

(Through the Bible) Colossians

by Zac Poonen

The book of Colossians teaches us about the importance of Christ living in us and manifesting His divine life through us, and how we can fill up the afflictions of Christ by rejoicing in our sufferings and presenting every man complete in Christ.

Duration: 54:26

Scripture: Colossians 1:27, Colossians 2:9, Colossians 2:20

Topics: "Christology", "Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the theme of Christ in you, focusing on the fullness of God dwelling in bodily form through Jesus and now in believers. It addresses the dangers of false teachings that focus on extreme forms of asceticism or indulgence, highlighting the need to recognize the practical relevance of Jesus being fully God and fully man. The sermon also stresses the significance of dying with Christ to attain holiness, being led by the peace of Christ as a referee in our hearts, and fulfilling the specific ministries God has entrusted to each individual.

Transcript

Colossae was a place that Paul had never visited, but probably when he was in Ephesus, he was there for three years, one of his co-workers, Epaphras, must have gone across and established the church in Colossae, and so Paul knew a lot about that church from Epaphras, and he had a very real interest in the development in that particular church. We can say that Paul's letter to the Colossians is like a twin letter to his letter to the Ephesians. In Ephesians, we saw the theme was, in Christ, you in Christ, we saw that this morning.

In Colossians, the theme is Christ in you, and we find that in verse 27, Christ, chapter one verse 27, Christ in you, the hope of glory. So where in Ephesians, we saw our position in Christ that made us rich with every heavenly blessing, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, here, it's the other side of that truth, that because Christ is in us, he can manifest through us that heavenly life that was manifested when he walked on this earth. So we could say in another phrase, the main emphasis in Colossians is, Colossians 2 verse 9, the fullness of God dwelt in Christ in bodily form.

God, the fullness of God dwelling in a human body, first seen in Jesus Christ, and now Christ dwelling in our human body and manifesting that divine life. That's the theme of this letter. And as we read through this letter, it appears as though, when you see the things that Paul is correcting, like when we read Paul's

letter to the Galatians, you know that the Galatians had the problem of legalism and of trying to become perfect through the law.

The Colossian Christians seem to have been affected by some of the teaching that was going on around in that area, which seemed to have affected them, which was basically in two extreme forms. We see that in the world today also in false religions and cults. One view was that the human body, being made of earthly matter, was evil, and so it had to be suppressed, and you had to treat it roughly, and then only you could be a spiritual person.

That type of teaching is found even today, where through asceticism and bodily discipline, you seek to be holy. Paul speaks about that in Colossians, the latter part of chapter 2. The other extreme are people who say, well, his body is not important. It doesn't matter what you do with his body, indulge every lust, and the main thing is the spirit, and that leads to a lot of immorality and fornication in the name of religion.

Not just ordinary fornication, but, you know, temple prostitutes and all that. And through the centuries, there have been these two extreme attitudes to the human body. One is like the attitude of yoga, and you discipline yourself, and you have nothing to do with even marriage, and sexual relationships in marriage are wrong, stay away from all that.

Asceticism, and the other is the opposite extreme, indulge every passion of the body. And both of them, both these extremes, tend to despise the body. The main thing is the spirit.

And so, therefore, some of these people probably didn't believe that Almighty God could come in bodily form, that God could actually become a man and walk on the earth. And even today, many Christians who believe that Jesus Christ did become a man, it's only in the back of their heads. It doesn't seem to have any practical relevance to their daily life on earth.

The fact that Jesus Christ is, always was, God, even when he was on earth, he was God, and at the same time, that when he came to earth, he was totally a man, are two important truths. If you lose a sight or understanding of either of them, and their practical applications, in that measure, your Christianity will suffer. You don't believe that Jesus Christ is God, you have a lot of questions, and then you're going to have a lot of problems in your Christian life, you're not really a Christian at all.

And on the other hand, is the other extreme, where you don't recognize that he became 100% a man just like us, made in all things like his brothers, it says in Hebrews 2.17, God came in human form, and that's why we can follow him. You could never follow him if he was just God, but because he gave up those privileges that he had as God, and lived on earth with our limitations, therefore we can follow him. So that's very important, that sin is not essentially found in the body.

