

***"Paul's Letter to the Colossians, The Teaching as a Whole"***

**Our Outline Today: Colossians, The Teaching As a Whole:**

- ***The Exalted Christ and His Indwelling Are the Focal Point of God's Work***
- ***The Threat of New Age Judaism and Christianity Continues***
- ***True Spirituality Exhorts Us All to the Reckoning that Counts***
- ***The Transforming Power of God's Unlimited Grace Has Been Manifested***

**I. The Exalted Christ and His Indwelling Are the Focal Point of God's Work:**

***[READ ] Col. 1:19-22***

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

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

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

***22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:***

***...***

***[READ ] Col. 1:23-29***

***23 If ye [since or indeed] continue in the faith grounded and settled, and 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;***

***24 Who 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:***

***25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;***

***26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:***

***27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:***

***28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:***

***29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.***

- ***Here Paul addresses what seems to me to be the highest truth in this letter and it all has to do with what God is doing today in this***

*current dispensation of God, the one which is “of faith” and not the works of law (see Eph. 1 & 3 and 1 Tim. 1:4, best manuscripts).*

- *If he is to reveal anything at all in this summary statement of what the Christian life is to be like, what does he focus on but this dimension of the Mystery, the Sacred Secret revealed to and thought Paul for us who are members of Christ's heavenly Body church. This is the pinnacle of teaching here and all that follows depends on it. I have called these different aspects of the Sacred Secret or Mystery “dimensions” here but in fact they are rather more like the facets on a precious stone that has been polished as diamonds, rubies or sapphires are.*
- *Just how critically important this teaching is for Paul and us is made clear in the verses surrounding it in its context and flavor the meaning of everything else in the letter ...*
- *But the essence of this teaching is quite wonderful, but it is so different than what one might expect. These words stand out: “the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach ...”. Though written over 19 centuries ago, few today seem to know these transforming truths.*
- *For over 19 centuries, today few know them. That Christ dwells in his children today is still unknown while there is much talk of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, there is little talk of Christ himself indwelling. I wonder if many know what the Spirit's indwelling is all about also. Just think for a moment about the work of almighty God down through the ages. The Lord appeared to some down through history .... The Holy Spirit even came upon believers in some cases and has been promised during the coming Kingdom to fill believers to overflowing with the consequence that they fulfill the Kingdom Law. But the son of God has now come into The World and accomplished our redemption. And, quite miraculously he now dwells within all who have believed!!! Praise God for his unlimited grace and the truths that communicate it so powerfully that are set before us here today again. What a blessing!*

## **II. The Threat of New Age Judaism and Christianity Continues:**

- *What is the greatest threat to believers today? Now that is a very large question. But the Pauline answer to that question may not be what you would expect. Let us learn what his answer is:*

**[READ ] Col. 2:8-17**

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

**9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.**

**10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- *Explain gnostic context here ...*
- *So the real consequences of legalism in whatever form it takes, are many, but most simply, they involve a great loss spiritually. And, in the end, submitting to a legal standard ... only “satisfies the flesh”, or one might well hope. But in fact there is no “satisfying of the flesh” in reality since the flesh can never really be satisfied.*
- *That the flesh or sin nature can never be satisfied is a fundamental teaching of scripture and a major one for Paul...*

**Rom. 7:24-25**

**24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**

**25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.**

**1 Cor. 15:55-56**

**55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?**

**56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.**

- ***So it is all clear. But the power of the flesh and the enemy of us all is so clever in using the flesh RELIGIOUSLY. Instead of true spirituality, buildings are raised, ceremonies are performed, much effort, even art as majestic as anything mankind may have ever created, all done with an assumption that in and through all of this man is made closer to God or that he has amazingly been made closer to sinful man. All of this is a remake of the gnostic teachings of the first century of the sort Paul is outlining here with Mary and the saints in heaven and the church hierarchy on earth, all offered as intermediaries between a perfect and righteous God and sinful man. But, there is only "one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." And the ladder to heaven is on him alone, John 1:51, and 1 Tim. 2:5.***
- ***Paul writes of this in his final words in chapter 2 of Colossians where he highlights the glory of God and the blessings offered to those who will rest in the always sufficient grace through Christ alone:***

