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■■ ■■■■ ■■ ■■■■ ■■■■■■■ As I thought of what I should be talking to you about in these days, I think my thoughts were directed to the epistle to the Colossians. And we are going to take this epistle systematically every time and study God's word as it is recorded to us in this epistle. I tried to summarize the whole epistle in one sentence and I found I was up against a big difficulty.

Can we summarize the epistle to the Colossians in one sentence only? And I think the best thing I can do is to say that it deals with the sole sufficiency of Jesus Christ. The sole sufficiency of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul attacks the problem with a problem, if I might say, in mind.

He has what you call the Colossians heresy in mind. And he wrote the epistle to combat this heresy. The heresy at Colossae, the city of Colossae, was really a sore problem.

And the Apostle Paul freaks the heresy in this epistle. Colossae was one of three cities situated in the eastern part of Asia Minor. The other two cities being Laodicea and Hierapolis.

And the three were within walking distance from each other. About 100 miles east of Ephesus, the capital of Asia Minor. And there was a heresy there, as I said, in the form of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism, not fully developed then, but dangerous enough to wreck an infant church. The Gnostic heresy had three branches of teaching. Jewish, in the form of traditions the Jewish people were trying to impose upon the Gentile converts.

Jewish traditions like Sabbath keeping and abstaining from meats and so on. And Greek brand of teaching. The people from the Greek origin thought that the mind and the matter or the soul and the body were opposed to each other.

And the body was evil. And was the prison house of the soul. And they thought of denying the body in an attempt, a vain attempt, to gain mastery over the spirit.

This teaching, this heresy, attacked the person of our Lord. Because if the body was evil, therefore was his body also evil. How could God be incarnate then? See the evil of the heresy then.

Then there was also the third brand or branch of teaching was the mystic branch. It taught that the angels or angelic beings acted as mediator between God and man. And the knowledge of this was only to be initiated.

This false teaching, this heresy, was in the mind of the Apostle Paul as he wrote this epistle. I'm not going to go into the epistle verse by verse for obvious reasons. But please start at verse 3 with me.

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since he heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which he hath to all the saints for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven will all be heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel which is come unto you as it is in the world and brings forth fruit as it doth also in you since the day ye heard of it and knew the grace of God in truth. Have ye also learned of it as for us our dear fellow servants which for you are faithful ministers of Christ who also declared unto us your love in the spirit for this cause we also since the day we heard it do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Right.

Here we hear the apostle in verse 3 says giving thanks to God and praying always for you. Those two always go together. Thankfulness, giving thanks and praying.

The air you breathe in prayer, you breathe out in thanksgiving. Prayer and thanksgiving. Thanking the Lord for what? Look at three things here that the apostle thanks God for.

Verse 4 says we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus. He thanks the Lord for the faith that placed those believers in Jesus Christ. Remember please it is only through faith that you are saved.

Nothing that you have done, all the work is done on the cross of Calvary. It is finished. The Lord Jesus Christ said it is finished.

It is faith in his precious blood. Secondly, the love to all the saints. All the saints.

Sometimes there are some saints that are not so lovable in our sight. But he says love to all the saints. Now very particularly he speaks of the hope that you have.

The hope which is set for you in the heaven. Which hope? Now the word hope in our modern usage does not mean very much. I hope it will be good weather.

But I am not sure. That is why I take my umbrella with me. Hope, but not so in the word of God.

Hope in the word of God is certainty, assurance. Because it is not built on what I think. Or what I suppose.

Or what I hope it will be. But it is built upon Jesus Christ our Lord and his perfect work on the cross. Hope.

We build on the certainty of hope. And especially the hope of his coming again. The Lord promised I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again. And receive you unto myself. That where I am there you may be also.

And friends this is the glorious fact. That lies before you now. As things move towards that wonderful fulfillment.

Of that wonderful promise. It is the hope of his coming again. Jesus Christ our Lord is coming again.

And he is coming again soon. I cannot fix a day, an hour, a time. But I know he is coming again soon.

Please turn with me to a very important passage. Well known to all of us. 2 Kings.

Chapter 2. 2 Kings. And chapter 2. You know very well the incident. Elijah was taken up to heaven.

