, 000 elite, salvation comes through knocking. Jesus is not God, but Michael the archangel.
- Christian Science – man is already saved, sin, evil, sickness, and death are not real, and it's not hot in hell. Jesus was not Christ because God can not become flesh.

Why do men add-on?

1. People want add-ons because it boils down that they can't believe the gospel is that simple. They believe there has to be more to it, therefore they add on to it.

(2 Kings 5:1 NKJV) Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper.

(2 Kings 5:2 NKJV) And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife.

(2 Kings 5:3 NKJV) Then she said to her mistress, "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy."

(2 Kings 5:4 NKJV) And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus said the girl who is from the land of Israel."

(2 Kings 5:5 NKJV) Then the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing.

(2 Kings 5:6 NKJV) Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.

(2 Kings 5:7 NKJV) And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me."

(2 Kings 5:8 NKJV) So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

(2 Kings 5:9 NKJV) Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house.

(2 Kings 5:10 NKJV) And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean."

(2 Kings 5:11 NKJV) But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely

come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.'

(2 Kings 5:12 NKJV) "Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, **better than all the waters of Israel?** Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage.

(2 Kings 5:13 NKJV) **And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"**

(2 Kings 5:14 NKJV) So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

(2 Kings 5:15 NKJV) And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, "Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel;

People have trouble believing the gospel can be so simple, therefore they add onto it.

2. But for others the gospel will make them face their sinfulness. It will call you to repentance, therefore people will change it to ease the revelation of themselves.

3. People will change it so they can do something other than just receive it, so that they can do something in and of themselves so they can say see what I have done, I've earned my salvation. It is self-righteousness.

Philosophy of Man's Intellect

The Philosophy of man's intellect, how man thinks things should work. Man's philosophies are innumerable. Men have philosophies on life, creation, love, marriage, happiness, forgiveness, sickness, and God, you name it. The first Internet site I hit had an Index categorized from A-Z.

As we mentioned before, man's philosophy is anemic, it has no power because it has no Christ.

So why then do people, even Christians, follow after man's philosophies, seek these counselors for how to live life or help them out with life? Why are so many people drawn to it?

1. First, for Christians, they can be drawn to it because they don't read the Bible for themselves and are not in a Bible teaching church. Therefore they will listen to what the world around them says is good stuff, today it is almost a cultural thing. They just don't know there is power in the Word. You'll never know there is water in the faucet unless you lift the handle.

2. For others, they like man's philosophies because it has no rules, it has no absolutes, and therefore there is nothing to hold the hearer accountable to. There is no black and white, therefore they can continue on in their ways. How often man's philosophy will look to blame your past, your family, or your environment, anything but you. Man's philosophies will call it an addiction, say it's not your fault. God will call it sin, and say repent. The hearer that doesn't want to admit their sinfulness takes comfort in man's philosophies.

3. Another reason so many people buy into man's intellectual philosophies is because these counselors allow people to talk. People need to talk; they will pay someone 150/hr just to hear them talk. I read an article that a man in California put an ad in the newspaper saying I will listen to you talk for 15minutes for 10 dollars. He was getting 15 calls a day. We as a church have to recognize this, and apply it to our ministry. Invest in people by listening to them, making time for them. There is therapy in conversation, if there is one thing we can apply from man's philosophies this it.

Whatever the case, the counsel they receive may be somewhat good, somewhat comforting, but it will lack power, because it lacks the divine Word, therefore it will only be a temporary fix.

I can meet people suffering from depression, suicidal, and I don't have to study psychology, get a 4-year degree in human behavior, or go to some seminar, all I have to do is point people to Christ and His word. I had to quit reading the training manual for the Chaplain because it had so much

of man's philosophy in it. I had anxiety because my mind couldn't absorb it all. I finally just closed it up and said I'll show up with my Bible, and the Spirit of the Lord, and say here I am Lord.

Christ the answer to man's philosophies.

(Colossians 2:1 NKJV) 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, (Colossians 2:2 NKJV) 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, (Colossians 2:3 NKJV) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

A definition of a true philosopher is said to be a person, who is searching for true wisdom and knowledge. All wisdom, all knowledge **is in — not from** — Jesus. Whoever desires wisdom to navigate life successfully must come to the realization that there is nothing more, nothing less, nothing else than Jesus. All treasures of wisdom are in Him.

William Randolph Hearst, the billionaire publisher, became rather eccentric in his later years. One day, looking through a book of famous artwork, a painting caught his eye. 'I want this painting for my collection,' he said to his aides. But after making some inquiries, his aides reported that they were unable to locate the particular work. 'If you value your jobs,' Hearst barked, 'do whatever it takes to find that treasure, and secure it for me immediately.' Three and a half months later, the aides returned to Hearst. 'Did you find the treasure?' he asked. 'Yes,' they replied. 'After much searching and painstaking research, we found it.' 'Did you purchase it?' he asked. 'No.' 'Why not?' Hearst demanded. 'Because we found it in your warehouse.'

So too, Paul says to the Colossians, 'You already have all the wisdom and knowledge you will ever need to get through life successfully. It's all in Christ. When you got Him, you got it all.'

(Colossians 2:4 NKJV) Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

Persuasive/Enticing words are a lot of oratory or sweet talk, a lot of hot air and steam.

I liken psychiatrists to this; for a house builder, the sooner he can finish the house, the sooner he gets paid and moves on to another home to build. But for a psychiatrist once the house is built, the money stops, so over and over they want to talk, and talk ---- they say you are getting better, but come back next week. It's a temporary fix that needs continual patching.

Philosophy and Rituals. On one extreme Christianity is in danger of evaporating into a philosophy—where it becomes nothing but steam. The opposite danger is it will freeze into a form where it becomes nothing more than a ritual. These rituals are the opposite but the same, you just keep doing and doing but nothing ever changes.

There is a real peril on either side. But the Lord Jesus called Himself the *Water* of Life. He is neither steam nor ice for neither can sustain life. That is why we need to guard against following the line of philosophy or following the line of ritual. Christianity is Christ!

(Colossians 2:5 NKJV) 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.

At this time the word that was coming back to Paul was that this church was standing. The Colossian church had a reputation for steadfastness, and Paul wanted them to continue like that and not be led away by some sweet talker.

To see your good order – order is a military term and it meant to stand shoulder to shoulder.

Steadfastness means, “to have a solid front, to be immovable.”

Here is a key to steadfastness, we stand together on this, we stand as a body shoulder to shoulder. I shared with you before the human tank the Romans would use, they would lock their battle shields together, walk side by side, and flaming arrows and chariots would bounce off them. We must do the same.

Christian you can not be an island, you have to be in fellowship with other believers and you have to be in a study of God’s Word with others.

(Hebrews 10:24 KJV) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

(Hebrews 10:25 KJV) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

This may sound like a play on words, but how do you standfast, be immovable? You gotta keep walking.....verse 6

(Colossians 2:6 NKJV) As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

Over and over, the Scriptures tell us to walk:

To walk in love (Ephesians 5:2),

(Ephesians 5:2 KJV) And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

to walk in light (Ephesians 5:8),

(Ephesians 5:8 KJV) For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

in wisdom (Colossians 4:5).

(Colossians 4:5 KJV) Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

And here we are told to walk in HIM – for in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

We gotta keep walking.

The banks of a river in Arizona called the Rio Rivera are lined with a substance called ‘near quicksand’. It’s almost quicksand — but not quite. If you keep walking on this near-quicksand, you don’t have a problem. But if you stop, you’ll start sinking, and you’ll get sucked in.

So too, the Christian experience is a walk. If we don’t keep moving, we’ll start sinking. And the way to keep moving is not to seek some deeper truth. The way to keep moving is to walk in simplicity, in the same way we received Christ.

Psalm 1 shows what happens when you quit walking, you’ll be standing with sinners, and sitting with the scornful.....gotta keep walking gang.

(Psalms 1:1 NKJV) Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

(Psalms 1:2 NKJV) But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

(Psalms 1:3 NKJV) He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

(Colossians 2:7 NKJV) rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

(Colossians 2:8 NKJV) 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.

Cheat/spoil you – this was the word used for a slave trader who would kidnap someone and force them into slavery.

As we spoke of, philosophies and rituals are according to the principles of the world – not according to Christ. They will imprison you from the freedom and joy of life when we see that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

(Colossians 2:9 NKJV) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
(Colossians 2:10 NKJV) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

The lie says Jesus is good, but adds this, this and this onto Him and it will be better. The truth is, we are complete in Jesus.

(Colossians 2:11 NKJV) 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,

(Colossians 2:12 NKJV) 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.

We will talk about circumcision and baptism in the next study.

(Colossians 2:13 NKJV) 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,

This is the key to Biblical counseling and ministry. Paul says the issue is this: the forgiveness of sin. What does man need? Forgiveness. It's so simple. We are forgiven because of Christ's work on the Cross. Therefore, we must forgive the person who bothers us, the parent who abused us, the spouse who left us because Jesus died for them, just as He died for us.

People will add on, they will follow philosophies and rituals, to try to cleanse themselves of the guilt they have, or the shame over things of the past, or the unforgiveness of the person that hurt them. The forgiveness part is huge for both philosophies and rituals where men are trying to earn God's forgiveness.

