

Colossians

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Contents

Introduction:	Christ In You, The Only Hope Of glory	3
Part One:	Filled With All The Filling	7
Part Two:	Not Beguiled Or Spoiled But Rooted	13
Part Three:	Completely Complete	18
Part Four:	The <i>Stoicheia</i>	23
Part Five:	We Are Risen With Him	28
Part Six:	Dual Natures Dueling	33
Part Seven:	Put On/Put Off	38
Part Eight:	The Importance of Religion	43

It's Christ in you, the hope of glory

Colossians: Introduction

Colossians is one of four letters of Paul known as the prison letters. Paul wrote these letters and sent them out at same time by way of trusted messengers. Most people of that day were not able to read. These letters were designed to be read aloud to the various house churches and then to be passed on to other house churches until all had heard the word of God. By way of introduction to the letter of Colossians I would like for us to read stating in verse 1:

Colossians Chapter One

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

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;

6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you may be being filled* with the knowledge** of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;(sunesis - noun)

* "ye might be filled with" vs Aor Pas 2 Pl

** "Knowledge" epignOsis - realization - revelation doSs noun)

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful (bearing fruit vp Pres Act Nom Pl m) in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might*, (In all power being made powerful) according to his glorious power**, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;***

* en pas dunamis dunamoO

** according to the mighty grip of His esteem and glory

*** into ALL indurance and patience with joy

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light**:

* the one making you (pl) enough, or competent

** into the inheritance of the holy ones in THE Light.

13 Who hath delivered us from(ek-out of) the power (exousia-authority) of (ho-of the) darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

(Who rescued us(a done deal) out of)

(the authority or jurisdiction of THE darkness)

(and transported us into the kingdom of His Son that He loves.)

14 In whom we have redemption (deliverance) through his blood, even the forgiveness (pardon) of sins:

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

The historical community of Colosse at the time of Paul was in the Lycus Valley about 100 miles east of Ephesus. It was the central hub of trade routes several centuries earlier but Roman roads had rerouted the flow of traffic through the neighboring town of Laodicea. At the time of this letters writing Colosse was a country village with surrounding farms.

The people of Colosse were Greek colonists, native Phrygians and some Jewish families in the area that were descendants of the 2,000 families expelled from Babylon to Asia by Antiochus III in 213 B.C. The area was of little military importance so the presence and influence of Rome was less pronounced.

Unlike nearby Laodicea, the tell-mound of the ancient town of Colosse has never been excavated and today appears as a distinctive a low hill. The rim of the old walls of the circular Greek style theater can still be seen. Of note, opium poppies have overgrown the soil covering the town. The area is prone to frequent earthquakes. The town was destroyed by an earthquake within a few years after this letter was written and was never rebuilt. Since that time the area has been a productive farming region well watered by the Menderes river.

As in Galatia and Ephesus, the threat of legalism was a constant. What is known to theologians as “Jewish-Hellenistic religious syncretism” was the religious trend in the

area. The mixed populations were blending together and combining their religions and traditions. The melding of Paganism, Greek Mythology, and Judaism along with the unifying idea that all religions are the same was oozing into the house churches. This letter was written to point out the uniqueness and supremacy of Christ in His defeat and elimination of the need of all religion.

If you would like a one sentence, short summary of this book it is the second half of verse 27 of chapter one: It is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Around that profoundly simple statement orbits our hope, our freedom, our life, our very being. If Christ be not in us, we are then the most hopeless and helpless of all people. Our redemption, our forgiveness, our justification and our eternal life are all dependent upon Christ being in us. Not metaphorically, but in reality: The living Lord, the King of Kings, the Head of all things to the Church living in and through us. This reality is not a religion but instead is a wholly a Holy lifestyle free from the bonds of religion.

The house Churches of Colosse and nearby Laodicea (4:16) came into being during the time that Paul and his companions were teaching in Ephesus. In Acts 19 it talks about the word of God spreading throughout Asia during the two years they taught in the Ephesian school of Tyrannus.

There is no record of Paul ever being in Colosse. The wording of verse 9 of chapter one seems to confirm that he did not personally know most of the believers in the area. A Colossian believer named Epaphras (1:8) had come to Rome to visit Paul in Prison to ask for help in combating the influx of religion into believer’s lives.

Religion is subtly insidious. Even without the influence of others we are in the flesh prone to gravitate back towards our own repetitive methods that we think will fool God. When we are inundated with the culture and pressure of religions it is very easy to allow ourselves to be pressured into compliance. After all what does a little religion hurt anyway? A little bit of law won’t hurt anything. Right? An incantation? Sure, why not: We’ll call it a prayer. We need a boss right? Well somebody’s got to organize things! Passover? Well OK, why not? It’s about God isn’t it? The ten commandments? What can they hurt? Uh what? Meet in the Pagan Temple? They have great seats and an altar! Sure why not? Ummm What happened to Christ?

Every one of the new believers in Colosse brought religious traditions with them. When in doubt the normal fleshly reaction is to fall back on our tradition. When we go back to our traditions and ways of doing things we minimize Christ. He is the one and only head. He has rubbed out, erased, done away with religion and nailed it to his cross. We are set free: In Christ. We are free nowhere else: Only IN CHRIST. When we chose to walk in tradition and religion we wrap the chains back around ourselves.

The cultures from which the Colossian believers came were held together by the following beliefs and corresponding traditions:

- 1.The Greek Mystery Societies that emphasized secret higher knowledge of the cosmic order.
- 2.Jewish ritualism and traditionalism with all of the feast days and 613 laws.
- 3.Veneration of angels who they believed controlled the operations of nature.
- 4.Greek and Roman Multi-demigods: Each of which had to be appeased.
- 5.Ascetic self-denial (2:20-23) with the idea that only those with full knowledge of ascetic truth could understand and experience spiritual maturity.
- 6.The political push to combine all religions into one.

God's answer to the Colossians by revelation through Paul's letter is truly simple and easy to understand if you are not blinded by religion: It is Christ in you the only hope of glory. It is Christ plus nothing else. Anything else is religion and prevents us from allowing Christ to live in and through us.

The structure of this letter is built upon first: Christ in you, then second; the resulting lifestyle of those allowing Christ to live in and through them. The Christian life is in truth the life of the indwelling Christ that God manifests through the believer.

We are truly brand new! It's about being new. Our whole world view, perspective and expectation should be based on our newness in Christ. We have Christ in us. Jesus Christ has all of the filling and fullness of God within Him. We have Christ in us. We have been endued with power. We have been filled with the filling (Christ) who has all of the filling that is possible from God. We have God in Christ in us.

Our loyalty and citizenship has been changed: "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves..." Colossians 1:3. Our whole approach to life should be based on who we are in Christ. The worldly perspective should fade away as we renew our minds to the truth of God's word.

We have Christ in us. We are in Christ. He is at the right hand of God. We are at the right hand of God because we are in Christ. God is in Christ. Christ is in us. You do not need help to connect to God if you are born again. You couldn't get unconnected if you wanted to. It is who you are Brand-New.

Welcome to the book of Colossians.

In our next session we will begin to look in more detail at this awesome little book. In the mean time pray for me. I pray that you may be continually being filled with the revelation knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Colossians Part One

In our previous session we talked briefly about the culture and geographic setting of Colosse. We read most of the first chapter as an introduction to this important little letter. I shared with you a one sentence, short summary of this book: It is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The reality of Christ in us is the doorway into understanding who, what and where we are as God’s children.

Many times Colossians is passed over and given little scrutiny because of its small size and the similarities to Ephesians. But there are indispensable truths in this little letter that must be understood to know the will of God for our lives. There is a distinct difference in emphasis in Colossians compared to Ephesians. Ephesians is about the body of Christ where as the letter of Colossians is about the Head of the body. Christ is the Head and we are IN Him. I can dream of no better place to find myself! In verse one, the phrase “by the will of God” is used by Paul. Paul had no doubt what the will of God was for his life. God had chosen him, rescued him from himself and his hell-bent religious quest. His mind-set and life changed because he knew what God had done for him and in him. Then he was sent with a specific message to and for all that God had called and that would believe. The multitudes of unbelievers that apposed and hindered him did not prevent him from doing what God sent him to do.

We: Yes you and I have been chosen, called, made able (that is empowered) and sent with a specific message “by the will of God. Unfortunately most Christians have no clue what the will of God is for their lives. It’s rare to get a ready and sure answer when you ask: “So, What is God’s will for your life?” Most will look at their shoes and shrug and mumble. In fact many of the denominations teach that we can not know God’s will for our lives and we must wander through life waiting for the next shoe to drop. Every disaster is thought to be an “act of God designed for their suffering.” Sadly many Christians have been born of God’s seed and then herded through a meaningless maze of works and worries while being fed stale religious lies. But God has made known his will to us. Every believer can and should know what God’s will is for their lives.

The concept that we have Christ in us is the central truth of the gospel for our times as it was given to Paul. As we begin to understand the mystery as Paul calls it, the greatness of what God has done for us begins to gel. In this session I would like to begin looking at some of the key words and concepts in the first chapter. To refresh our memories, let’s read starting at verse one of the first chapter:

Chapter One

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Be careful to notice that this letter is written to the saints, or the holy ones. It is written to believers. It is not written to unbelievers. An unbeliever can memorize the words and conjugate the sentences but to truly receive the things of God requires spiritual discernment. It is written to those of us who have Christ in us and therefore have the one and only hope of glory. Paul continues and says:

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

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;

6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

The gospel “bringeth forth fruit.” God said that his Word does not come back void. His Word always works. The Word of God is sharper than any two edged sword: No shield can stop it.