That's the point. You must realize that it's not because you have a body that you sin, and what is the clearest proof of that? Jesus had a body, just like yours and mine, he was born of the seed of David, of the sperm of David, which is the literal meaning of the Greek word, and yet, even though he had a human body just like ours, there was no trace of sin in that body at all. No conscious sin, no unconscious sin, no trace of sin, completely pure from birth till death.

Now here's another example of Satan, who has no body, no human body, and he's full of sin. So here you have a contrast, Satan who has no body is full of sin, and Jesus who had a human body had no sin. So we see that sin has got nothing to do with a human body at all.

It's your choice whether you're going to let sin be manifest through this body, or whether you're going to let the life of God and purity be manifest through this body. Every day we are making that choice. Colossians deals with the fullness of God dwelt in bodily form.

Christ now dwells in you. So that's the theme, and there's a lot of emphasis in the first chapter on the preeminence of Christ in creation and in redemption, just let's look at that. In chapter 1, I just want to read a few verses here and there.

First of all, he of course gives thanks to God like he always does for all churches that he wrote to, verse 3, and in verse 9, he says, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you. Here were Christians whom he had never met, as we read in verse 7 and 8, his co-worker Epaphras was the one who had gone and established that church there, and he came and told Paul about the wonderful believers in Colossae, and he says we have prayed and asked that you will be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. A very interesting Bible study that you could do on your own would be to study through the prayers of the Apostle Paul.

There are many prayers of the Apostle Paul right through from Romans on to 2 Timothy, and you find all those prayers, we saw two of them when we studied Ephesians, were always prayers for spiritual things. He never prayed that these people would become rich or they'd have good houses to live in or that they'd advance in their jobs. He never prayed for any of these material things.

He always prayed for deep, eternal, spiritual things, because Paul was so gripped by the fact that everything on this earth was only for a short period. It's like something like if you were taking a journey from here to Delhi and you were going to settle down in Delhi for the next 50 years, someone who's praying for you should not be spending most of his time praying that in the two-day train journey to Delhi you'll have a very comfortable time and you'll be able to eat good food and wear good clothes in the train and sleep peacefully. He should be praying more about things that you'd be able to live in Delhi happily for a long time.

So when we see that our life on earth is only like a short journey moving into eternity, Paul was praying that the way they lived on earth would be in such a way that when they get into eternity they'll have no regrets. That's so important. So he prayed that they would be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Now there's a translation of this verse in, I think it's in the paraphrase by J.D. Phillips of this episode where he says, I'm praying that you will look at things from God's point of view. To have an understanding or knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding means that you will look at everything from God's point of view and that was Paul's prayer for the Colossian Christians. When you think of your human body, don't listen to what all these philosophers in the world are saying.

Look at it from God's viewpoint. Jesus came in a human body so don't despise it. Everything you face in life, look at it from God's point of view.

That's a good prayer for us to pray for ourselves. Lord help me to see everything that happens in my life from your viewpoint. How do you look at that? That particular circumstance that came into my life, that particular sickness, that thorn in the flesh, that person who's treating me so badly, there's all these things.

Let me see it from God's viewpoint. Did it surprise God when that thing happened? It didn't surprise God. It did surprise me because I'm a human being limited by time and space.

But God was not surprised and when I move back or move up to God's viewpoint, I find my heart comes to rest and many things on earth look very different when I look at them from God's viewpoint. It's a very good prayer for us to pray for ourselves and if you can build a church where people have learned to look at things from God's viewpoint, you've got a spiritual church. You don't have a spiritual church just because they engage in a lot of evangelism and social activity.

No. It's if they've learned to look at things from God's viewpoint. Because it's only then, as it says in verse 10, that you can walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

You can never walk the way God wants you to walk unless you, first of all, have your mind looking at things from God's viewpoint. And only then, like it says in verse 10, will you bear fruit in every good work. And he speaks about being strengthened with power according to his glorious might, verse 11, which is a picture of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 15 is another description of Christ and I think it's one of the clearest descriptions in the New Testament of the fact that Jesus Christ on earth was God, in case anybody had any doubt about it. He is the image of the invisible God. The firstborn of all creation means the one who began all creation.

He is the image of the invisible God. That means God in human form, the one who began all of creation, the beginning of all creation. All creation in Genesis 1 began with him.

