

Truth

Magazine

*Taking His hand,
helping each other home.*




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COLOSSIANS

**“To the saints and faithful
brethren in Christ who are
at Colossae: Grace to you
and peace from God our
Father” (Col 1:2).**



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Introduction to Colossians

by Steve Wolfgang

Colossians often “lives in the shadow” of Ephesians, written to a church in a better-known city. Yet Colossians contains many insights and topics well worth studying in its own right.

Introduction

How would you react if the church where you worship received a letter from a preacher who has never been to the city where you live, and never attended the congregation where you worship? What if this letter dares to criticize the behavior and teaching of some who have become part of the congregation?

Now, what if the letter is from a respected apostle of Jesus Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit Himself? What if it contained not only warnings about false teachings and behaviors advocated by other Christians, but encouragement to grow in our walk as Christians, and practical advice on family relationships and other concerns? What if the false ideas it exposes are spreading to other places and adversely affecting the spiritual growth of other Christians?

Colossians contains many themes and topics similar to those in Ephesians, and often “lives in the shadow” of that better-known epistle to a church in a more prominent city. Yet, as with any portion of God’s revelation to man, it is well worth studying in its own right. This issue unpacks some of the many aspects of this fascinating letter!

Some questions that may occur when first encountering Colossians might be: Where is Colossae situated? Who were the Colossians? Who wrote this epistle? Who were his audience? What were “the problems” at Colossae? What warning about potential crises does it contain? What spiritual opponents does it identify (if any)? What strategies

regarding spiritual warfare? What spirals of spiritual growth, and regulations of personal situations and relationships, does the letter enjoin? How can it spur us to greater devotion and service to King Jesus, conqueror of “the powers,” Lord of heaven and earth? Several of these issues are addressed in the following articles. Read on!

“Colossians, like many books, and for that matter, like most symphonies, plays or poems, is not the sort of work that can be simply split up into successive units, like the separate inches marked on a ruler. . . It is more like a flower, growing from a small bud to a large bud and then gradually opening up to reveal, layer upon layer, the petals that had all along been hidden inside.”¹

Background

Colossae is situated in the fertile Lycus Valley, near Laodicea and Hierapolis. “The site is now almost completely bare and has not been excavated. . . It covers twenty-three acres [and] rises nearly 200 feet above the plain, witnessing to a longevity that stamped it as one of the premier cities of southwest

Phrygia.”² Notably, “the whole area suffered a calamity in the first century AD. Somewhere between AD 60 and 64 an earthquake struck the area and, according to Tacitus (*Annals*, 14.27), overthrew Laodicea. It may be assumed that nearby Colossae and Hierapolis were also affected. Tacitus goes on to say that Laodicea recovered herself with no material help from Rome, and no doubt Colossae did the same.”³ Though commercially less successful, Colossae continued to be a place of importance in the Roman imperial period, as is shown by an inscription of this time, and by the minting of its own coins from the second and third century AD that depict the usual city officials, showing that it had the rights of a city under the Romans.

Texts such as Acts 14:19-20 and 2 Timothy 3:11 relate the opposition to the gospel suffered by Paul and his companions. “Indeed, the pursuit by Paul’s Jewish opponents from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium to Lystra may indicate the ease of access between these cities on the Via Sebaste. At Lystra they stoned Paul and left him for dead, but he survived and set off with Barnabas to Derbe.”⁴ Furthermore, the collection of the temple tax (cf. Matt. 17:24) “implies

¹ N.T. Wright, *Colossians* (Tyndale NTC, 1986), p. 22. A useful survey of the varying approaches to the structure of Colossians, comparing the outlines from other popular commentaries, is in Scot McKnight’s commentary (*NICNT*, 2018, 66-72). Readers should also consult Walton Weaver, *Colossians* (Truth Commentaries, 1996).

² Alan H. Cadwallader, “The Social and Geographical World of Colossae,” (*Lexham Geographic Commentary*, 2019), 569-570.

³ Harold Mare, “Archeological Prospects at Colossae,” *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin* 7 (1976): 42-43.

⁴ Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta’s Atlas of the*

a fairly regular communication between the cities of the Lycus valley and the land of Israel. These would no doubt be facilitated by the good system of roads. . . which would probably bring a steady stream of Jewish travelers through a region where there were so many Jews resident. In the same connection, we should note that residents of Asia and Phrygia are reported among the crowd gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:9-10.⁵

While Paul could have visited the area when he went “throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia” (Acts 18:23), there is no evidence that he preached in Colossae; the gospel could have been pioneered there by the converts of his preaching at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:13-51) or by Christians in Ephesus when “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10).

Authorship

The belief that Colossians is pseudepigraphal (written by a follower of Paul’s in his name after his death), is alleged by some modern scholars. “Raymond Brown estimates that 60 percent of current scholars think that Paul did not write Colossians. Yet this view of the authorship of the letter is relatively recent. No early Christian doubted Paul’s authorship” and it was accepted as Scripture without apparent controversy. Yet, in the nineteenth century, the rise of historical criticism led to challenges of many traditionally accepted views of Scripture.⁶

Indeed, “There is no shred of evidence that the Pauline authorship of the whole or any part of this epistle was ever disputed until the nineteenth century. It formed part of the Pauline corpus as far back as can be traced, and evidence of such a character cannot lightly be swept

Biblical World (2nd ed.; Jerusalem, 2014), 373.

⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *Colossians* (NIGCT, 1996), p. 22.

⁶ Douglas Moo, *Colossians* (PNTC, 2008), pp. 29-30

aside. This strong external attestation is further supported by the close link between the epistle and Philemon, whose authenticity has been challenged by only the most extreme negative critics.”⁷

In 2014, I was asked to write about “New Testament Documents: Date and Authorship” for *Expository Files*. Here’s what I said about Colossians:

A common argument is that there is a relatively large number of words (48) which appear in Colossians but are found nowhere else in Paul’s writings (33 of which are not found in the other New Testament documents). But the number of these *hapax legomena* (words used only once, and not found elsewhere in the New Testament) are no greater in Colossians than in other undisputed Pauline epistles (Galatians, for example, has 35 such *hapax legomena* in an undisputed epistle of similar length).

Furthermore, since those who claim that Colossians is “non-Pauline” often cannot agree among themselves, “reading and considering the arguments of some academic challengers can leave a distinct impression that any such objection, like proverbial beauty, is very much in the eye of the beholder.”⁸ Such ‘stylistic’ objections conveniently ignore the fact that the Colossian epistle does, in point of fact, contain indisputably Pauline stylistic characteristics, found nowhere else in non-Pauline documents.

“Thus we are faced with an interesting conundrum that shows how difficult it is to draw neat lines around authors and their thought. Scholars are notoriously unwilling to admit ignorance or indecision [the Latin for ‘we do not know’ is ‘ignoramus!’]”⁹ For a recent

⁷ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (4th rev. ed., 1996), 576.

⁸ Steve Wolfgang, “New Testament Documents: Date and Authorship.” In Warren Berkley and Jon Quinn, eds. *The Integrity of the New Testament* (Expository Files, 2014), 77-94.

⁹ John M.G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon* (London: T&T Clark, 2001), 35.

analysis of authorship issues, see which includes the following observation: “More precise studies in stylometrics” have demonstrated that “numerous past studies have committed the fallacy of ‘statisticulating,’ which is ‘engaging in the unprincipled and statistically unjustified use of numbers to support a particular point.’”¹⁰

Contents

Many of the fascinating aspects of this apostolic letter are discussed in the following articles, including the spiral of spiritual growth (1:9-12); a “Christ-hymn” (1:20); the relationship of baptism and the concept of covenant (2:12); as well as practical instructions for Christians, including family relationships in the last portion of the epistle. A particularly problematic issue addressing false teachings arising from early gnostic ideology and residual concepts from various forms of Judaism are particularly addressed in Colossians 2:8-23.

Nathan Ward and Jeff Smelser provide insights into the issues raised by “the Colossian heresy,” and Lauren Bassford provides insight into ways Christian women can learn from Colossians. Andrew Dow, BJ Sipe, and Bruce Reeves examine various topics from several of the chapters in Colossians. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with these authors, and I am certain you will profit from their work. Read on—a spiritual fest awaits you! 🎉

¹⁰ Gregory K. Beale, “The Problem of Using the Criteria of Vocabulary and Writing Style to Discern Purportedly Non-Pauline Letters” in *Colossians and Philemon*, (Baker, 2019), 439-443.



Steve Wolfgang

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Questions about Abortion

by Kyle Pope

While the question of abortion has long been a controversial issue, Sacred Scripture provides clear guidance. Let us respect the sanctity of human life, and the biblical principles that bear on this discussion.

Introduction

On June 24, 2022, the US Supreme Court issued a ruling in a case known as *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* that overturned its previous rulings in two prior cases: *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) and *Roe v. Wade* (1973). *Roe v. Wade* had ruled that the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment inferred a "right of privacy" that granted to women the right of abortion with no restriction in the first trimester and only limited restrictions during the second and third trimesters. *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* had upheld this ruling while acknowledging the rights of states to limit abortions in consideration of the viability of the unborn child. The 2022 case ruled that the Constitution had never granted a right to abortion, leaving it to the states to regulate its practice. As the nation confronts the impact and debates that will come from this ruling, Christians must be prepared to answer several questions about this controversial issue.

What Does the Bible Teach?

Although the Bible does not directly address abortion, it is not because it is a new practice. The Egyptian Ebers Papyrus (ca. 1550 BC) detailed the preparation of drugs used to induce abortion. The Assyrian Code of Assura (ca. 1075 BC) mandated capital punishment for some types of abortion. The original version of the Hippocratic Oath (ca. 400 BC) taken by physicians included a promise not to aid a woman in inducing an abortion. The ancient world as a whole held human

life (in or out of the womb) of little value apart from one's economic and social status. Within this cultural context, the Holy Spirit revealed to mankind in Scripture the universal value of all human life—a principle that has influenced law within Western culture for centuries.

After the flood, God declared, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" (Gen. 9:6). In Mosaic Law, God declared, "you shall not murder" (Exod. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). In the record of the Hebrew midwives defying the command of Pharaoh to kill the Israelite children (Exod. 1:15-17), we see a recognition of the life of the unborn. One cannot "kill" (v. 16) what is not first "alive" (v. 17)—they refused to kill them because they "feared God" (v. 17). This demonstrates an awareness of accountability before God for treatment of human life. This high valuation of human life has laid the groundwork for all modern legal concepts that criminalize murder.

From a biblical standpoint, conception is not a mere biological process. David understood that God had formed him within the womb (Ps. 139:13-16). God told Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jer. 1:5). God is involved in every human conception. From a biblical standpoint, there is no distinction between human life within the womb and outside of the womb. Job acknowledged in his conception he was "a male child" (Job 3:3). When both John and Jesus were conceived, the same word was used for a child in the womb or out of the womb (Luke 1:26, 31, 36, 41; 2:12).

One Mosaic law is especially informative. It taught:

If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe (Exod. 21:22-25).

Some versions have mistranslated this "miscarriage" (RSV, NASB), but it is literally "her children come out" (YLT; cf. KJV, ASV, NIV, NKJV, ESV) describing premature live birth. Thus the "harm" that could follow, if it included death of the child or mother, demanded a penalty of "life for life." So, while the Bible may not directly prohibit abortion, its teaching against murder and on the value of human life clearly condemn its practice.

Is This Just a "Theological Issue"?

The concern Christians should have for biblical teaching matters little to pro-abortion proponents. Some who oppose the court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson* have accused the justices of reaching a decision based upon theology rather than law. That is a curious claim, given that the words *God*, *Bible*, *soul*, or *theology*, are never used in the 213 pages of the court's opinions on the case. In fact, the legal issue is not one of theology but of life.



Roe v. Wade ruled that “the word ‘person,’ as used in the Fourteenth Amendment, does not include the unborn.” That bizarre conclusion is strikingly similar to the horrific concepts expressed in the court’s infamous decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) which ruled, “A free negro of the African race, whose ancestors were brought to this country and sold as slaves, is not a ‘citizen’ within the meaning of the Constitution of the United States.” While unlike Roe, that case at least acknowledged those of African descent as “persons,” it argued that the Constitution considered them “as persons whom it was morally lawfully to deal in as articles of property.” Sadly, as a result of Roe v. Wade, our country has now seen the sale of body parts of unborn children and the slaughter and dismemberment of millions of babies in the womb. How could this happen? Because our culture does not see these precious lives as “persons” but “property” to be used and thrown away as we choose.

Can Christians Support Abortion?

In the days following the ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson* it was shocking to hear some Christians voice opposition to the court’s action. This came in the form of statements affirming a woman’s right to have control over her own body or in appeals to extreme examples of pregnancy under abusive circumstances. This ruling did not outlaw abortion but simply returned the issue to the states, concluding that previous courts had erred in reading a right into the Constitution that had never been explicitly stated. The result may be that some states will write laws codifying what Roe v. Wade had imposed. If Christians oppose the ruling because they wish it had gone further by affirming the right to life of the unborn, and recognizing them as “persons” rather than some sub-human class of property, I would agree. If instead, Christians parrot the worldly values of a culture addicted to immorality and convinced that one

has the “right” to murder innocent life created by God because that life will cause too many hardships—*Shame on them!*

There is no question how Christians from the earliest times have interpreted biblical teaching on this issue. A Christian text known as the *Didache* (ca. AD 80-180) commanded, “you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten” (2). The *Epistle of Diognetus* (ca. AD 80-160) taught that Christians “marry, as do all. They beget children, but they do not destroy their offspring” (5). A work known as the *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. AD 80-130) declared, “You shall not slay a child by procuring an abortion, nor shall you destroy it after it is born” (19). Athenagoras (ca. AD 177) asked, “And when we say that those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder, and will have to give an account to God for the abortion, on what principle should we commit

murder?” (*A Plea for the Christians* 35). Tertullian (ca. AD 210) wrote, “For us, since we have forbidden murder once and for all, we may not even destroy the fetus in the womb” (*Apology* 9). While these are not inspired texts, they clearly demonstrate that early Christians understood the teachings of Scripture to condemn abortion. Modern Christians who support abortion praise the work of its proponents, or rationalize away the wickedness of this practice because of difficult circumstances—*rejecting both scriptural teaching and the efforts of Christians for centuries to oppose it.*

Is This Only a Woman’s Issue?

Many have argued that men should have no voice in this issue because “it is a woman’s right to control her own body!” Jesus was a man. He taught “do not murder” (cf. Mark 10:17-21). Does He have no voice in this issue? Certainly, both men and women should exercise control over their “own vessel(s)” (i.e., one’s own body) “in sanctification and honor” (1 Thess. 4:4); yet when conception occurs (regardless of the circumstances) it is no longer simply a woman’s body, but a separate body that is distinct from the body of the mother. Isaiah wrote, “The LORD called Me from the womb; from the body of My mother He named Me” (Isa. 49:1, NASB). In the body of His mother, He was a distinct person. Modern technology has allowed us to view and understand the very beginnings of human development in all of its beauty and complexity. Surgeries have now been performed on the bodies of unborn children in the womb. Babies as young as twenty-one weeks old have survived premature birth. Gone are the days in which it was imagined that women were simply receptacles for the development of a man’s seed. Regardless of the circumstances that cause conception, when it occurs, the man’s seed and the woman’s ovum combine genetic material to become a distinct and unique form of life. Certainly, this life is dependent upon the body of the mother during the term of gestation, but

the dependency of vulnerable life upon the care of another does not surrender or forfeit its existence as “life” any more than a patient in a coma ceases to be a “life” while dependent upon others for his care. Though unseen and wholly dependent upon others, the life of the unborn is a matter that concerns us all. A culture that devalues life in the womb will quickly devalue all human life.

What about Rape, Incest, or to Save the Life of the Mother?

