

(Through the Bible) Colossians 1

by Chuck Smith

Paul's epistle to the Colossians emphasizes the supremacy of Jesus Christ and the importance of knowing the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Duration: 1:11:19

Scripture: Matthew 24:14, Mark 16:15, John 15:16, Acts 8:26-27, Ephesians 4:1, Colossians 1:10, Colossians 1:23

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Gospel Witness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by expressing gratitude for Jesus Christ, who came to earth as the manifestation of God and dwells in the hearts of believers. The speaker emphasizes the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit in being effective witnesses for the gospel. They mention that the gospel has been preached throughout the world and bears fruit. The speaker also mentions the need to trust in God's guidance and take one step at a time, using the example of Philip being directed to go to Gaza. The sermon concludes with the speaker acknowledging the significance of chapters 2 and 3 in the New Testament and expressing the intention to delve into them in the next session.

Transcript

Shall we turn in our Bibles tonight to Colossians chapter 1. The city of Colossae was in the area known as Pergia, a part of Asia Minor. A couple of other churches are greeted by Paul in this epistle and the epistle was told to be read also to those churches and that was the Laodicean church and also the one in Hierapolis. Paul had never personally been to these churches.

They had never seen his face. However, the churches were probably started as a byproduct of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. For as Paul was in Ephesus for two years, and Ephesus is not that far from Laodicea and from Colossae.

There were those who came from these areas, heard Paul and the Word of God was spreading through that area as the result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. So they probably went back to these areas and just began fellowships which grew into churches. Epaphras was the minister of the church in Colossae and Epaphras had come to Paul while he was in Rome in prison and had related unto Paul some of the dangerous heresies that had begun to be spread there in Colossae.

And so Paul is writing the epistle to correct these heresies that were becoming popularized in that community. One of the heresies was that of Gnosticism which denied the deity of Jesus Christ. Another

heresy was that of Judaism which of course was the mixture of the works along with faith for salvation.

The letter was written at the same time that he wrote his letter to the Ephesians and was carried by the same messenger Tychicus who carried the Ephesian epistle, carried also this epistle to the Colossians written about 64 AD during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy our brother. And so the introduction and greeting is so typically Pauline that in studying these epistles of Paul to the churches we have covered this same introduction in various forms.

Again because he is going to be addressing things of doctrinal error he again takes his title as the apostle of Jesus Christ and he's speaking with his apostolic authority. An apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. Again not all are apostles, not all are prophets, not all are evangelists, not all are pastors, not all are teachers.

God calls men and women to every vocation of life and whatever God has called you to be the important thing is that you be what you are by the will of God. Now it is interesting as Paul is praying for the Colossians here his first request for them is that they might be filled with the knowledge of the will of God. I think that's an important prayer.

I pray that for myself all the time. God help me to know your will in each situation. But I believe that it is important that each day we commit our lives unto God and to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

And if we will do that I believe that our lives then become the progressive revelation of God's will. I think that if in the morning I say Lord my life is yours. I want to be your servant today.

I want you to lead me by your spirit. I want you to overrule any wrong decisions that I might be making. Lord just take control of my life.

And I yield myself thus to the Lord. I believe that as the day unfolds it becomes a progressive revelation of that which God has purposed and planned for me. My problem I'd like God to just paint me a picture of the whole day and give me the schedule and say all right now at nine o'clock you'll do this and at 10 30 I want you to go over there and 11 o'clock if you'll come back here and talk to this fellow.

And I'd like the whole daily schedule in the morning you know so I could just look at it say all right you know fine you know let's let's go for it Lord. But it is interesting how God never gives you the second step until you've taken the first step. God said to Philip go down to Gaza.

That's all he said. Told him it was a desert place but he knew that when he got to Gaza and there were a lot of things that actually mitigated against his going to Gaza because it was such a desert place and he was in a great movement of the spirit in Samaria. Hundreds of people were coming to Jesus Christ.

Things were really cooking through his ministry their miracles were being wrought and God takes him out of this successful evangelistic campaign down to the desert. Now he could have stayed in Samaria and said oh Lord you know but come on can't you see the work that's being done and why do you want me to go to Gaza? And he could have stayed there and argued with the Lord and he could have rationalized very easily himself out of going to Gaza. He could have said that couldn't have been God that said that to me.