Alive. And Elijah witnessed it. He saw what took place.

And he could not contain himself. He went about speaking of what had taken place. And he went to a place called Jericho.

I am going to read to you just one or two verses. Look at verse 23. And went up from thence unto Bethel.

As he was going up by the way. There came forth little children out of the city. And mocked him.

And said unto him. Go up thou bold head. Go up thou bold head.

And he turned back. And looked on them. And cursed them in the name of the Lord.

There came forth two she bears out of the wood. And there forty and two children of them. Now you must have been puzzled at what took place actually.

Why? Why? My Arabic Bible does not say children. But says teenagers. Lads.

These were teenagers. And Elijah must have told them what took place. In the ascension.

Of Elijah. In a chariot of fire. And they made fun of this idea.

They did not make fun of the fact that he was bold headed. There is no shame in being bold headed. No fun either.

But they did not make fun of his being bold headed. Some people are blessed with hair. Others blessed with brains.

I am satisfied with my looks. However. They did not say go away.

You bold head. They said go up. You bold head.

Show us. Go up you bold head and show us. They scorned the idea of a person going up to heaven.

Not through the gate of death. They scorned at the idea. And what is happening today? The apostle Peter tells us that in the last days what happens? There will be scoffers.

Scoffers. Laughing at the idea. Of the rapture.

But we know for sure. That the day is coming near. And every sign on our right hand and on our left hand.

Says with unmistakable clarity. Behold. He cometh.

I have been asked by more than one dear brother and sister. What is happening today in the Middle East. In connection with the coming again of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I have no time. I did not intend to go into this topic this morning. But I will go out of my way a little bit.

Please turn with me to a well known passage. In the book of Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 19.

We are going to read just a few verses there. Please note as I always say. Three words repeated over.

And over. And over again in that chapter. The three words are in that day.

In. That. Day.

They occur a number of times. Look at verse 16. In that day.

Look at verse 18. In that day. Look at verse 19.

In that day. Look at verse 22 in the middle of the verse. In that day.

Look at verse 23. In that day. Look at verse 24.

In that day. Why does the Holy Spirit repeat those words? Over. And over.

And over again. There must be an important message. And an important message there is.

In that day when the coming again of Jesus Christ will be near. Things will take place. And he gave us at least nine things.

In this chapter. Which will take place. In the world in general.

But in the Middle East in particular. I am not going to go into these. Let me give you just one or two only.

Look at verse 18. In that day. Till five cities.

In the land of Egypt. Speak the language of Canaan. And swear to the Lord of hosts.

One shall be called the city of destruction. In my Arabic Bible it reads. The city of the sun.

S.U.N. Shemesh in Hebrew. Shemth in Arabic. City of the sun.

Maybe you have marginal references. And they will tell you also city of the sun. S.U.N. Well friends.

The city of the sun. Is there today. It lies about seven miles.

North east of Cairo. Some time ago. A company from Belgium.

Came to invest money in land. In Egypt. And they purchased large areas.

In what we call the eastern desert. Between Egypt and Palestine. And they built.

A very modern city. And I know the manager of the company. Was not an authority on Bible prophecy.

But he chose the name for the city. What do you think the name was? Ben Lepton? No. Asheville? No.

He called it Heliopolis. H.E.L.I.O.P.O.L.I.S. H.E.L.I.O.P.O.L.I.S. Heliopolis. Which literally means city of the sun.

Helio in Greek is sun. And the suffix opolis, city. Heliopolis, city of the sun.

Coincidence? No. There is no coincidence in the plan of God. As a matter of fact in your life and my life there is no accident.

No accident in the life of the child of God. All things that happen to you and to me. Are planned by His love.

All things work together for good. To them that love God. Heliopolis is there today.

You will ask me where are the other four cities. I don't know. The names are not mentioned here.

There are at least half a dozen new cities there. And I have no shadow of a doubt that the four are among them. But I can't locate them because the names are not given here.

Take another one. Please turn the page. Same chapter.

And I'm going to read to you one or two verses only. What great engineering project has been accomplished of late in the land of Egypt? That's right. I've heard right, you've said right.

The Aswan High Dam. The Aswan High Dam. Well what is the Aswan High Dam? Let me say something.