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

From the very day that Paul heard about the believers in Colosse, he began to pray a specific prayer for them. We must understand that this letter was designed to be passed to other house churches and so this prayer is for every believer until Christ returns to gather his saints. It says that Paul began to pray and desire. The Greek word *proseuchomai* (G4336 *pros-yoo'-khom-ahee*) is translated pray and it means to “will toward God.” To will toward God is to desire toward God. Let’s break this down and look at what Paul desires and wills toward God for us:

The phrase “ye might be filled with” is in the aorist passive, second person plural and should be read as: “ye may be being filled full with” the knowledge of His will. This verse does not deal with our filling with the Spirit of Christ but instead is talking about the renewed mind. We should be continually being filled the knowledge of his will. The next word is “in.” This little word points to where the filling should come from which is all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

The word “wisdom” is the Greek *sophie* which is five senses wisdom. Wisdom is a combination of knowledge and sound judgment. This is the wisdom we gain from study of the Word of God, reading, sciences, history, experience and all we can learn from a human stand point. I seem to remember a verse that tells us to study. I believe it was talking about rightly dividing the word. This is all five senses oriented.

But that’s not all. All of the five senses knowledge in the world can not make the necessary connections to rightly divide the word and renew your mind. Both are impossible without the next ingredient pointed out in verse nine. This is the factor that allows us to spiritually discern the things of God. This is how we “can just know that we know” in spite of what the world says and what is going on around us.

In the king James the words are “spiritual understanding.” The Greek word (G4152) *pneumatikos* literally means non-carnal: That is not of the flesh, not of the five senses. Yes! We are talking about revelation: Word of knowledge, word of wisdom, and discerning of spirits. Something that all believers receive whether they realize it or not.

Sadly many Christians who are caught in the maze of religious domination have been convinced that they are not holy enough to hear from God. My prayer for each and every Christian is to be continually filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. From hence comes the deep and unshakable realization of our freedom in Christ.

So it was Paul’s desire, (Remember verse one? This is a message by the messenger by the will of God. This prayer is according to the will of God for you and for me.) So it was Paul’s desire that we be continually being filled with the knowledge of God’s will in both all that the five senses can muster from the Bible and our experience together with the energized revelation that confirms and manifests the ministry of Christ in us.

Religious systems teach that we have to walk according to their morality and taboo codes to become worthy of God. But God’s plan is just the opposite: He has called us redeemed, sanctified, justified and empowered us so that we can walk in an appropriate manner. Our walk as a believer is a result of who we are as sons and daughters of God, not a way to weasel our way into the back door as a servant. Do you not remember the story Jesus told of the forgiving father who rejoiced when his son returned?

10 That ye might walk worthy (appropriately) of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

The walk of a believer bears pleasing fruit because the walk of a believer is the walk of Christ in us manifesting. The manifestations of the indwelling Spirit of Christ are the branches that the fruit of the Spirit grow on. It’s not our fleshly acts or our puny power of the flesh that produces anything Godly. It is Christ in us, our only hope of glory. It is His strength, His might, His glory and His life being lived through us.

10 That ye might walk worthy (appropriately) of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

God has made us able to walk appropriable. We walk enabled by God with miraculous power according to His glorious dominion, authority and strength. As Ephesians 2:9 so wonderful and simply states: It's not of works lest any should boast. It is his power, his authority, that he has enabled us with. It is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Another way to say it is: We have been enabled with His ability according to His authority. There is a play on the words for power and authority here in this verse. Dunamo-O, dunamis, kratos: Enabled, or empowered, or strengthened with miraculous power and might in and with the express authority and dominion of Him. Christ is in us. We are in Christ. We are enabled because He is able. The thought continues in the next verse:

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet (that is enabled) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Here in the King James it says: The Father has made us "meet." The word "meet" comes from the Greek word hikano-O (G2427) which means to make qualified or to enable. Do you see the point being repeated over and over again here? We have been enabled. Not of our selves but of His authority and power we have Christ in us and we are in Christ. There is nothing more enabling or qualifying than that.

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

It is the Father, that has delivered us. Literally He rescued us and carried us away from Satan's grip and enabled us in the freedom and power of Christ. It's interesting that this particular Greek word for "translated" is used here. This word methistano (G3179) is the word that was used in the Septuagint, to describe the carrying away or the forced relocation of large groups of people such as captured armies or the Jews into captivity. The mind picture being painted here is of a people in captivity and under Satan's heavy hand of slavery. God has rescued us out of the dungeons and pits of hell and miraculously transported us into the realm of Christ:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

God has paid our ransom in full. *Apolutrosis*, (G629) the Greek word for redemption means to pay the ransom in full. It was not a down payment with a balloon note, but full payment. It wasn't an oh-by-the-way, last minute decision on God's part. Ephesians chapter one says:

Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Our ransom, our rescue, our redemption was accomplished in Christ and determined before even the world was spun into orbit because God:

Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Eph 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Eph 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (In Christ)

15 Who is the image (G1504 eikōn - a likeness) of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

16 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:

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

The King James word “fulness” come from the Greek word pleroma (G4138) which means the “the filling or that which fills.” Let me illustrate what the Word is saying here with the use of the word pleroma by asking you this question: What is it that makes a cherry pie a cherry pie. What distinguishes it from any other type of pie? A Cherry pie from the outside looks pretty much like any other type of pie but when you cut into the pie you find out what kind it is. As a boy I once had the wonderful experience of visiting my grandmother's house on Thanksgiving. She was a wonderful cook. When we walked into the house the aroma of pies filled the place. I ran to the kitchen to look at the pies. Aahh! There they were all lined up on the cabinet, still warm, the crusts mounded up out above the pans. “What kind are they?” I ask my Grandmother. “Is there a cherry Pie?” She smiled and said: “Of course I made you a cherry pie!” I could hardly contain myself! But I had to wait until after dinner to taste that pie! “Which one is cherry?” I asked. She said: “You won't know till I cut it.” They all looked the same.

The type of pie is of course determined by what kind of filling it is filled with. A pie filled with apples just can't be a cherry pie no matter how hard it works at it. If you remember Acts chapter two verse four where it says: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,” the word used there for filled is pletho which is a form of pleroo. It is a word that describes the act of filling. But here in verse nineteen, the word “fulness” is pleroma which describes the filling. In Christ ALL the fullness or filling of God dwells.

Everything that God has to fill with dwells in Christ. In Christ God is the filling. In us Christ is the filling. Christ is in us. All of God's filling is in Christ and He is in us. We are in Christ. Now that's some cherry pie! We have been filled with all the filling. What more could you possibly want?

We: Yes you and I have been chosen, called, made able (that is empowered) and sent with a specific message "by the will of God.

Our ministry is the reconciliation of God and man. Our ministry is to set others free from the cruel chains of religious lies. Just as Jesus came to seek and to save, our mission is to allow Christ to seek and to save through us. It is Christ in us: He is the same yesterday, today and forever. His ministry has not changed. His ministry is our ministry. We live in an evil, sick and dying world. Everywhere around us is a sea of drowning people. The lost masses of humanity wash like waves around us. Miserable religious captives bob, clinging to float-some in the waves. We are a life raft, a beacon, a source of hope because we have Christ in us. Should we not look past our flesh and walk in Christ? Should we not allow Christ to live unbridled through us?

It's Christ in you, the hope of glory

Colossians Part Two

In the previous session we began to look at the verses in the first chapter that proclaims the greatness of our lord Jesus Christ. In Him all the fullness dwells. And we have God in Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Chapter Two

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

Paul did not know most of the believers in Colosse and Laodicea yet he had a great desire:

2 That their hearts might be comforted:

The biblical usage of the word “heart” refers to the seat of our emotions, or the innermost reaches of our mind. If your heart is comforted, you are at peace and without worry. Our heart is our mind-set: the automatic response part of our thought process.

The word “comforted” is translated from the Greek word *parakaleo* which literally means in this usage to be “being called beside.” This is an idiom that means to be in the process of receiving encouragement and comfort. If you recall that Jesus said that the “comforter” would be sent. The comforter is the Parakalete: The one that “calls aside.” English does not really have an equivalent but the figure of speech presents the mind picture of one coming along-side to support, encourage and comfort you. Paul had a great desire that we be in the process of being supported, encouraged and comforted. Christ is the life-giving Spirit: Christ in us is the Parakalete. Christ in us is our hope of glory.