Rape and incest are sins for which the abuser will face judgment before God (Deut. 22:23-29; 2 Sam. 13; Lev. 18:7-18; 20:11-21). No efforts to oppose abortion should ever minimize the horror of these terrible sins. Statistically, the trauma of rape seldom allows conception to take place, but sometimes it does. I personally know someone who was conceived in that way. Was that person not a human being within the womb? Was God not involved in that conception as He was in all others? Should that innocent life have been taken because of the sin of the abuser? Other sins can also result in conception—do they change the reality of the life that has been created? I recognize how difficult bringing to full term a life must be that is a constant reminder of such an assault. We should honor, praise, and support the dignity of those who value life even in the face of such evil. The answer is not to “proceed from evil to evil” (Jer. 9:3). Even if the woman chooses not to raise the child herself, scores of Christians the world over are ready and willing to adopt. We must encourage these responses by which souls seek to “overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).

The issue is, does the horror of these sins make the taking of innocent life no longer murder? The Bible teaches that capital punishment for certain crimes is not murder (Gen. 9:6; Exod. 20:10, 21:12, 16). This is not the taking of innocent life. It is punishment. In some cases, the Bible authorizes the principle of self-defense (Exod. 22:2-3; Luke 22:36; 1 Tim. 5:8) but the gospel also teaches “do not resist an evil person” but turn the other cheek to

the one who would abuse us (Matt. 5:39). The principle of self-defense has led some to argue that abortion to save the life of the mother is acceptable. The issue is not that easy. Childbirth has always been a life-threatening prospect for both the mother (cf. Rachel: Gen. 35:16-19) and the child (cf. the stillborn: Job 3:16; Ps. 58:8; Eccl. 6:3). Often, even when the best efforts are made, a mother or child can die. Doctor and patients can face difficult choices in an instant of time but the life of both mother and child should be valued and all efforts to save both should be put forth. ■

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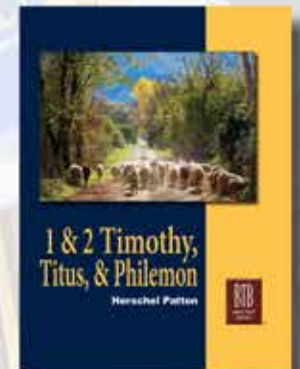
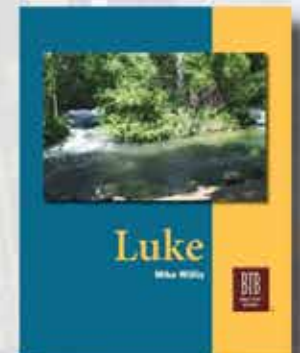
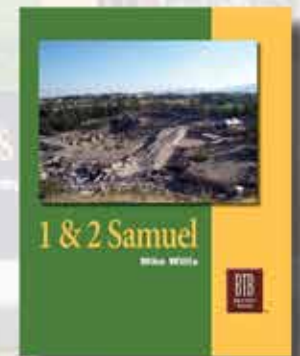
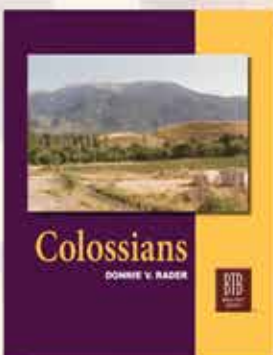
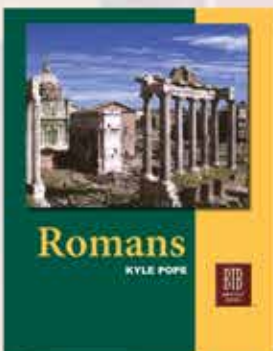
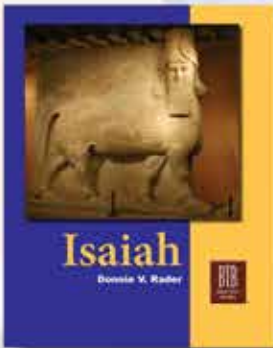
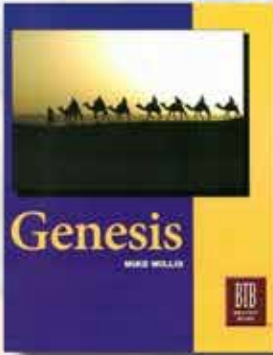
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A New Creature

by Sherelyn Mayberry

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17).



In the hymn, *A New Creature* (PHSS #617), we sing of becoming a new creature after being buried with Christ in baptism. Having heard God’s word and beginning to grow in our faith in Him, we determine to repent of our sins, confess Jesus as the Christ, and are baptized for the remission of our sins. Then, we are followers of Christ, and as such, we walk in “newness of life.”

Repentance requires death to the old life of folly and sin. Dying to sin, we no longer live in it and can be made alive to God in Christ Jesus through baptism (Rom. 6:2, 11). Having repented, we cease functioning as instruments of unrighteousness, but become instruments of righteousness through obedience to God’s will. Sin no longer reigns in our lives (Rom. 6:12-13). Like sheep, we return to the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25). Our godly sorrow for sin without regret leads us to salvation and a clearing of our past (2 Cor. 7:10).


When this change in our lives occurs, we suffer in the flesh, having ceased from sin. We no longer live for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. Those with

whom we once walked may be surprised that we no longer run with them in the same excess of dissipation, and they may speak evil of us (1 Pet. 4:1-4). As we stand with Christ, we can be confident that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus—not Satan and his devices, not anything (Rom. 8:37-39)! So, repent and return. Your sins can be blotted out and times of refreshing can come through Christ’s death on the cross and your obedience (Acts 3:19).

Having repented of our sins, we should be baptized for the remission of our sins that we might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit—eternal life with God the Father (Acts 2:38). Being baptized into Christ, we are buried with Him into death (Rom. 6:3-4a). Christ bore our sins on the cross so we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His stripes, we are healed (1 Pet. 2:24). Our old self in sin is crucified, our body of sin is done away, and we are no longer slaves of sin (Rom. 6:6). Having been buried with Him in baptism, we are raised with Him through faith in the working of God (Col. 2:12). Putting on Christ in baptism, we can

go on our way rejoicing (Gal. 3:27; Acts 8:38-39). What then?

As Christ was raised from the dead, we must be raised to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4b). If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away, new things have come (2 Cor. 5:17). We once were alienated from God in our wicked works, but now, being reconciled in obedience through baptism, we are made holy, blameless, beyond reproach. Bear fruit in keeping with repentance (Matt. 3:8). We must continue in that faith and not be moved away from our new hope (Col. 1: 21-23).

No longer being slaves of sin resulting in death, we are now slaves of obedience resulting in righteousness. When freed from sin and enslaved to God, we receive the benefit of sanctification, and the outcome—eternal life (Rom. 6:16-18, 22). The Truth we have heard makes us free. It leads us away from the slavery of sin to the freedom in Christ (John 8:31-32, 34, 36). Being a new creature, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). 



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Did Jesus Die for the Whole World?

by Bruce Reeves

Although the system of Calvinism has some internal consistency, it is entirely at odds with the gospel of Jesus Christ. “Whosoever will may come,” is a wondrous message! In contrast, the doctrine of limited atonement is dark and debilitating.

Introduction

For many, to ask this question is to answer it. Is not Jesus’s sacrifice for every sinner at the very heart of the gospel? Are we not to proclaim to all the world that Jesus died for their sins? Limited atonement is perhaps one of the most unpopular and controversial tenets of Classic Calvinism. There are even some Calvinists who attempt to accept every point of Reformed Theology except for limited atonement. Yet, most Classic Calvinists counter that Reformed Theology is so tightly structured and interdependent that it is logically impossible to have four of the five points of Calvinism. Once one subscribes to the Calvinistic view of God’s sovereignty, the total inherent inability of man to believe, unconditional election, irresistible grace, and the impossibility of apostasy, there is no room to deny limited atonement.

What Does the Bible Teach?

Universalism Is False, but So Is Calvinism!

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that the majority of mankind will be lost. Jesus says, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt. 7:13-14, ESV). Christ goes on to describe the final judgment for the disobedient, “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and

in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matt. 7:22-23). The Lord declares the eternal state of those who die in a lost condition: “These will go away to everlasting punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). Likewise, Paul describes the eternal consequences of rejecting the knowledge of God and His Son when he writes, “They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:9). In the Revelation, we read, “Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).

Calvinists charge their opponents with the logical conclusions of their own doctrinal presuppositions. If election is unconditional, one must either defend universalism or deny God’s redemptive love for all of humanity. Once one understands that the foundation of Calvinism is false, the truth of the gospel is quite clear: God redemptively loves every person, genuinely and sincerely invites all sinners to come to Him, sent Jesus to die for all, and His divine purpose elects us in Christ, conditioned on our free will choice to obey the Lord (Matt. 11:28-30).

Having established that universalism is false, there must be some sense in which the atonement of Christ is limited, but in what way? The key questions remain, “Is the offer of atonement only available to certain unconditionally chosen people?” or “Is the atoning

provision of Christ offered to all, while the reception of atonement’s benefits is limited to those who meet the conditions of the gospel?”

This is precisely why the teachings of total depravity (inability to believe) and unconditional election demand the Calvinistic version of limited atonement. Yet, those who reject these two tenets of Calvinism are free to accept the clear reading of the Scriptures in this regard. If salvation is a free will choice, then those who reject Christ’s sacrifice are responsible for rejecting the application and benefits of the redemption that Christ has sincerely offered. Did God not intend for the sacrifice of Christ to be available and sufficient for every human person?

Biblical Passages—“Jesus Died for All”

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29).

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Calvinists often engage in circular reasoning and self-contradictory argumentation concerning passages like John 3:16. John’s point is not simply that Jesus died for certain Jews and Gentiles, but that He died for the whole world. To argue that Christ died for “whoever believes in Him” while only the unconditionally elected are given the irresistible gift of faith is double talk at best and outright cruel deception at worst. The reason for the condemnation



of sinners is both their free will decisions to sin against God, but also their free will choice to remain in unbelief (John 3:18).

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all. . . (2 Cor. 5:14).

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time (1 Tim. 2:3-6).

Calvinists tell us that God desires all to be saved, but that He also unconditionally, unchangeably, and individually elected who would be saved. The doctrine also asserts that God foreordained every sin of humanity, condemns the majority for the sin they could not help but commit, and is the first cause of evil. We are then told that, although (in some sense) He desires the salvation of all, He does not redemptively love all men. Who can believe such

twisted thinking? It is true that God desires the salvation of all people, yet few will be saved. The reason is not that they could do no other, but in their freedom of will, the majority reject the Lord.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. . . (Titus 2:11).

But we do see Him who was made lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone (Heb. 2:9).

How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29).

The writer of Hebrews argues that there are those who have been “sanctified” (10:10, 14) by the “blood of the covenant” (13:20), i.e., the sacrifice of Christ—yet have now turned away from faith in Jesus. How does this harmonize

with the view of limited atonement? Some seek to evade the explicit teaching of this verse by denying that this was a truly “sanctified” person in the past. However, such efforts are so foreign to the writer’s thought and context that they are obviously forced, and therefore carry their own refutation.

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them. . . (2 Pet. 2:1).

This passage gives Calvinists untold problems as well. If Jesus only died for the elect, how is it that false teachers who are enslaved to corruption and heading for eternal destruction are described as having been “bought” by the Master. Obviously, they had been purged from their old sins, yet had gone back into sin (2 Pet. 1:10-11), thus Jesus died for all (Rom. 5:6-8).

The attempt to redefine the term “bought” to exclude the atonement of Christ is ill-founded and desperate.

The NT's usage of this term refers to those who have in the past been saved (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:24). This one passage unravels several Calvinistic teachings, such as unconditional election, total inability, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the impossibility of apostasy.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

The notion that the phrase "for any" should be translated as "any of the unconditionally elect" is to force one's preconceived notions into a text of Scripture that neither supports or permits it. If we understand that God desires the salvation of every person but permits freedom of will concerning salvation, then this verse is in complete harmony with the whole of the teaching of God's word.

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world (1 John 2:2).

This is another verse that gives real difficulty to Calvinistic theologians. The argument that "our sins" refers to Jewish believers and the "whole world" refers to Gentile believers violates the writing of the book altogether (1 John 1:7-9; 2:3; 3:1-2, 14; 4:6; 5:11, 14). John's use of the "whole world" refers to all those who are outside of Christ and living in sin, whether Jew or Gentile (cf. John 1:9, 10; 3:19; 7:7; 8:23; 9:39; 12:31; 14:19, 22, 27; 14:30; 15:18; 17:16; 1 John 2:2, 15-17; 3:1, 13; 4:4-5; 5:5, 19).

"My little children" (1 John 2:1) refers to Jewish and Gentile Christians. John is encouraging "any" Christian who sins to take comfort in Jesus being his advocate (1 John 2:1). Therefore, Jesus is not only the propitiation for our sins, but for those of the entire world, i.e., Christ's sacrifice is available to all, but applied only to those who obey the gospel of grace.

So, what would compel someone to re-interpret such passages to make them

compatible with the view that Christ died only for the sins of the elect and not for the sins of every human being? The cause is a false doctrine that forces one into contrived eisegesis, rather than biblical exegesis. Calvinists are forced into this position by a theological argument that implies the limited extent of the atonement, which is unbiblical from the very beginning. In his defense of limited atonement, R.C. Sproul admits that his other theological presuppositions serve as the foundation of his teaching, "Once we grasp the doctrine of total depravity, we know that no person will incline himself to faith in the atoning work of Christ. If God does not supply the means of appropriating the atonement's benefits, namely faith, then the potential redemption of all would result in the actual redemption of none" (*What Is Reformed Theology*, 175). Advocates of this view often commit the logical fallacy of a "False Dilemma." Sproul writes, "The issue is this: Was God's purpose to make salvation for all possible, or to make salvation for the elect certain?" (*What Is Reformed Theology?*, 174). Christ's sacrifice accomplished both objectives! He made salvation possible for all and secured the certainty of salvation to all those who choose to be faithful to Him. You have to work really hard to evacuate and reject the pointed passages that proclaim the universal availability of the atonement of Christ to all sinners. To deny the genuine offer of God's grace is to deny the gospel of Christ.

The Bible Says Jesus Died for Believers

One of the weakest, yet frequently offered arguments for limited atonement is the biblical affirmation that Jesus died for the saved. Obviously, believers are encouraged to recognize the sacrifice the Lord made for their salvation. Yet this does not deny that Jesus's offering is available to all sinners. Yes, Jesus died "for His sheep," for "His church," and for "His friends," but these statements would be expected if He died for all.

Conclusion

Limited atonement undermines the good news of the gospel for all. If this doctrine were true, never again could it be proclaimed to an audience that Jesus died for each one hearing the good news of the kingdom. The logical consequences of this teaching reveal the dark view that Calvinism has of the nature of God and the scope of His grace. It has been said that "logic is a compelling force in the human heart." If one can see that Jesus's sacrifice is available to all but is applied only to those who meet the conditions of surrender to the gospel, then the entire system of Calvinism is debunked and refuted. Thank God for His loving grace! His invitation is not simply an outward, but *insincere* call. He loves you, His Son died for you, and the Spirit is calling you to the living waters of salvation. John writes, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; whoever desires, let him take the water of life without cost" (Rev. 22:17). **11**

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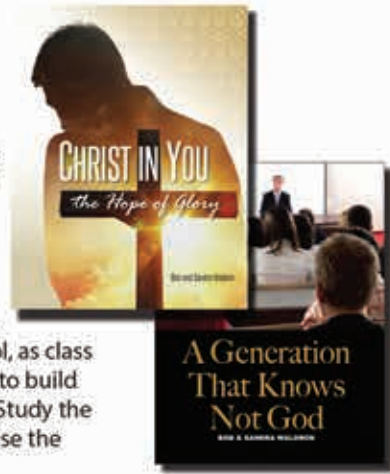
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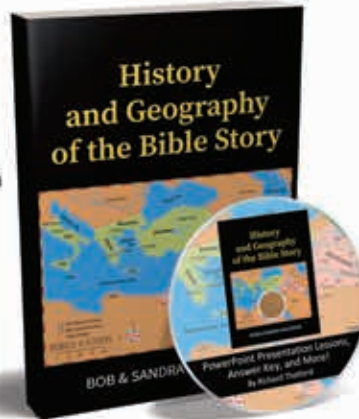
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The Fruit of the Spirit

by Shane Carrington

The Holy Spirit bears fruit in disciples as we listen to His teaching in Scripture and apply that word diligently in our lives.