In your biblical counsel, include in there, share it often with the people, you are forgiven.

End of Study: Christ the Answer to Man's Philosophy – 2:1-13

Christ the Answer to Man's Rituals – 2:9-23

Rituals – the Battle in the Heart

In this wonderfully nourishing Epistle to the Colossians:

- In Chapter 1, he discusses the truth about Christ;
- In Chapter 2, the truth about the Crooks;
 - Christ the Answer to Man's Philosophy
 - Christ the Answer to Man's Rituals
- In Chapters 3 and 4, the truth about the Christian

This book, like Ephesians has two clear splits in it. Chapters 1-2 are doctrine – what we believe and why, and 3-4 is duty – how then we should live.

In the first fifteen verses of this chapter we see that Christ is the answer to Man's Philosophy. The remainder of the chapter will show He is the answer to Man's Ritual. Paul will warn us of the crooks who will rob us of our peace and joy.

Again, Paul is writing this church in Colosse because the truth was under attack, they were being hit with all kinds of untruths. There were all kinds of add-ons going around Colosse. Man's philosophy that totally took away from the gospel, or man's rituals that added onto the gospel - some were so close, others way off, but in either case it took away from, and diminished Christ work on the cross.

False teachers were coming into this church at Colosse and saying, "hey what Christ did on the cross was great, but now you have to do your part", and they started to try to lay all these trips on the people saying you have to do this, this and this to be super spiritual. These teachers were trying to tell them what to eat, what day to worship, they needed to be circumcised, etc.....just one big legalistic trip.

Paul is writing them to comfort them, and to warn them, that they have Christ therefore they have it all – they are complete in Him.

Why do men add-on Rituals? What is it in people that they like rituals? That they like the idea that if I do this, this and this, then I am right with God.

1. People will change it so they can do something other than just receive it, so that they can do something in and of themselves so they can say see what I have done, I've earned my salvation. It is self-righteousness, it is pride in its worse form. The danger here is, that this is where it can cross over into being a cult, that it is your ritual that saves you, not Christ.

Side Note: I'm not going to get into a study on cults other than to point that out to you so that when you meet them, you will know where they are coming from – they are working for their salvation. Rituals become entrenched in people, it becomes a part of their very being. You are not going to root that out of them easily. First and foremost, these people are conditioned literally to the point of being brainwashed. If you witness to them, they have been taught how to counter what you have said. Once you start witnessing to them, they go on the defensive, and have their preprogrammed answers to who Christ is, who Satan is, end times, etc. If you challenge them, they consider that religious persecution, and that plays so well with working your way to heaven and self-righteousness. I find the best approach is to let them witness to you, then come with the offense, and then for me to say after they are finished – I'm confused for you said this but this is what the bible says, or to point out how they conflicted their own story. I have never one a cult member to Christ – but the day isn't over yet.

2. People want Ritual add-ons because it boils down that they can't believe the gospel is that simple. They believe there has to be more to it, therefore they add on to it. Remember the last

study's story on Naaman.

(Hebrews 9:12 NKJV) Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

(Hebrews 9:13 NKJV) For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,

(Hebrews 9:14 NKJV) how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

3. People like rituals because then they can measure how they are doing spiritually. The problem is they are so focused on how they are doing on their little checklist that they get so caught up in it, and they lose focus on the Risen Lord, who has the power to wipe the checklist clean.

4. Believers will add rituals on because of guilt. They believe they are saved only through Christ's work on the cross, but guilt forces them into the bondage of legalism, rituals and works, that they are somehow trying to cover their guilt. Nowhere in the scriptures does God try reform the flesh, He gives them a new heart.

(Galatians 3:3 NKJV) Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

A new heart comes with a fresh start, and that start comes daily:

(Lamentations 3:21 NKJV) This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.

(Lamentations 3:22 NKJV) Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

(Lamentations 3:23 NKJV) They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

(Lamentations 3:24 NKJV) "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!"

Paul is going to crush man's rituals and legalism:

(Colossians 2:9 NKJV) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
(Colossians 2:10 NKJV) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Complete – lacking, nor needing, anything else. Jesus is our all and all.

Refresher - The word translated "fullness" is the Greek word "pleroma - play'-ro-mah". It was a technical term in the vocabulary of these false teacher at the time. It meant "the sum total of all the divine power and attributes." Paul uses their term against them, applying their word to describe Christ. He uses their lingo they can relate too, but shows them where they should truly relate it too.

Do you feel empty? Well all the fullness is in Jesus. All fullness is in Jesus. Therefore, the closer I am to Jesus, the fuller I will be as a man. Conversely, the further I pull away from Jesus, the emptier I'll feel inside. All of creation centers around Jesus, is held together by Jesus, points to Jesus, and finds its fulfillment in Jesus.

In the days of the Roman Empire, a certain wealthy senator became estranged from his son. When he died unexpectedly, his will was opened. 'Because my son does not appreciate what I've done, I leave all of my worldly possessions to my loyal slave, Marcellus,' the will read. 'However, because I am a man of grace, I bequeath to my son one of my possessions of his choosing.' 'Sorry,' said the testator to the son. 'You can only take one of your dad's possessions. Which will it be?' - 'I take Marcellus,' said the son.

Excellent! That's the idea. When you take Jesus Christ, you get all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. When you open your heart to Him, you find everything you need. It's all in Him. Why is this understanding so important? Because it is the only way to keep from being sucked into 'enticing words', cults and other dead-end pursuits of pseudo-spirituality. That's what was happening in Colossae. People were coming on the scene saying, 'Hey, what Paul is preaching is fine, but there's much more.'

'No,' Paul says, 'Be steadfast in your faith in Christ. All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in *Him*.' We are complete in Him

(Colossians 2:11 NKJV) 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,

Circumcision – the cutting away of the flesh. Your rituals won't cut away the flesh. God didn't take a knife to your heart to cut away the flesh, He gave you a new heart. God wants to operate on your heart, cutting away the things keep you from seeing Him for all He is, all He has for you. A slice here, a snip here, as he conforms your mind to think and see things as He does.

But you may ask then why did God have the children of Israel circumcised? God was setting them apart from the rest of the world, a people that would be governed by Him. He was given a physical example of what he would later do spiritually.

God instructed that the child be circumcised on the eighth day, and studies show that vitamin K which causes blood clotting necessary for healing reaches its peak on the eighth day.

Also, there was a health issue. In the early 1900's a hospital in NYC was noticing the high rate of cervical cancer in woman, so they started a study and found that Jewish woman's rate was a fraction of the other woman. They realized it was because Jewish woman would only marry Jewish men, who of course were circumcised. These men were cleaner and did carry bacteria that uncircumcised men did.

So God's OT laws had reasons behind them.

(Colossians 2:12 NKJV) 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.

Baptism has turned into a ritual. Some churches say if you are not baptized you are not saved. Baptism is merely an outward display of the commitment you have made in your heart to Christ. You tell the world, don't come looking for that old man anymore, we buried him last week out in the river, a new man has rose from the dead (just like Jesus) and lives for Christ now.

Baptism is a public proclamation to the world that I now follow Christ. It shouldn't be a ritual but a celebration of the revival that has happened in your heart.

(Colossians 2:13 NKJV) 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,

This is the key to Biblical counseling and ministry – going back to guilt issue. Paul says the issue is this: the forgiveness of sin. What does man need? Forgiveness. It's so simple. We are forgiven because of Christ's work on the Cross. Therefore, we must forgive the person who bothers us, the parent who abused us, the spouse who left us because Jesus died for them, just as He died for us.

The forgiveness part is huge for both philosophies and rituals where men are trying to earn God's forgiveness. In your biblical counsel, include in there, share it often with the people, you are forgiven.

(Colossians 2:14 NKJV) 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.

Two things were nailed to the cross that day, our beloved Jesus, and a sign that read:

(John 19:19 KJV) And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

They would write the persons crime and hang it over their head on the cross so when all passed by, they would know why that person was punished. In this case the sign wasn't accusation, but a statement. The King of the Jews, could only be the Messiah.

The Messiah would come and take handwriting that was against – the 10 commandments – and nail them to the cross.

(Romans 3:20 NKJV) Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

In Exodus 20, god gave the 10 commandments. The first four has to deal with our relationship to the Lord, that vertical plane between Man and God – thou shall not have any other gods, nor worship idols, nor use the Lord's name in vain, and to honor the Sabbath. The other is horizontal plane between man and man – respect thy parents, not kill, not commit adultery, not steal, not lie, and not to covet thy neighbors goods. The horizontal intersecting the vertical, making the cross.

Here in Colossians 2:14, Jesus would say these commandments condemn you, but I have now paid your penalty on the cross..

Handwriting of requirements: means the Certificate of Debt. If you were convicted of a crime, you went to prison and upon serving your sentence you got a "Certificate of Debt" which said "paid in full". They would roll it up and give it to you. As you traveled through the Roman Empire you could never be charged for that crime again cause you had your certificate.

The Certificate of Debt was Paid in Full on the Cross at Calvary by Jesus. All of our sins past, present, and future were paid there at Calvary. The sentence of Death against us, lifted never to be brought against us again. If satan would come, we throw our Certificate in his face.