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

To get the full impact of this second verse it is helpful to read the literal translation. The English rearrangement of the word order obscures some of the meaning: “That the ones being united in the love of God be being comforted and encouraged in their innermost being to the point of full assurance in the understanding and realization of the secrets of God in Christ:”

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

All the secrets of God are stored in Christ. The word treasures comes from the Greek word *thesaurus*. To us a *thesaurus* is a book that we use to find synonyms or the many ways to express the meanings of a word. But the Greek word *thesaurus* refers to

the place that the treasure is stored. Christ is the thesaurus of all God's wisdom and knowledge. He is the storehouse. He is in us. We are in him. Did it ever occur to you that we are part of God's treasure? "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Which is in sharp contrast to the doctrines and philosophies of man. Paul continues in verse four:

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

Have you ever been beguiled? According to Webster to beguile is lead by deception or to cause to believe something that is untrue. Here is a list of synonyms (speaking of a thesaurus) for beguile: betray, bluff, burn, cheat, chisel, con, deceive, delude, double-cross, dupe, entice, exploit, finesse, flimflam, gyp, have, hoodwink, impose on, jockey, juggle, lure, manipulate, mislead, play, play for a sucker, rook, rope in, scam, seduce, shave, snow, stick, string along, suck in, take, take in, trick, betray, bluff, delude, double-cross, dupe, fool, hoodwink, mislead, take in, trick. With enticing words: To entice is to: lure, tempt, attract, bait, bat eyes at, beguile, cajole, coax, decoy, draw, entrap, lead on, seduce, tempt.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

If you have received Christ, Christ indwells you, empowers you and makes you able to walk rooted in Him.

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

"Rooted" is a verb in the perfect passive tense which should be read here as "having been rooted." In ancient Greek non-biblical writings "rooted" was used in two ways. In it's literal use it was an agricultural term that was used in relation to planting. In the figurative sense it was used to refer to the foundation of a building and/or the solid stance of a sportsman or soldier. The perfect passive tense tells us that we were not the instigator of the act of being rooted but instead we were the receiver of the action. Perfect passive is used to denote an action in the past that has ongoing results and effect. So to fully communicate the tense in English we could say: "Having been rooted in the past, we are now rooted and will always be rooted."

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, you are able to walk in him because God has rooted you with in Christ and placed Christ in you. Our root, our foundation is Christ: All else is sinking sand. Psalms 1:3-4 says: "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Please note that our rooting is not in education, philosophy, worldly knowledge, experience, religion or any other fleshly thing. We are rooted in Him. Any other root or foundation is on sinking sand. In the 1770's Edward Mote wrote:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.

We are rooted in Him: The second chapter of Ephesians makes it clear that God was the one who initiated and carried out our rooting in Christ:

Ephesians 2:4-6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:"

God made us to sit. "Sit" is a position of rest. A position of stability. Rooted: We are rooted together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Again, we are not the one performing the action but it is God who caused us to sit IN Christ.

As Christians, "having been rooted" refers to our spiritual birth, or infilling of Holy Spirit and the ongoing outpouring that results from having been rooted. Colossians 1:27 states that we have Christ in us who is the root, the foundation and our solid stance. Did you ever see a tomato plant reach up and "stob" itself into the ground and say there now! I'm rooted! We did not and can not plant ourselves or cause ourselves to be planted. Eph 2:8-10 tells us: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." The accuracy, precision and specificity of the original Word of God is amazing.

So, having been planted and having a solid foundation that cannot be moved we are being progressively built up in Him. "Built up" is a verb in the present passive tense that should be read as "being built upon." It is present ongoing action but we are the receiver of the action. God is the actor.

He acts in Christ in us and through our brothers and sisters who are outpouring the Spirit of Christ on our behalf. When we interact with one another we are to build up, encourage and comfort one another in love. We all have the ministry of reconciliation. 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (within whom

is hidden ALL the treasures of Godly wisdom and knowledge. V3) Philosophy: philo - I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine type of love. Sophie - man's wisdom: flim-flam wisdom. Philosophy is rooted in the flesh and vain deceit. It is based on the logic of the flesh which is always deceitful and vain. Philosophy is not according to the revelation of Christ.

Philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of men and rudiments of the world are used to spoil you. Have you ever checked out the meaning of that little word spoil? The original Greek word is sulagOgeO. The literal meaning is "one leading attached." It is a word picture or idiom that describes a defeated captive being led away bound and attached in a line of slaves, stumbling along being punished for the slightest pause or twitch. If you have been spoiled by the philosophies and traditions of men which come from the stoichia or rudiments of the kosmos you have been led away captive.

Now, based on that information does it mater which doctrines you listen to? Which organization you partnership with? A little bit of spiritualism mixed in doesn't hurt anything does it? Indulgences? Sure! I'll sell you some, what can it hurt. A gold dust sprinkling gem peddling angel? Well sure! It'll bring-um running! The deceptive enticements are legion. Paul warns us to beware lest any take us captive with the traditions and philosophies of man that emanate from the very depths of hell:

9 For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (The filling)

10 And ye are complete (Having been filled to overflowing - Perfect Passive Nom Pl m) in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Contrary to the philosophies and traditions of most denominations the bible declares that we are complete in Jesus Christ. Complete in Jesus who is the head over all to the Church. Just what is complete? Again we will go to a thesaurus and find a few synonyms for complete: All, entire, filled, exhaustive, faultless, full, intact, integral, integrated, replete, thorough, unabbreviated, unabridged, unbroken, uncondensed, uncut, undiminished, undivided, unimpaired, unitary, unreduced, whole. You are exhaustively, wholly, thoroughly, completely filled to overflowing in Christ who is the head. That means you are not condensed, deficient, empty, incomplete, lacking, missing, short, or wanting.

In summary Paul has warned us to beware of any philosophy or tradition that leads us away from living in the realization that we are complete in Christ. It's not of works lest any should boast.

You are complete. To claim the opposite would be to say: We are deficient in him who only claims to be the head. When we buy the lie that we are still under the law and must perform to be good enough, we reject the headship of Jesus Christ and move ourselves under the "rudiments of the world," under the "course of this world." And we know who runs the world right now.

Ephesians 2:2

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

But now: “you are complete in Him which is the head. For in Christ dwells all the filling of God. And, Christ who has all of the filling of God has filled us. We have Christ in us, the hope of glory.

It's Christ in you, the hope of glory

Colossians Part Three

In our last session we were tremendously blessed to find that God has made us complete in Christ. All the filling of God is in Christ and Christ is in us filling us to overflowing. That's what it means to be complete. We are going to begin with that concept and allow Paul to continue his thought process. In the first part of chapter two, Paul has just warned us to beware of any philosophy or tradition that leads us away from living in the realization that we are complete in Christ. It's not of works lest any should boast. We will begin in verse ten but to get the context perhaps we should start reading in verse 6:

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (the filling)

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: (Having been filled to overflowing - Perfect Passive Nom Pl m)

We have a tendency to read the scripture in isolated verses with no thought of the flow of the writer's thought. It is very easy to pull one verse out and use it to prove a point but miss the actual meaning of the verse. We should always be looking for how the verse we are reading connects to the surrounding narrative.

In the last session we exposed the wonderful news that we are complete in Him. We also looked at the meaning of the word complete: It means to be filled to overflowing; like a fishing net crammed so full that the fish are flopping over the top back into the water. Actually we have been filled with all there is to be filled with. We have all the filling. God is the filling that fills Christ. Christ fills us. You just can't get anymore complete than that. With all the filling of God in Christ in us we are thoroughly and thoroughly connected to God. This is why the Word says in Romans Chapter Eight:

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The impossibility of separation from the love of Christ becomes clear when the realization of our completeness dawns. If we have Christ in us and we are in Christ, then He is infused and absorbed into every part of our spiritual being.

Full comprehension of our completeness in Christ informs every aspect of our lives. The way we see ourselves changes. The way we perceive our place in the world changes. We have a new purpose and a new spring to our step. We find rest and peace in the completed work of Christ on our behalf long before we were born. If we are as Ephesians says chosen by God and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ, with Christ who has all the fullness of God indwelling in us, then we can indeed walk as sons and daughters of God. The renewed mind is dependant upon the foundational assurance of our completeness in Christ.

Now, other than the fact that we need to fully comprehend that we are completely filled, Paul wrote about our completeness to illustrate the absolute futility of religious rules and taboos to vainly try to beguile God into connecting to us. After establishing our completeness, Paul will now list some of the things that the Colossians were being told they had to do to attain holiness. The judizers were intent on convincing the Colossians that they were incomplete. From the Jewish perspective the new believers were lacking in both heritage and religious procedures. Please note that both heritage and procedures are fleshly. Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Jews who were sent from Jerusalem were insisting that they had to be circumcised, become proselyte Jews, do the ceremonial immersion bath called a micvah (Here translated baptism) and follow the Jewish dietary laws, observe all the Jewish holy feast days, and bow to their hierarchy. And then: "God might stoop down to acknowledge them and allow them to become "real" Christians."

As we read these verses please notice that Paul answers the deceivers charges as he lists their religious lies. They wanted the Colossians to be circumcised but Paul tells them they have already been circumcised in the circumcision of Christ. For them and for us the circumcision is made with out hands, that is, it is already accomplished in Christ. He did it because we could not. We have Christ in us and we are in Christ.

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

An important principle is being taught here in these verses that we should not miss. Christ did it for us. When he suffered he suffered for us so we do not have to. Because he died we will live forever. He paid for and was punished for all our sins so

we are completely forgiven and have no condemnation because he has already paid in full. The Greek word for forgiveness means “to send away.” When God forgives us He sends our sins as far as the East is from the West and He remembers them no more. They are just Gone. In Christ, God ransomed us, paid our debt and rescued us out of the devils ownership and placed us in the realm of Christ. We did none of that. It’s not of works, lest any should boast. When he was baptized, he was baptized for us, that is we were in him being baptized. When he died, we died in him. He did it all. It is complete. We are complete in him.