Introduction

People love the mystical. See what thrives at the box office. Stories abound concerning superheroes, wizards, witches, spirits, and ghosts. Science fiction and fantasy inundate our culture. Some also want to sensationalize our service to God.

Frances Chan, in his book, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*, writes, “. . .many of us don’t need more knowledge about the Spirit from a cerebral vantage point—what we need is experiential knowledge of His presence” (Chan, 36). He then proceeds to tell stories of people which he claims have experienced exactly that.

Can you imagine a gospel preacher actually advocating Chan’s idea that God empowers us in some mysterious way to fight temptation? What if a brother said, “You’ve got to feel it, I know, it’s not a popular word, but there it is. You’ve got to feel that. I actually feel a little tingle on my palm. That went a little too far, but I do. I do. I do. He is filling me with what I need to do this. . . . We’re talking about the fuel that powers you”? Would those statements be biblical? Should we not be concerned about this kind of teaching?

Jack Wilkie, author of the book *Church Reset*, said on his website, “. . .if the Fruit of the Spirit is just the result of me trying my hardest to obey. . .” rather than just relying on the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in us, we are missing the point. He further stated that “. . .fruit is and always has been, the natural external growth that shows what lies within. . .” He then says that by relying on the Holy Spirit

to produce the fruit in us, as opposed to “trying my hardest to obey,” “the burden is taken off of us” (Wilkie, *Focus Press Blog*, 3/23/2017). He believes we need a direct operation of the Holy Spirit—apart from the written word of God—for God to produce that fruit in us.



Neither Wilkie nor Chan believe that the word of God is sufficient. Such a mystical view of the Holy Spirit’s work contradicts Jesus, who told disciples to,

Bear fruit. . . abide in Me. . . bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. . . abide in my love. . . If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love. . . (John 15:1-10).

Jesus also said,

If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free (John 8:31-32).

God is involved in the fruit that true disciples bear, but the Spirit does not bear the fruit for us. God gives us opportunity,

instruction, and encouragement, urging us to participate in His will for disciples. Through these means God nourishes us, grows us in Christ, and helps us produce fruit for His glory.

Rick Atchley preached a sermon in 2006, in which he claimed that the Holy Spirit told him, way back in 1994, that he needed to quit being a coward and start advocating the use of mechanical instruments to worship God. If, like Rick, brethren travel the route of feelings over the written word, how long will it take for that kind of reasoning to lead them to use mechanical instruments in worship—and other unbiblical practices?

The Bible reveals that the Holy Spirit inspired and empowered certain ancient disciples (see previous article). The purposes of these miracles were to reveal and confirm the word of God. Today the Holy Spirit convicts, converts, and strengthens us through the written word that was completed long ago (John 16:7-15; 17:17; 20:30-31; Eph. 3:2-5; etc.). The gospel is the “power of God” that saves and transforms us to be like Jesus (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17; 12:1-2; 1:5; 16:26). Looking for mystical avenues for spiritual strength is unbiblical.

The Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:13-26)

As disciples of Jesus, we understand that the Holy Spirit is integral to our justification, transformation, and eternal glorification (John 16:7-15; etc.).

Living “by the Spirit” will lead us away from a life dedicated “to the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). If we have been planted and born again by the Spirit (John 3:1-5; 1 Pet. 1:22-25)—and rooted in, watered by, and pruned by the Spirit (John 15:1-10; 16:7-15)—we will have the fruit of the Spirit produced in us (Gal. 5:22-23). This list is beautiful, powerful, and far-reaching in our lives: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”

This fruit is the opposite of (and an antidote for) “the works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21). While those works are clearly condemned and condemning (Gal. 5:21), “there is no law” (Gal. 5:23) against the fruit of the Spirit. A life lived in harmony with the Holy Spirit’s teaching is healing in our relationship with God and fellow believers (Gal. 5:22-26). A life lived in carnality leads us away from both God and faithful disciples (Gal. 5:19-21,26).

God provides the foundation for our spiritual growth, without which we could not even be disciples of Jesus. He sent Jesus to redeem us through His foresight and grace. In Scripture, Jesus teaches us by word and example what it means to be children of God. When He ascended, Jesus and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to reveal the Father’s plan and the Son’s redeeming work in words we can understand (Rom. 1:16-17). The Holy Spirit also revealed God’s plan for our transformation that we might be more like Jesus (Rom. 8:29-30; 12:1-2; 1:5; 16:26). In Galatians, that transformation is described as growth away from “the works of the flesh” and into the nine-fold “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:13-26). The Spirit bears this fruit in us as we “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24), “walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16,25), treat others in a godly manner (Gal. 5:26), “are led by the Spirit”

(Gal. 5:18), and repent away from the practice of sin and toward obeying God’s will (Gal. 5:21-23). The Holy Spirit fosters our bearing of fruit when we use the tools He has made available (Eph. 6:17; John 15:1-10).

Three of these tools are the written word (Eph. 4:15; 6:17; 3:3-5), prayer (Eph. 6:18), and the spiritual relationships that we share with fellow Christians (Eph. 4:1-16; Eph. 3:14-19). Through these, may we “lay aside the old self” and “be renewed in the spirit of (our) mind(s)” in order to “put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph. 4:22-24).

How Far Does This Go?

What happens when people crave mystical movements of the Holy Spirit outside what He revealed in the written word? How far are they willing to go? Consider another telling example.

In 2014, Lauren King became a preaching intern in a congregation in Tennessee. Her justification for this was revealing. She appealed to her feelings, saying,

The Lord also made it clear, through a lot of discernment and a lot of prayer, that I was supposed to pick up a preaching emphasis. . . . A lot of the ways that I’ve been perceiving the Lord’s voice is through having peace when I walk through open doors. If I have an unpeaceful heart, then that’s not really where I’m supposed to be, but if I’m at a place where I have peace about where I’m going, then that’s the Lord telling me, yes” (King, Quoted in *Seek the Old Paths Blog*, 1/2015).

Trying to read “the Lord’s secret will” like tea leaves leads away from Scripture and God (Deut. 29:29; John 20:31-32; etc.). When people appeal to emotions as proof of the Spirit’s work within them, they have left the Holy Spirit’s teaching in Scripture and are using a fleshly approach to God. This is incredibly dangerous.

Conclusion

The work of the Holy Spirit is neither focused on bodily sensations nor emotions. His work centers on conviction, conversion, and transformation—through the word He revealed by inspiration (John 16:7-15). Apply His word to your life, and through this, He will strengthen you to bear spiritual fruit. Trust the Spirit’s inspired, written word. Trust no one who elevates feelings above Scripture. ■

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By Bobby L. Graham



QUESTION.

How Are We Supposed to Stand Out for Jesus?

ANSWER.

I commend the young person who asked about this matter, because the question evidences a genuine interest in living the life of a Christian. I would suggest some rather bold measures to stand out for the Lord.

Bone Up

You will go no further in standing out for Jesus than your Bible study allows you to go. Be sure to devote adequate time to what God says about all matters in the Bible (Acts 17:11; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:14-17). Bible study is an investment in your future and that of others—both earthly and heavenly future, as you stand out for Jesus.

Give In

All words and actions begin in the mind/heart (Prov. 4:23; 16:2; Matt. 15:18-20). For this reason, you must guard it

and cultivate it along spiritual lines (Prov. 31:30; Matt. 6:33; Rom. 8:5-7; Col. 3:1-2).

Surrender all to Him, and you will surely stand out for Jesus.



Stand Up

When your mind is filled with the life-changing word of God and your heart is surrendered to the Lord, in all that shows forth in life you will stand up and out for Jesus (Matt. 5:13-16).

Kneel Down

Never be afraid or ashamed to pray to God through Jesus Christ, both privately and publicly, knowing that He will strengthen you for the battle in which you must fight. The best verse I know on praying is Philippians 4:6, which leads with the idea of being anxious in nothing but prayerful in everything. The next verse adds that the peace that God gives will then guard the heart and mind through Christ Jesus. His blessing will cause you to stand out for Jesus.

Sound Out

Never miss an opportunity to sing out His praises, to express His excellencies/virtues, or to have communion through His body and blood, thereby proclaiming His death till He comes again (Jas. 5:13; Eph. 5:19; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Cor. 10:16). While private worship is encouraged for all, it is what we do together in worship that receives, by far, the major emphasis in the New Testament. You will glorify God, strengthen your brethren, and receive much needed strength from them for your efforts to stand out for Jesus.

Dress Under

Although we live in a time when most dress in disregard of Biblical teaching, remember that “fishers of men” can easily fish in the wrong pond and catch the wrong kind of men if they give little attention to how they appear to others. Your attire says something about how serious you are about your influence on others and in taking them to heaven with you, as indicated by the words “modesty,” “shame fastness,” and “sobriety” in 1 Timothy 2:9. Instead of being content with being “eye-pleasing,” work on being “heart-attracting” to others (1 Pet. 3:3-4). Never be guilty of suggesting to others that they should follow Jesus when your dress “suggests” something else. In every good way, you can stand out for Jesus.

Speak Out

You might have noticed that teaching’s place in our list comes last. That is because no teaching will accomplish much good without the support of a life lived according to God’s will (Acts 1:1; 2:47; Rom. 2:21-24; 1 Tim. 4:16). The purpose of your entire life is to direct people to Jesus Christ as you stand out for Him. **T**



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Going Up to Jerusalem

by Barry Britnell

Fully understanding Luke's description of Jesus' walk to Jerusalem helps us appreciate the love that Jesus had for all of us.

As I have traveled across Israel, I have heard a number of people refer to the land as “the Fifth Gospel.” In other words, the land (like the gospels) also tells the story of Jesus. Knowledge of the geography of the land of Israel often assists in the understanding of the words provided to us by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

There is an interesting verse in Luke 19. After Jesus visits the city of Jericho, the author simply states:

And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem (v. 28).

It is easy to read that verse and quickly move on without thinking about everything that is going on within it. To fully understand it, you need to know a bit about the geography of the land. In particular, you need to understand three aspects of the road Jesus traveled: the elevation, the distance, and the environment.

First, let us discuss the elevation gain of this road. The city of Jericho sits in the bottom of the Jordan Rift Valley. This valley runs north to south and connects the Sea of Galilee and areas to the north, southward toward the Dead Sea. The valley averages 8-10 miles wide and it is very common to see all the way across it

on any given day. The valley is also, for the most part, under sea level. Therefore, the city of Jericho sits at an elevation of approximately 850 feet *below* sea level.

Conversely, the city of Jerusalem sits on top of the Central Mountain Range. This range features moderately high mountains and stretches from the north to the south through the land. Jerusalem itself sits at an elevation of approximately 2700 feet *above* sea level. So, do the math! When you do, you learn that Jesus truly was “going up.” As he traveled, he would have climbed around 3,500 feet in elevation.



Looking southwest from Jericho toward the hills in the Wilderness of Judea.



Looking north across the Wilderness of Judea. The road between Jericho and Jerusalem ran from the right to the left through this region.

Secondly, you must consider the distance Jesus covered. As the crow flies, the distance between Jericho and Jerusalem is about 15 miles. So, not only did Jesus climb about 3,500 feet, but he also did that in a relatively short distance. Therefore, it was also a steep climb.

Finally, let us look at the environment. The road between Jericho and Jerusalem sits in the northern part of the Wilderness of Judea, on the leeward side of the Central Mountain Range. Therefore, very little rain falls in this area. Vegetation is extremely limited, and is concentrated around small springs that occasionally flow out of the hills. Having no shade to accompany you along the way, the sun would continually beat upon any traveler walking along the road.

So, let us revisit our verse from Luke 19. Jesus “went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.” For the original readers of Luke’s gospel, they understood exactly what this road was like. However, for all of us, sometimes we fail to understand how difficult this walk was for Jesus. Yet,

when you study the geography of the area, you begin to understand what Jesus was going through. This hike was long, and it would have taken most of the day. This hike was steep, and the sun would have been beating down on him the entire way.

This was a very difficult walk.

In addition to the physical challenges of the walk, Jesus was simultaneously struggling with emotional challenges. Jesus knew where He was going. Jesus knew what was going to happen when He got there, and He knew that it had to be done.

This was a very difficult walk.

In the past, I have done a good bit of hiking. As you are walking, you are rarely talking at the same time. You need to conserve your talking energy and use it on walking. So, you end up doing a lot of thinking. Jesus was probably doing the same thing. I wonder what Jesus thought about as He traveled. Honestly, I do not know, but I would guess that He was thinking about the dreadful week

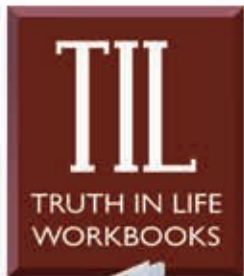
ahead of Him. He was probably thinking about His friends and family, who did not fully understand what was going on. He probably thought about you and me. Because He knew that if He did not make it up that hill and complete the job God wanted Him to do, we would have no hope.

Let us all be thankful that our Lord Jesus climbed that steep, hot, difficult path and “went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.” **T**



Barry Britnell

Barry is the founder of Exploring Bible Lands, LLC (exploringbiblelands.com) and leads Bible Study tours to the land of Israel. He also works with Appian Media (appianmedia.org) to produce biblically sound videos used in teaching others about the Bible. Barry and his wife, Tabatha, have three children and live in Athens, AL and worship with the Capshaw church of Christ.

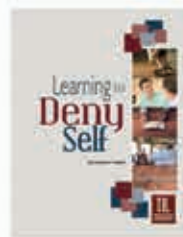
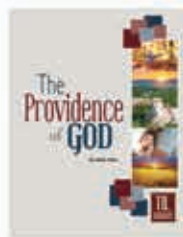
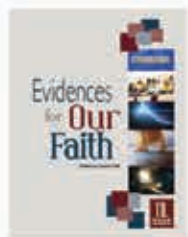
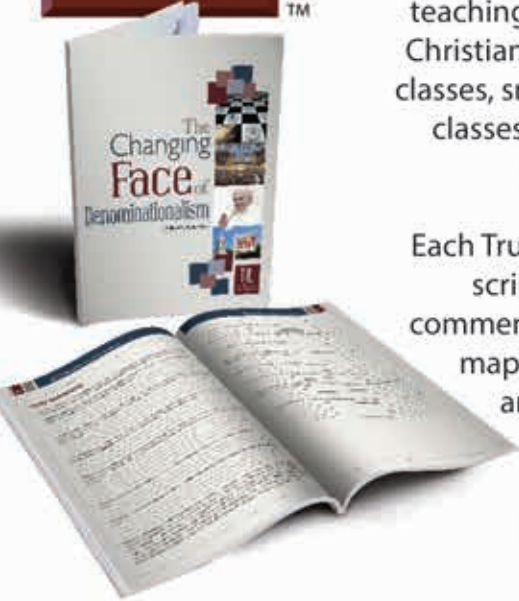


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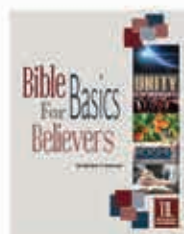
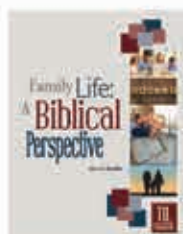


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Selfishness vs. Selflessness

by Chris Reeves

Young people today live in a culture that constantly pressures them to look inward and be selfish, and they need to be reminded to deny themselves and serve others.