Nine tenths of the land of Egypt is desert land. And one tenth only under cultivation. And we out to the River Nile.

And there is any life in the land of Egypt. The River Nile is a big long river that flows from south to north. And each year it rises during two months.

August and September. Because of the torrential rain that falls on the mountains of Ethiopia. And they run in the River Nile to the Mediterranean Sea.

Well this water, most of it is wasted into the sea. They thought of making use of it. And to make use of it to bring land under cultivation from the desert.

And what do they do? They said well we'll build the Aswan High Dam. Huge wall. Behind the reservoir.

A man made lake. Huge lake. To store the water of the River Nile during those two months.

To use as the Nina Rose. All right. But to dig a lake of that size would cost billions of dollars.

There was already what you call the depression of Abu Simbel. Which could be used as a lake. And they built a wall behind the lake.

All right. But to use it they had to transport or transfer the monuments from Abu Simbel elsewhere. Which they did.

And they actually diverted the course of the River Nile. From its natural course into that lake and then out of that lake to the course of the Mediterranean Sea. Look for instance at verse 6. Chapter 19 verse 6. And they shall turn the rivers far away.

They shall turn the rivers far away. At the time this prophecy was uttered. The River Nile was a deity to the Egyptians.

They worshipped the River Nile. Who could touch the River Nile? Who could turn the River Nile far away? But Isaiah with the eye of prophecy. Spoke of days to come.

When a great thing will take place. When Jesus Christ will come again. To the world.

And he gave us a number of things which will happen before then. And they will turn the rivers far away. What is more.

When that water came on the mountains of Ethiopia. It brought along a lot of silt with it. Which was an excellent fertilizer for the land.

And at the same time an excellent feed for the sardines. So much so that thousands of tons of sardines were caught from the Mediterranean Sea during those months. The sardines came to feed over the silt.

But when the wall was built. The silt deposits sedimented behind the wall. Settled down behind the wall.

It doesn't run anymore with the River Nile. So much so there is no feed for the sardines. And there are no sardines now.

Nothing. Thousands of workers were out of work because of what took place. Look at verse 8. The fishers.

Or fishermen. Also shall mourn. And all they that cast anchor into the brooks shall lament.

And they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. Which they actually do today. Why? No sardines.

How could Isaiah know this? When he spoke as he was moved by the Spirit of God. What is the message you take you and I from this? Jesus Christ our Lord is coming again. He is coming again soon.

The hope that is set before you. Turn back please to Colossians chapter 1. The hope of the coming again of Jesus Christ our Lord. So the Apostle Paul thanks God for their faith in Christ.

For their love to all the saints. And for their hope in Jesus Christ. And for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.

Now verse 6 is a tremendous verse. Speaking of the gospel of Christ which is come unto you as it is in all the world. And brings forth fruit as it doth also new since the day you heard of it.

And knew the grace of God in truth. Now the Apostle Paul is going to give us now 3 stages of knowledge. 3 stages of knowledge.

The first stage is the knowledge of the grace of God. Let me say something to you. Man's desire in the East, in the West, in the North, in the South.

The educated, the uneducated is to find favor with God. How? How? Through many ways man has tried. But it is not many ways my friend.

This is the difference. The great difference between Christianity and other religions. Other religions show you man's search after God.

Christianity shows you God's search after man. The Son of God has come to seek and to save that which was lost. And he is seeking you this morning.

Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest. Turn with me to Psalm 118.

See the cry of all the ages. Psalm 118. I am going to read to you just 2 verses of this wonderful Psalm.

It really summarizes the cry of the ages of people everywhere. Psalm 118 verse 19. Open to me the gates of righteousness.

Please note the S, the plural number in gates. Open to me the gates of righteousness. I will go into them and I will praise the Lord.

That's what man says. To man there are gates of righteousness. Giving to the poor.

Trying to be good. Going to church. All sorts of rituals.

Prayer. All these are gates. But will these take you to the righteousness of God? No.

Look at verse 20 please. This is God's answer. This gate in the singular number.

This gate of the Lord into which the righteous shall enter. This gate. There is only one gate.

One gate to God. One way. I am the way.

The truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. Says Christ our Lord.

I am the way. The truth and life. Have you entered by that gate? I am the door of the sheep the Lord said.