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Let me ask you this question: If something is complete, what else is there to do to it? Nothing of course. If you have a task to do and you fulfill it, is it complete? Jesus came to fulfill the law. Did he finish his task? He fulfilled the law, completed it and blotted it out, that is erased it because it was contrary to us and took it out of the way nailing it to his cross.

Do you remember the meaning of the little word “spoiled?” If you remember from our last session we found out that the literal meaning is “one leading attached.” It is a word picture or idiom that describes a defeated captive being led away bound and attached in a line of slaves, stumbling along being punished for the slightest pause or twitch. If you have been spoiled by the philosophies and traditions of men which come from the stoichia or rudiments of the kosmos you have been led away captive. This is what Jesus did to the principalities and powers, he made a public show of them, making a triumphant victory march leading the powers of Satan bound and defeated.

So we are complete in Christ. In Christ ALL requirements have been met. In Christ we have been redeemed, declared righteous and holy. Christ fulfilled ALL the law, every one of them for every one of us. It is done, complete fulfilled. Therefore we are completely, completely complete. So why would we be concerned about some religious person judging us based on what we eat or wear or which day we chose to meet, or condemning us because we don’t follow their rituals? We are the body of Christ. We have Christ in us, the one who led religion away captive and nailed it to his cross. Why would we try to un-nail it and crawl back into the stink of religion?

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Religion is insidious. Those of us who are recovering from performance based religion are like drunks in a liquor closet. We are so tempted to try just a little of this and little of that and we soon find ourselves stone drunk and beguiled. Old religious acquaintances want to know why we have “left the church.” Of course we have not left the church. We are the church: the body of Christ. Perhaps we should answer their questions with a question of our own: “When will you learn to be the church and stop playing church?”

The beguiling methods of religion are all designed to make you question your completeness. If you are not complete then you must find a way to become complete. Religions are built around the idea that there is something we must do to achieve a state worthy of God’s attention. Perhaps a sacrifice will appease the distant and angry God. Self flagellation might do the trick after all the more I suffer the more holy I become ... Right? Perhaps if I hold my hands in the air, dance and sing while I beg God to show up. One thing you can be absolutely sure of: That guy or gal behind the curtain has not-a-clue as to how to help you see your completeness. When you realize you are complete you will see through the curtain of deception and stop supporting the religious lie.

18 Let no man beguile you [of your reward] in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

The words “of your reward are not in the Greek and confuse the meaning of the verse. “Of your reward” was added by the King James translators. They of course were part of the Church of England which had just spit away from the Roman Pope. Beguilement reins supreme in both organizations with conditional performance based rules and oppressive leadership. If you stop and think about the organizational structure, traditions and philosophies of the religion you are either in or just out of, you will find a dedicated effort to keep people seeking to achieve, seeking approval of the leadership, seeking, seeking, sunk.

Let no man deceive you, intruding into those thing he has not seen. Religion puts on a good smoke and mirror show presenting things they themselves have not seen. Puffed up in vanity they pretend to be holy but are as lost as a goose in a hail storm leading other to ruin. Beware lest they beguile you. They feed on your fleshly mind. In the flesh we want it to be all about us. Our achievement, our holiness, our talent, our gifts, our ministry: Ours, mine mine, mine! But in Christ our fleshly old man is dead. Romans tells us to reckon our old man dead from the rudiments of the Kosmos. We are no longer subjects of the god of this kosmos. We are children of God. As a son or daughter of God why do we chose to live like the slaves of the devil?

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Will worship is self worship. When we are deceived into chasing after performance based religion we are lured into self worship. It's about false humility: "Oh look at me I am so humble and wise." "Watch me tithe: Look how generous and blessed I am!" "Thank God I'm not a sniveling sinner like you!" "Have you seen my ... " Well, you get the picture.

Chap 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Ordinances or laws of touch not, taste not, handle not are for those who are not complete. We are complete. Just how complete are we? We are complete. In Christ we died, were buried, and we arose. Yes! When he got up we got up with him. Even our resurrection is already accomplished. Did I say something about being Complete? Since we are complete and risen with Christ we should be seeking things of God where Christ sits at the right hand in the preeminent position of power and authority. There we are in Christ at the right hand of God. Christ is in us, which is the one and only hope of glory.

It's Christ in you, the hope of glory

Colossians Part Four

To most, Christianity is just one religious philosophy among many. Of theology there are endless arguments. Theology is in fact all about argument. The mixing of philosophies has been common and widespread since the first human walked the earth. In fact the evolution of human culture has been formed and guided by the melding of philosophies and religions. In our supposedly enlightened age of reason the philosophical quagmire rolls on ever driving the proverbial wedge that separates man from the idea of God.

As I speak these words in the year 2009 in the United States of America, the country is torn as the secular humanists consolidate and establish their power. The religious people of the country were politically out maneuvered and are being marginalized and many have now been declared a threat to the security of the state.

I pray the atrocities of human history will not be repeated but this seems not to be the normal shifting from one political party to the other in open and honest debate. This power shift carries with it an elemental move with a surge of power. The future of this country is in flux.

We can look at what is going on around us as merrily a political and philosophical debate but we would be remiss in doing so. As believers, born into the spiritual realm as sons and daughters of God we must see far beyond the smoke and mirror show that flickers around us.

Our world view should be from a heavenly perspective. Although we are still in the world we are no longer of the world. To quote an old camp song:

This world is not my home, I'm just-a passin' through.
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me from heaven's open doors
and I just can't feel at home in this world any more.

Our quandary is not a new one. From the time that the very first person was born again into the spiritual realm, the pull to return to the old traditions and philosophies has been there. Every believer is torn. Romans seven clearly presents the struggle between the old and new man: Spirit versus flesh. But why is the pull so strong?

Our flesh is a part of and in reality springs from the elements of this world. Our flesh and blood is made up of all the same elements that the environment around us is composed of. We are hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, magnesium and so on and on. Our body is really just a bag of dirt and water dissolved and rearranged: Just mud. Our bodies can not be separated from the elements and that is why the Bible tells us that flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Bible tells us to reckon our flesh dead and to live according to the Spirit. The Spirit and flesh are diametrically opposed and have nothing in common. In Colossians chapter two and in Galatians Chapter four Paul warns the believers to beware of turning back to the rudiments of the world.

The Greek word is stoicheia. Let's read a few verses to see how this word is used and listen to Paul as he warns us. Let's start in Colossians chapter two verse twenty:

Col 2:20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments (stoicheia) of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

Col 2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

Col 2:22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

And back up to verse eight:

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (stoicheia) of the world, and not after Christ.

And now turn back a few pages to the book of Galatians and go to chapter four verse eight.

Gal 4:8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

Notice it says "then" as in past tense, before you knew God you were slaves unto "them." The "then" is in contrast to the "now" in verse nine. The word "them" is a pronoun that takes the place of a noun. "Them" refers to the beings who present themselves as gods but are not.

Gal 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, (stoicheia) whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

In both of these passages Paul is making the contrast between the completed work of Christ: Our being birthed into the spiritual realm as free sons and daughters of God in contrast to our slavery under the stoicheia that rule the physical and fleshly realm.

To understand the gravity of Paul's warning against returning to the stoicheia we must understand what this concept of stoicheia is. The King James words "rudiments" and "elements" are translated from the Greek word stoicheia. Let's talk a bit about the origin and usages of the word stoicheia:

The term stoicheia had an interesting meaning that is somewhat strange and certainly

may be foreign to our modern way of thinking. As always when we are looking to understand what the writer meant for the original readers to understand we must find out what the word meant in the culture and setting of that time and place. Our modern understanding and usage of the words and phrases are quite beside the point and will almost universally end in misunderstanding. Um .. have you noticed that there are over 20,000 denominations with each having their own interpretations?

Words are bundles of association that paint mind pictures. For instance our word “banana” carries a picture of a fruit in our minds, along with the memory of the flavor, smell, feel in our hands and texture in our mouth along with a particular type of bicycle seat. You may also be thinking about a type of bread, pudding or a memory of a comedy routine involving the slipping on a banana peel. Most of us will think of the yellow fruit we get in most supper markets but there are hundreds of varieties. In some of our minds who lived through the sixties the word picture may include the smell of the smoke from the inner peel.

In some cultures the word “banana” would bring forth primarily a mind picture of the material hats and sandals are made of and a specialty paper made from the leaves. So to some banana may bring to mind their livelihood in cultivation, care and harvesting; or maybe their sweatshop experience of making shoes, hats and paper. A simple word like “banana” carries a different mind picture depending on the part of the world and culture you are part of.

Therefore, we must find the socio-religious and political baggage that was carried by the term stoicheia to the people of Colosse and Galatia in the first century if we are to understand this warning. It carried a heavy load of thought in the culture that Paul was writing to.

The literal meaning of stoicheia, (G4747) according to the Strong’s Greek Dictionary is “something orderly in arrangement: a serial basal, fundamental, initial constituent.” In other words, stoicheia is the basic building blocks of something or the initial or originating principle or power behind something. For instance, until recently the electrons and protons of the atom were considered by science to be the elemental particles or stoicheia for all matter. Now they are talking about an even smaller component that makes up electrons and protons.