I wrote this article one week after getting back from a preaching trip to Ghana, Africa. While there, I noticed something very interesting. In the Ghana culture, children are taught from a very early age to help others around them, especially the elderly. On a daily basis, it is very common to see young people helping others by carrying various objects for them. They do this especially for the elderly. Many times while I was there, the young people would carry my briefcase bag for me. I would try to carry it myself and a young person would quickly take it from me. This was surprising to me. We do not have this practice or habit in our culture. If you don't believe me, the next time you pick up something, see if a young person comes to your aid to carry it for you.

When I have the opportunity to mentor the youth of our day, I say kindly to them that there is a need for them to be less selfish and more selfless. Our youth have a great potential for service to Jesus and others. Our youth are smart and talented. They are full of life. Nevertheless, I also see a lot of selfishness in our youth today. Selfishness is simply the attitude of being concerned with one's own interests at all costs, above the interests of others. Our culture promotes narcissism and egotism, and our young people are the unfortunate casualties of it all.

Today, young people have their phone, and that's all they need. They look at their phone and are wrapped up in their social media, and they don't have time for anyone else. I've seen many youths looking at their phone and walking right

by others without speaking to them. They know their phone, but they don't know their Bible. They can operate all their phone apps, but they don't know to operate a basic appliance or piece of machinery. They have time for their phone (and maybe some schooling), but not for others.

There is so much in our culture today that is pressuring our young people to be selfish. Sometimes they get it in school, from their friends, or at home. They definitely get it on social media. Social media is full of the focus on self. Social media is often about the way *you* look, the "likes" that *you* get from others, the instant feed-back *you* get, the praise *you* get, etc.

I would remind our young people of the basic Bible principle of self-denial.

Jesus wants us to deny ourselves and come follow Him (Matt. 10:33; 16:24; Luke 9:23). Self-denial is the beginning of being a godly Christian. However, our culture is pushing and pressuring young people to think of self only. It is the selfishness in people that leads to troubling times. Remember, "lovers of self" stand at the head of the list of things that lead to grievous and troubling times (2 Tim. 3:2). We are certainly witnessing these troubling times today in America. Elders are not to be "self-willed" (Titus 1:7), and yet many young people are conditioning their lives to be just that. They are more like the "self-willed" false teachers of 2 Peter 2:10.

The problem of selfishness in a young person, of course, begins at home. We are not born selfish, but we learn early on to



be selfish. Many parents are raising selfish children. So, I would counsel our young people who truly love the Lord and want to go to heaven to note the following Bible passages and commit them to memory. Maybe you could make a list of these verses and keep them in your room to look at regularly. Consider these verses from the New American Standard Version:

Do not eat the bread of a selfish person; or desire his delicacies (Prov. 23:6).

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence (Matt. 23:25).

But to those who are self-serving and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, He will give wrath and indignation (Rom. 2:8).

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3).

For even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written: "The taunts of those who taunt You have fallen on Me" (Rom. 15:3).

It does not act disgracefully; it does not seek its own benefit; it is not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong suffered (1 Cor. 13:5).

And He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf (2 Cor. 5:15).

For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish, and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, selfishness, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances (2 Cor. 12:20).

... idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions (Gal. 5:20).

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves (Phil. 2:3).

For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:21).

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. . . For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing (Jas. 3:14, 16).

I am hearing today that many young people are unhappy. Since the pandemic, there has been a dramatic increase in youth drug abuse and suicide. Many young people are angry, stressed, and violent. They lash out by hurting others and themselves. Many young people are doing poorly in school and others are having troubles at home. Many young people are engaging in crimes against others. What is happening? What we are seeing is the fruit of selfishness. Young people have been conditioned to think of self over others, and, when you have a selfish person, you have an unhappy person. Getting out of self and serving others will make you a happy person.

Would I tell our young people to get rid of their phones? No, I would not. Should they stop using social media? Of course not. These things can be used for good. I know young Christians who are using social media to help spread the gospel. What I would tell our young people is to think more of others. Like we sing in worship, "None of self, and all of thee." I would tell them to be a "giver," not just a "taker" (Acts 20:35) and "bear" the burdens of others (Gal. 6:2). Be your "brother's keeper" (Gen. 4:9). Refresh others and you will be refreshed (Prov. 11:25). Love your neighbor (Mark 12:31). Crucify self (Gal. 2:20). Young people, we need you to be the faithful church of the future, and it begins today with a selfless life. **T**



Chris Reeves

Chris has preached for the Warfield Blvd. church of Christ in Clarksville, TN, since 2016. He and his wife, Cheri, have four children and two grandchildren. His Bible study website is thegoodteacher.com. The church website is wbcc.org. He can be reached at chrisreevesmail@gmail.com.

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Habits of Hospitality and Service

by Abraham Mayberry

Through re-prioritization and forming helpful habits, youth can show hospitality and service to both God and their community while they are young.

Introduction: The Morning Routine

The idea of waking up early is very unusual for the average college student; I am the opposite. At college, I enjoy my morning routine: going on a run (somedays), brushing my teeth, showering, and then—my favorite part—going to the campus coffee shop. Going to the coffee shop was my favorite part of my morning routine, not just for the coffee, but because that was when I would do my daily Bible reading with a close group of friends. Making the routine of studying the Bible in a community kept me more accountable for reading it daily and forged a daily habit.

Whether drinking coffee, driving the same morning commute to work, or nightly routine, we are all people of habit, practices, and patterns. As Christians, we can apply our nature of creating habits to our spiritual service to God and others. Jesus gave us our mission in this world to love God and love others (Matt. 22:37-40). One aspect of this is our hospitality and giving. Some youth often struggle with finding ways to serve at a young age and often relax their generosity and service. Creating habits of generosity and giving is crucial to the walk of a Christian at any age.

Beginning while We Are Young

Back in high school, there was an old poster in a classroom with a quote, “Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they

become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny.” Our Bibles record, in a letter from Paul to Timothy, a young disciple of Christ, to “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). Both quotes agree—the time is now to form helpful practices!

Even if we are young, we must begin making habits of charity to God and hospitality to others today. We cannot put this off till we are older. We can become the person we want to be by the habits we start when we are young. This change does not happen overnight but begins with studying the Scripture, prayerful meditation, and creativity in thinking

about how we can serve in whatever circumstance or stage of life we find ourselves.

Haggai: Rebuilding and Re-prioritization

First, we must study the message of Haggai—one prophet in our Bibles. Before Haggai, God sent His people into Babylonian captivity because of their sins that had built up over many years. Eventually, Babylon fell, and under the new rule of the Persians, some of God’s people had the opportunity to return to the land. The post-exilic community of God’s people needed a reminder on how to renew their lives and work for God.



This was not just about them returning to the land, but returning to God.

Around August 520 BC, the prophet Haggai delivered a message from the Lord to Zerubbabel (the governor of Judah) and Joshua (the high priest). The people neglected the work of the Lord and needed to get back to work. Haggai spoke, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD. . . Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins?” (Hag. 1:2, 4). Then God challenged, saying,

Consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD. You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? Declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house (Hag. 1:7-10).

God’s message challenged the people to resume their work by condemning the people for putting their interests before God’s by building their own homes first before the temple. The people do not believe it was the right time to build the house of the LORD, but God calls them out by saying they had enough time to build their own homes.

The term “paneled” describing their houses probably references the inside of wealthier homes (Fuhr and Yates, 258-259). This term is referenced in the temple and royal palace (1 Kings 6:9; 7:3, 7). During the rule of King David, he wept that he lived in a cedar house while God’s house was in a tent. It was the opposite for the audience of Haggai’s message. David’s heart contrasts with the people here. God and the temple should have taken priority in their lives, but the people focused on themselves first.

The people needed to refocus their priorities and return to the Lord’s work. In response, we read that God’s remnant people listened and obeyed God. God’s response to the people’s intention and

change of heart was, “I am with you, declares the LORD” (Hag. 1:13b).

Helpful Habits and Suggestions


Applying this message to our lives, I ask—What is our focus? If we have money, do we use it first for ourselves or God and others? We have a similar calling today, and the time to work and serve is now. We must honestly look at our priorities and assess our lives. While we are young, we must begin practicing hospitality and generosity to God and others, even if we do not own a home. There are many ways our generosity and hospitality can be accomplished, with or without money. When planning how to achieve this task, an excellent first step is to take the time and effort to prepare.

For the work of the church, we can use a portion of our money from our job to give to the Lord’s work with the church. This might mean sacrificing the five coffees we buy and using that money to give back to the church. Any amount you can give is pleasing to God, and sometimes it might just be a couple of dollars, while other times more. If you do not have the money at times, there are ways to give back without it. You can help teach or co-teach a Bible class, write cards to shut-ins, or even volunteer to clean the building on a Saturday. The importance is to start now and not put it off till later in life because life seems only to get busier.

Another important aspect of giving in the life of a Christian outside of the church is helping our community. Supporting our community is not done through the church treasury but individually in a Christian’s life. Sometimes this part of giving is too relaxed and is often forgotten because it is less structured than giving back to the church. We must find creative and practical ways we can serve the community individually. When budgeting for giving to the church’s work, we can also budget for our individual service and giving to others. It is vital that we don’t let either giving slack off. Money set

aside for the community could be used to purchase Bibles, restaurant gift cards, or care packages with essential items for the homeless. It could mean personally donating money for adoptions, clothes/shoes to a donation drive, or volunteering at a local food kitchen. To live a life of generosity requires self-sacrifice and thoughtful consideration of how best to practice these things scripturally and effectively.

Conclusion

Let us remember Paul’s encouragement to the Philippian church, “Let each of you look not only at his own interests but also the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4). Re-prioritizing our life of service with a humble and hospitable heart is pleasing to God. It begins with small steps in the present. Let us not just have habits of daily morning coffee but also habits in our service to our God and others. 

Sources

All Scriptures are quoted from the *English Standard Version (ESV)*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016.

Fuhr Jr., Richard Alan, and Gary E. Yates. *The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.



Abraham Mayberry

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Upcoming Changes to Your Truth Magazine Subscription

A Letter from the Editor

The last several years have been challenging for Truth Publications with the pandemic, economy, and supply issues. The board appreciates how everyone connected with this organization, especially how Lance Taylor and the excellent staff at CEI Bookstore, pulled together—applying their considerable talents to streamline operations, improve efficiencies, and help us meet the needs of our customers. As our truthbooks.com website prominently states, “You and your church need trustworthy books and resources. We publish and provide Bible-based products to help everyone grow spiritually.”

To achieve this end, we must operate from a sound financial footing, adjust to changing economic conditions, and adapt new technologies that help us accomplish our purpose. Along with most of the publishing industry, we have shifted to a “Print on Demand” model of operation. Instead of printing thousands of copies of each item in our inventory, we print limited quantities and reorder as needed.

The changes that are sweeping the publishing industry also affect *Truth Magazine*. Except for a few national publications, which are largely supported by advertising, most religious, academic, and professional journals have gone digital.

Throughout 2022, it has been especially difficult to maintain the production schedule of the print version

of *Truth Magazine*. We have experienced difficulties in getting the magazine printed, challenges with distribution via the U.S.P.S, supply chain issues in which the printer had to stop production until they received paper, ink, or parts, and escalating costs that have staggered a formerly healthy economy.

As a result, the Executive Committee has recommended to the board that we shift *Truth Magazine* from print PLUS digital distribution to focus solely on the digital distribution of this product and its growth. We have been developing our digital channels for several years, mastering the different formats, and seeking to increase the quality and breadth of our offerings.

Truth Magazine is available on the Amazon Kindle platform as a monthly periodical. We distribute it as a full color PDF, and in a version accessible via web browsers (which is especially useful for brethren who live in the third-world and who do not enjoy broadband access). Recently, we have been improving our ePub version, which can be read on a phone, tablet, computer monitor, etc. There has been an increasing demand for digital content. We have been striving to meet this demand, and broaden the scope and quality of our digital offerings.

We regret the necessity of this change, but it cannot be avoided in the present economic climate. Our customers/subscribers may be assured that we

will do right by each of you. Hopefully, most of our subscribers will make the transition to fully digital subscriptions. Since individual and group subscriptions renew throughout the year, we will make every effort to address the needs of each subscriber based on his individual subscription status.

A majority of our subscribers are already receiving *Truth Magazine* in a digital form. While the shift to digital comes at a cost, it also means that we can expand our offering, and provide more monthly columns (on a broader variety of subjects) that will enable us to provide sound spiritual teaching on relevant topics.

Our reason for existence is captured in the statement, “Taking His Hand, Helping Each Other Home.” Recognizing the authority of God and Christ, we take His hand. He leads, we follow. Having done so, we then are able to help each other (those who are outside of Christ, as well as our brethren) in three ways: Our physical homes are made whole through the application of sound biblical principles. Our spiritual home (the church) is made strong through faithfully proclaiming the gospel message. By submitting to the will of God, and through the forgiveness made possible by the blood of Christ, and by God’s grace, we can reach our heavenly home.

Yours,

Mark Mayberry

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If your subscription status change requires follow-up, a team member will contact you in a timely manner. Please be considerate of our team members during this time. Moving to a digital only magazine was a difficult decision for our board of directors, but a necessary one during these pressing times.

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Introduction to Colossians

by Nathan Ward

This introductory article helps us better understand the nature of the false teaching that was infiltrating Colossae and the solution Paul provided to it.

Introduction

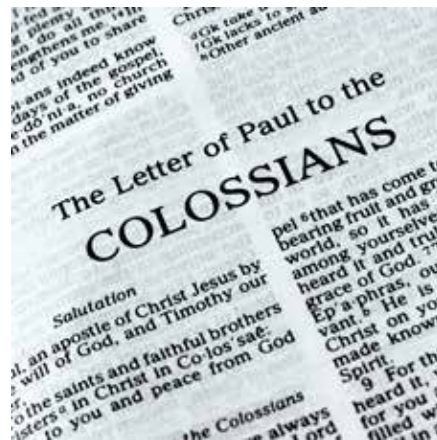
Paul's letters to various congregations are a key part of Scripture. Each brings a variety of internal and external contexts for consideration, all of which are valuable in understanding the letter. Given the space constraints, I cannot examine all the relevant information, so this article will focus on two key issues related to Colossians: the nature of the false teaching in Colossae and the solution Paul provided (See Note #1).

The Colossian Heresy

Paul's letters were never mere greetings or well wishes, but were always written in response to a particular occasion in his life or the lives of his readers. In this case, Epaphras visited Paul (1:8) and brought news of a false teaching in the Lycus River Valley that threatened the Colossian Christians. Although this topic has been studied intensely for generations, questions persist as to just what was going on in Colossae.

Elements of the Teaching

The clearest picture of the false teaching is in chapter 2, where Paul seems to address several elements of it. There are, however, various difficulties in such "mirror-reading" of an ancient document. For example, Paul may have used irony or exaggeration for rhetorical effect. Did he try to describe the false teaching precisely or persuade the Colossians to see the folly of it? Did he quote the false teachers, or lampoon their teaching? Even so, this



chapter is our best hope to determine the false teaching. In particular, Paul mentioned philosophy, human tradition, and the elemental spirits of the world (2:8); food, festivals, and Sabbaths (2:16); visions and angel worship (2:18); and asceticism (2:18, 20-23). Many consider circumcision (2:11-13) to be a part of the teaching as well, though Paul's mention of it may be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

The difficulty is at once evident. Some elements seem Jewish. Some elements seem to have nothing to do with Judaism. Some elements may or may not have to do with the false teaching. All of it needs to be weighed carefully with the dangers of mirror-reading in mind.