***Col. 2:18-23 [Now the rest of the story, what are the consequences of not hearing his institution as given in the earlier verses?]***

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

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

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

21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

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

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

### **III. True Spirituality Exhorts Us All to the Reckoning that Counts:**

- ***From the first words in this blessed letter until the last, the entire letter is about how God has worked, how he is working today, and how he will work in the future, even in eternity. When the subject***

***turns to our lives here and now, the subject is still about how God has, is, and will work, but the focus shifts to what our proper response should be to that working...***

**[READ ] Col. 3:1-4**

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.  
2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.  
3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.  
4 When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

- ***Here we see truth that cuts across all religious systems. For there is nothing here of a works-based righteousness. All that is written here speaks of the fruit that may be borne in the believer who is counting on, reckoning on, Christ's completed work for us sinners and who therefore is able to "put on" the clothing of righteousness. And, gloriously indeed, it is when Christ in us is manifested that we as we truly are in him may be manifested gloriously together with him. Amen and amen.***

**[READ ] Col. 3:5-13**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- ***So the reckoning that counts is well established against every new age and religious system and against even the fundamentals of all of the enemy's deceptive schemes, all of which in the end honor and glorify him rather than the Lord of glory and grace.***

***This is how God is working today under grace. Praise his name. May we receive this precious truth and live by it always, and share it everywhere.***

- ***What a privilege we have. May we by his grace fulfill it daily.***

#### **IV. The Transforming Power of God's Unlimited Grace Has Been Manifested:**

- ***At the very beginning of the letter, the apostle boldly stated that the transforming power of God's unlimited grace has been manifested and then at the end he reaffirms that by listing many in the Body by name. These were or would be perhaps soon well known to the Colossian believers.***
- ***But still there are so very few! There is no mega-church here, no multi-million dollar meeting hall with stadium seating and a sound and video system that cost much more than the private homes of most meeting there. There was nothing here in Colosse like that. In fact, it seems that this was a house church as was the one in Laodicea also referred to here as the church in the home of a believer named Nymphas. And, as we see in the letter to Philemon, the church in Colosse seems to be meeting in his home.***
- ***So the transforming power of God is highlighted at the beginning and at the end as what might seem to be the most significant work of God to be considered here in this letter. And yet the message of the letter is that that work could never be accomplished apart from the truth of the mystery itself and its bold proclamation. This should cause many to wonder about what appear to be the most significant works of God in this world today.***

***The first and the last portions of this letter highlight that dramatically, first by identifying the recipients of this letters as the working out of God's heavenly and redemptive power in and through them, and then at the end listing the names of many. That makes it so very personal. And, we should note, that the verses at the beginning also make it a reminder to them (and us) of how the Lord God worked in our own lives perhaps long ago. This is never to be***

*forgotten. If it is, we become vulnerable to the enemy's subtle influences as so many have who once believed on our Lord Jesus and then turned aside to more religious endeavors with the false teaching that usually accompanies them.*

*Let's read those verse now and as we do, let's remember how the Lord worked in us to the praise of the glory of his grace:*

**[READ ] Col. 1:3-6**

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

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

**5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;**

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

**[READ ] Col. 1:12-15**

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

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

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

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

- *So the transforming power of God's abundant and redeeming grace through Christ Jesus was clearly both revealed and then demonstrated to Paul and has been to us as well if we take his words to heart*
- *And then the personal names, all 9 of them. And they are not all leaders in the assemblies for even a redeemed slave named Onesimus is included!*
- *And in the letter to the Philippians he makes this wonderful and ever so encouraging proclamation, even including the names that were so prominently included in that letter, Euodias and Suntyche:*

**[READ ] Phil. 4:1-4**

**1** Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved.

**2** I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

**3** And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellowlabourers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

**4** Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

- *So what about us? Can anyone doubt that this includes us?*
- *What book is your name written in? Mine?*

**Application / Conclusions:**