In chemistry stoichiometry is used to factor the molecular weight of the elements. In the King James Bible stoicheia is translated in a figurative way as: element, principle and rudiment but the implication is much more involved than the mind pictures these English words paint for us. Let me try to briefly paint the mind picture that was generated when the word stoicheia was used: In the Colosse/Galatia area, there were believers who had been rescued out of Roman and Greek Paganism, Judaism and Persian mysticism. There was a great mixing of philosophies and aspects of many religions had crept into all of the culture.

To all of these cultures there was an understanding of the concept of stoicheia as the building blocks and the instigating cause of things. For instants in each of these

cultures the letters of the alphabet were considered to be the stoicheia or elements of speech. Not the written form but the spoken sounds were thought to have a magical or spiritual quality to them. The harmonic sounds of the vowels served in the worship of their gods and to summon spirits. The gonging of a symbol or tinkling of bells and chimes were used to “clear the air” or to attract good elements. The origin of the “church bell” comes from this tradition.

The mixed religions of the area had the idea in common that evil forces threatened their well-being and that certain “magical” practices were necessary to hinder their influence. Even a cursory study of the traditions of the modern denominational “Church” reveals “magical” practices in the ritual.

In our time astrology is a good illustration of how paganism is practiced by many who don’t consider themselves pagan. Persons with many religious backgrounds consult horoscopes, and take them seriously. When Christian, Hindu, Moslem or Jewish people read horoscopes, they usually don’t see it as a denial of their own religion. They certainly don’t see it as a conversion to paganism as an organized religion. The pagan ideas of astrology: That your fate is subject to the stars, and your fate might be changed with the prescribed ritual or amulets are incorporated into the person’s religious world view. Of course astrologers will tell you that astrology works with all religions. What they don’t tell you is that the constellations represent elemental spirits or the stoicheia.

Archeology gives insight into the first century mixing of religions as names of Jewish angels can be found on pagan amulets, being invoked to help the pagan ward off the influence of the stoicheia. Pagans, Mystics, Jews and obviously some self proclaimed Christian teachers at Colossae were teaching procedures and rituals that were supposed to block the effects of the stoicheia in their lives. The religions the believers had come out of were entirely focused on these rituals and elements including the physical elements: Earth, wind, fire and water which in ancient understanding, are spirit beings that rule over the elements and are known as elemental spirits or stoicheia.

They believed the stoicheia were the force behind sickness, curses, earthquakes, crop failure, plagues, and all natural disasters. They borrowed from each other in the search for the right mediating spirits that could be called upon for help and protection from the wrath of the stoicheia.

Paul understood the stoicheia were a central part of the present evil age. They are the masters of unredeemed humanity working through assorted means including the Jewish law and pagan religions. Bible students know that the master of the stoicheia is Satan and they hold their subjects in bondage.

All of this of course may seem strange to modern sanitized American Church folk, but much of the world still lives under the fear of elemental spirits who control “fate.” They are the stoicheia. The use of the word and the belief in “luck” comes from this tradition. In Colossians 2:20 Paul uses the term stoicheia, reminding the Colossians

that they “died to the stoicheia in Christ.” Paul wrote:

Col 2:20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments (stoicheia) of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

Col 2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

Col 2:22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

Bondage to the stoicheia comes cleverly disguised as religion claiming to free you from their influence. Those who are operating in so-called “spiritual warfare” and “generational curses ministry” should take notice. The forces of darkness are all too willing to play along and may even inspire the techniques and supply the manifestations. They like the attention because it distracts people from Christ and what He has done, once for all.

One of the most effective diversions of the stoicheia is to convince us that they really don't exist. But if they don't exist who were we enslaved by before Jesus set us free? The bible is specific when it comes to the existence and working of Satan and his fallen angels. Satan is called the god of this world and the stoicheia are his enforcers. In Galatians chapter four it says we were enslaved to them before we knew God.

Gal 4:8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

Gal 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, (stoicheia) whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

The life of a born of seed, son or daughter of God is not a religious game. We have been rescued and extracted from slavery under the boot of the stoicheia. We are a heavenly people. We have Christ in us and we are in Christ at the right hand of God. The stoicheia would like nothing better than to derail us, confuse us and put us to work for them.

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (stoicheia) of the world, and not after Christ.

It's Christ in you, the hope of glory

Colossians Part Five

In our last session we briefly introduced the stoicheia. In chapter two Paul warns believers to beware lest we be beguiled into turning back to the stoicheia. To American sanitized, freshly ironed, only-believe-what-you-can-see, evolution accepting church folk the concept of the stoicheia is unacceptable. However, in the rest of the world the control and fear of evil spirits is very much in the forefront of life.

We here in America often wonder why the Christian faith is dwindling but in the third world (like central America, Africa and inland china to name a few) the gospel is red hot and expanding. The answer is pretty simple actually. We've been convinced that the stoicheia do not exist and if they do they are somehow distant. Most of us don't recognize the rampant working of the stoicheia in our politics, business, churches, schools and entertainment.

However to a convert in the South American jungle the Spirit of Christ better be preeminent and able to subdue the stoicheia. Otherwise, becoming a Christian is a foolish choice indeed and will end in a death sentence. To reject the authority of the evil stoicheia is to bring wrath and vengeance upon one's whole family.

To them, becoming a Christian is not a casual choice of a new philosophy or a new social gathering with business contacts but is a total change in spiritual masters. This was the way it was for the Colossians. It is true for us too, but we have been beguiled into attributing the activities of the stoicheia to chance, science or if we can't explain it we blame God.

The Bible says: "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." Our "civilized" Churched society attributes all sorts of darkness to God. The stoicheia has been integrated into the theology and ritual of the so called church. The stoicheia brings its evil, curses and sickness along for the ride. There is only one name given under heaven whereby one can be saved. Belief in good works, social justice, environmental justice, feeding the poor are all commendable but none will birth you into God's family. There are many that call themselves Christian who are just agents of the stoicheia in a thin disguise. In Matthew, Jesus plainly said:

Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

In its simplest form the gospel is the good news that the supreme and most powerful Spirit has paid your ransom and set you free from the stoicheia. This awesomely powerful Spirit, the creator of all things sacrificed His own Son to pay for your sin and

short comings. After the Son died and was dead for three days, God the Father raised up the Son and exalted Him and placed Him over ALL. If you believe and receive the freely offered Spirit of His Son, you will be set free from the stoicheia. In Christ you will have authority and power even over the stoichea. As a believer, the stoicheia must flee from even you because it is the authority and power of God in Christ working through you.

If you are a person living under the heavy hand of bondage to the evil stoicheia, this is good news indeed. You have lived your whole life and your ancestors, for generations and generations paying the idols and demigods homage and a major portion of all your living to appease and avert the curses of the stoicheia. You may have even sacrificed your first born to buy peace but it was never enough or never paid in full. To the person living in this reality, Christ in you freely given by the grace of God is fabulous news.

But professing themselves to be wise they became fools: Modern society is too smart to accept the need of a savior much less the spiritual explanation for the running disaster in their lives. Modern denominational strategies down play or outright deny the true gospel and replace it with a social gospel. The new strategy is to be relevant to the unsaved society around them.

This gospel that Paul preached and has written to us is pretty simple to explain. Typically Paul spent only a few weeks in an area and moved on leaving a fledgling group of God's children behind. He left a group of empowered and free sons and daughters of God who understood they were able to withstand the stoicheia. They were not relevant to the society that they lived in because it was owned by and harvested by the stoicheia.

They were a ring of spiritual warriors, armored up with there swords drawn. They were under attack from every side. Their families, their bosses, their old priests and soothsayers were all against them. As long as they stood together and did not give into the stoicheia they were free and the power of God flowed through Christ in them.

The powers of darkness do not go down easily and they attacked the first century believers in every way they could. To become a believer often meant loosing lively hood, family and sometimes your life. Property records and deeds were kept and controlled by the priests in the pagan temple. If you were not willing to pay tribute to the pagan gods you would soon lose any property you owned. Thousands of believers were used for death sport in the arena at Ephesus, Rome, Corinth and other roman cities of the time. Many were crucified, burned, beaten, stoned and tortured because they had the good fortune to receive the gift of Christ in them.

The reality of the freedom from the stoicheia must have been powerfully strong to motivate these first century believers to "stand, having done all to stand." A social gospel designed to fleece the community does not cause this kind of loyalty and dedication. There was something more than a fast talking preacher. In Colossians chapter three verse one; Paul wrote:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Do you truly know that you know that you know that you are risen with Christ? Do you know that this body of the old man is going to die and turn back to dirt but you, the new man has risen with Christ and resides already at the right hand of God in Christ. If that miracle has truly been energized and seared into your renewed mind by God in Christ in you then you will just stand. Your shield will be up and your sword will be flashing. The old man will be far secondary to the living reality of the heavenly hope of Christ in you.