That's such a desert place and surely God wants me to stay where things are really hopping you know and that couldn't have been the Lord you know and had he never gone to Gaza he would have never gotten

the next instruction. You see our problem is that we don't always follow the first order and then we never get the second order. The second order often doesn't come until the first order is obeyed.

Go to Gaza. When he came to Gaza he saw a chariot heading towards Ethiopia. The Lord said join yourself to the chariot second order and progressively God's will was made known to him.

So it happens in our lives. So whatever I am I am by the will of God. Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.

Timothy, Paul calls him his beloved son in the Lord, a companion of Paul. Probably no one understood and was so in harmony with Paul as was Timothy. To the Philippians he said I'm sending Timothy to learn of your estate because there is no one who is as like-minded in the things of the gospel as I am as is Timothy.

He had really caught the heart of Paul in his commitment unto the things of the Lord. Somehow it is extremely difficult to find those who have the same vision, the same commitment to the things of the Lord. He's writing to the saints, those that have been set apart, and the faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossae.

Now remember, heresy is creeping up in the church. He's going to be writing to correct some of these heretical ideas, but he writes to them as first of all saints, secondly as faithful brethren, and thirdly in Christ. The typical grace be unto you and peace from God our Father in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ praying always for you. And Paul it seems mentions in almost each of his epistles his prayers for those people. God is my witness, he writes to the Romans, that I bow my knee before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, making mention of you in my prayers.

He offers a couple of prayers in his epistle to the Ephesians and he mentions his prayers in so many of the epistles. Paul was a man of prayer as is true of any man who is used mightily of God. They are men of prayer.

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have to all the saints and the hope which is laid up for you in heaven. Again, these three are so often coupled together. The faith, the hope, the love.

Remember in Corinthians 13, now abide these three faith, hope, love. Characteristics that mark the believer, the faith of the believer, the love of the believer, and the hope that is in the believer. These are the characteristics that are the continuing mark of the child of God.

And so the faith in Jesus Christ, the love for the saints, and the hope which is laid up for you in heaven. Where have you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel? One of Paul's prayers for the Ephesian church is that they might know what is the hope of their calling. If you only knew what awaits you, if you only knew this hope laid up for you in heaven.

Peter said, thank God we've been born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, fades not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God. This hope of that glorious kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

And so the hope laid up for you in heaven, which is come unto you, the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you as it is in all the world. Now it is interesting here that Paul does declare that the gospel at this time had gone into all of the world. That's amazing.

Without jet airliners, without satellite tv, without radio, the early church was able to take the gospel into all of the world. They fulfilled the commission of Jesus Christ, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Paul here declares that the task was accomplished and this is just some 32 years after the death of Christ.

And this is without building a single church or building a single seminary or without campus crusade for Christ, without programs. How was it accomplished? It was accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit and by the fact that they did depend upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the church. Now I thoroughly disagree with those who say, well the Holy Spirit was given in the beginning to give them a start, but once they got organized, they no longer needed the Holy Spirit's power and so God withdrew that power to let us go now on our own steam, so to speak, with our own genius and with our seminaries and all.

With all that we have today, we are failing to get the gospel into all the world. A smaller percentage of people in the world know of Jesus Christ today than did know of him 30 years ago. In fact, with the rate of the population growth explosion in the world and with the rate by which the gospel is being preached in the world, the declining rate, if things continue status quo by the year 2021, only 5% of the people in the world will have heard of Jesus Christ.

With all of our seminaries and radios and TVs and programs and wisdom and devices and schemes and methods, it's a real indictment against the church. It does say much for the Holy Spirit and for his ability and power. I believe that the only hope for the church to reach this generation with the gospel is again the empowering of the Holy Spirit and being led of the Holy Spirit.

I don't think it can be done by man's devices. I don't think that we can devise a program to do it and I don't think God intends us to. I believe that it is only through prayer and through being led by the Spirit that the church can be an effective witness in the world.

Jesus said, ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. But the only power that we have whereby to be that kind of a witness is the power of the Spirit. And if we deny that and reject that, then surely we are going to fail in the mission of getting the gospel into the world.

Again in this first chapter, Paul makes mention of the fact of the gospel being preached into all of the world. Verse 23, if you continue in the faith, grounded and settled, be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I, Paul, am made a minister. There are those who say, well, Jesus can't come until the gospel has been preached into all the world.