We move on to verse 22, because he came in this fleshly body, notice, he came in a fleshly body. See, because even if you say body, some people may say, well, it was not really a fleshly body. And there was those types of heresies in the first century and later on where people wondered whether Jesus actually came in a fleshly body.

He says, it was in that fleshly body that he died and in order to present you blameless. Now, I want you to move on to verse 24, there's a beautiful verse here. He says, I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of his body, which is the church, in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Now he already said in verse 22 that in a fleshly body he suffered. Now there's a very interesting phrase here, which I don't know whether you have considered seriously. Verse 24, it says there's something missing or lacking in the afflictions or the sufferings of Christ.

What is it that is missing or lacking in Christ's afflictions? Didn't he say on the cross it is finished? And what does the Holy Spirit mean when he says through Paul that I am now filling up what is still lacking in Christ's afflictions? There's a great truth here. See, Jesus suffered all through his earthly life. We read of some of those sufferings in the Gospels, but there were many, many, many more that he suffered in his soul, in his spirit, in his body that there's no record in Scripture.

And when he finally died, he said it's finished. That's how he became a forerunner of salvation for the whole world. Now when Paul was called to serve this Christ, and you and I are called to serve this Christ, as I said the other day, we have to be mini forerunners for other people.

So, today we have a body like Jesus had a body, and the Holy Spirit now seeks to lead us through the same pathway of suffering that Jesus went through. Not his suffering for the sins of the world, that we have no part in, but all the other suffering that he went through of rejection, misunderstanding, persecution, and ridicule, and mocking, and all types of things. And he says, in Jesus' case, you take a glass, in his whole lifetime there was a measure of suffering that completely filled up that glass, and then the cross, he said, it's finished.

Okay. Now I'm following in Jesus' footsteps, and I've got a human body, and the Holy Spirit has to do the same work in me. Here's my glass.

When I'm born again, it's empty. I've suffered nothing for Christ. And gradually, as time goes on, this glass begins to fill up with sufferings, sufferings.

These are the sufferings of Christ. It's what he endured when he was in a bodily form. Now I've got this body, and Christ is in me.

The same Christ who suffered when he was on earth is now in me, and he has to go through the same thing now through my body. In ridicule, mocking, he said the servant is not greater than his master. If they call the head of the house Beelzebub, what do you think they'll call you? Worst names.

The world hates you because it hated me first. So all those sufferings, now it has to be filled up in our body. That's why it's a great privilege.

And he says, this glass is now to be filled up. There's still a lot left. This is the filling up that he speaks of here.

What is still lacking of Christ's sufferings, which he completed in his body, which has now got to be completed in my body. It's a great mystery. Many people don't understand it.

Many people don't understand that when they're going through suffering, and they're coming into fellowship with Christ's sufferings, I'm not talking about the suffering that you suffered because you did something stupid or foolish. Jesus never did anything stupid or foolish, but he still suffered because his whole way of life was contrary to this world. His entire ministry was constant conflict with Bible scholars and with all the great theologians of his day.

He was in conflict, conflict, conflict, conflict, and they hated him and finally killed him. It is the same today. When we fill up the afflictions of Christ, we find ourselves in conflict with the entire religious system of this world and also with a lot of so-called Christian theology and religion.

We find ourselves in conflict just like Jesus was. People who don't know God, but who've got a lot of cleverness, Jesus was in conflict with them, and they hated him. Who were the ones who called him Beelzebub? It was not the Greeks and the Romans.

It was people who had a Bible. Who were the ones who persecuted Jesus the most? Who were the ones who killed him? Who were the ones who caused him all those afflictions? Religious people with a Bible. So if you're going to fill up the afflictions of Christ, you're going to find religious people with a Bible afflicting you, because they don't know God.

Jesus said that they hate me, they persecute me because they don't know my Father, and they'll do the same thing to you. So when we fill up the afflictions of Christ, we rejoice in it. Because as we go, he says here, I rejoice in these sufferings because as this is filled up, I am doing, Paul says, my share.

Each of you have got a share for the sake of this new body of Christ, the church. That was his first body, a physical body. Now he's got another body, the church.