Christianity is not acting better or looking better. Most of churchianity is about doing the dance, talking the talk and hoping no one really knows who you really are. The devil's disciples often pretend to be a Christians, saying the right words , wearing the right amulets, displaying the right bumper stickers, while leading others to their doom. The stoicheia are crafty and are working harder today than ever. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter eleven:

2Co 11:14 ... for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

2Co 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

We are risen with Him. Around the world at the pagan holy day of Ishtar people recreate the death and burial of Jesus. Some even have themselves literally nailed to crosses to dramatize his death. What a diabolical plan to get Christians to observe the Pagan holy days! But we as believers don't have to wait for a pagan feast to recognize that he got up. When he got up we got up with him.

Our rising in Christ was a cosmic bolt from the blue to the stoicheia. Satan in all his conceit and self assured knowledge was side-swiped and carbunckled. He thought he had won because the son of God was dead. The Jew's messiah had failed. But when God raised Jesus, millions of us got up in him. If the "princes of this eon" (Satan and his stoicheia) had known they would not have killed Jesus. (1Co 2:8)

If we have risen with Christ we must have been dead. Actually we are all born spiritually dead. The old fleshly body is born and grows then molders away and dies. Those without Christ in them are just dead. Those of us with Christ in us have been resurrected with Christ and will live forever. The body will soon die but the spiritual us will live forever. That is why Paul says:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (dirt)

In the king James, the words "set your affection" comes from one Greek word phroneo

which means to exercise your mind. Paul is telling us to put our thoughts on the things above: Heavenly things like our life, position and privilege in Christ and our deadness to the stoicheia. We should be thinking about allowing Christ to live his life through us because our flesh is dead as it says in verse three:

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Our life is hid or literally covered by Christ. And when Christ returns to gather his saints we will be uncovered or revealed.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; (they're dead anyway v3) fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: (all of which are old man characteristics)

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

The NIV leaves out half of the thought presented in the Greek in verse six: The NIV only says: "Because of these, the wrath of God is coming." This rendering leaves the reader with the idea that the wrath of God is coming on believers.

Of course most of the editors involved in the crafting of the NIV come from denominations that teach a performance based, blessing or curse system of theology. What a sad and wasteful way to live as a believer: Ever waiting for God to pounce and punish if you mess up. Ephesians tells us (even in the NIV) that it's not of works lest any should boast.

Notice the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. The word here for children is G5207 uihos (whee-hos) which means son or offspring. The wrath of God comes on the sons or offspring of disobedience. We are the sons and daughters of God, offspring of the most high. Believers have therefore now no condemnation in Christ. (Rom 8:1) This letter is written to believers who are born of God's seed and have Christ in them: Christ paid for and took all the punishment for our sin and sins.

According to verse seven, the children of disobedience are what the believers were when they were still living under the fear of the stoicheia. The Greek word for disobedience here is apeitheia (G543) which means disbelief and comes from another Greek word that means unpersuadable.

In this context, Paul is contrasting the old man to the new man. The old man is the offspring of the earth and was born in slavery to sin and death under the rule of the stoicheia which is a huge contrast to the new man. The new man is born of God's

seed, a free and powerful son or daughter of God. The one is made of dirt and will return to the dirt shortly but the other is Spirit and will live forever free in Christ. The “children of disobedience” refers here to the unregenerate people who have chosen not to be convinced to believe the completed work of Christ and therefore choose to stay under the rule of Satan.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

It's Christ in you, the hope of glory.

It's Christ in you, the hope of glory

Colossians Part Six

In the past couple of sessions I have briefly introduced the concept of the stoicheia. Understanding the role of the stoicheia illuminates the contrast between the evil fleshly reality and the eternally holy spiritual realm of Christ. The tension between these two realities form the stage that we the human race play on. The stage is set and the cameras are rolling.

Unfortunately there are no “cut for commercial” breaks or rehearsals. The enemy is very real and the fiery darts are flying. We must learn, grow, encourage and come to one another’s rescue in the midst of the battle.

Chapter Three

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Why would a risen son or daughter of God who is completely complete in Christ with absolutely NO condemnation need to be concerned with idolatry, and other pesky sins? Doesn’t getting saved wash you “white as snow” and fix your desire to sin? Now to those of the Arian and Wesleyan theological tilt, this is taken to mean that God gave you a ticket to ride but now you have to build the boat. God cut down the tree for you but now you have to chew and scratch it into the shape of a boat. When you get done building your boat you have to paddle your way to heaven. How else are we going to get this bag of dirt and water we call a body into heaven?

This is actually a theological question that divides the denominations. Once when I was at seminary I used the “God gave us “a ticket to ride” but you have to build the boat” illustration during a discussion in a theology class. The discussion ended with a heated argument about where the oars come from to row the boat. Uh-mm ... The word says something about avoiding foolish questions.

Those that believe we have to get this flesh and bone body cleaned up and dressed up so we can get it into heaven are very tired and frustrated. They are stuck in

performance based religion which is a form of idolatry in of itself. To suggest that your works can manipulate God is the height of arrogance and places you above God.

Mortify everything that is idolatry. Idolatry is putting anything; yes, anything before or above God. Now, this is one of the favorite claw-holds for abusive leadership. Leadership that equates loyalty to their organizational hierarchy to loyalty to God have placed God in a jar and taken his throne. Their demand for subservience is in reality placing them selves above God.

The king James word “mortify” is translated from the Greek word nekroO (3499) which means to deaden or subdue. The things of the Spirit should be far more important to us than our fleshly selfishness. As we focus our thoughts on our spiritual life, the overwhelming grace of God and renew our mind to the written and revelation word of God the power of fleshly cravings will become less pronounced.

Let’s read those verses again and get down to what they say to us:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked (past tense) some time, when ye lived in them.

Here’s what the theology boys will tell you: We are risen with Christ in verse one which means we are alive but in verse three we are dead. Our life is hid in Christ in verse three but we are to deaden our members in verse five. The wrath of God is coming on the children of disobedience so we better get it right! AAAHHHH!!! Now, does that Help? It kind of leaves you schizophrenic doesn’t it?

OK, now let’s leave the theological hoo-haw and just hear what God is saying to us in these verses. To get this, you need to understand that we have dual natures. In Romans chapter seven Paul writes about the struggle between our old fleshly nature and our new spiritual nature. He concludes with the discussion in chapter eight verse one with the fantastic revelation that our new spiritual nature has absolutely no

condemnation because it is in Christ. If you are not familiar with the seventh and eighth chapter of Romans please study it out later. You will be very happy you did.

We are born in the flesh of earthly seed in the kingdom of Satan. The flesh is of the earth and will return to the earth. Our second birth is into the spiritual realm of Christ. Spiritually we are born of God's seed and are sons and daughters of God with citizenship in heaven. We have two distinct natures that are always at odds with one another. Paul made this plain in Galatians chapter five:

Gal 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Gal 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Gal 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Unbelievers do not have this conflict between natures because they are just flesh. Self righteousness is the best nonbelievers can muster. Morality to the unbeliever is conditional and is dependent on what they can get away with in any given social setting. It's all about looking good. The motivation of unbelievers is always selfish even when it is wrapped in good works. It's always about satisfying themselves. In the flesh, believers have the same urges and desires that unbelievers have except we have Christ in us empowering us to walk in the Spirit.

Now, let me say again, this book of Colossians is written to and for believers. To understand we must see which of our natures are being addressed or referred to. In verse one; spiritually we are risen with Christ. In verse three, spiritually our eternal life is hidden or literally covered in Christ. In verse four, when Christ returns to gather his saints those of us that are still walking and breathing, our fleshly body will be changed into our single natured spiritual self. Those who have died already and their fleshly bodies have been buried, burned and/or carried off by the worms will be raised as their single natured spiritual selves. Our spiritual selves are completely complete in Christ. Our spiritual selves are part of the body of Christ. Our flesh on the other hand is dead and serves as our temporary earth suit while we here on earth waiting for Christ to return.

In verse three, our flesh is dead. Performance based religion is about making our dead flesh appear holy. It is an impossible task. Working to make our flesh holy is a little like trying to make Steve the Sock Monkey come alive. From a heavenly eternal view point our flesh is just as dead as Steve the Sock Monkey. So, in verse three our fleshly life is dead but our real life is our spiritual self which is covered in Christ. In verse seven Paul reminds us that before we became believers we lived completely submerged in the lusts of the flesh and in verse six we were in the past "children of disobedience" or in other words "offspring of the kosmos" as are the unbelievers around us." Since we are going to be forever and always our spiritual self we should

mortify or subdue the flesh because the characteristics of the flesh are contrary to God.

In First Corinthians chapter fifteen - I'll give you a few seconds to get there; In First Corinthians chapter fifteen the bible addresses this in a very direct way. We will start reading in verse 42 but you should go back later and read the whole chapter to get the context of the passage. Watch for the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body:

1Co 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

1Co 15:43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

1Co 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1Co 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

The last Adam, Jesus the Christ was made a quickening Spirit. It is Christ in us the hope of glory. Actually it is this quickening Spirit of Christ that is in us that manifests the promise of healing and all the other manifestations of Spirit we experience in this physical world: But back to the difference between the spiritual body and the physical body:.

1Co 15:46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

1Co 15:47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

1Co 15:48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

1Co 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

So, as you can see, there is a distinct difference between the spiritual body and the earthy or physical body. They are of two different realms. While we are here we should read the rest of the chapter to finish the thought:

1Co 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

1Co 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

1Co 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

If you remember back in Colossians we just read verse four which said: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Here in the statement “in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump,” Paul is talking about the return of Jesus Christ to gather holy ones who will be changed in that twinkling of an eye. The flesh will be gone and we will be our spiritual forever self.

