

“Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, Living Above and Beyond This World System”

***Review: “In Christ Are All the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge,
Part 2” – Heavenly Living Versus New-Age “Christian” Religions***

- ***Our Identification with Christ Jesus and Its Consequence Is Extolled***

[READ] Col. 2:9-12

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

10 And ye are complete [made fullness] 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 [in death]

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.

- ***The contrast is now complete: in Christ [and only in Christ] “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”! The only sure and enduring blessings in this life therefore are in him! Though there are many proposed substitutes, none of them are truly satisfying or enduring. Their glory is short lived and as Paul writes in Philippians 3, those that dwell in them “glory in their shame”. Yes, if we have not eternal hope we may well “eat, drink and be merry” for a time, but before long it will be clear that next is death and then, the final judgment.***
- ***Our identification with Christ speaks to how God sees us “in him” at the cross and then in his resurrection to newness of life. The Lord God sees us in Christ Jesus with all that means. His death was once for all and his resurrection to a new life apart from sin and its consequences for us AND FOR HIM was as well. Romans 6 puts it in these terms:***

Rom. 6:6-11

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- ***So the reckoning that counts makes the difference, the apostle writes!***

But how do we see ourselves? Often, I am sad to say, we see ourselves bound by sin with its power and not at all as the Lord sees us as set free. Praise God for that liberty. Amen.

- ***So much has been imputed by Almighty God to us along with many transformations allowing us to participate in God's working in and through us!! The apostle now explains it all with these blessed and life transforming words in Colossians 2:***

- ***Verse 9: "... for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily": All that the false gnostic, new-age teachers were promoting was directly opposed to the truth concerning the risen and ascended Christ Jesus. They were teaching that Christ was far less than the truth here shows. Christ really was ALL, far more than can even be imagined, even the fullness (being filled to even overflowing) of the Godhead in bodily form no less!***

What had the false teachers been teaching the Colossian believers? They were teaching a mix of Jewish and Greek religion and philosophy much like many churches today teaching a "new" kind of Christianity, a 'new-age' religion that is NOT truly Christian at all. The Jewish "Kaballah" is still being taught today and that was apparently derived from the ancient Gnostic system which taught the following:

- ***God is perfect while man is imperfect.***
- ***There is a necessity therefore, they taught, for intermediaries, whether in the spirit world or in the natural world, angelic spirits on the one hand and teachers and administrators, on the other hand, in a hierarchy or order from lesser to greater. In this kind of religious system, authority and full submission is the word of the day. It is simply assumed that submission to the authorities is equivalent to submitted to Almighty God!***

- *Thereby there is a religious means of ascending from here in our earthly realm into the heavens by religious works.*
- *But this is so contrary to the truth, Paul writes here, for Christ is far more than those teachers knew — but the Colossians had been taught the truth and now needed to be reminded of that truth after the spiritual damage caused by the false teachers.*
- **Verse 10:** *“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power... : **Literally, here we read “and you are made fullness (to overflowing) in him”.** And he adds who “is the head of all principality and power”. We now see a little more of their teaching. For the Gnostics held that God was so far outside the realm where physical humanity dwelt that there was no way he could be approached apart from intermediaries, some of which are named here “principalities and powers”. Apparently they saw Christ as one of them, perhaps one on a lower level even than those named here.*

But Paul states the truth boldly that Christ is above them all!! Indeed he was since the Gnostic false teachers were being taught by demonic forces who were elevating themselves as intermediaries between God and man! Indeed, they were even created by him and he was therefore as their creator above them all. In Ephesians we see a similar teaching about the same thing in the parallel passage where the additional realms of intermediaries are listed as “might, and dominions”.

- *But there is so much more on the apostle’s heart and it is very practical, a teaching that cuts to the heart of the Gnostic religious and ritualistic system that revolved around the Jewish religious liturgical practices of circumcision and water baptism:*

- *Verses 11 & 12 say so much about this:*

Col. 2:11-12

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 *[in death]*

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.

- ***This circumcision and this baptism of which the apostle writes here are in no way the physical circumcisions or the physical baptisms that the Mosaic Law required of Jews and proselytes. For the circumcision and the baptism that is for today under grace has nothing to do with any of those rituals which the Jewish-Gnostic teachers were promoting. For this circumcision was Christ's own "death" circumcision and in the next verse, Christ's burial baptism, both of which we participate in as believers the moment we believe.***

Our identification with Christ includes both of these, and not those alone, but also his resurrection as our next verses state so powerfully. His resurrection also insured ours, first spiritually, and then finally physically:

- ***All Religious Schemes Are Contrary to the Working of Christ in Us***
 - ***So the Lord God works not through but above and beyond the religious trappings of the new-age religionists, ancient or modern. And he is not finished with his teaching on this subject:***

Col. 2:13-15

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.