And in this church, these afflictions are to be filled up. You've got your share, and I've got my share. The difference is this, that Jesus suffered everything in his body, but we suffer it in the total body of Christ.

But you've got a share in that, and I've got my share. I cannot do your share. What does that mean? When you go through some suffering, I can't be faithful for you, so how can I help you there? You've got to be faithful in your suffering, when you suffer from your relatives, when you suffer from your neighbors, when you're persecuted, when people oppose you because you're following Jesus, when they throw out your name as evil and throw you out of the house, perhaps, because you want to follow Jesus.

That's part of the suffering of Christ. Rejoice at that time and say, Lord, thank you for giving me the privilege of filling up a little bit of the afflictions of Christ for the sake of the church, which is his body. That is how we have a ministry to other people.

We do it for the sake of the church. I don't gain anything from it. But if I go through this suffering, it's like, why is it called part of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings? What did Christ gain by that suffering? Nothing.

If Jesus came to earth to gain something for himself, we have to say he was a total failure because he gained nothing for himself. He lost everything. Through Christ's sufferings, he gained nothing, but we gained a lot.

And if you are in fellowship with Christ's sufferings, you will gain nothing, but other people will gain a lot through your sufferings. Are you willing for that? I hope all of us will say, yes, Lord, I'm willing. I want to be in fellowship with your mind and your spirit and your attitude that I want to suffer so that other people will gain something through my suffering.

Because out of that suffering, it's like the grapes being squeezed, or the olive oil being pressed. Have you seen how they crush the sugarcane in a grinder? They put those sugarcane sticks in there and grind it and grind it and grind it, and all that juice comes out. And you think they're finished with it, no, they put it back a second time.

Every little bit of juice comes out for whose benefit? Somebody else is going to drink it. That's a picture of how God makes us a blessing to other people. You got to be crushed, you got to be squeezed in circumstances and trials, and from that, the radiance of Christ, the beauty, the aroma of Christ comes forth.

That's the only way we can be a blessing to other people. That's how Jesus fulfilled his ministry. And so we see here, he goes on to say, now with this experience, verse 28, we proclaim Christ, who came in this bodily form, admonishing every man, that is rebuking, correcting everybody in the church, teaching every man, it's both prophecy and teaching, with all wisdom.

And what is our ultimate goal? This was Paul's ultimate goal, that we may present every man complete or perfect in Christ. If Paul had a church of 100 people, he says, I'm going to do everything possible to make

sure that all these 100 people, not 99, but every man, every brother, every sister, every child becomes perfect in Christ. And I'm going to exhort them, I'm going to admonish them, I'm going to teach them with all wisdom, because one day I have to present these people to God.

I tell you, there are very few pastors and shepherds who have this burden. They just want to preach and go, but Paul had a burden. Every single person here, I must know their spiritual condition.

I would never take the responsibility of being an elder in a church, without taking the responsibility of knowing the spiritual condition of every single person sitting there. And I've been an elder in Bangalore for 25 years, and I can say that I have, to the best of my ability, known in all these years, the spiritual condition of every single person in my church, so that I could correct them, rebuke them, give them wisdom, encouragement, seen their need, spoken encouraging words, spoken strong words, because I want to present them perfect in Christ one day. I don't want anything from them.

I want to present them perfect in Christ. And for their sake, for the sake of the body of Christ, I have to go through a lot of crushing in my private life, that God deals with me in so many ways, so that the juice can come out from me, that other people can drink and be blessed. This is Christian ministry.

And to this, and for this purpose, he says in verse 29, I labor, I work hard, striving. Look at these words, I labor, striving. How does he strive? With the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, verse 29, with which, first of all, God mightily works inside me.

You know, God always has to work inside me before he works through me. He has to work inside you by his Holy Spirit, and then work through you to bless other people. But if you ever serve other people in a church, make these two verses like a goal for you.

Verse 28, your goal to present every man perfect in Christ. Verse 29, the means by which you reach that goal through the fullness of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 2, he speaks about, he says, I pray that your hearts will be knit together, verse 1, in love, that you will have a full assurance of knowledge, of understanding, in a true knowledge of God's mystery.

You know, this word mystery comes a few times in Scripture, and I want to just mention something about it here. Mystery means a secret that can only be known if God reveals it to you through his Holy Spirit. I have not seen, neither has he heard, 1 Corinthians 2, verse 8, 9, and 10, neither has entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed them to us through his Spirit.