Identifying the Problem

There is no consensus as to what the problem was, but educated guesses can be made. Diagnostic simplicity suggests it is best to presume Paul addressed a single problem, so our approach will attempt

to reconcile the various elements. Even as we consider the options, we must constantly remember that our knowledge of first-century Asia Minor, and the situation in this church, is limited and certainty is impossible.

Jewish Theories

If circumcision is an element of the false teaching, then it would head the list of Jewish elements alongside Sabbaths. Sabbaths do not stand alone, as the triad of feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths are a regular Old-Testament grouping, where they seem to represent the commandments of the Law (e.g., 1 Chron 23:30-31; 2 Chron 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3; Isa. 1:13-14; Ezek. 45:17; Hos. 2:11; cf. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 8). Food laws also fit here, and "human traditions" may refer to the traditions of the elders so loved by the Pharisees (cf. Mark 7:1-23). In addition to these clearly Jewish elements in Colossians 2, Judaism was undoubtedly present in that time and place, and was a problem that Paul faced (e.g., Acts 14-15; Galatians).

Some have argued that all the elements of Colossians 2 make sense as warning against Judaism, and theories which find parallels in Gnosticism or other pagan philosophies are unnecessary. However, it seems that there are also pagan elements, which would indicate that it is not *merely* Judaism under consideration. As a result, various Gnosticized forms of Judaism have been suggested, but evidence of such belief systems in this time and place has not been found. In some cases, it is clear that these systems did not exist in the first century.

Gnosticism

Others have sought to find parallels among pagan religions and philosophies. Some have suggested that Colossian false teaching was tied to Gnosticism, a philosophical system to which many religions accommodated themselves. Gnosticism checks some boxes, particularly its asceticism and philosophical slant. It does not, however, account for the Jewish elements of the false teaching. Further, Gnosticism is a second-century development. At best, it would be an incipient form of Gnosticism mixed with Judaism.

Syncretistic Theories

No worldview that we know accounts for all the data. Instead, it is likely a syncretistic problem—either a paganized Judaism or a Judaized paganism, with the only questions being which broke into the other and which was more dominant. This approach accounts well for the data and is historically plausible: on one side, God’s people had a long history of mixing Yahweh worship with idolatry; on the other, syncretism was not only inevitable but encouraged in polytheism.

The Solution to the Problem

Unlike the false teaching that serves as the backdrop to Colossians, the solution is quite simple to see, for Paul’s emphasis is not on explaining the heresy, but on meeting error with truth. That truth—the answer to the false teaching—is Christ, who is overtly present in nearly every section of the letter.

In the introduction (1:1-14), Paul is an apostle of Christ writing to faithful brothers in Christ (1:1-2); he has heard of their faith in Christ (1:4); Epaphras is a minister of Christ (1:8); and their redemption is found in Christ (1:13-14). A hymn of praise to the preeminence of Christ follows (1:15-23), where Paul says Christ is the image of God and firstborn of creation (1:15), the creator and sustainer of all things (1:16-17), the one who is before all things (1:17), the head

of the church and firstborn of the dead (1:18), and the fullness of God (1:19), who reconciles all things back to God (1:20-23).

In discussing his ministry of the mystery (1:24-2:5), Paul defines the mystery as “Christ in you” (1:27) or simply “Christ” (2:2); Paul’s ministry is to proclaim Christ in order to present everyone mature in Christ (1:28), because all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ (2:3) and firmness of faith in Christ prevents delusion by false teaching (2:4-5).

In Paul’s discussion of the false teaching (2:6-3:4), the centrality of Christ is most noteworthy. In this context, Paul urges them to keep walking in Christ (2:6) and says that the philosophy is not according to Christ (2:8), in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (2:9). Indeed, there is no reason to fall prey to the false teaching, because they are connected to Christ: filled with Christ (2:10); covenanted with, baptized in, raised by, and made alive with Christ (2:11-13); their sins were taken away by Christ (2:14). As to the spiritual forces that so enamored the false teachers, Christ disarmed them, triumphing over and shaming them (2:15). Thus, because of Christ, there is no need to listen to them (2:16). In fact, their obsessions are merely shadows of which Christ is the reality (2:16-17) and buying into the false teaching will separate them from Christ—the head (2:18-19). In summation, death with Christ means freedom from human regulations (2:20-23) and life with Christ means a new focus (3:1-4): Christ, at the right hand of God (3:1), a life hidden with Christ in God (3:3), Christ who “is your life” (3:4), and an eager expectation of the appearing of Christ with whom they will appear in glory (3:4).

As the letter moves to more general exhortations (3:5-4:1), Christ is somewhat less prominent, though He still is clearly present. There is no distinction between any Christian, because Christ is all and in all (3:11). The statement that “Christ is your life” (3:4) is clarified

(3:15-17) as the peace of Christ rules in the heart (3:15), the word of Christ dwells in you richly (3:16), and the name of Christ governs all speech and action (3:17). Likewise, Christ is central in the relationships discussed (3:18-4:1), as wives, children, slaves, and masters are all called upon to remember their Lord.

Conclusion

At times, it seems Paul’s letter to the Colossians provides more questions than answers. Even so, in the final analysis, there is much clarity: Christ is the answer. A proper understanding of Christ’s divine person and atoning work reveals the lie of false teaching, exposing it for the empty fraud that it is. This is the enduring message of Colossians, for it is true in every circumstance for every apostasy that ever comes along: a proper understanding of Christ is vital to standing against every form of error. ■

Note

Note #1: This is a modified and abbreviated version of my essay on Colossians in *From the Pen of Paul*, 2nd Ed. (Temple Terrace: Florida College Press, 2022), 288-306. See there for discussions of more topics (including background on the city of Colossae, the church in Colossae, and the authorship, date, and provenance of the epistle), full citation information documenting my research, and a list of recommended resources for further study.



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Colossians 1: Knowing Jesus

by Andrew Dow

Before Paul gets into the nitty gritty of combatting false teaching, he encourages the Colossians to build a solid foundation by learning fully and properly who Jesus is.

Introduction: The Foundation of Problem Solving (Col. 1:1-2:5)

In Colossians 2:6, Paul wrote, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” This is a transition in the book of Colossians. Paul will spend time later explaining how to “walk.” Their “walk,” however, is a direct result of how they “received Christ Jesus the Lord.” This principle remains true for Christians today: what we believe about Jesus will shape how we live for Jesus.

In the letter to the Colossians, Paul issues warnings and corrections. Although the identity of the *Colossian Heresy* is beyond our scope, we know from the text that the Colossians need to prepare themselves for spiritual combat. While Paul confronts false ideas directly in chapter 2, he begins with a more fundamental approach. The most important thing for the Colossians to do is simply to understand who Jesus is. If they can remember how they “received Christ Jesus the Lord,” then they will be well equipped to “walk in Him.” Therefore, Paul begins this letter by reminding the Colossians exactly who Jesus is.

The Structure of Colossians (1:1-2:5)

With relatively slight modifications, there is broad consensus on the structure of Colossians 1:1-2:5. The text can be divided as follows:

Section	Verses
Greeting	(1:1-2)
Paul’s Thankfulness for the Colossians	(1:3-8)
Paul’s Prayer for the Colossians	(1:9-23)
Paul’s Work for the Colossians	(1:24-2:5)

There is nothing particularly unusual about the things we find here. Paul’s greeting is typical. With one exception, Paul includes sections of thanksgiving in all his letters. Paul often expresses his prayers for his readers, and it is common for Paul to write about certain aspects of his apostolic work.

There is, however, one anomaly in the structure of chapter one. The oddity occurs in verses 15-20 where Paul abruptly breaks out in song! Although often lumped into Paul’s “prayer” section, this passage reflects a dramatic shift in style and content. The effect of this shift is to cause us to pay special attention. As we work our way through the text, we will emphasize this important section.

Why Paul Is Thankful for the Colossians (1:3-8)

Paul begins by expressing his thankfulness for the Colossians. Namely, there are three qualities within them that are worthy of thanksgiving: “We have heard of your *faith* in Christ Jesus and the *love* which you have for all the saints; because of the *hope* laid up for you in

heaven. . .” (1:3). Faith, hope, and love are often lumped together to summarize the most basic characteristics of the Christian life (e.g., 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:21-22). The Colossians, therefore, are doing something right and maturing well.

The Colossians are not merely commended for these qualities. They are also reminded where they first learned about them: “you previously heard [of these things] in the word of truth, the gospel” (1:5). Notice that Paul is subtly introducing the point he will make more clearly in 2:6. The Colossians’s actions (their faith, hope, and love) are an outgrowth of what they learned about Jesus through His Gospel.

How Paul Is Praying for the Colossians (1:9-23)

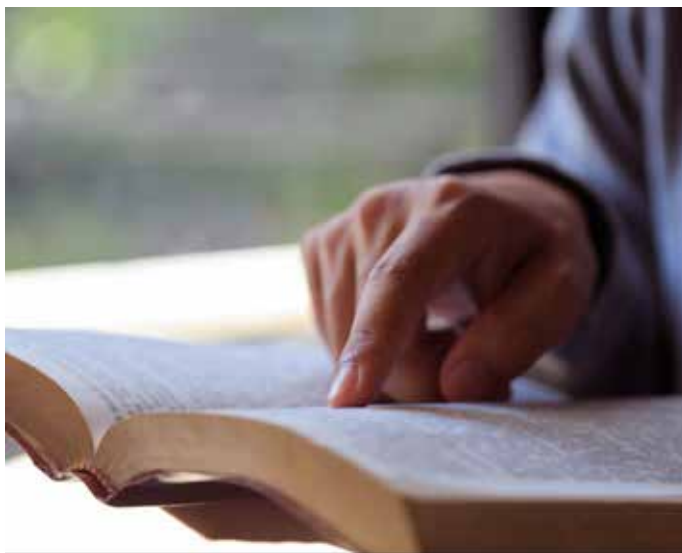
Paul seamlessly moves from thankfulness to prayerfulness by linking the two together: “For this reason. . . we have not ceased to pray for you” (1:9a). Paul’s prayer for the Colossians is simple, but profound. He prays “that [the Colossians] may be filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9b). The prayer is for knowledge. Elsewhere Paul commends and encourages knowledge of “the gospel” (1:5) and “God’s mystery” which is “Christ Himself” (2:3). The most important thing for the Colossians is that they know who Jesus is! If they know Jesus and His will, they will be ready to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (1:10a), “please” God by “bearing fruit” and “increasing” (1:10b), and be “strengthened with all power” (1:11). To

summarize Paul, an increasing and true knowledge of Jesus is necessary for those who want to live as His disciples.

In the midst of this prayer for increased knowledge, Paul inserts a poem (1:15-20). The prose of Paul's typical letter writing is interrupted with rhythm and parallelism common to ancient poetry. Though the source of this poem is debated, it has been suggested by some that this might represent an ancient Christian hymn—perhaps a hymn the Colossians were familiar with or used in their own worship. Whatever the source of this poem might be, Paul uses it to teach important truths about Jesus. Truths that the Colossians already knew, yet should strive to know better.

First, the poem describes Jesus as being supreme over creation (1:15-17). Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” (1:15). By bearing God's image perfectly, Jesus fulfills the mission of Genesis 1:26-27. Jesus is “the firstborn of all creation” (1:15). This is not a statement of chronology (i.e., that Jesus was created first), but one of status (cf. Ps. 88:20, 27; Exod. 4:22). Jesus holds the position of the firstborn with all of its authority. By Jesus, “all things were created. . .” (1:16). Based on these truths, the poem declares the relationship of Jesus to His creation: “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (1:17). That is to say, Jesus is supreme over creation!

Second, the poem describes Jesus as being similarly supreme over a new kind of creation: His church (1:18-20). Just as the first half ended with a climactic declaration of Jesus's relationship to creation, so this one begins: “He is also the head of the body, the church” (1:18a). What is it about Jesus that puts Him in this position of authority over God's people? Jesus is “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead” (1:18b). This reference to resurrection highlights His authority not only over creation but



also over those who will follow Him into a new kind of existence. Jesus has “the fullness” dwelling in Him (1:19). He does more than perfectly bear God's image; He completely embodies God's fullness (cf. 2:9). Finally, Jesus has reconciled all things to Himself (1:20). Just as He is the power behind our creation (1:16), it is only through Him that we can be reconciled to God and be recreated (1:13-14).

This poem serves as the basis for the remainder of the letter. When the Colossians face false teaching—whatever it may look like—they need to remember who Jesus is. When people come along and try to diminish Jesus or convince them that He is something less than what He claimed to be, they need to remember who Jesus is. After all, Jesus is the reason their lives changed in the first place (1:21-23).

What Paul Is Doing for the Colossians (1:24-2:5)

Paul concludes his extended introductory remarks by letting the Colossians know about the work he has been doing. In this last stretch of verses, Paul aligns himself with the Colossians by clarifying that they are on the same team! Both the Colossians and Paul share in the knowledge of Jesus, which determines how they walk.

First, Paul describes broadly what his work entails. His time is spent doing two things: suffering (1:24) and teaching the gospel (1:28). Paul sees his life as being completely wrapped up in Jesus's own work. By suffering, he carries on the work that Jesus's own suffering began (1:25). By preaching, he continues to reveal the mystery that was first revealed in Jesus (1:27). So, broadly speaking, Paul's work is indistinguishably tied to the purpose of Jesus in the gospel.

Second, Paul hones in on how his broader work impacts the Colossians. He hopes that his struggle produces results in their lives. Namely, that they might be “knit together in love. . . [attaining] the full assurance of understanding. . . [and producing] the stability of [their] faith in Christ” (2:1-5). Paul began by expressing thankfulness for their faith, love, and hope. Even so, his desire is that his work of preaching the gospel might produce increased love, assurance, and faith in the lives of the Colossians.

Conclusion

“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. . .” (2:6). Before the Colossians learn how to walk, they need to know who Jesus is. My prayer and encouragement for us is that we might be filled with a desire to know Jesus. The solution to every issue we might encounter—whether it be in our lives, homes, or churches—is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The solution is knowing Jesus and walking in Him. **11**



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Colossians 2: Gnostic Tendencies Then and Now

by Jeff Smelser

Learning about the gnostic tendencies addressed in Colossians might seem pointless to some, but the same tendencies at work then are still a danger today.

Introduction

Let's begin with Marcus. He was a second century teacher, one of those men whom audiences find appealing, a man who endeared himself to women, especially wealthy women. He had a way with them, and he had *his* way with them.

With magician's tricks, Marcus would convince them that he had some sort of special power. He would then urge them to partake of his "Charis"—that being the Greek word for *grace*—but also the name of one of the supernatural beings imagined by gnostics. With suggestive language, he would exhort a woman, "Receive Charis first from me and through me. Prepare yourself as a bride receiving her bridegroom, in order that you might be what I am, and I might be what you are. Set the seed of light in your bridal chamber."

Then, telling her that she had received Charis, he would urge her to prophesy. She would demur, saying she didn't know how, and he would urge her on, "Open your mouth, speak whatever, and you will prophesy!" Flattered and enthralled with her mentor, she would speak some nonsense, which she was led to believe was in fact prophecy. In gratitude, she would share her wealth, and herself, with him. Describing the damage done by such men as Marcus, Irenaeus borrowed Paul's language when he said they deceived many "silly women."

Paul's first letter to Timothy was a guide to combatting what was "falsely called knowledge" (6:20). In Greek, "knowledge" is *gnōsis*. We sometimes talk about the

thirty "Aeons" (supernatural beings such as "Charis") imagined by gnostics as standing between the ultimate God and the physical world. Explanations of how they were inter-related—who begat whom—varied from one gnostic teacher to another. This is probably what Paul had in mind when he warned against "fables and endless genealogies" (1 Tim. 1:3).