*(John 19:30): When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished:** and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. **It is Finished** – from the greek word "teleo (tel-eh'-o); means to end, i.e. complete, execute, conclude, discharge (a debt):--accomplish, make an end, expire, fill up, finish, go over, pay, perform", ----- Bottom Line: **PAID IN FULL***

Jesus said teleo, it is finished....**Paid in Full.**

Many Christians aren't healthy because they fail to understand this foundation and profoundly simple element. They know they are going to heaven, but guilt from their past keeps them from moving forward – therefore they add a ritual here or there to make them feel they are earning His forgiveness. Jesus says you don't have to do that, Paid in Full.

For others, they know they're forgiven, but they can't believe the one who hurt them is. 'You can't ignore the abuse, the trauma, the anxiety which has been inflicted upon you,' they are told. 'It must be dealt with.' Wait a minute! It wasn't ignored, and it *has* been dealt with by Jesus' blood on the Cross. He hung on the Cross of Calvary dying for the very sin which bugs us in others. Therefore, for us to say, 'We gotta dig it up and talk it through,' makes a mockery of what Christ did on Calvary. 'It is *finished*,' He cried. It's done. It's paid for. So be forgiven and forgive one another.

(Colossians 2:15 NKJV) Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Romans 8:38-39 - God's not impressed w/ principalities and powers.

*(Romans 8:38 NKJV) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,
(Romans 8:39 NKJV) nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

When a Roman General conquered an enemy, he would return to Rome in a triumphal procession. The General would ride in the lead chariot, followed by his soldiers. Behind the soldiers walked the conquered men, chained and often naked, to the derisive jeers of the crowds which lined the streets. Paul borrows this image in this verse for our application.

The only toe hold or hand grip a demon has on someone is his sin. But if the sin has been washed away by the blood of the Son, the demon has nothing upon which to cling. Once forgiveness is understood and blood is appropriated, the powers of darkness are rendered powerless. That's why Peter tells us that when Jesus died, He went into the lower parts of the earth and told the demonic spirits they no longer had authority over us (1 Peter 3:19).

*(1 Peter 3:18 NIV) 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,
(1 Peter 3:19 NIV) through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison*

If I understand and rejoice in the blood of Christ, demonic powers are nakedly impotent. But the funny thing about demonic powers is that they are squatters. They won't leave until I say, 'Hey, you gotta go! I'm not going to listen to this depression you're whispering in my ear this morning. I'm not going to buy it because of the blood of Jesus Christ.' That's what is meant by pleading the blood. It's not a phrase you use, it's an understanding you have. Wherever I plead the blood of Christ, Satan doesn't have influence over me. Let this sink in, gang, and you will really be set free.

When the cross is understood, when forgiveness is understood, guilt and self-righteousness will be washed away by these understanding, not covered by some ritual.

Christ will say you are forgiven, you are complete in Me. Soooooooooooooooooo, let no one judge you, verse 16, nor judge yourself.

(Colossians 2:16 NKJV) So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

Paul says watch out for legalism, for this horrible bondage. There were those in Colossae saying that the way to be more spiritual was by keeping the Sabbath and festivals, and by not eating or drinking certain things.

food or in drink

Jesus said it's not what goes in the mouth that defiles, but that which proceeds out of the mouth, for our tongue reveals what is truly in our heart.

*(Matthew 15:16 NKJV) So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding?
(Matthew 15:17 NKJV) "Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?
(Matthew 15:18 NKJV) "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.
(Matthew 15:19 NKJV) "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.
(Matthew 15:20 NKJV) "These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."*

regarding a festival

This refers to the Jewish feasts they celebrated (Leviticus 25), these false teachers said you have to honor those or you are in sin. God warned them no doubt knowing they would esteem the feast greater than the Christ. These feasts were what would call holidays, hence see how

Christmas the holiday is esteemed greater than the reason for the season. – the Christ in Christmas.

or a new moon

New moon refers to the Jewish calendar, they would calculate their crop planting based on the cycles of the moon. For some they believed it had special powers. God hated this.

(Isaiah 1:13 NKJV) Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies; I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.

(Isaiah 1:14 NKJV) Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.

Today how many believers are fooled into reading their horoscope, and what's your zodiac sign.

or sabbaths

A woman came to a pastor and said Saturday is the Sabbath, the bible says so, do you not agree. He said yes I do agree, and she got a gleam in her eye and said then why do you not honor it if you agree it hasn't changed. The pastor said the day hasn't changed, but I have been changed, I am a new creation, and all things are made new.

That sums up those who want to put you on some trip about baptism, food and drink, holidays (new moons).....those things might not have changed, but you have been changed, they are all just shadows of the reality to come.

(Colossians 2:17 NKJV) which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

A shadow of things to come. This word shadow is where we get our word "photograph" (from the Greek word – shade). A shadow is an image of the real thing. The Old Testament practices were shadows, pictures of the real thing to come – Jesus Christ. The Passover was celebrated when the children of Israel left Egypt, but it was all a picture of Jesus being the sacrificial lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

Christ has come, there is no need to go back and look at a picture, we can just look at the real thing. I read a story about a young couple who got married right before the young man was shipped overseas to fight in WW2. He was gone for two years, but when you saw his wife around town, you could spot her from afar because had this huge purse she would always carry. Inside the purse was a wall size photo of her husband. When she would meet people she would pull out his picture and talk about him. But, the day he returned, as she waited at the pier for his ship, they said didn't have that big purse. She didn't need it to recognize him, and she didn't need it to see his face, for she was going to see the real thing, hold and kiss the real thing, walk and hold hands all the way home with the real thing.

(Colossians 2:18 NKJV) 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,

taking delight in false humility and worship of angels

People who say I am such a sinner, I can not approach God, I am such a sinner. Therefore I will pray to His mother, or Michael the Archangel. That is false humility, because it is blasphemy to say such things, because that person is saying Jesus' work on the cross wasn't enough, it wasn't enough to reconcile me to God, therefore I have to go another way to God.

The extremes of this is Ouija boards, palm readers and psychics – people thinking they can reach the spirit realm by some means other than Jesus.

(Colossians 2:19 NKJV) 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.

(Colossians 2:20 NKJV) 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;

(Colossians 2:21 NKJV) "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"

(Colossians 2:22 NKJV) which all concern things which perish with the using; according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

(Colossians 2:23 NKJV) 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.

Philosophy and Rituals, so close, yet so far away because they take away from the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Satan's mission, battle plan, is to deceive the believer. His mission is to deceive and counterfeit the reality. If you steer a ship on a long journey, all he has to do is introduce a 1 degree error in your gyrocompass, and though you won't be far off in a day or two, but let that error accumulate and you will be lost and way off.

(Colossians 2:9 NKJV) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

(Colossians 2:10 NKJV) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

End of Study: Christ the Answer to Man's Rituals – 2:9-23

Colossians: Chapter 3

Things Above - 3:1-16

In this wonderfully nourishing Epistle to the Colossians . . .

- In Chapter 1, he discusses the truth about Christ;
- In Chapter 2, the truth about the Crooks;
- In Chapters 3 and 4, the truth about the Christian

This book, like Ephesians has two clear splits in it. Chapters 1-2 are doctrine – what we believe and why, and 3-4 is duty – how then we should live.

In chapter two we were warned about the crooks that would try to rob us (the false teachers), and now here in chapter three we are told what to watch out for ourselves so we don't rob ourselves and our families.

But before Paul starts this warning, he takes us for a little field trip, up into heaven, to remind us where we are seated – in heaven, that our salvation is secure – for we are hidden in Him, and because we are hidden in Him, our life is in Him.

The world around us can change dramatically in the next day or so. These truly are perils times. We as Americans can image being afraid of just going to the mall. Suicide bombers, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, terrorist level orange, a new strain of influenza.

It is an awesome thing to be a Christian, because we see the big picture. God conforms my mind, and as I see things going on around me I'm not freaked out, because I know the big picture. I know God is working out his plan of salvation in man, and that He sits on the throne and has a plan for me.

These four verses are key for the days we live in, and this specific moment in time. The only people who can have peace in their hearts are those whose hearts are in heaven.

(Colossians 3:1 NKJV) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

(Colossians 3:2 NKJV) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

(Colossians 3:3 NKJV) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

(Colossians 3:4 NKJV) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

In December Renee went in to wake Wayne for school, and he immediately sprung out of bed saying only one more day until Christmas break. Consequently, it caused him to go through the last couple days of school eagerly.

I am thoroughly convinced from watching people and studying the Word that the people who are truly content are those who constantly realize that this world is not where it's at. On the other hand, those who try to find happiness here are perpetually frustrated. The possessions they purchase are never quite what they were supposed to be. The relationships they form are never as satisfying as they thought they would be. The dreams they pursue are never as fulfilling as they hoped they would be. Nothing is ever quite right until we realize, 'Hey, it's not here!'

I believe this is why the Lord constantly tells us in the Word to set our hearts on things *above*. People are bogged down, with stomachs churning, brows furrowing, and hearts breaking because they are taking life on earth far too seriously. When a person finally understands heaven is where

it's at, he is free to enjoy life. It doesn't matter where he lives, what he does vocationally, what kind of car he drives, bike he rides, or skates he gets around on. All of that is irrelevant because he sees the finish line — he realizes that Christmas break is only 2 days away.