Well, the gospel has been preached in all the world and it brings forth fruit. The glorious thing about the gospel is it does bring forth fruit. And look where in the world the gospel has been received.

Look at the fruit that it has brought forth in the lives of the people and in the nations themselves. Those nations that have received the gospel of Jesus Christ, look at the fruit that it's brought forth. Those nations

where other religions are more or less the national religions and reign, look at the fruit of that.

Now, I'm talking about the true gospel of Jesus Christ, because unfortunately, the church as an institution does not always proclaim the true gospel of Jesus Christ. But the church as an institution quite often is just another religious experience and is as another religion in the world because it doesn't always proclaim the real gospel of Jesus Christ. And so there are nations that have come under the influence of the church and they're no better off for it.

But those that have come under the influence of the gospel of Jesus Christ, you can see the fruit. It has brought forth fruit in the lives of the people. And one of the fruits of the gospel is that of the love of freedom, the love of liberty.

Our nation founded really from people who were looking for that freedom of worshiping God without a state church, without the state ordering the church and supporting the church and taking the taxes from the people for the church. The darkness of Europe today is the result of state church systems. And in those European nations where you have the state church, where the church is supported by the taxes of the people, you find that the church is decadent.

It's dead. There were men who had a love for freedom because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And they established this nation.

And that's why freedom and liberty was such an important thing to them. But as other forces have moved in, as the church's witness has waned, we see there is also an eroding of our freedoms and eroding of the liberties. And people are allowing it because the strength of the gospel is not what it once was in this land.

And so we are not as free as were our forefathers. There's a lot of things that you could carry on with that, but time doesn't permit. It brings forth fruit.

The real fruit of the gospel is love, an appreciation of fellow man, a love for our brothers, a love that manifests itself in deeds of charity and goodness to one another, reaching out the fruit as it doth also in you since the day you heard it and knew the grace of God in truth. And Paul's emphasis here, you heard and knew the grace of God in truth. How important that we know the grace of God in truth.

As you also learn from Epaphras, our Diller fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ, who also declared unto us your love in the spirit. So Epaphras had given to Paul this report on the church. For this cause, we also, since the day we heard, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

So the first petition that Paul is praying for the church is that they be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Secondly, that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Paul wrote to the Ephesians and told them all that God was and had done for them.

And then he said, now walk worthy of the calling wherewith you were called. You're a child of God. Walk like it, live like it.

Walk worthy of that which God has called you to be his child. Walk in a manner that is befitting that of a child of God. You might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

How important that we be increasing in our knowledge of God. And that's what these Sunday night services are dedicated to. For you can only really know God in truth as he has revealed himself to us through his word.

Your only real source of the knowledge of God is here in the Bible. And so to know God, we must know the word of God whereby he has revealed himself to man. Increasing in the knowledge of God.

And we week by week should be increasing in our knowledge of God. That you might be strengthened with all might according to his glorious power. You might begin to experience more of that power of God's spirit working in your life unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.

Now, so often our patience and long-suffering is not with joyfulness. It's with sort of complaining and whining and griping. I've been waiting so long, you know.

And we just sort of wail when God makes us wait. But that we might wait with joyfulness giving thanks to the Father who has made us worthy to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Paul again wrote of the saints in light to the Ephesians.

Here in and there is a great parallel. Of course, both the epistles were written at the same time. So a lot of parallel thoughts in the two.

But we give thanks to God who has made us worthy to be partakers of this inheritance. Again, Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they might know. No, well, that they might know what is his inheritance, something different.

But he did refer also as one of the blessings of God, that inheritance that is ours of the saints in light. Who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear son. That's what conversion is all about.

Being delivered from the power of darkness, from our bondage in sin, that power of Satan that once held us and translated into the kingdom of his dear son. We read so much in the scriptures of the kingdom of God. And so often we think of that as something totally future.

For many people it is. But for you, it should be a present experience. You see, you become a part of that kingdom the moment you bow your knee to Jesus Christ and acknowledge him as your king and your Lord.

I am in the kingdom of God. I am in the kingdom I have yielded my life as a faithful subject and servant to that kingdom. He is my king.