By me if any man enters he shall be saved. He shall go in and come out and find pasture. Have you found him? Have you found him O dear Lord? Jesus Christ the only Savior.

Look unto me and be saved. All the ends of the earth. For I am the Lord and there is none other.

Have you found him? If you have not found him come unto me today. I shall never never forget an experience of mine. It was my yearly habit or experience or practice if you wish to call it to take boys from my high school and other high schools for a summer camp by the seaside every year.

Two weeks under canvas on the seaside. Oh perfect time. Good meals.

Not as good as the meals you have here but good meals good games fun wonderful time and of course meetings in the word of God. One year I had 52 students a number of helpers too and next to us was a camp for the faculty of engineering and I received one day an invitation from them challenging us to a volleyball match. They came to play on our grounds and you can imagine the two teams their team age 21, 22, 23, 24 at the most our team 17, 18, 19 at the most and they had the grandest time the grandest time in their lives.

They enjoyed themselves immensely. The game ended by 12 noon and the visiting team went to their tents and our team came to our tents for lunch but about 15 minutes later they said no more. I heard whistling and shouting and running so I dashed out of my tent to see what was happening.

I found people running I ran with them. You know why I was running I was running because they were running. Until I came to a group of people standing by the seashore I pushed my way through I can close my eyes now and see with horror instead of walking back to our tents let us swim back one of them was not a good swimmer and he fell in trouble the other came to his rescue he also wasn't a good swimmer and he fell in trouble too and both literally were drowned were drowned I saw them with my own eyes drowned lifeless on the beach 15 minutes ago only 15 minutes ago they were full of life 15 minutes later they were dead what is your life? young man what is your life? a puff of smoke vapor vanished away if I had come to them and said listen prepare to meet your God what do you think they would have said to me? nonsense I have a long life ahead of me I am still young I know it it was not a long life ahead of them it was only 15 minutes have you found Jesus Christ your Lord? is He your Savior? can you say I have entered by the gate?

I know I was blind but now I can see I know Him as my Savior He is calling unto you now come unto me behold I stand at the door unlocked if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in talk with him and he with me open the door of your heart now turn with me back to 1st Colossians Colossians chapter 1 please Colossians chapter 1 the first stage of knowledge is in verse 6 the grace of God in truth

then he offers the prayer in verse 9 for this cause we also since the day we heard it pray for you and to desire that he might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding the knowledge of God's will Christian brothers and sisters the only safe place for you the only blessed place for you is the center of God's will for you step out of that place

and you are in for trouble you are in for trouble the difference today between Christian and Christian is someone is in the will of God someone is out of the will of God the tragic thing in the lives of many people today is they have stepped out of the will of God Paul is praying for the believers that they may increase and be filled with the knowledge of the will of God what is the will of God well I find the will of God expressed generally for every believer in two ways the apostle says this is the will of God even your what sanctification even your sanctification this is the will of God even your sanctification and what does sanctification mean set apart I am set apart for Christ I don't belong to myself as I said in the morning behold I stand at the door of the Lord if any man hear my

voice and open the door I will come in and sup with him he is still my guest but what is the rest of the verse and he with me he with me you will be his guest he will take over he will be your Lord he will sup with me first when I am saved but afterwards I sup with him is he your Lord my life it is not according to his will pray today as you sit and hear this word the dearest idol I have known whatever that idol be help me to tear it from thy throne and worship only thee a holy life a set aside life for Christ I think of a young man he was away from home betrayed by his own brethren sold into slavery but he knew the will of God he knew the will of God he was a man of destiny and he knew that he was a man of destiny this was God's will for him he gave it to him a number of dreams his name

was Joseph young people you are people of destiny destiny in Christ eternal life belonging to him and he knew he was a man of destiny and he stood up to it I am sold as a slave never mind I will be the best slave I will be the best slave he was a man of destiny not only that but he was a man of extra I will be the best slave and he was because we read that his master delivered everything into his hands and what happened you know the temptation that came his way and what most of us don't realize is the fact that the temptation came to him day after day day after day she spoke to him I wonder if he reasoned with himself I am far away from home nobody will hear about it my father will not know of it my brother will not know of it no one will know of it and after all I didn't ask for it she