Set your heart on things above. It's a central message not only of Paul's but throughout all of Scripture. Live for heaven and you'll enjoy life. How does that happen? How do we set our hearts upon heaven? Many ways, but I'll suggest three . . .

One – Treasure:

Jesus said,
(Matthew 6:21 NKJV) "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I remember a year before I got saved I bought mutual funds, I had a 401K at work but wanted to invest more deeply. Everyday I would check the stock page to see how I was doing, gains and losses. But then I needed that money for something else, so I went and cashed it out. Guess what. Once I sold my shares, I never turned to the stock page again. I just lost interest.

When Jesus tells us to lay up treasure in heaven, it's not God's way of raising money.

*(Matthew 6:19 NKJV) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;
(Matthew 6:20 NKJV) "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

Knowing that where our treasure is, our heart will follow, it's His way of raising our hearts and minds out of this world and up into heaven. You see, if you invest your treasure in mutual funds, that's where your heart will be. If you put your treasure in your house or hobby, your heart will be there as well. Your heart follows your treasure — so one of the ways we get our hearts on things above is by investing in the Kingdom.

Secondly – Trials:

We live for heaven through our trials. I am convinced God will send a trial a day your way just to keep you homesick for heaven, from getting too comfortable in this world. If He didn't, we would become bound up in this earth, and would miss out eternally on what He has in store for us.

Suicide bombers, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, terrorist level orange, a new strain of influenza, cancer, aids, overdoses, kidnapping.....oh Lord come quickly.

Thirdly – Transfers:

The Lord gets me to set my heart and mind on things above is by transfers — when the people we love precede us into heaven. This process is very important because when you have transferred friends, parents, and spouses in heaven, your heart longs to be there all the more keenly.

Treasures, trials, transfers — three ways our hearts can be constantly set on things above. And no matter what happens down here, we can deal with it because our hearts are up there.

And if you need reminding or refreshing, Colossians 3:1-4:

The days are going by rapidly, gang. We are going to see Jesus soon, and when we do, we will say, `This is it! This is what we've been craving and longing for all our lives

That is why I believe we can't talk too much about heaven. And that's why Paul says, `That's where your heart should be because when Christ appears, it's going to be glorious. Talking about heaven daily, will make heaven a reality.

(Colossians 3:5 NKJV) Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

These things we are going to study was written to believers, it wasn't about salvation, it was about setting our mind, and living above. Yes there were some false teachers coming in and telling them hey you can live any way you want and still be saved, but the Lord is writing because he wants to protect and provide for us.

We are going to study this tonight in terms of godly relationships in the Body of Christ, setting our mind above, on the Head of this body.

These things may sound like basic I know things, but I believe if we allow, God will put His finger on each and every one of our hearts and show us something we need to adjust in our life.

Now If we don't set our minds on the things above, then nothing here below will ever work out the way God truly intended for them. A fruitful blessed marriage is powered by setting our mind on the things above. Child rearing begins with being a child above and watching and learning from our Heavenly Father. Our interpersonal relationships go astray when we take our eyes off the things above, and apply the things below to handling conflicts with one another.

This letter was to go to Laodicea also, the lukewarm church. Living for this world will make you lukewarm. There are too many lukewarm marriages and families.

Paul here will name things that take us away from and distracts us from setting our minds on the things above. Things like pornography, covetousness, anger, and blasphemy.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth:

Send your friends your obituary, you are dead to those things.

Put to death – Mortified (OKJV), means depriving of power, or destroying the strength there of. We want to be angry or curse, but God says I want you to destroy the power of that thing. How? The replacement principle, fill yourself up with the love of God, then where will be room for anger. Fill yourself up with peace and where will there be room for turmoil.

Take a glass filled half way with dirty water and you can dump it out to get the dirt out, but you'll be empty. But if you take a picture of fresh clean spring water, and pour and continue to pour, not only will it be cleaned, it will be filled – to overflowing.

If you are struggling with any of these sins, the first thing you are to do is to kill it, and then deprive the power of those things so they can't come back again. Kill it through repentance, deprive it through replacement.

Now do it: ***moses when faced with the red sea in front and pharaoh behind, God said move it***

The Lord said why do you cry to me, tell the children of Israel to go forward.

Don't pray about repenting, repent. Don't meander and let the world catch up to you – move on and away

(Exodus 14:1 NKJV) Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

(Exodus 14:2 NKJV) "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.

(Exodus 14:3 NKJV) "For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.'

(Exodus 14:4 NKJV) "Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD." And they did so.

(Exodus 14:5 NKJV) Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"

(Exodus 14:6 NKJV) So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him.

(Exodus 14:7 NKJV) Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them.

(Exodus 14:8 NKJV) And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness.

(Exodus 14:9 NKJV) So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.

(Exodus 14:10 NKJV) And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.

(Exodus 14:11 NKJV) Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?"

(Exodus 14:12 NKJV) "Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

(Exodus 14:13 NKJV) And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.

(Exodus 14:14 NKJV) "The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

*(Exodus 14:15 NKJV) **And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.***

(Exodus 14:16 NKJV) "But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

God calls sin, sin, to protect and to provide for you.

When I see marriages, friendships, and or families struggling or falling apart, I can most usually put my finger on one of the following in the next few verses.

Fornication:

Fornication - porneia, por-ni'-ah – where we get our word pornography. The Scriptures do not distinguish the difference between the two

The reason so many people are dissatisfied with their spouses is because of pornography and fornication (on TV and Movies). They see these images and their spouse can not match up to what they see. You have to put it to death, you can not let it into your mind, and thus your marriage. That stuff will torment your mind. You don't need to go to therapy or counseling to analyze the problem, you just need to kill it – right now. Don't compromise, just say that is it, it is over right here, right now. God will never ask you to do something that He hasn't given you the power to do. Doesn't matter how good the story might be, or how many awards it has won, stay away from movies and TV shows that have fornication in them. The scriptures do not clearly define the difference between pornography and fornication, the reason being is that the two are the same.

If you are dating and want a sure-fire way to ruin; sleep together. God will not be a part of a relationship that is in direct violation of His Word.

A story in USA TODAY, headlined 'Fate Of the Union: Living Together First Means Divorce Later', stated that new evidence proves living together before marriage is no guarantee to marital bliss. On the contrary, those who do so have a 50% greater chance of divorce than those who don't — sobering news for the country's 3 million opposite sex couples who are unmarried yet living together.

For years, the proponents of premarital sex have used the logic that since `you wouldn't buy a car without test driving it', if you're going to have a successful marriage, a `test drive' is in order. The problem is, coming together sexually before marriage is like taking a test drive in a demolition derby. When the test drive's all over, you're shocked to find the car is all beat up and doesn't work right any more. Sin of any kind carries its own repercussions, and because God is neither a respecter of persons nor parsons, none of us is exempt

The next four, all consume our minds that take us away from setting our minds on the things above, where Christ is seated:

uncleanness,

Means impurity, specifically our words, looks, gestures, your thought life, and the jokes we tell or hear. Dirty jokes desensitize us to the harsh reality that sin takes on those who partake of them.

Passion – inordinate affection,

Means uncontrolled passion or lust in the sexual sense - perversion. The person who cultivates this type of appetite can always find opportunities to satisfy it, especially with all that is available on cable and the Internet.

evil desire – evil concupiscence,

Longing for what is forbidden. The person is one step away from putting these above three into action. A continual planting in the mind will eventually cause the body to respond.

and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Means you have to have it. Anything you got to have, let it go, don't get it. Anything materially that you feel you can't part with, then get rid of it, because it is dominating you.

How many marriages and families are ruined every year because of the pursuit of things. Our culture says, 'Live for your earthly desires' — yet covetousness is the cause of wars among nations and in relationships; pornography is a major reason for the breakdown of families and society; evil desires have caused entire countries to collapse. Read history and you will find this to be so. Living for earthly desires brings death. Putting to death our earthly desires brings life.

(Colossians 3:6 NKJV) Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

(Colossians 3:7 NKJV) in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

(Colossians 3:8 NKJV) But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

And now the call to put-off, and to put-on. Put off the old man and to put on the new man. Put off, rid yourself, throw out the old clothes. These things have no part of any relationship: friendships, marriages, parenting.....these things destroy relationships and God says put it off, it is not your style anymore, that was the old you.

If I came in here, wearing my 70's look, you would say you are so out of style. That's the way it is when we put on the world in anyway. If we put on anger, malice, etc, it just doesn't fit us anymore. Even people recognize and say that's not your style.

How many marriages and friendships have been ruined because of these things.

put off all these:

anger,

The Greek word translated 'anger' is 'orge', which refers to a slow, simmering emotion. I'm angry with my boss, my spouse, my lot in life. It's a festering, smoldering feeling — and it's got to go.

wrath,

Anger becomes wrath when we develop an unforgiving spirit. When anger explodes, it is like shrapnel flying in a war zone, people are left wounded, some critically.

malice,

Malice: Anytime you're humored by someone else's misfortune — that's malice. Heehee he is getting fat, bald, lost job...heehee. It is pride, because their misfortune makes the other person feel better. Malice also comes in the form of revenge. We need to be rooting for each other, not against each other. Husbands don't feel threatened if your wife is learning the Bible deeper than you, excelling at work, root for her. Friends do the same, teach your children to root for their brothers and sisters, not against them.

blasphemy,

Blasphemy is speech that slanders others and tears them down. This is the gossip realm here, but Christians call them prayer request. Gossip is so prevalent in the church, it has cause churches to split, or at the minimum, friendships to split.

filthy language out of your mouth.