That's the mystery. And there, in the Scripture, if you look up a concordance, you'll find that there are only two mysteries that are called great mysteries. Great mysteries.

There are other mysteries mentioned in the New Testament, two that are called great. One is the mystery that God came in human flesh, 1 Timothy 3, 16. Great is the mystery of godliness.

He was manifest in the flesh. There's a mystery there, it's the secret of godliness. What is the secret of godliness? Jesus came in our flesh.

Think about it. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what that means. That's the first great mystery.

Secondly, Ephesians 5, 32, he says this is a great mystery, the husband-wife relationship, husband and wife becoming one flesh. The two shall become one flesh, Ephesians 5, 31. This is a great mystery, but I'm speaking not about husband and wife, he says in verse 32, I'm speaking about Christ and the church.

So the church being one flesh with Christ is the second great mystery. And this has got some connection with that, what we said earlier about in our flesh, suffering, because we have a fellowship with Christ as our divine husband and bridegroom. On both of these, we need revelation from God.

Ask God to show you what it meant for Jesus to come to earth and be totally a man, just like us, to be tempted like us, to overcome like us, and what it means that we now are to follow in his footsteps, follow in the same way, suffer in the same way, and overcome in the same way, and thus build the church to be one with him as his bride. This is the greatest ministry you can ever do on the face of the earth. There is absolutely nothing greater than that.

There are many good things you can do in the name of Christ. Paul said he spent all his life laboring to do this, to build the church. And I believe that the greatest servants of God are the ones who build the church.

Now I greatly respect other people who have lived good, godly lives. I mentioned Mother Teresa the other day, but I would never spend my life doing what she is doing. I would spend my life doing what Paul did.

Paul did not spend his life doing what Mother Teresa did, no. God bless her, but Paul said, I'm going to build a church. He did not do social work, because he knew that social work is ultimately not going to establish God's kingdom.

I mean, if you make people's lives comfortable in a hospital, or in a school, and get big better wells, and make life easier for them, and send them to hell through a smooth path, what's the use of that? They were going to hell by the rough path, but you made the path a little smoother, and gave them a comfortable journey to hell. It's no use. So Paul realized the most important thing is to lead people to Christ.

The greatest Christian I respect in India is not Mother Teresa, it's Sadhu Sundar Singh, who had a great passion to reach people for the Lord, and who lived a godly life. That's the man I've always respected. And nobody would give him a Nobel Prize, or Bharat Ratna, or any such thing, because you don't get such medals for building the church.

That's the greatest ministry you can ever do. That's what Paul did. He never got involved in social work.

God bless those who feel they're called to do that, that's fine. But the greatest work you can ever do in this land is to build the body of Jesus Christ. Never forget that.

We don't despise others who do good things in the name of Christ, but if you want to do God's highest, remember there's nothing, it's the church that's going to remain until all eternity. Okay, it says further in chapter 2 and verse 11 and 12. In Christ you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh.

That means, just like in circumcision there's a cutting off of some flesh, we were cut off. Our flesh was cut off on the cross. I have to take that position.

This flesh which I carry around with me is crucified with Christ. And that's what I testify to also in baptism. I've been buried with him in baptism, verse 12, in which you also were raised up together with him.

And just like every son of Abraham, of the seed of Abraham, had to be circumcised after he became a child of Abraham. How did you become a child of Abraham? By being born into a Jewish family. That's all.

It's the only qualification. You were immediately circumcised. In the same way, every child of God, as soon as he becomes a child of God, that is not by normal birth, but by new birth, as soon as he's born again, must be baptised.

Circumcision was only for males. Baptism is for males and females, because there is no distinction now. You become children of God.

You became children of Abraham by birth. You become children of God by new birth. As soon as you became a child of Abraham, you became circumcised.

As soon as you become a child of God, you must be baptised. It's the same. And so we see baptism here is a symbol, like circumcision was there, of cutting off of confidence in the flesh.

And we see further, in verse 14 and 15, two things that Jesus did on Calvary's cross. One, he cancelled out this certificate of debt that was against us. You see, the law had made a list of commandments that I had to keep.