Therefore, I am in his kingdom. And so I've been delivered from the power of darkness, been translated into that kingdom in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Again, one of the glorious blessings of Colossians chapter one, the redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Who is the image, talking now of Jesus Christ, of the invisible God? And he's going to tell us several things now here concerning Jesus. Remember, the Gnostics and the heresy that was creeping into Colossae were denying the deity of Jesus. So Paul here is going to now tell of the supremacy of Jesus.

He is the image of the invisible God. John chapter one, no man has seen God at any time, but the only begotten son who was in the bosom of the father, he hath declared him or manifested him, made him known for the word was made flesh and he dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth.

He was the image of the invisible God. In Hebrews one, he is the brightness of his glory or the effulgence of the glory of God, the express image of himself. Jesus is the express image of God, the image of the invisible God.

He is the firstborn of every creature, or as the word means in the Greek precedence above first in not first, second, third, fourth, but first as the above all. And so here he is above all of the creatures or creation. For by him were all things created.

Genesis one tells us in the beginning God created the word God. There in Hebrew is Elohim, which is plural Hebrew singular for God is L the dual tense is Ella and Elohim is the plural tense for God. In the beginning God Elohim plural.

And I believe that that is a hint of the Trinity right in the very first verse of the Bible. The fact that they would use God in a plural form in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And when it came to man and God said, let us make man in our likeness.

And after our image, not I will make man after my likeness, after my image, but let us in the divine councils of the father, son, and the spirit, man was created in the likeness, in the image of God. So in John chapter one in the beginning was the logos, the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. And the same was in the beginning with God and all things were made by him.

And without him was not anything made that was made Jesus, the active agent in creation for by him were all things created. The all things, it does mean just that to be taken literally for things that are in heaven and things that are in the earth, the whole universe created by him. Things that are visible and things that are invisible.

So the visible material universe that you can see, plus the invisible universe that you don't see the spirit beings, the angels, the various rankings and orders of spirit beings here referred to as thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were made by him and for him. So not only is he the creator, but here he is the object of creation.

They were made by him and they were made for him. All of the angels, all of the universe, all of the things within the universe were made for him. And that includes you.

You were made for his good pleasure and purpose. People don't like that. Sometimes they rebel against that, which he has given you the capacity to do because when he created you, he created you with a free will or a choice.

You were created in his image and God is a self-determinate being. And thus he created you self-determinate, the power of choice. And that was necessary in order that he might have meaningful fellowship with you, studying the human body and studying the wisdom of God.

I realized how that God could have made us very sophisticated robots, put circuitry boards in us and could have made us to fulfill all of the functions that we can fulfill as human beings, except meaningful love,

meaningful fellowship. And for that, you couldn't have a robot. You've got to have a choice.

And so God created us with the choice, the capacity of choice. And if you will exercise that choice and live for him, your life will be rich and full and satisfying. If you exercise your choice by living for yourself, your life will be empty, futile and frustrating.

He is before all things. In the beginning, God. He existed before ever there was a world or stars or planets or life forms.

Before there were ever angels, he existed. He is eternal. He has always existed.

He is self-existent. He is before all things and by him, all things consist. The word in Greek means are held together.

A very interesting statement in the light of the discovery of the atoms and the law of electricity. Coulomb's law of electricity declares that like charges repel. Positive charges repel each other.

Opposite poles attract. So there's an attracting force between a positive and negative power. And that's what we use in our electricity and running our motors and all the alternating currents.

Coulomb's law of electricity. But there is the repelling force of like charges so that there is a repelling force of positive charges. We used to have a little box that looked like a coffin and had a mummy in it.

And it was sort of designed rather ingeniously because you could take and pop that little thing on the end and it had a magnet inside the mummy case. And the magnet would go down to the foot when you pop it. And there was a little magnet.

The mummy itself was magnetized so that when you would pop the magnet down at the foot, you could lay the mummy in it and it would lie still in the casket. Then you would take and pop the thing at the head. Of the casket to pop the little magnet back towards the head.

And then you hand it to your friend and you say, see if you can make the mummy lie in the casket and try as they will. They put the little mummy in the casket and it pops right out because you've got the positive poles now both at the head of the mummy and it pops out and and they're mystified because this mummy pops right out of the casket and they hold it there for a while and and pinch it, you know, and and as soon as they let go it pops out again. And it's just a little trick that was based upon Coulomb's law of electricity of the repelling force of like poles.