This just doesn't mean foul language, but also abusive language. The mouth brings the attitude. Men sit around and curse, like one of the tough guys, it goes straight to their heads, and then they bring it home.

KEY: - Some consider this being legalistic, but the truth is people are always looking for some secret to victorious Christian living, we overcomplicate things. The Scriptures say take it off. You got to say it has to go.

(Colossians 3:9 NKJV) Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

(Colossians 3:10 NKJV) and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Lying, yes even those little white lies, put them off. The image of Him, Jesus is the truth, and the truth shall set you free. Truth is so freeing, no guilt, nor shame, no worries about getting caught in a truth. Base, and then build every relationship off the truth, and you can be sure that relationship will be built on solid ground.

(Colossians 3:11 NKJV) where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

A superiority complex in any relationship will damage or doom the relationship.

- Circumcised nor uncircumcised – is a religious division
- Barbarian was a non-greek – not in our clique
 - Scythian – this was a group of people that lived north of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. Possibly the most barbaric the world had ever known. You talk about pagan, heathen, brutal, and just downright mean. They would kill their enemy, then use their skull as a cup to drink their blood. But these people were being won to the Lord.

Everything in heaven is based on what went on inside of you, while everything on earth is about what went on outside of you.

Heaven is the great reversal. Because man looks on the outward appearance (I Samuel 16:7), those who know how to package and promote themselves are the most successful on this earth. But because God looks on the heart, everything will ultimately be judged not on external appearance, but on internal experience. Consequently, a lot of folks we might have brushed aside as weird or ugly on earth are going to be incredibly honored in heaven. And a lot of 'beautiful people' on earth will take a back seat to those who were unnoticed here on earth.

(Colossians 3:12 NKJV) Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

Now by putting these things, using the replacement principle, and setting our mind above, this will lead us to personal holiness, which will lead to holiness in our relationship to others.

put on:

tender mercies - bowels of mercies,

This where they considered the seat of the emotions, in the bowels. How heartless the world around us can be. We need to display tender feelings of compassion towards one another. Husbands your wife need to be reassured with tender feelings of compassion.

kindness

This word meant being profitable. It means being helpful to others. What can I do to bless you today my wife, child or dear friend.

Humility

Humility the opposite of pride and domination. Humility is not thinking poorly of oneself, rather it having a proper estimate of oneself in the sight of God. The person with a humble mind, is never judgmental, for they know, there goes I except by the grace of God.

meekness

Meekness is not weakness, it is power under control. Meekness does not fly off the handle because he knows everything is under control. Men, are you displaying meekness in the household, or are you lording over your wife and children.

longsuffering;

This word literally means long-tempered. A person who is long-suffering can endure provoking people or circumstances without retaliating. How many times if you could have just endured another hour with keeping your mouth shut, you could have diffused that situation that exploded in your home or friendship.

All the above are summed up in the next verse.

(Colossians 3:13 NKJV) 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.

Forgiving one another:

Interesting word here for forgive: charizomai, khar-id'-zom- ahee; to grant as a favor, i.e. gratuitously, in kindness, pardon or rescue:--deliver, (frankly) forgive, (freely) give, grant.

It means, yes you are in the right, they are clearly wrong, but as a favor I forget the debt. It is a pardon. The government grants pardons, not because new evidence proves they are innocent, but for the reason of mercy and grace.

(Colossians 3:14 NKJV) But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

This is the agape love – unconditional love. We all want to be like Jesus, preach to the multitudes, raise the dead, walk on water, but do you realize we all have the opportunity, everyday in our own homes, to be just like Him – by being that agape love, that unconditional love, to our spouse, children, and friends.

'Put on the new man,' says Paul. 'Put on mercy, kindness, humility. Put on meekness, longsuffering, and love.' In short, put on Christ.

Now the "Replacement Principle"

(Colossians 3:15 NKJV) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

(Colossians 3:16 NKJV) 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.

Fill your heart with these things - ,

in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

and there will be no room for the other things like anger, wrath, gossip, and covetousness in your life. That is why we exist here in this home fellowship, so that we can do some replacement on Thursday nights.

End of Study: Things Above - 3:1-16

Things at Home - 3:17-21

In this wonderfully nourishing Epistle to the Colossians . . .

- In Chapter 1, he discusses the truth about Christ;
- In Chapter 2, the truth about the Crooks;
- In Chapters 3 and 4, the truth about the Christian

This book, like Ephesians has two clear splits in it. Chapters 1-2 are doctrine – what we believe and why, and 3-4 is duty – how then we should live.

In this study we are going to apply this “duty”, how we should live, into our day-to-day lives of living with one another – in marriage, in parenting, and in friendships.

(Colossians 3:17 NKJV) 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.

Go back to verses 1-4 for perspective, we need to put our minds on things above if anything is going to work right here on earth.

(Colossians 3:1 NKJV) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

(Colossians 3:2 NKJV) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

(Colossians 3:3 NKJV) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

(Colossians 3:4 NKJV) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Now we can talk about marriage and parenting.

We have to go back and apply everything we learned in the last study into our marriages and parenting.

(Colossians 3:18 NKJV) Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

‘Here’s how you’re to live on earth, wives,’ says Paul. ‘Submit to your husband.’ But notice Paul says wives are to submit to their *own* husband — not to submit to men generally, but to their own husband specifically. Women, don’t let anyone say, ‘Sister, I need to correct you on this, or deal with you on that,’ because, unfortunately, there are men who seem to feel it’s their calling to go around the Church correcting women. They have a ‘women’s ministry’, wherein they talk to women about the way to dress, behave, talk or think — and they are un-scriptural in doing so, for Scripture says, ‘Wives, submit to your own husband exclusively.’

Where was Adam, the question is always asked? But how about where was Eve? Why was she not with her husband? Why was she out seeking spiritual things apart from her husband. Wives you are to ask your husbands the questions, and let him seek out the answer. Don’t go to the pastoral staff, let him go to the staff if he can’t get the answer.

(Colossians 3:19 NKJV) Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

People get bitter whenever expectations are unrealistically high, when promises are broken. Husbands, your wife is not going to be God for you. She will not satisfy your deepest longing. Only the Lord will satisfy you, as only the Lord will satisfy her. Truly, if you love the Lord with all your heart, you will have no reason to be bitter with your wife, let her failures go, pardon her of them. Husbands.....you can not change your wife, only the Lord can. You can only take her deeper in the Lord by going deeper yourself. Pray for her and with her. Be a

man of God, cause godly woman love godly men. If you are not being a godly man, don't expect her to be. Your wife is a reflection of you.

(Colossians 3:20 NKJV) Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

This is written simply enough for any child to understand: Kids, obey your parents in all things. Don't argue with them, but do what they say, for by this is the Lord well pleased.

In all things.....that includes doing the dishes, taking the trash out.

(Colossians 3:21 NKJV) Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Similar to Paul's injunction to put away bitterness towards their wives, Paul warns fathers that unrealistic demands lead to anger and discouragement in the hearts of their children.

There has to be a balance, you have to raise them up, but not to the point that all you are doing is yelling at them. We can see today in the home. Parents are so worried about their children being happy. Look at today's children. They have computers on their desks, Internet connection, stereo on the shelf, and a television next to that – all in their own room. They have a closet full of Nike clothes with Reebok shoes. They get to choose what the family eats for breakfast and dinner. They come home from school, and immediately tunes into the television, or fire-up the Playstation.

Parents are so worried about meeting their kids wants, they no longer see what the needs are. Parenting has shifted from parents saying "I have to teach my child **truths**", to I hope they are happy, I hope they think well of me, I hope they are not upset or offended with me, what can I do to please them and meet their needs. Parents have drifted from I need to teach my children truths, what is right and what is wrong, and this is what you need to know to prepare you for life properly.

Chip away at their faults, teach them through example the replacement principle, and watch the Lord bring their eyes to the things above.

Conclusion:

Put off these old things, put on these new things, and the Lord will protect and provide for all your relationships. Kill those things first by repentance, then reduce them powerless through the replacement principle, and you will not be distracted by the earthly things, but will have your eyes set on the things above.....and every relationship you have, marriage, parenting, and friendship will be blessed abundantly.

End of Study: Things at Home - 3:17-21

Things at Work – 3:22 – 4:2

In this wonderfully nourishing Epistle to the Colossians . . .

- In Chapter 1, he discusses the truth about Christ;
- In Chapter 2, the truth about the Crooks;
- In Chapters 3 and 4, the truth about the Christian

This book, like Ephesians has two clear splits in it. Chapters 1-2 are doctrine – what we believe and why, and 3-4 is duty – how then we should live.

Work, that dirty four-letter word. The Lord places such an importance on our performance and behavior in the workplace, that He places it right after marriage and parenting in this chapter of setting our minds on the things above.