And I did not keep them. And so every time I did not keep God's law, I got into debt to God. And the result was, in my life I had accumulated such a huge debt.

Sin is like a debt I owe to God. And Jesus came, paid the debt on the cross, tore up that certificate, and said, you're not, there's no debt for you now. That's the picture he uses, of sin as a debt to God, Jesus tore up the certificate and said, you're free.

That's one thing. The second thing he did on the cross, verse 15, was he took away the armour from the principalities and powers who could harm me, having triumphed over them in it, and he gave me their weapons. It's something like, here are a whole lot of demons who got guns, machine guns, pointed at a helpless person like me, and I'm scared of them, because they've got their machine guns aimed at me, and always shooting at me, and I have to run for cover, because these guns are firing all the time.

What did Jesus do on the cross? He took away all their machine guns from the demons and gave it to me. Now who's on the run? Have you seen that? Have you seen that the weapons that they had have been taken away from them? Have you seen that we've got the name of Jesus now? Like we sing in that song, in the name of Jesus, we have the victory. Tell me who can stand when we go against the enemy in the name of Jesus.

That's a mighty weapon the Lord has given. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and they are saved.

We resist the devil in the name of Jesus. Satan and all his demons were defeated on the cross, once and for all. Every demon, whenever you encounter a demon-possessed person, remember the demon inside that person was defeated on the cross.

The demon does not have a machine gun anymore. It's been taken away on the cross. You've got something now to fire at that demon in the name of Jesus.

It doesn't matter if you're the weakest person, the weakest soldier in the army. If he's got a machine gun and the enemy does not have anything, that tough, huge Goliath of a demon will fall. Remember that.

And we've got the mightiest weapon of all in the name of Jesus. Further, he speaks in verse 16 onwards to verse 23 about these various philosophies and methods of holiness that people have thought of their clever brain and their ideas and their reasonings without revelation from God have produced of how to become holy. One is, avoid certain foods, be a vegetarian, don't drink certain things, keep certain festivals, go on certain pilgrimages, verse 16, keep the Sabbath day holy.

There are some so-called Christians who say you can't be holy unless you keep the Sabbath day. And here Paul says to the Colossians 2,000 years ago, don't let anybody judge you in such matters. Don't let anybody tell you you've got to keep the Sabbath day or you've got to keep Christmas day or you've got to keep any other day.

These things are only a shadow. The reality is in Christ. When you have the reality, why do you need the shadow? And if Paul was living today, he would have used a picture like this.

He said, those are only a photograph. You got the reality. I keep my wife's photograph with me when she's not there.

When she's there, I'd be crazy if I'm always looking at the photograph. Why do I need the photograph when she's there? That's what he's saying here. When you've got Christ himself, why do you want all these symbols and pictures? That was only a shadow, that was only a photograph.

You've got the reality now. You've got your husband himself. Why do you want your husband's photograph now? The Sabbath day was a photograph.

All those festivals and all that were photographs. You've got the reality. Then he says, don't let anyone cheat you of your prize.

You know that there's a prize that God has reserved for you in heaven. Don't let anybody cheat you of it by delighting in self-abasement. That means a false humility.

I tell you, there's a lot of false humility among Christians. False humility, which is spiritual pride, wearing the garment of humility and pretending to be very humble. Get rid of all that false humility.

You know, where they believe in worshipping angels, no, you must not only worship God. But when you translate that word angels, we don't find Christians teaching us to worship angels, but I'll tell you how this verse applies to many people in India and other places. The word angel, I told you, is messenger, doodad, messenger.

And there is a lot of worship of messengers in Christendom today. Haven't you seen that? Just like many Hindus worship their so-called God-men, many Christians have got also little little God-men, Christian leaders whom they admire so much, it almost amounts to worship. They never feel this man can ever make a mistake.

He's perfect. He's almost like Christ. And they worship him.

Now, to respect a godly man, to appreciate him and to listen carefully to his advice is all good. But to worship, wrong. And so worship of messengers, you think that's humility, it's not humility, it's a false

humility.

You don't become holy like that. And then he says the answer to that is, verse 19, instead of holding on to that messenger, you must hold on to the head. This is Christianity, hold on to the head and the best messenger is the one who helps you to get connected to the head.