did day after day but what did he do he was not only a man of destiny and a man of excellence he was a man of purity young people listen to what he said how can I do this great evil and sin against God if he had given in to temptation could God have used him to interpret the dreams to Pharaoh no he stood firm he knew the will of God for him sanctification how can I do this great evil and sin against God he was a man of purity and as I said he was a man of destiny and he was a man of excellence he knew the will of God for him what was the end result he was cast into prison into prison as a result what did he do did he shake his fist to God and say thank you and is this my reward no he knew the will of God and he rejoiced in the will of God I am sold into slavery I would be the best slave I

am sent to prison I would be the best prisoner I would be the best prisoner because he was so successful in prison God gave him grace in the eyes of the man in charge of the prison them that honor me I will also honor are you honoring God young people in your lives him that honor me I will also honor yes he was the best prisoner and when he was called before Pharaoh he was the best interpreter he was a man of excellence yours is excellence in Christ Jesus I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly this is the will of God for you even your sanctification there is a third stage of

knowledge I am told that I have only 40 minutes to speak or else therefore I have to stick to 40 minutes yes look at verse 10 please that he might walk worthy of the Lord unto

all pleasing being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge a third stage of knowledge the knowledge of God we have seen the knowledge of the grace of God the knowledge of the will of God and the knowledge now of God himself this is actually what took place at the moment of crisis in the life of Jacob you read Genesis 32 up till that moment he was given up to trickery he was successful in many ways he became rich but let me tell you something riches are not a sign of God's favor or rather not a sign of a holy life but a holy life is known in the secret place when you have communion with God and you spend time with him that's what Jacob experienced in Genesis 32 he was ordered by God to go back to his homeland but he dreaded to meet his brother Esau because of what had

taken place Jacob means supplanter we in the Middle East give great importance to names names have meanings most names as a matter of fact all names in the olden times had meanings and were given for specific purpose today most people summarize their hopes and aspirations in the Middle East in the names they give to their children our son is called Samir S-A-M-I-R which means good friend and there is a reason for it we had two daughters and when our eldest daughter was five years old five and a half she came home from school one day and she was really miserable really miserable and she almost cried and we tried to talk to her no she was pouting and sulky and she wouldn't answer at last he opened up and said in tears each girl in my classroom had a brother but I don't have a brother I said

bless your heart I was saying almost saying going to say bless your gizzard however I said well bless your heart why don't you pray pray the Lord to give you a brother why do you want a brother I want a brother to be a friend to me a good friend to me well I pray for the Lord to give you a brother to be a good friend to you really daddy if I pray to God will he give me a brother what shall I say she put me on the spot I said well very sincerely and simply she started to pray that the Lord will give her a brother and you know when my wife was expecting we had no shadow of a doubt that he was going to be a son and he was and we called him Shamir which means good friend F.A.M.I.R you call his name Jesus because he saves his people from this well Jacob means trickery a person given trickery

it's a planter it's not a good name you give to your children too I hear a number of good names Violet Rose Iris all sorts of good names forget me not all sorts of good names you give to your children but Jacob was not a good name it's a planter trickery cheater deceiver and the Lord knew what he needed he did not need protection from Esau he did not need another plan he needed a meeting place with God to know God personally and the Lord appeared to him in the form of man who wrestled with him all night and you know what took place he touched the hollow of his thigh and the hollow of his thigh was out of joint and he held on to him I will not leave thee except thou bless me you want a blessing Jacob yes please and then came the question the far reaching question the thirsting question

what is your name what is your name I'm sure you want a blessing today I'm sure each one of us wants a blessing today but the question comes what is your name what is your name slothful prayerless doubtful unfaithful what is your name you know it oh friends the man with the capital M is standing in our midst this morning and he's asking this question to you personally what is your name would you know God personally tell him your name and the answer will come if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from how many all unrighteousness your name shall no more be called Jacob but Israel friends with God and friends the knowledge of God himself will be the blessed experience of each and every one of you let us pray our loving heavenly father we bow in

thy presence in the quietness of this hour we praise thee and we thank thee for Jesus Christ our Lord for the knowledge of his grace the unmerited favor for the knowledge of his will and for the knowledge of thee

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