The man God uses is a man who knows how to work.

- It was when Moses was tending his father-in-law's sheep that God appeared to Him in the burning bush (Exodus 3).
- It was when David was tending sheep when he was called from the field and Samuel anointed him with oil (1 Samuel 16:11-13).
- It was when Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen that Elijah cast the mantle of ministry upon him (I Kings 19:19).
- It was when Peter and Andrew were casting their nets that Jesus called them to be fishers of men (Matthew 4:19).
- James and John were mending their nets when Jesus called them (Matthew 4:20)
- Matthew was sitting at his desk working as a tax collector when Jesus called him (Matthew 9:9)
- It was when Saul was laboring for the high priest on his way to Damascus that Jesus appeared to him and turned his life around (Acts 9).

How about me you might say, you mothers.

The NIV translates the word "bondservant" as a slave. Therefore this is for you.

You students, I've yet to hear a child not call school work.

As for you young guys and gals, in reference to working around the house, I remind you of the story of a young man named Samuel. He was busy working around the temple, sweeping and cleaning, when the Lord tapped him on his shoulder.

(1 Samuel 3:1 KJV) And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

(1 Samuel 3:2 KJV) And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;

(1 Samuel 3:3 KJV) And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

(1 Samuel 3:4 KJV) That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

There are many people who want to be missionaries, ministers (full-time and part-time) who are just sitting, `waiting on God'. But they will still be sitting at age 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70. The answer is to work. Whatever you're doing, do it heartily to the Lord — for it is then that God will tap you on the shoulder and give you even more significant tasks.

(Colossians 3:22 NKJV) Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

obey in all things

'What if I don't agree with the policy?' you ask. Too bad. It might not be your flavor, or what you would do as a boss, but you are to obey those in authority over you unless what they demand is immoral — and then you better have Scripture and wise counsel to back your objection.

I am amazed when companies have to offer incentives and bonus for people just to do what they were hired to do. A company will say we are going to give a bonus check to whoever makes 100% on their audit, when the fact is, 100% is just doing what their job description calls them to do.

(Colossians 3:23 NKJV) And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

(Colossians 3:24 NKJV) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

W-O-R-K

W – Whatever, you do, do it heartily unto the Lord, for it is Him you serve not man.

Because work gives you an.....

O – Opportunity, to witness for Him, not in word, but in deed. Hey rejoice if you get all the junk jobs. People will say why are you always so pleasant, even though you get to do all the rotten jobs. Lets face it, good workers get more work, and not always more pay. If there are 100 bricks that need to be moved, and ole Joe is moving kinda slow and can only do 40, that means you get to do your 50 and Joes 10. Hey rejoice that the company sees you work over and above your minimum requirement. Companies should be calling churches and saying do you have anybody there that needs a job, we find the best workers are these people who say they are born-again Bible Believers, man they really get the job done.

The Amish have a saying, "witness for Christ, and if all else fails use words." Let you first witness at work be your hard work, your work ethic and integrity. If you can't witness first through that, if you are a 40 brick worker causing others to pick your 10 short up, then please just keep your mouth shut, you will give people reason to blaspheme the Lord.

But you hard workers rejoice in your job, because you are witnessing for Christ in deeds and actions, and be assured people are watching.

Now an important side note before we move on, be careful with the words you use at work in regards to conversation about the work environment or situation. In order to keep your witness be careful that someone doesn't take your statement about work and think you are talking negatively. Example, you talk about how difficult this work exercise just in an ordinary conversation. Now it is true that the work is difficult, but the person with the bad attitude will use it as a means to complain about work, and think they have found a fellow complainer, and may even use your name as a reference when you are not around. There are a lot of complainers in the workforce, the first key to be a good witness in the workplace, is not be a complainer like the rest.

3. W-O-R-K,

Whatever you do, do it heartily unto the Lord, because work gives you a.....

R – Reason, to praise Him with thanksgiving for His provisions. Tell ya what, miss a paycheck or two, you will get a whole new perspective on your job. Let the rumors of layoff come around, and you'll realize what is at stake.

Our Father who art in heaven we pray.....give us this day our daily bread. Work is our daily bread.

(Matthew 6:9 KJV) After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

(Matthew 6:10 KJV) Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

(Matthew 6:11 KJV) Give us this day our daily bread.

When I worked at Sikorsky aircraft, I can remember Supervisor Demarco saying, "I want all you complainers to go down to the unemployment line and complain to that guy standing in line; and after he punches you in the nose, he will then come down and apply to take your job."

The children of Israel wondering in the wilderness complained about the daily bread, manna, that supplied their physical needs everyday. Be careful about complaining about your job or you may find yourself purging quail through your nose.

Father, thank you for "giving us this day, our daily bread".

4. W-O-R-K

Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, - Verse 24

K – Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ (Colossians 3:24 NKJV)

You have to know who your real boss is or you will continually be frustrated at work.

Hey Gang, the more they treat you poorly, and you keep your witness, the more your reward in heaven will be, and here on earth because you will become more like Jesus.

You know what, I appreciate a good dumping every now and again – almost weekly now. It keeps me in the right perspective, invest in heavenly things, not earthly things. If I work to please man, so the boss man recognizes me, he is man and he will let me down. More times than not, they will take it as an opportunity to use me for their advantage.

I should work hard while I am there, but not get so wrapped up I neglect my family, devotion time, and ministry.

How often I'll be driving home thinking about what I need to do. Or I'll skip my morning devotion so I can hurry to work to get working...sometime 10-12 hours a day.

Then I say after weeks on a big project, and I get overlooked, or taken advantage of, why did I trade temporal things for eternal things. I can't get that time back. There is always opportunity to make money another day, but never an opportunity to get the time back. Once our time is spent, it is spent for life.

Work, and work faithfully, and then God will tap you on the shoulder and say I've watch you work, I got something else for you to do, join me in this ministry. It may be part time, it may be full, but when He does call, apply these same things. Whatever you do, do it heartily unto the Lord, you'll have opportunity to witness for Him, it will give you a reason to praise and thank Him for the opportunity, and always know in ministry, that your reward will come from the Lord.

Watching Mother Theresa care for people with their open sores, bodies smelling, and wounds bleeding, an observer said to her, 'I wouldn't do what you do for a million dollars.'
'Neither would I,' Mother Theresa replied.

Truly, the only motivation big enough for such service is an eternal reward.

Whether it is feeding the hungry or making money for your boss, work as if you are working for the Lord.

(Colossians 3:25 NKJV) But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Gang, everybody at work may get away with it, but you won't. That extra 15 minutes for lunch, the pens, the long distance calls. Hey if you had a housekeeper, how upset would you be if you found out she was making long distance calls on your phone, and charged you an extra hour wage to boot. God has called you to a higher standard.

and there is no partiality.

Means there is no justification. Even if your boss ripped you off, you don't get pay adjustment by any other way than company policy.

(Colossians 4:1 NKJV) Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Here God talks to bosses on how to treat their workers.

You will stand before your master. We all have someone working for us in some sense, whether it is your maid, gas attendant, the worker at 7/11, or you manage a fortune 500 company.

Bosses, make sure you're acting justly, lovingly, equitably. Sure, you might be in a place of power and prominence now, but never forget you will one day stand before *your* Master and give account of what went on through your life and in your heart.'

Having said that, let me say this to those who are not masters, but employees. When things are done justly and equitably, sometimes it causes a problem in the hearts of the rank and file.

'What's the big idea of him making as much as I do? He only got as far as fifth grade — and I went through my junior year in high school!'

Jesus spoke to just such an issue in Matthew chapter 20. Spiritually this applies to salvation, but Jesus was using an illustration of the the workplace, that still applies today.

A master goes to the marketplace at 9 a.m. and says, 'I need some guys to help me bring in my crops. I'll pay one denarius to anyone who works for me.' A denarius being the wage of a soldier, it was a good day's pay. 'We'll do it!' said some unemployed men looking for work. 'We were wondering how we were going to feed our families today — and now we have the opportunity to make a good wage. We're so blessed!'

The master then goes back to the same marketplace at noon and finds more unemployed men whom he takes to his vineyard to join those he had hired previously. At 3:00 in the afternoon and again at 5:00, one hour before quitting time, the master returns to the marketplace yet again, and brings back more workers.

At the end of the day, he pays the laborers he had hired at 5:00, a denarius — a full day's wage. The first guys, the ones hired at 9 in the morning, immediately whisper among themselves, 'If he's paying those guys a full day's wage for only an hour's work, can you imagine what he's going to pay us?!' But their dreams of Lexuses and Sharper Image are abruptly cut short as the master pays them a single denarius.

'Unfair!' the 9:00 gang cries. 'Why?' the master asks. 'I paid you the exact wage for which you welcomed the opportunity to work. Now, why is it a problem for you that I choose to be kind and treat everyone equally?'

In this account, Jesus underscores our tendency to be happy only until we see what someone else gets. The vineyard workers began the day excited, and ended the day murmuring because they looked at the other guys. It's a problem with which we all struggle.

So what's the key?.....Don't look around. You see, once I start looking around, I inevitably get discouraged. I start to say, 'Hey, why is that guy getting the breaks?' or 'Why does that blessing go to him when I've been working harder and longer?' Gang, if you're going to be bummed every time someone else is blessed, you really shouldn't be in the field of ministry or blessing.