1Co 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1Co 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

1Co 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

1Co 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

1Co 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1Co 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Or, as it was said in Colossians where we started:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

When Christ “who is our life;” Christ who is our only hope shall appear to gather his saints, we shall also appear with him in glory. But for now, it is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians Part Seven

In our last session we began to cover some of what the Bible tells us about our dual natures. Our ongoing individual struggle between the old fleshy nature and the new heavenly nature is a microcosm of the entire creation. The cosmos appears to hurtle toward chaos in the grip of evil, yet the heavenly fullness of time of redemption is nigh. Even now the forces of heaven are afoot, preparing for the appearing of the One from heaven: The one who has defeated the darkness. There is great hope. The victory is assured. The victory is already ours.

He has given us the victory. We have been endued with His power to pilot our fleshy vessel through the stormy straits of evil. God has filled us with the Spirit of Christ so there is absolute hope. In the power of Christ in us we can renew our minds, tumbling down every stronghold the flesh has built. It however does not happen in an instantaneous flash.

All the fear motivations, misinformation, knowledge and emotions that we gathered as an unbeliever do not just go away when you are reborn into God's family. The old man is still slinking along waiting to take control: And he will take control if you allow him to. However:

Col 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Col 3:2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Col 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Col 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Col 3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

Col 3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

As an unbeliever, before we were born again, we walked, that is, lived our lives entirely in the flesh. Everything we did, thought and felt was selfish and directed entirely at our personal gain or satisfaction. Fear was the deep and persistent instigator of our actions and thoughts. Any kindness or benevolence we extended toward others was

driven by our elemental fear of not being valued or loved. The evil acts of mankind can all be traced back to the rage and despair that rises out of fear which is the basis of the old fleshly nature.

Unregenerated society is held together by the fear of adverse consequences for certain actions. We call it the “law.” The law of the land is followed because of fear of punishment. The basis of the “thou shalt not” laws is the punishment of non compliance. Fear of punishment drives compliance. The narcissistic nature of natural man requires a fear based control to keep the strong from devouring the weak. All religions and governments rely solely on fear of punishment may it be ever so subtle to keep order.

Only the indwelling Spirit of Christ lifts us beyond fear. The love of God casts out fear. The love of God exists only in and can only be manifested by the Christ in us. Truly the only hope, the only solution, the only peace is in Christ. God in His infinite mercy and grace, has chosen to lift us up and place us in the most holy and exalted place imaginable: In Christ.

Yet, our old nature is unchanged and remains in the realm of fear. Our adamic nature can not on it's own escape fear because it is constructed of the elements of this world. All of the characteristics of a fear based being are still there: Anger, wrath, lies, doubt, lust for power, and the rage that emanates from perceived loss. Counseling couches are filled with people paralyzed by the walls of rage that the old nature has erected. We all have perceived past insults and injuries that our old nature demands vengeance for.

And yet there is hope: Our new nature, Christ in us delivers the love and mercy of God that overcomes and casts out fear. Christ in us empowers and creates a new nature in us that is not based on fear but on the all powerful love of God.

Our new nature, our heavenly nature, firmly and forever anchored in heaven in Christ has the power and might, the patience and mercy of God. This new nature is the premise, the crux, the purpose of God giving his Son as the sacrificial payment in full for our redemption from the old adamic nature.

This new nature is the real us, the forever us. Our choice is to live in the old stinking dungeon of fear or to live in the mansions of the love, mercy and grace of God. We can: “... seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, not on things on the earth.” We have been empowered to choose. We can choose to put on the characteristics of Christ or the characteristic of fear. Paul writes to us:

Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

Col 3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

God is not a man that He should lie. He is all together faithful: If He says He will do it He does. If He tells us to do something We can. Don't think for a second that the old nature can accomplish this. We can do this because He has empowered us to do it. His instructions come with a power pack to energize the job. We're "plugged in." We have Christ in us: He is up to the job.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Col 3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

In the renewed mind of our new nature, in the body of Christ there are no distinctions of race, creed, gender, young or old, rich or poor because in the new nature there is no fear, no hate, no rage, only love and mercy. As God's elect we are able.

Col 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Col 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Col 3:14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Col 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Col 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

As the new spiritual you steps forward; out of your old nature's comfort zone, the old man starts to whimper and whine. It's real easy to just shrink back and let the old man win. Your new man insists; but your old man whines. In another situation your old nature reacts with anger and seeks revenge, but the new inner man is at the same time looking to forgive. I'm sure you are familiar with this quandary as Paul described it in Romans 7:

Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Rom 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

So what are we to do as believers? Do we just let our old nature run amuck and sin at will? How do we begin to manage this old self with the new self? The answer is Christ in you the hope of glory. The new man is energized by the Spirit of Christ in us. As our new nature begins to walk in Christ, Christ manifests through us. Here in Colossians chapter three Paul describes the “put on/put off” dynamic.

This is not the old performance based religion game of “acting” holy. It’s not an act. The old man can put on an act of not being selfish but it’s a sham. Have you ever watched people, (or maybe you can identify yourself in this.) Have you ever watched people walk away from church to their cars? As they get further away from the building and closer to their cars their shoulders begin to relax, they take a deep breath and slip into the car where they can be themselves again and not have to play at being holy. It’s the old nature putting on the “look at me I’m so holy” show. That is certainly not what Paul is telling us here in this chapter. The new man is not capable of “acting” like it is holy because it just is holy. The old man is not holy and no amount of acting can make it holy.

These verses and many like them are used extensively by the performance based religion theologians to tell their followers how they should act to become acceptable to God. Unfortunately when the old nature toils achieve good works it always ends in scandal. Selfishness can not be hidden for long. When the old nature approaches these verses the result is religion.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

Here is the key to the put on/put off dynamic: The renewed mind. Our old nature responds naturally to the pressures of the world and conforms itself to societal norms. The answer is to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Being transformed is to go through a metamorphosis which is an inside job. Before the little caterpillar spins her little cocoon and takes her nap, she fills herself with all the leaves she can hold. After the cocoon is spun and the little worm sleeps, the metamorphosis begins and is completed quite without the help of the caterpillar. She wakes up transformed into a beautiful butterfly. We stuff ourselves as full as we can with the word of God and then God energizes and transforms us. It’s not of works lest any should boast. We are not in a juggling contest.

The mind is the battle ground between the old and new nature. That is where we put on and put off the things listed here. Our actions and emotions are secondary events that happen as a result of thoughts. Our mind becomes renewed as we think on the things of God, place the written word of God in our mind and Christ in us energizes us with revelation knowledge. As God energizes His word in our mind, the fleshly imaginations come crashing down.

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

11 Where (in the new man) there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

In the new man, that is in the renewed mind and the body of Christ, there is no earthly race or nationality. We are new. We are a part of a heavenly race created in Christ. We are the body of Christ. We are the elect, the beloved children of God chosen before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame.

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Colossians Part Eight

Hello and God bless you, or rather let me ask you: “Do you have any idea how blessed you are? God has blessed us with ALL spiritual blessings and has extracted us out of the grip of Satan and his angels. I would like to title this final lesson in Colossians “the Importance of religion.”

First let me define my terms: The word important comes to us thru Middle English from Medieval Latin and it means “of significance” or “urgent.” The word “important” in of itself has neither a positive nor a negative connotation. If you were floating out in the ocean, circling sharks could be considered important, while at the same time the boat approaching to rescue you would also be important.

So today when I say that religion is important, I am saying religion has played a significant role in the development of human history. Although the humanists and secularists claim to be non religious, they indeed follow the ritual of their plastic idols and serve devils at the pleasure of their god: The prince of the power of the air, Satan.

The word religion literally means “to restrain” or “to tie back.” So, religion has been a significant way to restrain mankind throughout history. The taboos of religion restrain the predatory urges of the flesh. Religion has always been a tool to control social groups, to unify the purpose and beliefs of a group. A good place to see the word religion in this light is in Acts chapter twenty six, verse five where Paul is explaining his background as a Pharisee.

Act 26:5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

As a Pharisee, Paul lived a severely restrained lifestyle. Everything was regulated, measured and counted. Even his sandal laces were wrapped and tied exactly to a precise formula and ritual. And, Paul says he was head and shoulders above his peers in the practice of his religion before he met Christ.

Throughout recorded history the role of religion has played a significant role in all societies on earth. Religion has been a way to connect people around a ruling class with a set of goals and taboos. Historically religion and government were closely tied together. Today we see a similar situation in radical Islamic countries. Here in 2009, our country is having an identity crisis because of a blurring of the religio/political spectrum. To many our president embodies their hope and they see him as a savior figure.

Old Israel’s whole identity as a nation was tied to the temple and the system of priests and kings. Throughout the middle ages in Europe the kings claimed to be divinely appointed and served at the pleasure of the Pope. England’s King Henry when excommunicated; started his own church, appointed himself as the head of the church

and had his own version of the bible printed. Tribal leaders across the world always represented the local religion and were thought of as somehow blessed by the gods.