Now in the bombarding of the nucleus of an atom it took 600,000 electron volts to insert a proton into the nucleus of an atom. And so by that they were able to determine that between two protons there is a power between 10 and 50 pounds necessary to hold them together. The nucleus of an atom is clustered, protons clustered together in total defiance to the law of electricity.

The mystery of the universe is what holds them together. Science does not have an answer. They created an answer a few years ago, with what they called the Masons, which were, they called atomic glue, but then that has been thoroughly discounted.

There was one man who received his PhD in science and his thesis was on why the electrons do not collapse into the nucleus of an atom, the protons, following the law of electricity with the attracting force of opposite poles. There's a double mystery. Why are the protons held together and why don't the electrons

collapse into it? And he wrote his thesis and his thesis was basically they don't collapse in it because they don't collapse into it.

And he got his doctorate. We don't know. And by his confession of the truth we don't know.

There is no answer except here. By him all things are held together. The Lord would just release his hold just for a second.

This whole physical universe would go up in one big gigantic bang. It'd all be over. In the nuclei of every atom in the universe, these positive charges would follow their natural bent and they'd just repel each other and the whole universe would just be the end of everything.

In the material universe. By him all things are held together. Lord, hang on.

And he is the head of the body, the church. We need to remember that. There are always those men who are trying to take that position as the head of the body, the church.

I think that that is one of the weaknesses of denominations is that it does sort of curry that power struggle and men driven by the desire for power seek to gain the control over the denomination. A truly godly minister could care less about being the president of the denomination or even the Pope. He only wants to be what God wants him to be.

If he's truly a godly man. He has no real ambitions to be anything other than what God has called him to be. But there are men who are driven by the desire for power and they strive to gain that preeminence and position of the head of the church.

And it's always rather sad to see it. For Christ is the head of the church. He is the beginning.

He is the firstborn from the dead. Now others rose from the dead before he did, but he is the firstborn in that he is never to die again. Those that were raised from the dead before died again, but his is unto eternal life.

That in all things he might have the preeminence. Now that is the purpose of God and the plan of God is that in everything Jesus has the preeminence. All things again includes you.

And so the question does Christ reign preeminently in your life? Does he have the preeminence? You see that's the purpose and the plan of God for Jesus Christ. That he has the place of preeminence in each of our lives. That he is above everything else in our lives.

That nothing supersedes the place of Jesus Christ in my life. Now not just a mouthing of it. Oh yes, Christ is preeminent, but in the reality, the actuality.

And I'm afraid when it comes down to reality, when it comes down to actions, that many of those who do lay claim to being Christians, the truth of it is Christ is not preeminent in their lives. Now let's not look at them, let's look at ourselves. You see I'm not going to have to answer for them.

I'm going to have to answer for me. When I stand before God, I'm only going to be responsible for this fellow right here. And I'm going to give an account to God for me.

And therefore it is important, not that I examine other people's commitment, but that I examine my own commitment. That I not look at other people's failures, but I look at my own failures and judge myself. But that's important for each of us, that we will each just look at ourselves and judge ourselves.

For if we will judge ourselves, then we will not be judged of God. For it is pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. Our minds cannot really grasp that particular phrase.

It's pleased the Father that in Him, in Christ, should all of the fullness of God, the Godhead dwell. The fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells in our Lord. We get that in chapter 2. We are complete in Him.

And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by Him I say whether they be things in earth or things in heaven, and you that were one time alienated and enemies in your mind by the wicked works, yet now has He reconciled. And so Jesus has made peace with God possible for man. Man was at war with God.

Man was rebelling against God. We all were in that rebellion against God. As we walked our own path, as we went our own way, as we were following after the desires of our flesh and of our mind, we were at war with God, rebelling against the law of God and the commandments of God.

But Jesus, through the blood of His cross, providing a righteous basis for God's forgiveness of our sins, has made peace with God possible as He reconciles all things unto Himself. So we are told, be ye therefore reconciled unto God. Don't be at war with God.

Be reconciled unto God. And all things have been reconciled through Jesus Christ, whether they are things in earth or in heaven. And you that at one time were alienated from God, you were enemies of God in your mind and by your wicked works, you've now been reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, that He might present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight.