Many of the gnostics believed the God of the Old Testament was not the ultimate God, but rather the ignorant offspring of a mis-begotten byproduct of one of those thirty Aeons. With such a conception of the God of creation, they claimed to despise the physical creation. Some of them denied Christ's incarnation. They generally rejected belief in a future resurrection. Like Hymenaeus and Philetus, they said the resurrection was past already. They claimed the only resurrection is the spiritual one experienced when one first comes to know Christ.

Paul does not address all aspects of gnostic teaching in Colossians 2. Yet, there are indications he has in view the evolving gnostic influence, and there is relevance in our day.



Allusions to Gnostic Influence in Colossians 2

In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns against being taken captive by "*philosophy and empty deception*." Gnosticism was not an organized religion but a speculative philosophy, an amalgamation of eastern mysticism, Greek notions of deities, Judaistic influence in some cases, and a lot of Christian vocabulary. (The names given to the imagined 30 Aeons were such things as "Grace," "Faith," "Truth," "Hope," "Love," "Assembly," etc.) It was carnality deceptively disguised as spirituality.

There is another phrase in verse eight that we should notice. In the different versions of the NT, it is variously translated as "the elemental spirits of the world," "the rudiments of the world," "the basic principles of the world," etc. More accurately, the phrase is simply, "*the elements of the world*." That phrase was used by gnostics in referring to the physical creation, which they professed to despise. Paul takes their phrase and equates it with their own system. Paul says their teachings, which they exalted as being superior to the world, are the elements of the world.

"*Fullness*" was the word used by gnostics for the whole constellation of the 30 Aeons. They imagined the ultimate deity to be the beginning of the 30 Aeons. Christ, as explained by some of them, was a mere offspring of these 30 Aeons. For some of them, the idea that Christ was in a fleshly body was unthinkable. (cf. 1 John 2:22; 4:2.) Gnostics purported to disdain "bodily" things. Remember their phrase,

“the elements of the world”? In fact, the full phrase they used was “the bodily elements of the world.” In Colossians 2:9, Paul says, “the *fullness* of Deity dwelt in Christ *bodily*.” In one sentence, Paul gives Christ preeminence and affirms His sojourn in the flesh, thus confronting gnostic teaching on two points.

Aceticism

“*Self-abasement*” is the phrase used in the NASB translation of Colossians 2:18 for the ascetic practices advocated by some gnostics. Saturninus and his followers preached against marriage and against eating meat. Remember that Paul warned Timothy that some would come opposing marriage and imposing dietary restrictions (1 Tim. 4:3). Already near the beginning of the seventh decade of the first century, Paul alludes to the ascetic rules some were promoting—“Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch”—and says these rules themselves are “elements of the world” (Col. 2:20-21).

Promiscuity

Some gnostic teachers imposed strict rules on the unenlightened Christians who had not been initiated into the special gnostic knowledge while they themselves lived promiscuously. They reasoned that, with their special knowledge, they were above it all. You might think of the Corinthians’ motto, “every sin is without the body.” So also the enlightened gnostic supposed that whatever the body did was not sin; it was irrelevant, as long as he had the special gnostic enlightenment.

Pride

Paul rebukes this elitist attitude when he speaks of their being “*inflated*” by a “*fleshly mind*” (Col. 2:18). He is saying that the very people who thought themselves spiritually superior with their special knowledge, who attributed the creation of flesh to the work of an ignorant god, were themselves characterized by fleshly minds.

Gnostic Tendencies Today

The *spiritual elitism* of the gnostics is seen again today in various ways. We see it in some who think they speak in tongues, who think the Holy Spirit speaks to them directly by means of a voice in their head (or a feeling in their heart) which no one else hears. Such people often think themselves immune to what the Holy Spirit has, in fact, said through the written word. A point of unwelcome Biblical teaching is dismissed: “*Well, I know God. I have the Holy Spirit. If you had the Holy Spirit like I do, you would not be so hung up on your book religion.*” Trivializing obedience to the written word as “book religion” while claiming a more intimate relationship with God is akin to the spiritual elitism that characterized the Gnostics so long ago. John said, “hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3).

Some who identify themselves as “Messianic Jews” pride themselves in informing others that “*there is no ‘J’ in Hebrew or Greek,*” and in saying “Yeshua” instead of “Jesus.” (However, then they will use the word “Jews” and “Judaism,” both having a “J” in English!) They are also fond of using the Hebrew expressions for the various OT feasts, or to speak of the Sabbath. It is a human tendency to take pride in knowing something that others don’t know. We like to be the one who is in on the secret—in this case, “the real pronunciation.” This can be another manifestation of spiritual elitism.

Denying the resurrection is the defining trait of the realized eschatology movement, also known as the 70 AD doctrine. It seems to me that an elitist attitude sometimes accompanies this doctrine: “*With my deeper understanding of Scripture, I see that the passages you take to be talking about a future resurrection are actually talking about something else.*”

In a context where John is confronting gnostic influence, he warns against the pride that is of the world (1 John 2:16).

The *speculative bent* of the early gnostics is alive and well today. They enjoyed speculating about Aeons—which male divinity consorted with which female divinity to produce which offspring. I know of some today who are consumed with speculations in demonology, supposing they can identify by name which demon is responsible for a given misfortune. “End-times” speculation is rampant among many Evangelicals. Many cannot get motivated to study their Bibles unless they think they’re seeing some clue about the “end times,” some key to interpreting geopolitical events that will allow them to decipher the time of the Lord’s return. Such people are more interested in what God *has not* told us than they are in what God *has* told us.

Finally, *Marcus has his kin today*. Some men like to be in the pulpit because they like to be on stage; they like to be “the guy.” They project confidence and power, and that can be attractive to a woman. Such a man may also feed on the admiration of women. Then add to the scenario a vulnerable woman, dissatisfied with her own marriage, and you have a disaster in the making for the two of them and for the entire congregation.

Some people find it pointless to learn about the gnostic tendencies referenced in various NT passages, yet there is value in comprehending the nature of the error that Paul addresses in Colossians 2. The value is not merely historical and academic. We need to see that the human tendencies at work then are still a danger today. ■



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Colossians 3: Transformation

by B.J. Sipe

To make lasting changes in our walk of faith and our relationships, we must first be transformed through the renewal of our mind.

Introduction

Everyone makes changes, but how many of us make a *lasting change*? All of us in our walk with Christ strive to put to death the old man and put on the new one. Yet, no matter how hard we try to make lasting changes to our faith, we just can't seem to stick with it. That old man creeps back up, and we go right back to the sinful practices from which we were delivered. *How do I make lasting changes with my faith?*

This is a question that Paul is going to address in the third chapter of the letter written to the Colossians. There are many, even among Christians, who believe that following Christ is primarily about behavior modification. It is not. It is first and foremost about heart transformation. The first is not truly possible without the second. We fail to make a lasting change in the way we love God and the way we love others because we try so hard to fix our faith or fix our behavior, but we have never let Jesus truly change our heart. To make lasting changes in our walk and our relationships, Paul teaches us that we must first have a transformation of the heart.

Changed Mind

Colossians 3:1 is a continuation of 2:20, where Paul writes, "If you have died with Christ to the elements of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?" If one has been raised with Christ, he must have first died with Him (cf. Rom. 6). We die not only to sin, but to the practice of sin itself. This change

in behavior and practice will be much of Paul's focus throughout this third chapter, but it is not how he begins. There is a prerequisite to this. To make lasting change—true transformation—it always begins with the heart.

The heart was considered the center of the will. It has reference to the mind. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life." The mind is a powerful place, and what we allow in it and for it to dwell on will greatly determine our convictions and our actions. Jesus makes this correlation between the heart and the hand in Matthew 15:16-20, which says, "But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander." These sinful behaviors, all common practice to the old self, have a common birthplace. Jesus says they are born out of the heart, which is to say—the mind.

It is for this reason that Paul will structure his teaching the way that he does to begin this third chapter. In fact, in nearly every instance of Paul's writings, before he enters a lengthy dialogue about Christian conduct, he first addresses the state of the Christian's mind. The apostle calls for those who have been raised in Christ: (1) to seek the things above, and (2) to set our mind on things above.

We must seek the things that are above. The term "seek" is here best understood as meaning to desire, demand, and obtain. This is the first and most important lesson that we must

see: for true transformation to occur, we must first see the supreme value of things above (Matt. 13:44-46). If we do not see the supreme value of Christ and the things that are above, true lasting transformation will never take place. A heart that is still in love with the world will always go back to seek the things of the world, not the things above.

We also must set our mind on things above, not on things of this earth. To set one's mind here means to ponder, honor, or regard. We must therefore not only be changed through what we value but also in what we dwell upon. When we neglect to fill our mind with things above, but rather set our mind on the flesh—especially sinful desire—transformation will never take place. Romans 8:5-8, "For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit. Now the mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace. The mindset of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

This collective process is what Paul will reference throughout Scripture as "renewing of the mind" (3:10; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23; Titus 3:5). For true transformation to take place, one's mind must first be made new after the likeness and image of Christ.



Changed Walk

The result of a changed mind will be a changed walk, putting off the old man and putting on the new “according to the image of your Creator” (3:10). Colossians 3:5-9 details the way in which we once walked when our mind was seeking after things of an earthly nature. It is important to recognize this as not an exhaustive list, but examples of works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). It is also important to recognize it is these works of the flesh that the wrath of God will come upon, and therefore it is imperative that we no longer walk in them.

The language used here is “put to death” (3:5) what is earthly in us. If you have seen the film *The Princess Bride*, you can appreciate the misconception people often have of this reference. Unfortunately for many, rather than putting to death the old man, much like Wesley, the old man is only “mostly dead.” Part of him we have allowed to continue to live on and have not crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). Why does this happen? It is because our heart is still seeking and set on earthly things (1 John 2:15-17). The old man lingers when we are still in love with the world. No matter how much we try to put him to death, he

pops back up because of the desires of our heart. This is why Paul goes back to the mind, saying putting off the new self and putting on the new is founded upon renewal of the mind (3:10).

Rather, we are to put on the new self, which is detailed in 3:12-17. Note that above all, we are to “put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.” Love is the goal of our transformation. Each of these other traits of the new man—compassion, kindness, humility, etc.—are all qualities of love (cf. 1 Cor. 13). This love must not be a worldly love as defined by man, but a godly love as defined through God’s word (3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). When we walk in love in word and deed, then we walk under the direct authority of the Lord Jesus (3:17).


Changed Relationships

Love is the perfect bond of unity, but of *what*? I would argue it is not of *what* but rather of *whom*. “I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery—Christ” (2:2). Paul will conclude this section by illustrating the outcome of a changed mind and changed walk through changed

relationships. This transformation is therefore not merely inward in nature, but outward in the power it has to change our relationships (cf. 1 John 4:7-12).

Paul will address wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, and masters in this context. Notice the commonality between them all; each of these relationships returns to the Lord and one’s love for Him. Wives are to submit to husbands as fitting “in the Lord” (3:18), children obey for this “pleases the Lord” (3:20), slaves obey masters while “fearing the Lord” (3:22), “serving the Lord” (3:24), masters act with justice and equity for they have a “Master in heaven” (4:1). Elsewhere, Paul will make this correlation to husbands and fathers (Eph. 5:25ff; 6:4). It is our love for the Lord that serves as our foundation for our love for others.

Conclusion

“Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands” (Matt. 22:36-40). The greatest commandments are about transformation in how we love God and love others, a changed walk and changed relationships. Yet notice where Jesus begins—the heart and the mind. To make lasting change, each of us *must be renewed!* 



BJ Sipe

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Colossians 4: Living the New Life

by Bruce Reeves

Those who ridicule the Holy Spirit's influence through the gospel and then argue for mystical experiences that leave one with bodily sensations have given in to the path of emotionalism, which is more akin to paganism than biblical faith.

Introduction

When we consider the powerful preeminence of Christ in Colossians 1, His divine fullness in chapter 2, and His reign and authority in chapter 3, it is easy to overlook the importance of Colossians chapter 4. Yet this section of Colossians serves an essential role in the development of the theme of the epistle. We find that the privileges of Christ call us to participate in His mission. Paul moves his readers from the consideration of the riches and fullness of God's mercy to the faithful proclamation of the word of God. The Lord's grace is not merely a set of propositions, although it is grounded in truth, but it is living the new life of Christ in real time and in the real world.

The New Life of Prayer

The new life of Christ focuses on fellowship with God. Paul writes, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). This devotion connects us with the influence of the Spirit through the gospel. To "pray at all times in the Spirit" is to pray under the influence of the Spirit's guidance in His revelation (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20). Those who mock and ridicule the Holy Spirit's influence through the gospel of Christ and then argue for mystical experiences that cause bodily sensations have given in to the destructive path of emotionalism. This is seen in the chaos of the Charismatic movement which is more akin to paganism than biblical faith. Prayer is a powerful support of the faithful Christian in a world that is hostile to the gospel.

Epaphras is held up as one who was "laboring earnestly for you in his prayers. . ." because of his "deep concern" for his brethren (Col. 4:12-13). The ESV says he was "struggling" on their behalf in his prayers and the NIV renders the text as "he is always wrestling in prayer for you." It is a tremendous blessing to know that faithful brethren are fervently praying for us! How do we ensure that we are devoting ourselves to godly prayers? The petitions of believers are to be guarded and protected by thanksgiving. The term "alert" indicates that thanksgiving helps guard our prayers from self-defeating and idolatrous selfishness (Jas. 4:1-3). If our prayer life has denigrated into a spiritual drive-thru window for fleshly desires, rather than the dependence and praise of faith, Paul offers a corrective—"thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2; cf. Phil. 4:4-6). We surrender to Jesus as Lord of our lives in thanksgiving (Col. 3:17). Thanksgiving not only guards our prayers, but it also leads us to spiritual alertness!

The New Life of Proclamation

Our mission as God's people is to proclaim the gospel of Christ. Paul wrote, "Praying at the same time for us. . . so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak" (Col. 4:3-4). Interestingly, Colossians 4:2-3 offers a biblical echo of Colossians 1:24-29. Paul encourages brethren at Colossae to "fully carry out the preaching of the word. . ." and the "mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations" which has now been "manifested to His saints" (Col. 1:25-26). He goes on to encourage the growth of believers: "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose, I also labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (Col. 1:28-29).



The term “mystery” refers to God’s eternal purpose in the gospel that has been “revealed” and “manifested” to saints. This mystery was the secret and eternal plan of God for the salvation of the whole world (Col. 1:26-27; cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:2-11). Paul’s desire to speak as he ought is not merely a request for brethren to pray for his eloquence, but that he proclaims the fullness of the word of God, even though he was imprisoned (Col. 4:4). In other words, he was saying, “Pray for my dedication to the gospel and courage to proclaim Christ” (Eph. 6:20).

We are given some wonderful insights in this section regarding how we should share Christ with unbelievers:

Be Wise Toward Outsiders (Col. 4:5a).

Not only did the gospel unify Jewish and Gentile believers, but it also transformed the approach of all saints to those outside of Christ. Our understanding of God’s nature and grace shapes our endeavors to teach the gospel to the lost. As Christ invaded Paul’s own life with His grace, so God through Paul is expanding that Christ-invasion of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire, and into all the world. Our faith is not only heard by what we say, but it is seen in our walk with the Lord (Col. 1:9-10, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16). Some have decided that the best approach to evangelism is to blur the lines of distinction between the New Testament church and denominational teachings. Yet, it is worthy of note that Paul uses the term “outsiders” to describe the lost (Col. 4:5; 1 Thess. 4:11-12). The driving force of evangelism is not seen in erasing biblical distinctions between believers and nonbelievers, but by seeing the need to call the lost to salvation (Mark 16:15). It is vital that we adorn the doctrine of Christ in our lives and in our speech (Matt. 5:13-16; Titus 2:6-10).