Religion has always served to bring order to a chaotic and harsh world where the earthquakes and the angry ocean drowns whole cities; where evil lurks as pestilence and plagues, marauding armies and neighbors kill and steal your wives and children while herding away your livestock and burning your home. Religions give false hope by giving false answers to man's nagging questions about life, death, sickness, curses and taboos.

None of which have anything to do with Christ in you, the hope of glory. In the Colossian area there was a melding together of religions with the idea that they were all related. In fact they were and are related because they are all religious practices tied directly to devil spirits. As I have mentioned before, Paul refers to them as the stoicheia in chapter two verse eight:

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you (lead you away captive) through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (stoicheia) of the world, and not after Christ.

Paul also said in first Corinthians chapter ten, verse twenty:

1Co 10:20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Now, either the Word is true or it is not. Either they worshiped devils or they didn't. If they did, the devils have not retired. The activity of devil spirits has indeed ramped up and deception is widespread. It is either Christ or devils. There are only two choices. Consider with me a few of the devils offerings:

Here in the new world, the ancient Inca worshiped their king whom they regarded as divine along with the cycles of nature which were controlled by the gods. Sacrifices were offered at the precise points of time with the prescribed ritual and harmonic sounds. The emphasis of worship was the cycles of sun, moon, and stars. For them time and numbers were the sacred building blocks of spiritual power. A demon, Inti the sun god was the chief among many gods. Human sacrifice was routine and fear ruled supreme. The government was the religion.

In the Mediterranean region the ancient Phoenicians worshiped a triad of gods, each of which were called different names and took on differing characteristics depending upon the city in which they were worshiped. Their head god was El, but he was often called Baal who had a consort Astarte who was the maternal goddess. She was also called Asherar-yam, or Baalat, or the mother of god, or our dear lady and was the mother of the son of Baal. The son of the god and goddess was the god Melqart. Astarte was both heavenly mother and earth mother. The Phoenician triad was assimilated into their neighbor's religions along with their alphabet and number

system. This is where the devilish inspiration of Mary worship came from.

Also centered in the Middle East is Satan's counter-punch to the true gospel. In Islam, religion and government are one and the same with a two pronged approach. First, Islam demands absolute obedience to the laws and rituals of Allah and his human representatives. The second goal of Islam is the eradication of unbelievers. Both the Koran and history demonstrate and establish these two goals. People of the Islamic faith are quickly spreading over the world and now constitute the second largest religion.

Religion was very important to the Ancient Egyptians. The purpose of their rituals was to recreate the conditions they believed had existed in the "dawn of creation." Their magic was aimed at harnessing what they thought was the creation power. The central tradition was that of a divine Pharaoh that was not only the political ruler but also a god. The Pharaoh was the incarnation of Horus, son of Re the sun god. The pharaoh was called the "son of god." Paul said these gods were devils.

From this religious smorgasbord came Catholicism. Catholicism is a combination of several Pagan traditions including Judaistic Kabala with a Christian twist. Look at the religions that Paul said were controlled by devils and you will find the traditions and doctrines of the Roman church. The Roman church is led by a human that claims to be the head of the church. The pope is purported to authoritatively represent God without fallibility while leading an army of priests who transmit and enforce the traditions, rituals and taboos.

1Co 10:20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Religion is a construct of the kosmos. The kosmos is the world political and religious system that Satan rules at this point in time. The purpose of religion is to keep humankind focused away from God. Religion is important to the devil and his agents. Christ came to seek and to save those who are lost. He said if he sets you free you will be free indeed.

To understand the challenge Paul was addressing in the community of Colossae, the nature of the pagan religious culture must be understood. Otherwise we understand in light of our own culture and our own world view and miss the whole point. The pagan practices that the Colossians were inundated in might be termed as magic by us, but in that time the practices represented the highest of scientific knowledge.

There were three levels attainable to practitioners. First there was a physical manipulation of tangible things to create illusions. The ancient papyri call this level of practice gaeteia. Gaeteia uses the effects of herbs, sacrifices and rituals. This is the level of magic that the Jews thought the disciples were using when the body of Jesus disappeared out of the tomb. There was much of this level of practice in play in the Pagan temples as is illustrated by construction techniques of the ancient ruins. Sadly,

today this level of practice is common as we hear of mysterious smoke, orbs, angels, gems, gold dust, faked healings, and the list goes on ...

The second level of practice was the inviting and bonding with a spirit to the extent that soothsaying and supernatural effects were accomplished. These practitioners were called mageia. This is the level that the Jews assumed Jesus was practicing at when he healed others and commanded devil spirits. They accused him of casting out devils in the power of Satan. This was a common practice among the Pagan religions of the Middle East, Egypt, Galatia, Greece, Rome and the barbaric pagan areas of what is now turkey. The modern day prophetic movement is replete with false prophets practicing at this level. There is an active effort to catch and propagate spirits among themselves and to their followers. Beware lest any should spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit ... Biblically, an example of a Jewish sorcerer can be found in Acts 13:6:

Act 13:6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:

The third and highest level of practice was what the ancient writings call theourgia. This level of practice was the giving over of oneself to a god (demon) who was manipulated into doing the will of the practitioner. In recent history we have seen the likes of Jim Jones and David Koresh among others who practiced at this level and were totally taken over and controlled by their devil spirits. The word theourgia means divine work. The practitioner of this level was referred to as a "son of god." We see an example of this in Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:9

Act 8:9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

Of course the Jews of that area had come out of captivity where they had assimilated the mystical beliefs and practices that are the early forms of what we know today as Kabala. Kabala is a form of mysticism that uses the Hebrew texts for divination and other occult practices. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica:

"The earliest roots of Kabala are traced to Merkava mysticism. It began to flourish in Palestine in the 1st century BC and had as its main concern mystical contemplation of the divine throne, or "chariot" (merkava), seen in a vision by Ezekiel, the prophet (Ezekiel 1). It explained creation as a process involving the 10 divine numbers of God the Creator and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Taken together, they were said to constitute the "32 paths of secret wisdom."

If you take these four levels of devil worship and mix in an illusion of Christianity you will have the early catholic church. Even the Catholic's own theological histories acknowledge the blending of Pagan practices, holy days and rituals in the assimilation of the pagan cultures. Even a casual comparison of the rituals and structures of the Roman religion reveals pagan gods morphed into saints, the theourgia as pope and

cardinals, the mageia as bishops and with the gaeteia as priests out beguiling the masses. The other religious denominations can be traced back through points of rebellion and separation to the mother, the Roman Church. To find the true church, God must call you and place you in Christ with Christ in you. It's not of works, or magic, or, or, or

The practice of deception using slight of hand, emotionalism mixed with rituals continues today in religions of all types including humanism and secularism. The demon's names have changed and the rituals slightly altered but the beat goes on. The stoicheia continue to shout that all religions are the same so pretty much anything goes. The sad fact is they are right. All religions are the same. Religion is about manipulating a god into doing your will through the use of rituals and incantations. The god of this world and his demons are very willing to play along until they have you hooked. Then they manipulate you.

It was deep in this quagmire of pagan religion and fear that Paul wrote to the Colossians. Try to hear these words of God as written by Paul as though you were born and raised as a pagan and were still living in the midst of a pagan society. Paul said:

Col 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

God did the work. He made us able and He made us good enough. It is God:

Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

This statement meant something to the believers in Colossae. They fully recognized the darkness for what it is, first hand, undisguised. The darkness today is no different. The forces of darkness are at work in every aspect of the world. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. And God "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Col 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Col 1:16 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:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. (He is preeminent over all the stoicheia)

Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Col 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

The one and only hope of glory: Christ who is the head of the Church who is the new and singular heavenly race, is preeminent. He is the bright and morning star the king of Kings the lord of lords. How puny and snively the counterfeits are in His light!
Now skip down to verse 26:

Col 1:26 Even the mystery ...

A higher and superior secret knowledge than all the secret societies and mysticisms of the stoicheia: "which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:"

Col 1:27 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:

Move down to chapter two, verse twenty:

Col 2:20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments (stoicheia) of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

Col 2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

Col 2:22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

Following of religious laws presupposes that by fleshly effort we can make things clean, consecrated and godly. The rituals of all the pagan, mystical and Jewish practices are about purifying utensils, sacrifices and oneself for the summoning and appeasement of spiritual entities. But in the little book of Titus Paul elucidates the fallacy of their practice:

Titus 1:15-16 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Although they profess to know God (big G) they are serving gods.(little g) They make great swirling smoke and dance the dance of deceit. In their traditions and

philosophies they reveal the defiled practice of the stoicheia. Their minds are blinded to the one true God and their practice makes nothing pure.

Religion is important as the controlling factor that brings people together in community united in purpose and taboos. Religion is the way that lost humanity continues to be herded into groups for the slaughter.

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Today we live in a complex and confusing world. Religion, politics, and social pressures press in to conform us and label us. But there is only one Christ, only one hope of God's glory. It is Christ in you. Christ in you comes not from the ritual of religion or the acting in the proper way but by the calling and choosing of the one true and holy God, who has extended His grace through faith to us. Not of works, lest any should boast.

Col 2:8 Beware lest any take you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, after the religion of men, after the stoicheia of the kosmos, the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Beware!

In Christ is our only hope, our only protection, our only peace, our freedom.

It's Christ in you! The hope of glory.

Colossians

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It's Christ in you, the hope of glory