'Masters,' says Paul, 'you have an obligation to be just.' The boss is responsible to see his workers are justly paid How does this happen? Read on . . .

(Colossians 4:2 NKJV) Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

Want to be a good master in the home or job? The only way I know to do it is to pray. 'Father, Your Son taught us to ask You to give us our daily bread. And now, Lord, help me to properly distribute the bread You send.'

Bosses you have to be in prayer continually to determine what is right in your sight, how do I run this ministry, this business, this family. As the Philistine's continually attacked the children of Israel, Finances will continually stalk and attack us in the ministry, business, and home.

Now a big question, if the job I am at - stinks - when is it time to move on to another job? I suggest to you, before you go jumping jobs, you make sure your heart is right first. During prayer time, go and seek the Lord and say I have truly applied W-O-R-K. Am I bringing God glory in whatever I am doing, is my work a witness or am I a complainer, am I thankful for the daily bread, do I really know who my boss is?

If you don't work hard for the Lord, don't expect Him to work hard for you. If you want to be blessed, then you have to bless.

If you are right in these areas, then you can bath your decision in prayer, then you can have peace in knowing you are making the right decision, a decision that is led of God, not your emotions, and is best for you and your family.

being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

Be a thankful person. This applies to everyone — masters and servants, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters.

One morning during an eclipse in the Middle Ages, people woke, expecting day to dawn. When it didn't, they freaked out. 'Oh no!' they cried. 'The sun didn't rise today.' What was at first sort of a curiosity became a real concern — and they began screaming, wailing, and howling. When the sun did at last appear, the people cheered, clapped, and blessed God for the sunshine which they had previously taken for granted.

How good it would be for us to wake up and say, 'Thank You for a new day, Father. I'm alive. The sun is out. There's air to breathe. I'm not wearing a Chemical Suit in 100 degree heat with people trying to shoot me.

When I pray, thanksgiving is always before my supplication. Thanksgiving reminds what God has done in my life, it is a demonstration of what he will do for me in the future, thanksgiving keeps my prayer time form turning into some big whining session, of what I need or don't have.

Personally, I don't think there's anything more abhorrent than grumpy believers. Don't they realize how good God has been to them? They're going to heaven. They have the Scriptures. The Spirit indwells them.

I don't think there's a single excuse for a rational person to be grumpy. Thanksgiving should be flowing from our lips constantly. Apply thanksgiving to Life, apply it to Work.

End of Study: Things at Work – 3:22 – 4:2

Colossians: Chapter 4

Servants in Action – 4:2 - 18

In this wonderfully nourishing Epistle to the Colossians . . .

- In Chapter 1, he discusses the truth about Christ;
- In Chapter 2, the truth about the Crooks;
- In Chapters 3 and 4, the truth about the Christian

This book, like Ephesians has two clear splits in it. Chapters 1-2 are doctrine – what we believe and why, and 3-4 is duty – how then we should live.

Paul ends this letter with “*remember my chains.*”

There is a beautiful place in the world, a place few people every want to go, it is a place called helplessness. The place of sanctified loneliness, even if you are surrounded by dozens of people. It is a place God will take you to exalt His Holy name, both in you and the world around you.

What binds you today, what is it that you feel you want to break free from (and I'm not referring to sin). That very thing that binds you, may be the very thing that frees you, that takes you to that place of hopelessness, the place of sanctified loneliness, where it is just you and the Lord. That place where you cry out, Father come to me, you call me into the heavenly, but I make it, I can't reach you, please come to me. Then you'll hear the Father say – here I am.

In Revelation 6 the saints cried out, how long O'Lord will you make us wait till you act, and God gave them a white robe and said be patient, just a little while longer:

(Revelation 6:9 NKJV) When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

(Revelation 6:10 NKJV) And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

(Revelation 6:11 NKJV) Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

He will say to you, here's your robe of righteousness, meaning all is well, be patient a little while longer, I'm doing things you can't see.

And here in chapter 4 we see servants in actions, and we see them stepping up, taking up ministry to reach out where Paul's chains confined him, kept him from going and ministering.

Maybe your chains, this thing that confines you is causing others to step-up, or is placing you on a path that others will someday walk, but you had to walk there first.

You may say “how much longer”, and He will say, “just a little while longer – here's your robe of righteousness”.

What does He ask from us while we are in these chains that confine us, verse 2 – pray.

Colossians 4:2 NKJV) Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;
(Colossians 4:3 NKJV) 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,
(Colossians 4:4 NKJV) that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Intriguing. Paul says, 'Pray for me, pray for us — not that we'll get out of here, but that the Word will go forth from here.' I think if I was writing this, I would say, 'Please pray for me that I'll get outta here. I'm tired of being in prison.' Not so Paul. He says, 'My desire is that God's Word will go forth from here, that those around me will really see that Christ lives in me.' Truly, this is the way to pray. Paul's prayer was answered. The Word was spoken and spread. First by this very letter to the church in Colosse and Laodicea, then later read over the centuries, and right here today at this kitchen table.

A sign said: Pray . . . it works. 'True — but what if it doesn't work?' Most of the time we pray small prayers like, 'Get me outta here'. And when they don't work, we stop praying instead of learning what prayer really is. Prayer is not to get God to see things my way, but rather to get me to see things His way.

AP story: Walking into her house to answer the phone, Cindy Hartman of Conway, Arkansas, was confronted by a burglar who, after ripping the phone out of the wall, ordered her into the closet. Hartman dropped to her knees and asked the burglar if she could pray for him. 'I want you to know that God loves you and I forgive you,' she said. The burglar looked at her and apologized for what he had done. Then he yelled out the door to a woman in a pickup truck, 'We gotta unload all this. She's a Christian lady. We can't do this to her!' Hartman remained on her knees, and the burglar returned the furniture he had already taken from her home. Then he took the bullets out of his gun, handed her the gun, and walked out the door.

Fascinating story. You see, Cindy Hartman could have prayed, 'Get me out of here,' but instead she prayed like Paul. 'Could I pray for you?' she asked the burglar. *That's* in harmony with the heart of God. How do I know? Because of what Jesus said on the Cross. He didn't say, 'Get me out of here,' He said, 'Father, forgive them. They don't understand what's going on,' (Luke 23:34).

How I want to be more like Paul. I've got so much to learn in this arena — but I see the principle and the rightness of what Paul is modeling here as he prays not to get out of prison, but that he'll have boldness and wisdom in any situation.

(Colossians 4:5 NKJV) Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.

You may think the place God has you is a waste of time, but God doesn't — He says the this time is precious, don't waste it — redeem it.

Walk wisely because people are watching you. Time is moving rapidly, so redeem it. Sharper Image has a clock for about \$80 which, on the basis of insurance projections, will calculate how many seconds you have left to live. Let's say the number is 500,000 seconds. That number flashes on the screen and begins counting down each second. It's a great idea!

Somehow we think we're going to live a long time, but James was right when he said life is a vapor, a puff of steam (4:14). It's going so fast. Make it count. How? Redeem it. Find ways in which you can say, 'I don't need to waste this time because I don't have a lot of time left!'

According to USA Today, the average American will spend six months of his life waiting at red lights. People say, 'I just don't have time to pray' — but what if they decided that at every red light they would pray for people in the Fellowship, for people in Anne Arundel County who don't know Jesus, for people in the world who have never heard His Name? What if they decided to keep an open Bible on the seat next to them in order to read a verse or two during every red light? Don't worry if it turns green, the guy behind you will let you know. People say they don't have time to read, to pray, to memorize, to study. Yes they do. And I'm not even talking about getting up at 3 a.m. I'm talking about just using the time they're at stoplights. Redeem the time!

(Colossians 4:6 NKJV) Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Even in periods of hard times, helplessness, let your speech be seasoned with salt. Salty speech? Years ago, salty speech connoted swearing. That's not the salty speech Paul is talking about. No, the idea here is of salty french fries. I love salty french fries, but I've got to have a Coke to go with them, because they make me thirsty. So too, the speech we use should create in people a thirst for the wine of the Spirit in our hearts.

A prisoner in the concentration camp with Betsy Ten Boom said, Betsy talks about heaven, like she had already seen it." That how our speech should be, we talk about the things of God with a passion, a passion because we live it daily, not just something we read about like a history lesson; and then people will thirst for what they know we have already taken in.

(Colossians 4:7 NKJV) Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.

Tychicus - Beloved brother, faithful minister, fellowservant — what wonderful qualities.

Each of these people listed in the rest of this chapter is a new person in Christ, so first there was a transfer from the old man to the new. They had to put off and put on as we studied. All transfers begin at the cross, as new life begins in man. I like what Herod said in Matt 2:8 Go and search carefully for the child.

(Matthew 2:8 NKJV) And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

When man searches for Christ, he is not seeking Him like a lost coin, rather what he is searching is his very heart, and he sees a need for a Savior, and it is there that we find life.

His name is Jesus, Hosanna means "save now", Immanuel, "God with Us".