Make the Most of Every Opportunity (Col. 4:5).

The verb translated as “make the most of every opportunity” means to “purchase up.” Thus, we are to buy up each valuable moment by maximizing every opportunity to speak and do good (Gal. 6:10).

Frame All Conversations With Grace

We read, “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person” (Col. 4:6). Although truth can be taught by unsavory persons (Phil. 1:15-17), we must be thoughtful concerning how we teach the word of God (Eph. 4:15). Rather than engaging in hotheaded diatribes or reckless and unthoughtful expressions in discussions with nonbelievers, we should equip and prepare ourselves to offer a defense of Christ with meekness and fear (1 Pet. 3:15). Our speech is to be seasoned with a gracious, fruitful, wise, loving, truthful, and encouraging spirit.

New Life of Providence

We pray for each other because we believe in a God that can open doors for the gospel to be heard and fellow believers to be edified (Col. 4:3). The Lord opened a door of faith for the Gentiles (Acts 14:27), a “wide door for effective service” even when there were “adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12), and the door for the advancement of the gospel even while Paul was imprisoned (Phil. 1:12-14; 2 Thess. 3:1).

The Lord’s providence is also seen in the value of the Scriptures. The apostle’s letters were to be read in all the churches with an understanding of his apostolic authority (Col. 4:16). The exchange of Pauline letters was a common practice among the brethren, and they were to be read by various congregations (1 Thess. 5:27). Apparently, the things he wrote to Colossae would benefit Laodicea as well. Paul says he taught the same things in all the churches (1 Cor. 4:17). The Lord has providentially

insured that we have all that we need and can have full confidence in the Scriptures.

The New Life of Partnership and Participation

We read of several individuals who were encouragers of the apostle Paul. They are described as beloved brothers, faithful brothers, fellow prisoners, and fellow servants, etc. (Col. 4:7-18). The new life we have in Christ brings us into a spiritual family that is filled with diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultural experiences. All believers enjoy fellowship with one Lord, through one faith, by one baptism, in one body, by one God, one Spirit, and with one hope (Eph. 4:4-6). Think about your relationships in the gospel? Who has been your Barnabas? Who has been your Paul? Who has been your Jonathan? In a world that is hostile against Christ, we need each other. We need to encourage each other in worship, teach one another in study, admonish each other in correction, and support one another in love (Heb. 10:24-25; 12:12-13).

Conclusion

This chapter must not be overlooked but embraced. The preeminence and fullness of Christ not only brings us salvation but calls us into His body with other believers as we participate in the gospel together and proclaim Jesus as Lord! I know of no better place to end than Paul’s last statement: “Grace be with you” (Col. 4:18). **||**



Bruce Reeves

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Colossians for Women: Why Textual Study?

by Lauren Bassford

Expository study is important for women, too. This is illustrated by the lessons women will find in a whole-book study of Colossians.

Women in the Lord's church rarely write about textual study. We don't write workbooks or articles or much of anything that focuses strictly on the text and the analysis of it. We much prefer topical studies. How many Bible studies have women had on modesty, submission, being a good wife and mom, prayer, study, or many other great topics? How many Bible studies have women had on analyzing the text of a particular Bible book? Even when we study a text, usually Proverbs 31, it tends to be more topical than textual!

This topical-rather-than-textual approach leads to a lamentable belief among women in the church that we're just not as capable as men of expository study. I've been in many ladies' studies where a question comes up—sometimes difficult, sometimes not!—and after a moment of quiet reflection, some sweet sister says, "Well, I guess we'll just have to ask Brother So-and-So!" Lack of practice at textual Bible study has led to a belief that we lack the capacity for textual study, and sisters, that's just not so!

God has created His daughters with brains capable of understanding and engaging with the text. Romans 8:17 says that all of God's children are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. We don't get a pass on reading, studying, and understanding the text for ourselves! If we are heirs, it's up to us to understand as well as anyone else. As daughters of God, we can and must learn how to engage with the word, and not rely on cherry-picked topical studies.

On the rare occasion that women in the church engage in a textual study, they typically end up using a book written by a man. This is a good option, but it leaves something out of the study. Women are created by God to be different. Not only do we look different, but we also think differently. We approach the Bible differently. We take different applications from Bible texts. We study differently.

Women studying the text together will find vastly different arguments and applications than a group of men might. I've lost count of the number of times I've left my husband befuddled by relating the way a group of women went about analyzing a text! It makes no sense to him, but it makes perfect sense to us, which is exactly why it's important for women to study the text together.

Going through a text in its entirety changes the application of that text as well. Colossians is a prime example of this. The back half of the book of Colossians is full of practical applications! As women, though, those applications often morph into an intimidating, stressful to-do checklist. I must put sin to death, and put on compassion, and be at peace, and sing right, and submit, and be devoted to prayer, and. . . it turns our walk with God into a breathless sprint of inadequacy. If we start with the doctrine at the beginning of the book, though, that changes how we apply the back half of the book!

In Colossians chapters 1 and 2, Paul lays out the preeminence of Jesus, the first-place-ness of Jesus. He does this by comparing Jesus to other people or groups

that we might think would take first place. According to Colossians 1:15, Jesus is better than the idols of false religions. Our Lord is better than our earthly rulers (1:16). He is even better than the wonderful men who serve as elders and leaders in the Lord's church (1:18)! In fact, in Colossians 1:21-23, compared to the wretched people that we all are without Him, Jesus is incomparable.

That all establishes how great Jesus is, and how not-great we are. In chapter 2, Paul explains why that's significant. We have been brought to fullness in Jesus. Jesus is where we find our salvation. He has changed everything about our life! The verbs in Colossians 2:10-14 are interesting, because they're all past tense. This has already been done! God has done this amazing work through Jesus to redeem and purchase us as His people.

That completely changes the way we read the applications through the rest of the book. Suddenly, these instructions are no longer a panic-inducing list of things we must complete in order to be worthy and good enough for God. We don't have to do all these things to pull our weight. Instead, the understanding of Jesus and the great work He has done turns the directions later in the book into a reaction of gratitude.

Even Paul's language points us to this idea of obedience as a reaction. In Colossians 2:16, he begins his sentence with "Therefore." That connects the action he prescribes in the rest of the context with the justifications he set up in the first part of the book. The rest of the book is a therefore, a because-of-

this. He begins the section by talking about their concern with the opinions of others around them. Jesus, being the top of the heap, changes the way we think of the reactions of others to our religious expression. It doesn't matter whether someone else approves of the way I "do church." As long as I'm doing what God wants, the way He wants it, that's the most important thing, because Jesus is the most important.

Most of chapter 3 is an exhortation to let Jesus change your perspective. If you're with Jesus, you're fundamentally changed, and that should change everything about you and your life. You shouldn't be the old woman you were before Jesus. You should, according to Colossians 3:12-14, put on the things that make you look like Jesus. Instead of stressing and worrying and being frantic like the world around us, Jesus changing our lives means we can look to Him for peace, in Colossians 3:15.

No more does my speech focus on the world and its enticements. Instead, in Colossians 3:16, everything I talk about, sing about, teach about is Jesus! We appropriately use this familiar verse to teach against instrumental accompaniment to our song worship. In context, though—especially in the context of the whole book—that's not what it means at all!! Instead, it describes our song worship as being Jesus-focused entirely.

Even beyond what we say and sing, everything we do should be about Jesus, too, according to Colossians 3:17, and we should be so thankful! This is a change of life that isn't just about where we go to church on Sundays, or whether we do this or that worldly activity. Instead, accepting the life that Jesus offers alters the entirety of our lives, down to our attitude about the changes that have come about.

This relationship with Jesus also changes every other relationship we have. Colossians 3:18-4:1 covers many relationships, but in all of them, the message is the same: submit to the people around you. Wives, submit to husbands. Husbands, love your wives, but loving

someone is another way of saying submit to what they need rather than what you want. Children, submit to your parents. Parents, submit to your children by teaching them what they need to know and doing what's best for them. Slaves, submit to your masters in everything. Masters, submit to your slaves by treating them as people made in God's image, and remember that you have a master, too! Every relationship we have should be characterized by submission, because we recognize that, with everything Jesus has done, our identity and security is in Him, not in proving ourselves superior in our earthly relationships.

Even in the way we interact with outsiders, we are to recognize Jesus as our Lord and let Him change the way we interact. No longer is it fine to grumble and complain with the other soccer moms at practice. Instead, I have to be wise in my interactions with those outside of Christ, because *I am how they see Him!* In Colossians 4:6, my speech must always be graceful. I can never let down my guard and stop speaking as someone who belongs to Jesus, because I never know who's listening and what those outsiders may need to hear. My life has been redeemed by Jesus, and so I speak and act like I am His, all the time!

The doctrine of Colossians is pretty straightforward. I won't vouch for other books, but in Colossians, the message is simple: Jesus is the very best, and His work for you changes absolutely everything about your life. Reading Colossians as a textual study, rather than looking to the back half of the book for topical applications, gives deeper meaning and motivation in following Paul's instructions when we get to them in the course of the text. 📖



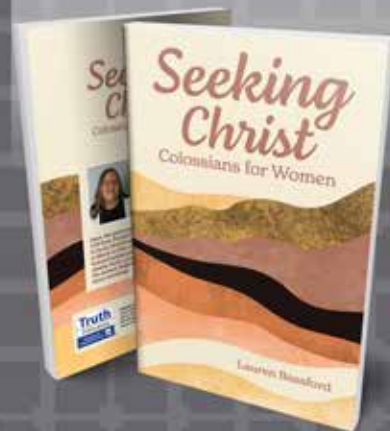
Lauren Bassford

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 Evangelist: Joey Rankin 850-244-9222

ORLANDO

Church of Christ at S. Bumby

3940 S. Bumby Ave.
 Sun. Communion: 9:30 am | Bible Study 10:00 am
 | Praise & Preaching: 10:55 am (No pm Service) |
 Wed 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Ken Chapman
 Office: 407-851-8031 | bumby.org | Note: Please
 call for current worship and Bible study times.

PANAMA CITY BEACH

Beach Church of Christ

8910 Front Beach Rd.
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm &
 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 850-234-2521

SEFFNER

Church of Christ

621 E. Wheeler Rd.
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:50 am &
 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
 Evangelist: Bobby Witherington | 813-684-1297 |
 seffnercoc.org

GEORGIA

PINE MTN. VALLEY

Church of Christ

Route 116 (near Callaway Gardens)
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm &
 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
 Evangelist: Tommy W. Thomas | 706-628-5117 or
 628-5229 | pmvchurch.com

IDAHO

BLACKFOOT

Church of Christ

370 N. Shilling | P.O. Box 158-83221
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm |
 Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
 208-785-6168 or 681-1552

IOWA

DES MOINES

Church of Christ

1310 N.E. 54th Ave.
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:40 am |
 Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 515-262-6799

ILLINOIS

DOWNERS GROVE

Church of Christ

1236 63rd St. (Dir: 1.5 miles E of I355)
 Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 9:55 am &
 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
 Evangelist: Steve Wolfgang | 630-968-0760 |
 dgcoc.org

GLEN ELLYN

Glen Ellyn Church of Christ

796 Prairie Ave.
 Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am
 & 5:00 pm
 Evangelist: Keith E. Brown | 630-858-2290 &
 630-377-3990

MATTOON

Southside Church of Christ

1100 S. 17th St.
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am &
 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 217-234-3702

SOUTH HOLLAND

Southeast Church of Christ

16224 S Vincennes Ave.
 Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 4
 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Donald Hawkins | 708-339-1008 |
 southeastchurchofchrist.com

WASHINGTON

Tazewell County Church of Christ

Meeting @ Sleep Inn Suites and Motel | 1101
 North Cummings Lane, Washington, IL 61571
 Sun. Worship: 11:30 am | Bible Study: 12:30 pm |
 Wed. Bible Study 6:30 pm @ home of Tim Sundlie,
 call for address
 Evangelist: Tim Sundlie | 608-796-9028 | sun-
 beads1@gmail.com | tazewellcococ.org

INDIANA

CLARKSVILLE

Clarksville Church of Christ

407 W. Lewis & Clark Parkway, 47129
 Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am &
 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
 Evangelist: Brian Anderson | 812-944-2305 or
 812-948-9917 | clarksvillechurchofchrist.org

JAMESTOWN

Church of Christ

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am |
 Wed. 7:00 pm
 765-676-6404 | jamestowncoc.com

NOBLESVILLE

Stony Creek Church of Christ

15530 Herriman Blvd, 46060
 Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 am |
 Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: John Smith | preacherjohn54@att.net |
 317-501-8035 or 317-501-0249 or 317-701-1204

OOLITIC

Church of Christ

400 Lafayette Ave. | P.O. Box 34
 Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am &
 6:00 pm | Wed. 7:00 pm
 812-279-4332

PEKIN

Church of Christ

(First St. & Karnes Ct.)
 Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am &
 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 Evangelist: Jeremy Goen | 812-967-3437 or 967-
 3520 | pekinchurchofchrist.com

KANSAS

TOPEKA

17th Street Church of Christ

5600 SW 17th St, Topeka, KS 66604
 Sun. Bible Study 9:15 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am
 | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
 785-235-8687 or 785-273-7977 | 17thstreetchur-
 chofchrist.org

KENTUCKY

BEAVER DAM

Church of Christ

1235 Williams St.

Sun. Worship 10:00 am | Bible Study After am
Worship & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Jerid Gunter | 270-274-4451

BENTON

Fairdealing Church of Christ

8081 US Hwy 68-East, Benton, KY 42025

Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am |
Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm

270-354-9451 | fairdealingmarc@gmail.com |
churchofchristatfairdealing.com | Conveniently
located near Kenlake State Resort Park on the
western shore of Kentucky Lake.

BRANDENBURG

Brandenburg Church of Christ

612 Broadway

Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am &
5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 6:30 pm

Evangelist: Charles J. White | 270-422-3878

CAMPBELLSVILLE

Sunny Hill Dr. Church of Christ

107 Sunny Hill Dr.

Worship 9:30 am & 11:30 am | Bible Study 10:30
am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Steve Lee | 270-789-1651 | sunnyhill-
coc.com

CANEYVILLE

Caneyville Church of Christ

103 N. Main St. | P.O. Box 233

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:45 am &
5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Jarrod Jacobs | 270-589-4167 or
270-274-3065

DANVILLE

Church of Christ

385 E. Lexington Ave.

Sun. Worship 10:00 am | Bible Study 11:15 am &
5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: B.J. Sipe | 859-236-4204

FLORENCE

Northern Kentucky Church of Christ

18 Scott Drive, Florence, KY 41042

Sun. Worship 9:30 am & 5:30 pm | Sun. Bible
Study 10:30 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

859-371-2095 | nkcofc.com

FRANKLIN

31-W North Church of Christ

1733 Bowling Green Rd.

Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am &
6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Steve Monts | 270-776-9393 |

31wchurchofchrist.com

LEITCHFIELD

Mill St. Church of Christ

733 Mill St. Hwy 62 E.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:55 am &
5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Dan McMahan | 270-971-1492 |

millstreetchurchofchrist.org

LOUISVILLE

Valley Station Church of Christ

1803 Dixie Garden Dr.

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am &
6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Michael Hardin | michaelhardin1123@
att.net | 502-937 2822

SHEPHERDSVILLE

Hebron Lane Church of Christ

3221 East Hebron Lane

Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5
pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm

Evangelist: Ron Halbrook & Connie W. Adams

| 502-957-5115 or 502-955-1748 | hebronlan-
echurchofchrist.com

LOUISIANA

GONZALES

Southside Church of Christ

405 Orice Roth Rd. | 70737 (Baton Rouge area)

Sun. Bible Class 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am &
6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: R.J. Evans | rjevans@eatel.net | 225-
622-4587

MANY

Lakeside Church of Christ

12095 Texas Hwy. (Hwy. 6 W.)

12 miles west of Many

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm &
5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

318-256-9396

MAINE

PORTLAND

Church of Christ

856 Brighton Ave. (Breakwater School) | Leave
Maine Turnpike at Exit 48

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm w/
second service immediately following am worship
| Mid-week Bible Study (please call for times &
places)

207-839-3075 or 839-8409

MICHIGAN

KENTWOOD

W. Michigan Church of Christ

3084 Creek Drive SE, #1-C, Kentwood, MI 49512

| P.O. Box 8446, Kentwood, Mich. 49508 (Grand
Rapids area)

Sun. Worship 11:00 am | Sun. Bible Study 12:30
pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Joseph Gladwell | cedarsprings98@
gmail.com

ROSCOMMON

N. Michigan Church of Christ

414 South Main Street

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 am |
Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm

Evangelist: Ryan Thomas | 810-837-1302 or 989-
389-3226 | northernmichiganchurchofchrist.com

MISSISSIPPI

CLINTON

McRaven Rd. Church of Christ

301 McRaven Rd. (I20, exit 36)

Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am &
6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Leonard White | 601-925-9757 or
924-2645

MERIDIAN

7th St. Church of Christ

2914 7th St.

Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am

Grandview Church of Christ

2820 Grandview Ave.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 11:00
pm | Wed. 6:30 pm

Ron Cooper: 601-934-3675 | roncooper@
bellsouth.net

Ricky Ethridge: 601-737-5778 | rickymarsha@
bellsouth.net

SOUTH HAVEN

Church of Christ

2110 E State Line Rd. (Exit I-55) (Memphis area)
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am |
Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: James A. Brown | Bldg: 662-342-1132

MARYLAND SEVERN

Southwest Church of Christ

805 Meadow Rd, Severn, MD 21144
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 11:00
pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
Evangelist: Brandon Trout | 410-969-1420 or 410-
551-6549 | swcofchrist.com

MISSOURI

BLODGETT

Blodgett Church of Christ

422 N Linton St., Blodgett, MO 63824
Sun. Worship 10:00 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Russell Rice | 573-475-0417

BLUE SPRINGS

Southside Church of Christ

4000 SW Christiansen
Sun. Worship 9:00 pm | Bible Study 10:00 am |
Worship 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Brett Hogland | 816-228-9262

BRANSON

Eagle Rock Rd. Church of Christ

432 Eagle Rock Rd.
Sun. Worship 9:30 am | Bible Study 10:30 am |
Sun. Evening Worship 2 pm | Wed. Bible Study
6:00 pm
Evangelist: Philip North | 417-239-1036 |
primrosenor@suddenink.net | eaglerockroadchur-
chofchrist.org

CAPE GIRARDEAU

Cape County Church of Christ

2912 Bloomfield Rd
Sun. Bible Study 9:15 am | Worship 10:00 am |
Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Seth McDonald & Jerry Lee Westbrook | 573-837-
1001 | capecountycoc@gmail.com | capecounty-
coc.com

FAIR GROVE

Church of Christ

217 N. Orchard Blvd.
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am & 10:00 am | Worship
11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Walter Myers | 417-830-8972 or 417-
736-2663

KENNETT

Church of Christ

703 Harrison St.
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm &
6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Nolan Glover | 573-888-6778 or 870-
650-1648 | westsidechurchofchrist.us

SAINT JAMES

Church of Christ

685 Sidney St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:15 am &
5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Lynn Huggins | 573-265-8628

SAINT JOSEPH

County Line Church of Christ

2727 County Line Rd.
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 9:50 am | Wed.
Bible Study 7:00 pm
816-279-4737 | countylinechurchofchrist.com

NEBRASKA

BEATRICE

Church of Christ at 7th & Bell

Bell St & S 7th St. Beatrice, NE 68310
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am &
6:30 pm
402-233-4102 or 402-228-3827 | churchofchrist-
7bell.org

NORTH CAROLINA

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte Church of Christ

5327 S. Tryon Street
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am
| Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
704-525-5655 | charlottechurchofchrist.org

LINCOLN

Lincoln Church of Christ

3781 East Highway 27, Iron Station, NC 28080
Sun. Bible Study: 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 11:00
am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Stan Adams | 704-748-9777 (Bldg) &
704-748-3747 (Jerry) | lincolnnchurch@gmail.
com | lincolncoc.com

OHIO

BEAVERCREEK

Knollwood Church of Christ

1031 Welford Dr, Beavercreek, OH 45434 (located
a few miles E of Dayton)
Sun. Short Worship: 9:30 am | Bible Study 10:05
am | Sun. Worship 11:00 am | Wed. Bible Study
Adults: 1:00 pm & All ages: 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Heath Rogers | 937-426-1422 |
knollwoodchurch.org

DAYTON

West Carrollton Church of Christ

28 W. Main St., Dayton, OH 45449
Sun. Worship 9:00 pm | Bible Study 9:30 am |
Worship 10:25 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelists: Michael Grushon 937-866-5162 or
Alan Beck 937-469-3311 | wc-coc.org

FRANKLIN

Franklin Church of Christ

6417 Franklin-Lebanon Rd. Franklin, OH 45005
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:45 am |
Tues. Bible Study 6:30 pm
Evangelist: Josh Lee | 937-789-8055 or 937-746-
1249 | franklin-church.org

MANSFIELD

Southside Church of Christ

687 Mansfield-Lucas Rd. Mansfield, OH 44907
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:45 am |
Wed. Bible Study 4:30 pm
James Bond: 419-564-3878 | Mr. Kim Walton: 419-
651-3488 | Bldg: 419-522-8982 | northsidecoc.us

NEW LEBANON

New Lebanon Church of Christ

1973 W Main St. New Lebanon, OH 45345
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am, &
5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Bruce Hastings | 937-687-7150 or
937-478-0367

MARIETTA-RENO

Marietta-Reno Church of Christ

80 Sandhill Rd. Reno, OH 45773
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am &
6:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Mark Childers | 304-615-1091 | 740-
374-9827 | mariettarenochurchofchrist.org

NORTHWOOD

Frey Rd. Church of Christ

4110 Frey Rd., Northwood, OH 43619 (Toledo Area)
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm &
6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Donald Jarabek | 419-893-3566 &
567-694-5062

POMEROY

Westside Church of Christ

33226 Children's Home Rd., Pomeroy, OH 45769
Sun Worship 10:00 am & 5 pm | Bible Study 11:00 am | Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm
Jack Hunt | wmhunt55@gmail.com | 740-645-4612 | Find us on Facebook!

OKLAHOMA

MCALESTER

North A St. Church of Christ

2120 No. A St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:45 am & 5:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Rob Lungstrum | 918-931-1362 or 918-423-3445

OREGON

SWEET HOME

Church of Christ

3702 E. Long St.
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 7:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
Bldg: 541-367-1599

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA

Mt. Airy Church of Christ

7222 Germantown Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19119
Sun. Bible Study 10:15 am | Sun. Worship: 11:15 am | Tues. Bible Study: 7:00 pm
Evangelist: James H. Baker, Jr. | 215-248-2026 | mtairychurchofchrist.org

SOUTH CAROLINA

SUMTER

Woodland Church of Christ

3370 Broad St. Extension
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: A.A. Granke, Jr. | 803-499-6023

WEST COLUMBIA

Airport Church of Christ

4013 Edmund Hwy. (Hwy. 302)
Note: See our web site for current assembly schedule.
Evangelist: Terry W. Benton | 803-834-6978 | airport-church-of-christ.com

TENNESSEE

COLUMBIA

Mooresville Pike Church of Christ

417 Mooresville Pike | (Located .8 mi. N. of Hwy. 50/Jas. Campbell)
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 3:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
931-388-5828 or 931-381-7898 | mooresvillepike-coc.com

COSBY

Cosby Church of Christ

4894 Hooper Hwy. | 37722 | (Located 15 mi. E. of Gatlinburg on Hwy. 321)
Sun. Bible Study 10am | Worship 11:00 pm & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm
Evangelist: Olie Williamson | 423-487-5540 or 423-748-0844

KINGSTON SPRINGS

Kingston Springs Church of Christ

350 North Main St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Steve Walker | kscoc.com

MOUNT PLEASANT

Locust St. Church of Christ

108 Locust St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Daniel H. King, Sr. | 931-379-3704 or 931-964-3924 | lscoc.com

MURFREESBORO

Cason Ln. Church of Christ

1110 Cason Lane
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Bldg: 615-896-0090 | casonlanechurch.org

Northfield Blvd. Church of Christ

2091 Pitts Ln, Murfreesboro, TN 37130 (located at the corner of Northfield Blvd and Pitts Lane)
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: David Bunting | 615-893-1200 | GodsRedeemed.org

NASHVILLE

Hillview Church of Christ

7471 Charlotte Pike
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Lee Wildman | 615-952-5458 or 615-356-7318

Perry Heights Church of Christ

423 Donelson Pike
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 9:55 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Johnny Felker | 615-883-3118 | perryheights.faithweb.com

TEXAS

ALLEN

Twin Creeks Church of Christ

1414 W. Exchange Pkwy
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10:00 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Jerry King 214-504-0443 or 972-727-5355 | twincreekscoc.com

ALVARADO

I-35 Church of Christ

E. Service Rd. off I-35, N. of Alvarado
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
817-295-7277 or 790-7253

ALVIN

Adoue St. Church of Christ

605 E. Adoue St., Alvin, TX 77511
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
Evangelist: Mark Mayberry | mark@ascoc.org | ascoc.org

BAYTOWN

Church of Christ at Pruett & Lobit

701 North Pruett St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:40 am & 6:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Bldg: 281-422-5926 | Weldon: 713-818-1321 | biblework.com

BEAUMONT

Dowlen Rd. Church of Christ

3060 Dowlen Rd.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Max Dawson | 409-866-1996 | dowlenroad.com

DICKINSON

Dickinson Church of Christ

2919 Main St/FM 517 E., Dickinson, TX 77539
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sunday Worship 11:00 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
713-298-6673

EDNA

Church of Christ

301 Robison St.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Phillip Stuckey | 361-782-5506 or 361-782-2844 | ednachurchofchrist.org

EL PASO

Eastridge Church of Christ

3277 Pendleton Rd.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
915-855-1524

GALVESTON (BACLIFF)

Bacliff Church of Christ

4303 18th St, Bacliff, TX 77518
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Sun. Worship 10:00 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Richard Lay | bacliffchurchofchrist.org

FORT WORTH

West Side Church of Christ

6110 White Settlement Rd. 76114
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
817-738-7269

GRANBURY

Old Granbury Rd Church of Christ
4313 Old Granbury Rd, Granbury, TX 76049
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Chip Foster | 817-913-4209 or 817-279-3351 | oldgranburyrdchurch.org

HOUSTON

Fry Rd. Church of Christ

2510 Fry Rd, Houston, TX 77084
Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: David Flatt | fryroad.org | church@fryroad.org

IRVING

Westside Church of Christ

2320 Imperial Dr. (Located close to DFW Airport)
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 9:50 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
Evangelist: Mark Roberts | 972-986-9131 | justchristians.com

LUBBOCK

Indiana Avenue Church of Christ

6111 Indiana Ave, Lubbock, TX 79413
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 9:00 am & 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
806-795-3377 | lubbockchurch.com

MANSFIELD

Northside Church of Christ

1820 Mansfield Webb Rd, Mansfield, TX 76063
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship: 10:20 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 5:30 pm.
Evangelist: Tom Roberts | 817-996-3926 | northsidecofc.us

NACOGDOCHES

Shawnee Church of Christ

612 S Shawnee St, Nacogdoches, TX 75961
Sun. Bible Study 9:45 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 | Wed. Bible Study 6:00 pm
Minister: Van Dennis | 936-615-2950

Stallings Dr. Church of Christ

3831 N.E. Stallings Dr.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:20 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelists: Randy Harshbarger & Jay Taylor

SAN ANTONIO

Pecan Valley Church of Christ

268 Utopia Ave. (Dir: I-37 S.E. Exit Pecan Valley)
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Jesse Garcia | 210-660 0409 | pecan-valleychurchofchrist.org

SHERMAN

Westwood Village Church of Christ

314 N. Tolbert
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Ronald Stringer

TEMPLE

Leon Valley Church of Christ

4404 Twin City Blvd.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
Evangelist: Jason Garcia (yourfriendjgar@gmail.com) or (leonvalleychurch@gmail.com) | 254-939-0682 | leonvalleychurch.org

TEXARKANA

Franklin Dr. Church of Christ

2301 Franklin Dr.
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:15 am | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Bryan Garlock | 870-772-0746 | txkchurch.com

WACO

Sun Valley Church of Christ

340 E Warren St. (in Hewitt, a suburb of Waco)
Sun. Bible Class 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Marc Smith | 254-292-2482 or 652-7698

VERMONT

MONTEPELIER

Montpelier Church of Christ

Meeting in the Capital City Grange Hall, 6612 Route 12 Berlin, VT 05602
Sun. Bible Study 9:00 am | Worship 10 am | Tues. Evening in Homes
Evangelist: Open | montpelierchurchofchrist.com | P.O. Box 70, Williamstown, VT 05679 | For questions or directions: Wade Holt 802-485-4311

VIRGINIA

CHESAPEAKE

Tidewater Church of Christ

217 Taxus St.
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Steven Matthews | 757-436-6900 | tidewaterchurchofchrist.com

RICHMOND

Courthouse Church of Christ

8330 Doublecreek Court, Chesterfield, VA 23832 (Located in teh Metro Area; Courthouse Rd. at Double Creek Ct. 2.2 miles S of Rt. 288)
Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 5:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Nathan L. Morrison | 804-778-4717 | courthousechurchofchrist.com

Forest Hill Church of Christ

1208 W. 41st St.
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Evangelist: Jack Bise, Jr. | 804-233-5959

RIDGEWAY

Church of Christ

2970 Old Leaksville Rd.
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm & 5:30 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
276-956-6049 | churchofchristatridgeway.com

ROANOKE

Blue Ridge Church of Christ

929 Indiana Ave. N.E. (5 min. from Roanoke Convention Center)
Sun. 1st Lesson 9:15 am | Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:30 pm
Evangelist: Brent Paschall | 540-344-2755 | blueridgecoc.org

VIRGINIA BEACH

Southside Church of Christ

5652 Haden Rd.
Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm
Robert Mallard | 757-464-4574

ChurchDirectory

WASHINGTON

BELLINGHAM

Mt. Baker Church of Christ

1860 Mt. Baker Hwy.

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Joe Price | 360-752-2692 or 360-920-6965 | bibleanswer.com/mtbaker

TACOMA

Manitou Park Church of Christ

Meeting at Gray Middle School, 6229 S. Tyler St., Tacoma, WA 98409

Note: Please see webpage for updated meeting location and times.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 11:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm (Online)

253-242-3098 | tacomachurch@gmail.com | tacomachurch.com

WEST VIRGINIA

CLARKSBURG

Westside Church of Christ

7 Old Davisson Run Rd

Sun. Worship 9:30 am

304-622-5433 | westsidechurchofchristwv.net

FAIRMONT

Eastside Church of Christ

1929 Morgantown Ave.

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Worship 10:45 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

304-363-8696 or 304-844-2437

MOUNDVILLE

Moundville Church of Christ

210 Cedar Ave, Moundville, WV 26041

Sun. Bible Study 9:30 am | Sun. Worship 10:30 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Tony Huntsman | 304-845-4940 | cedarsower.com

CANADA

CALGARY, AB

Northside Church of Christ

803 20A Ave NE, Calgary AB T2E 1S1

Sun. Bible Study 10:00 am | Sun. Worship 11:00 am & 6:00 pm | Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm

Evangelist: Eric Castillo | +1-403-619-1249 | churchofchristcalgary.com

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