Now you see, through my faith in Jesus Christ, I have been forgiven all, all of my sins and transgressions, so that when Jesus presents me to the Father, He's going to present me blameless, unreprouable, holy. In Jude, we read, Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Oh, do you realize what Jesus Christ has provided for you? The total pardon and forgiveness of your sins and your transgressions.

He has, as you are in Christ, God sees you as holy and pure and righteous, for the righteousness of Christ has been accounted or imputed unto you through your faith in Jesus Christ. Not through your efforts, not through your great commitment, not through your tremendous sacrifices, but through your simple faith in Jesus Christ, God has accounted you righteous. God looks at me tonight as righteous.

Now I don't even look at myself that way. I look at myself and I see all my flaws. I see all my failures.

I see my weaknesses, but God sees me in Jesus. And as He looks at me in Christ, He sees me without blame, holy, unreprouable. Oh, I love that.

How thankful I am for that place that I have in Christ tonight because of Him. God sees me as perfect. If you continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I, Paul, am made a minister.

So again, the mention of the fact that the gospel had been preached to every creature. They were thorough in their evangelism in that first generation. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you.

And Paul is talking about himself. I now rejoice in my sufferings for you. And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.

Now, this is a very difficult scripture to understand, and I will frankly confess to you, I am not certain that I do understand the full implications of it. It does seem that Paul is saying that in some way he is completing the afflictions of Christ in his own body. For Christ's body's sake, the church.

Now, it can only be understood if we understand the relationship of Jesus to his church or the relationship of Jesus to you. Whatever reproach you bear for your faith in Jesus Christ is really reproach that is being directed at Jesus. Whatever suffering you bear for Jesus Christ's sake, that suffering is being directed at Jesus.

And so Paul recognized that these beatings that he received, the stonings that he received, the suffering that he was subject to and the imprisonment at all were because of man's animosities against Jesus Christ. So that he was suffering for Christ's sake. He was imprisoned for Christ's sake.

He was actually taking the sufferings of Jesus Christ or the reproaches of Christ, the feelings that man had in his natural heart against Jesus, the hatred that man had against Jesus. Paul was privileged to bear it. I rejoice that I can bear these things that are directed at Jesus, that I have this privilege of filling up the afflictions of Jesus.

That is the feelings that man have of antagonism toward Jesus are directed at me and I'm able to take them for him. And Jesus so identifies with us that he shares with us in this suffering. He said, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, trials.

Don't count it a strange thing concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing has happened to you. Rejoice. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake and for the Gospels.

For great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you. So filling up of the sufferings of Christ, man, the natural man still hates Jesus. And as you stand there before him as his representative, you receive his abuse that he is really directing in his heart towards Jesus.

Now they counted it a privilege that they were able to do that. They rejoiced that they were able to take that suffering for Christ's sake. Don't take it personal.

A lot of times we're so sensitive. Someone says something, we take it personally as though they're directing it at us. No, it's being directed at Christ.

And it's because I'm Christ representative that I'm standing there and receiving it. And if I look at it that way, then I can rejoice, Lord, that you counted me worthy to suffer for your sake, as did the apostles in Acts chapter four. Lord, oh my, you counted us worthy to suffer for you.

So I rejoice in my sufferings in that I am receiving the afflictions that are directed at Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you to fulfill the word of God. So Paul has been made a minister according to

God's plan to fulfill the word of God. Even the mystery, which has been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, the glorious mystery of God is that Christ will come and indwell you.

The other day we had an opportunity of sharing the gospel with the King of Laos. And as I was sharing with him, I knew that he was a Buddhist and Buddhist, Buddha did teach that a man's. Problems and the evils of the world all stem from the material world, the flesh and the material world.

And that if a man could completely disassociate himself from the material world, heaven was to dwell in the spirit and not have anything to do with the material, in other words, to be totally removed from the material is to enter into nirvana. And so that is, of course, the hope and the goal of the Buddhists is to through asceticism and all denying the flesh, fastings and all these things to completely disassociate himself from the physical, that he might enter into the total spirit, which is nirvana. And if you don't make it this round, then hopefully next round you'll improve.

And if you don't make it then, then next round. Of course, the interesting thing is there must, you know, when we started out with only one, how come we have so many billions today? Where are they coming from? You know, to be reincarnated. I mean, there's got to be a lot of new bodies being formed because you started out with fewer spirits than we now have.