What's in a name we might say, it is always interesting studying someone's name in the Scriptures, many of them have a deeper meaning to them. Jacob means heel-catcher, Moses means wanderer, but I am most fascinated with Sara and Abram, when God changed their names. He changed them simply by adding a letter, the letter "h", Sarah with an "h", and Abram, to Abraham.

The Lord adds a simple "h" to the name, insignificant at first glance, but powerful at second.

For God with us - Immanuel, becomes God in us, as the Spirit of the living God takes residence in us:

(1 Corinthians 3:16 NKJV) Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

The Hebrew word for Spirit is ruwach, roo'-akh; it meant wind; by resemblance breath. ruwach in the Hebrew is a word spoke with just a breath, the "h". When God breaths His breathe in you, it's just a breath, an "h" that changes you forever.

This wind, is also a fire; that when allowed will consume all those things that keep us from setting our mind on the things above, that allow Christ in us, the hope of glory to rule and reign in my life in all situations and circumstances.

We will receive a new name in heaven, I wonder if it our name now, with an "h" added to it.

(Revelation 2:17 NKJV) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

When God breathes His Spirit into us, we are changed forever. We need this "h", this Spirit in our life so we have the power to walk the walk He has called us to. Like Sara and Abraham, we are barren and impotent without the "H", the Spirit of God living in us.

(Colossians 4:7 NKJV) Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.

(Colossians 4:8 NKJV) I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts,

Look at the three marks that Tychicus was known for:

A beloved brother

A faithful minister

A fellow servant in the Lord

This is what the ruwach does in a person's life.

(Colossians 4:9 NKJV) with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.

If you're a student of the Word, you know Onesimus plays a key role in the book of Philemon. A runaway slave who ended up in prison as a cellmate of Paul, he got saved, was released, and now turns out to be a faithful friend and minister.

Onesimus' chains brought him to Christ, and little did he know a letter written about him would become an epistle to lead many others to Christ.

How many people have a testimony just like Onesimus. A testimony of how it seemed that all was lost, nothing would ever seem right, this divorce, illness, relationship, nothing good can ever come of it. I imagine that is what Onesimus thought himself.

(Colossians 4:10 NKJV) Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),

Marcus is John Mark. Remember the story in ' (Acts 15:36-41)? Setting off on their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas take John Mark, Barnabas' nephew, with them. Then somewhere in the early part of the journey, John Mark freaks out, and runs home. At the outset of their second missionary trip, Barnabas says, 'I'll get John Mark and we'll be on our way.'

'Hold on,' Paul says. 'John Mark flipped out and failed us last time. He's not coming again.'

'Yes he is,' said Barnabas, Son of Comfort.

'No way,' said Paul. 'There's work to do. We can't have this guy tag along with us. He just doesn't have what it takes.'

'I'm taking John Mark,' said Barnabas.

'Fine,' said Paul. 'Go your way. I'll take Silas and we'll go in a different direction.' (Acts 15:36-41) And they parted company.

Years later, we see that Barnabas' work was successful with John Mark, for here in Colossians Paul salutes him.

So too, you who feel like you 'missed the mark', that God opened a door for you to do something, but you failed — take heart. I don't care how badly you messed up, He's not through with you. Talk about failure! He had less than three years of formal education and failed in business in '31. He was defeated for State Legislature in '32, and failed again in business in '34. Finally elected to

the State Legislature in '35, he ran for Speaker and lost in a landslide. He was defeated again for Elector in `40, and for Congress in `43. Elected in `46, he was tossed out of office two years later, defeated in a re-election attempt in `48. Failing in business once again, he ran for Senate, but was defeated in `55. He ran for Vice President in `56, was crushed, and was defeated for Senate another time in `58. And then in '60, 1860, Abraham Lincoln won — and went on to become perhaps the greatest political leader in American history.

Could it be that the wit, wisdom, and understanding of human nature which he exhibited so powerfully came as a result of the setbacks, failure, and defeat Lincoln had experienced previously?

Don't despair, precious people. John Mark blew it badly, but came through ultimately. So can you. Don't despair your failures and setbacks, the chains that bind you, you have a robe of righteousness, you have the "h", the ruwach, the Spirit of the living God inside of you.

(Colossians 4:11 NKJV) 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.

Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus , Mark, and Justus proved to be a comfort. When people are hurting they don't want a sermon, they want comfort. Don't prepare people a sermon, prepare them a meal. Don't share Scripture then go home, share yourself, your time. Provide comfort to them.

Matthew 5-7, the greatest sermon ever preached, and what happen immediately after that sermon, when Jesus came down from the mount? It says a leper came to Jesus and said if you are willing you can make me clean.....and what does Jesus do, He says I am willing and then he stretched forth His hand and touched the man. A leper, how long had it been since someone touched him? How many times did those words echo in his ears as he walked the streets.....unclean...unclean, how many times was he the brunt of children's mocking, and self-righteous peoples sneers? Yet Jesus didn't just heal him, He touched him. Jesus didn't give him a Bible Study tape from the Sermon on the Mount, He touched him.

Prove to be a comfort.

(Colossians 4:12 NKJV) Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

(Colossians 4:13 NKJV) For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

Epaphras labored fervently in prayer. The idea here is one of giving birth, going through pain to bring forth prayer. Sometimes that's what it takes. Do you ever feel like not praying? Am I the only one who begins to pray, but then gets distracted and succumbs to the list of other things to tend to first?

Such wasn't the case with Epaphras. He labored in prayer until there was a breakthrough, a birth of renewal and revival in the hearts and lives of those for whom he prayed.

Note: I put a slip of paper next to me when I pray, so when a distracting thought comes I write it down, so I can handle it later, for I have a tendency to want to take care of it then, and of course it reduces my prayer time.

God gives people burdens for other people and places, it is truly a gift from the Lord, that he would entrust you with a specific person or place so that you might intercede on their behalf.

(Colossians 4:14 NKJV) Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

Luke, the beloved physician . . .

Luke, a doctor? Why did Paul call Luke the *beloved* physician if Luke didn't even have enough faith to be a faith healer? Because Paul, the one who saw such powerful healing miracles happen that even the sweat bands and aprons he wore were used as instruments of healing (Acts 19:11-12), knew the necessity of a physician given intellectual gifts and training to help people physically — and welcomed Luke's presence on his missionary journey.

You will hear every so often this teaching on generational curses, that a person is sick or bound because of the sins of their family past, a sin that they were not party too. Their decree is that no one should sick, if you are, then there's a sin somewhere in your family's past that you have not confessed and dealt with.

Paul not only calls Luke a physician, but a beloved physician. Shame on you Paul, what's a person need a physician for, what they need to do is confess great granddaddy's drinking problem.

Jesus himself acknowledges the blessings and needs of a physician:

(Matthew 9:12 KJV) But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

I'm not going to dwell here on this, but want you to know that it is out there, and here is your Biblical counter to it.

Also:

(Deuteronomy 24:16 KJV) *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.*

(James 1:17 KJV) *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* - doctors fall in as good gifts from above, as did Luke, the beloved physician

and Demas greet you

In the book of Philemon, which preceded the book of Colossians by a couple of years, Demas is called a fellowservant (verse 24). Approximately six years after this, there's a third mention of Demas, where right before Paul dies, he says, 'Demas has forsaken us, having loved this present world (II Timothy 4:10). So Demas went from being a fellowservant to one who turned his back on the Lord because he loved the world.

How did this happen?

Here's how: the Christian life is like a steam locomotive. When you're first saved and on fire, you stoke the boiler with the Word. You come to church, you're involved in ministry, and you're moving along in your faith. But there can come a time when you start to think, 'Hey, I'm cruising along fine. I don't need to feed the fire so fervently. I don't need to study Scripture so consistently. I don't need to have devotions daily. I don't need to go to church regularly because, look, I'm really moving!' But here's the deal, gang. Once the fire stops being fed, the engine starts slowing down, although imperceptibly at first. Yes, the train keeps moving down the tracks for a time and everything appears to be going fine, but little by little the engine goes slower and slower until finally it stops dead in its tracks. You might be able to go weeks, months, even years on the momentum you gained in the early days — but if you don't continue to feed the fire, eventually you'll stop altogether. And, like Demas, you'll say, 'What happened? How did I end up *here*?'

(Colossians 4:15 NKJV) Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

`The church which is in his house' — that's a great little phrase. If you have a family, you have a church. Husbands, wives, parents, is your house a church, a place of worship. Lets be honest, how differently we act in the church in our homes, than we do right here in the public church.

(Colossians 4:16 NKJV) 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.

In other words, `Pass this letter on the church at Laodicea, and they'll pass theirs on to you.' We don't have the letter, but it was evidently written by Paul at this time to the Laodiceans.

(Colossians 4:17 NKJV) And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

`Do what God has told you, Archippus,' — which is a good word for us as well — to do whatever it is God has told us, to keep on with whatever it is He has laid upon our hearts individually and corporately in order to bring it to completion.

(Colossians 4:18 NKJV) This salutation by my own hand; Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.

Remember my chains he says, and may you remember that God is always working in your chains, just as He worked in Paul's chains.

Grace be with you. Amen.

Paul opened his epistle with the salutation of grace, and now closes it with the benediction of grace. As it began, so it ends because grace is the whole deal.

Amen.

End of Study: Servants in Action – 4:2 - 18