And then the other way of holiness mentioned that many people teach is through discipline, verse 20 and 21. Don't handle this, don't touch this, don't taste this, and with a severe treatment of the body, verse 30, sleep on the floor, fast for days so that you become holy. And I'll tell you, I've seen a lot of people who fast for many days, lose their temper, have got bitterness.

I say, where has it made them holy? They gossip, they speak evil of others. All this severe treatment of the body has not made them holy, but it's got an appearance of holiness, but it does not deal with sin inside. What is it that deals with sin inside? Listen, you have died, chapter 3, verse 3. That's the way.

Take your position of death with Christ and you have been raised up, chapter 3, verse 1. That is the way of holiness. The way of holiness is not by celebrating these festivals and by worshiping messengers and severe treatment of the body and yoga and discipline and fasting and none of these things will make you holy. You can try it for centuries, you won't be holy.

The way to holiness is like it says in Romans 6, you've got to die with Jesus. You've got to take your place as dead to this world and living with Jesus also, not just dead. A lot of people who speak about death, death, death, death, end up with this type of yoga type of holiness.

It's all self-denial and discipline of the body and all that. But the life of Christ, the life of Jesus in a human body, just like he himself lived on earth in a human body. This is what the Holy Spirit seeks to communicate to you and me.

And then one proof of that will be that your mind will be set, verse 2, on the things that are above. You're not always occupied with the type of food you eat and earthly discipline, you're occupied with the things above. Your mind, that's where holiness begins.

See the contrast between your mind in chapter 3, verse 2, and the body in chapter 2, verse 23. It's not by suppressing the bodily things that you become holy, desires and passions. It's by having your mind set on the things above that the body also obeys the Holy Spirit.

Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Let your mind be set on things above. Since you have died with Christ, now consider, verse 5, the members of your earthly body dead.

In Romans, in Colossians, it's the same secret of holiness. What is that? You have died with Christ. Ask God to give you an understanding of the way of the cross.

This is the secret of holiness. How you died with Jesus and you rose up. It can be as great a crisis in your life as when you were born again, when you see this truth.

Okay, we turn now to verse 13. It says here that as Jesus, there are many things here, it says we must put away and in this renewal, verse 11, there is no distinction in the body of Christ, all are the same and you must bear with one another and forgive one another just as Jesus forgave you. And then it says in verse 15, let the peace of Christ be the referee, in the margin it says, be the referee in your hearts.

How do you know when you are going astray? How do you know when you have missed God's will? There is a referee inside your heart. Have you seen a football match? You can never have a football match without a referee because everybody will be committing a foul. But when you have a referee, as soon as anybody commits a foul, he blows a whistle.

Now supposing you're playing a football match and the referee blows a whistle and you don't bother about the referee, everybody stop and you say, that's wonderful, everybody stop, let me kick a goal now and you go and kick a goal and you kick another goal and you kick another goal, the referee will say, just bring the ball back, there are no goals, you committed a foul here two minutes ago and nothing is counted till you set this foul right and then you're going to humbly bring the ball back and you're going to set the foul right, all your goals are not counted because he blew the whistle.

Now what's the application of this for our Christian life? When you find in your conscience a whistle is blown by the referee, you have done something wrong, you spoke in a harsh way to your wife, you did this wrong or that money that you took was not right, you know what happens after the whistle is blown? Whatever you may do for the Lord is not counted. Every goal you scored, not counted, the Lord says come back, set this foul right, go and apologize to your wife, don't go and do evangelism, go and apologize to your wife first, all the goals you score will not be counted, do you understand that?

Let the peace of Christ be your referee, if you follow this referee, you'll never go wrong and how long are you going to wait till you obey the referee, have you seen football matches where they are arguing with the referee, no I didn't do a foul, who wins finally? The referee or the player? Always the referee, the referee's word is final, he'll give him, I don't know, what is it a yellow card or red card or various cards they give to sometimes send them off the field if they argue too much, so don't argue with your referee because he may send you off the field completely, whatever card it is to send you, say okay Lord I'll do what you say, set it right and then move on, what is the referee's sound, how do you know the whistle is blown?