Look at how many spirits we got around here today in the world. You know, in fact, what is it, about 10% of the people who ever lived in the history of man are living present time. So sort of, you know, upsets that reincarnation bit.

But knowing that he had this background as a Buddhist, I shared with him that the Bible teaches that man basically is spirit. He lives in a body. He possesses a consciousness.

But if a man lives on the body side of his life, he is living less than God would have him to live, for God would have us to live on the spiritual side of our life. So if my body is ruling and I am ruled by my fleshly appetites, then I am living a life alienated from God. But to live in fellowship with God, I must live after the spirit, the spirit-dominated life, knowing that essentially this is what Buddha taught.

And I said, you know, there have been other religious leaders in history who taught important truths concerning how a person should live after the spirit. But I said, the problem was having taught the truth and pointed to the path, they could not give you the power to walk in that path. And that oftentimes is totally frustrating because I listen to what they say.

I consent and I say, hey, that's right. I want to live that way. I don't want to live after my flesh.

I want to live after the spirit in fellowship with God. But I said not being given the power to do it, it only frustrated me. So God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for my sins, to provide forgiveness for my sins.

And then I said He did something else. He rose from the dead and then He said, now I will come and dwell in you. And by my dwelling in you, I will give to you the power to walk this path.

You don't have it in yourself, you can't do it in yourself, but I will dwell in you and I will live in you, empowering you to do it. And I said that basically is the chief difference between Christianity and the other religions of the world. With Christianity, the power is imparted by the indwelling of Jesus Christ.

It isn't just pointing to the path and saying that's the way you should walk, but it is coming in and giving you the capacity and the power to do it. Pray for the King of Laws, that the word of the Gospel that was planted will take root. And as he acknowledges his own failures to alien, disassociate himself from the flesh, that he'll seek that power of the indwelling Christ as we have here, the mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

That's the hope that we have. I can never do it myself, but He has come to live in me and to give me the capacity to do it. Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man complete in Christ Jesus.

And so that is the purpose of the ministry, is to bring you into the full maturity in Christ Jesus. And wouldn't it be God, all of the churches were dedicated to this. For years my ministry was dedicated to bringing people to Christ Jesus, but never to bringing them to the full maturity in Christ Jesus.

Evangelism was my bag, the big thing. And the church was weak. Paul's desire, his teaching, his purpose was to bring them into the full maturity in Christ.

Whereunto I also labor striving according to His work, which works in me mindly. You know, I'm going to stop right there, because there is so much in chapter two that I don't want to get started and then have to rush the thing at the end, which I have a tendency to do when I get carried away in the first part of the lesson. I have that tendency, you know, to then rush through some extremely important passages of scripture.

And chapter two is one of the most important chapters in the New Testament. And I don't want to just rush through it. So we're going to stop right there for tonight and next week we'll take chapter two, three, and we might, well, four is really just sort of, you know, the final greetings and all.

So that we can pop through in a hurry. But the real teaching lies in chapters two and three. As I say, four just is sort of goodbye and the personal greetings to the different ones.

Father, we thank you tonight for Jesus Christ, your only begotten Son, who came to this world to manifest the Father, was the express image of God, the creator of this whole vast universe. What a marvel that He should walk upon this planet Earth, eat with men, sleep with men, talk with men. Touch men.

Oh God, how we marvel at the mysteries of the Incarnation. God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. But even of the greater mystery, that same Jesus who died and rose again, who created the Earth, who holds the worlds together, now dwells in our hearts and empowers our lives.

Lord, how awesome that you should dwell in us. May we yield to you our bodies as instruments through which your will might be accomplished. In Jesus' name we pray, Father.

Amen. May the Lord bless you and help you as you sort of digest the truth. That it might become a very part of your life.

And that indeed you might discover that great power that resides in you as a child of God. That mystery of God, Christ in you, the hope of glory. And may His power bring strength and victory to your life this week.

May He demonstrate that power by giving you victory over an area in your life where you've been stumbling for a long time. May this week you begin to experience real victory there for His glory,

recognizing, hey, this is nothing but the power of Jesus Christ dwelling in me. Thank you, Lord.
God bless you and be with you as you walk with Him. In Jesus' name.

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