You lose your peace, the peace is the referee, peace is gone, you're agitated, troubled about something, if you come to a church meeting agitated, you should not open your mouth because that agitation will come out of your mouth, never speak when you're agitated at home, if you're agitated about something, the best way you can bless your wife is by keeping your mouth shut, remember that, when you're agitated, the referee is blown, set that foul right, every time your heart is agitated, something is wrong and then he goes on to speak about something very similar to what we read in Ephesians and chapter 5, give thanks in everything, verse 17, do everything in the name of Jesus and then wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, masters, all the way from 318 to 411, one more thing before I proceed, verse 15, he said not only about this referee but he said be thankful for one another and he's speaking about the body here at Greeks and Jews and circumcised, verse 11, it's one very important requirement in the body is to learn to be thankful for one another, I want to encourage you to listen to the referee and be thankful for your fellow believers and in the family, we already considered our wives and husbands and slaves and masters and children and parents must behave, it says, fathers, verse 21, don't exasperate your children, don't keep on nagging them, nagging them, nagging them, nagging them, nagging them and they'll get discouraged, bring them up in a good way, husbands, verse 19, don't be bitter against your wife, what a word, in 365 days in a year, how many days are you permitted to be bitter against your wife?

Not even one, when the Bible says don't murder, how many days in a year are you permitted to murder? Not even one, when the Bible says don't be bitter against your wife, how many days are you permitted to be bitter against your wife? Not even one, but some people think, yeah, murder is serious but being bitter

is not so serious, who said that? God, the same God who said don't murder also said don't be bitter against your wife and if you're a serious Christian, you'll strive to that goal where you're never bitter against your wife even for a single day in your life, you'll be thankful.

Okay, masters, treat your slaves fairly, give them good wages, pay them properly, devote yourself to prayer, verse 2, verse 6, be careful about your speech, let your speech always be with grace so that you always know how to reply to each person who talks to you. In everything that we say to people in our conversation, there must always be grace. Like I often told you, you may speak like a lion in the pulpit as a man of God, as a representative and mouthpiece of God, but in your conversation, be like a lamb, always with grace, always with kindness and mercy.

We move on to verse 12, here is a man called Ephaphras, the man who established the church there, he says he's always praying for you, Paul says, what is he praying for? That you people may become perfect. You know, this was the burden of the apostles, that every brother and sister must become perfect in Christ, fully assured in the will of God. They were not happy with converts, they were not happy even with people who became disciples, they wanted those disciples to become perfect, they worked with them, they were not so busy doing evangelism that they didn't have time to build a church to make people perfect.

That's God's plan for today. And then, verse 16, he says, there's a letter I've written to the church in Laodicea, we'll come to the church in Laodicea in Revelation chapter 3, but notice here that Paul wrote a letter to them, and if they had listened to that letter and taken heed to what Paul wrote, they wouldn't have gotten to that problem that we read in Revelation chapter 3. Now that letter is not found in scripture, we don't know where it is, God has not included it, but I'm sure it was full of some prophetic exhortations that could have saved that church in Laodicea from the problem they faced. Sometimes God sends a prophet to you to give you a word, you don't listen to him, years later you suffer because of that.

Lastly, verse 17, he says to Archippus, it's a beautiful exhortation, take heed to the ministry which you received from the Lord, that you fulfill that. He's not saying about what ministry other people have received, leave them alone. God has given you a particular ministry, fulfill it.

That was his exhortation. There's a man mentioned here in verse 14 called Demas. Demas at that point was a co-worker of Paul, fulfilling the ministry God called him for.

After a while he got diverted and got attracted to the things of the world as we read in 2nd Timothy 4 and went astray. And Paul had experiences like that with some of his workers, so he told Archippus who was in Colossae, you're a young brother Archippus, God has given you a ministry, he's got a plan for your life, he wants to do something through you and I say that to all of you, put your name in place of Archippus there. I put my name in place of Archippus there when I was a young man, I read this verse and I heard the Lord saying to me through this verse, take heed to the ministry I have given you that you fulfill it.

Don't get sidetracked into something else and I want to say to all of you, don't get sidetracked into social work if God has called you to build a church. Don't get sidetracked to sit behind a desk if God's called you to evangelism or to a prophetic ministry or a teaching ministry. Take heed to the ministry God's given you that you fulfill it.

Amen. Let's pray.

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