- ***But there is so much more here seen in these next words and these are bold and powerful words indeed:***
 - ***Verse 13:*** "are dead", "quickened", forgiven": ***Past tenses, all, here. This has already been accomplished! By imputation, the Lord God sees us under this mantle or umbrella. But how do we see ourselves? Most believers have never heard this teaching.***
 - ***Verse 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”: ***This was both historical and revelatory indeed regarding the Law and the Cross. Who would have known apart from Paul’s teaching here?***

- ***Verse 15: “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”: “Led captivity captive” is found in the parallel passage in Eph. 4 and I am reminded here of that. The hierarchy of evil angelic agents in the heavenlies had plotted together to destroy Christ by crucifixion, but they failed instead by his cross work enabling the redemptive work of God and their own eternal defeat. This result was of course not anticipated by them in any way.***
- ***The message in these verses is that nothing can be added and much may be lost by turning aside from what the apostle had taught the Colossians. So his word to all was simply “beware”! This is a very strong word, but it is the right word! Our studies today and next time will fill in the blanks, as it were, in this teaching of the apostle Paul, and essential teaching today for all of us.***

Our Outline Today:

- ***The Dangers to Our Faith Are Often Subtle, Real and Powerful — Beware!***
- ***Our Defense Against Threats By New-Age Religions Is Sure — Know!***
- ***Only the Reckoning That Counts Makes the Difference in Life — Mortify!***

Our Outline Next Time:

- ***Only the Reckoning That Counts Makes the Difference in Life — Put Off!***
- ***Only the Reckoning That Counts Makes the Difference in Life — Put On!***
- ***Only the Reckoning That Counts Makes the Difference in Life — Dwell!***
- ***Only the Reckoning That Counts Makes the Difference in Life — Even When It Gets Tough!***

I. The Dangers to Our Faith Are Often Subtle, Real and Powerful — Beware!

- ***Our Proper Defense Against Spiritual Assaults Therefore Is Active Opposition. Those that do not oppose also teachings will likely fall under its spell in due time sad to say. And there were and are consequences practically as well, because this was not only a philosophy but also a religious system.***

- *We learned in our study on spiritual warfare that there are defensive preparations for the fight ahead that need to be made by all of us and in addition that we do have an offensive weapon provided by God, his Word of Truth. But we also learned that the only effect response to our circumstances in life is an active engagement with the enemy. This letter provides the framework for that ...*
- *Take special note of his reference to angels and seeing secret things.*

[READ] Col. 2:16-19

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.

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.

- *Now the exhortation, perhaps long expected although perhaps not long awaited by these Colossian believers:*
Verses 16 & 17: "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: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.":

- *There is so much detail here concerning the current crisis of faith in Colosse. All of these were Jewish and based on the Law of Moses. But those religious observances were never intended to be permanent for all time, he writes, for they all pointed forward (in type) to another time yet future when Messiah would rule this earth.*

The body causing the shadow was the appointed one, the Seed of the Woman, the anointed one, the Christ himself. But he has come, the apostle writes, and that has changed everything for now and therefore they cannot be more than mere anachronisms if still practiced today.

Those condemning scriptures were "nailed to his cross" even. So don't allow anyone to judge you regarding this, as you fail to participate in their rituals. And, by application, we should

be encouraged to live our lives independently of those religious systems as they were in Colosse. But the apostle is not finished for he continues:

Verses 18 & 19: “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, 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”:

- ***And then these words, getting even more directly to the heart if the matter, which was not only to do with a false system of worship but the spiritual errors behind that false religious system.***

And this is very easy to apply today, for the largest cults are caught up in these false teaching and religious practices even today. Consider the Mormons, for example. And I could name many more. The false and satanic worship of unseens (or the “seen”, even, is contrary to and destructive of the inward working of God in us corporately which is the life of the Body enlivened by the Head, Christ Jesus.

And do not forget that the largest so-called “christian” organization in the world is just another caught up in the same satanic deceptions.

- ***Paul’s exhortation continues as goes on, for he dwells on this subject, the Gnostic-Judaic religious system it seemed was so influential in Colosse:***

[READ] Col. 2:20-23

20 Wherefore if ye be dead [Lit. “If” or “since” you died] 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.

- **Verses 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”:
- ***These “rudiments” or “elements” of the satanic world system are again the center stage here as they were before. They are the spiritual foes who manage satan’s heavenly kingdom. They provide the order and structure of it and we know here how he is referring back to the principalities and powers, mights and dominions as also in Ephesians chapter 1.***

Now though, he highlights one of their techniques of management here on this earth — the ordinances or prohibitions, religious regulations supposed, they might say, to be based directly on the Mosaic system but, of course, suitably reinterpreted and selectively applied.

He then asks the rhetorical question “Why are you [still] subject to such requirements” to make his point even more strongly. And then he in asking the question also provides the sure answer: “you died with Christ from the rudiments of the world!” Amen.

Let’s all take this teaching to heart since it is so liberating in the current world in which we live not all that different from the first century world Paul lived in.

- **Verse 21 & 22:** “(Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?”: ***In other words, since the Law passed away for Jews and for Gentiles it had never been required, all of these regulations are according to the teachings of men and not God. Now that is a statement indeed, isn’t it? Do you believe it?***
- **Verse 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”: ***Now the concluding verse in the chapter, verse 23: There is a difficult translation issue here unless we take the words one at a time. For the KJV translation is actually pretty accurate to the Greek text.***
 - ***This is the Pauline evaluation of the Jewish-Gnostic false christian religion and it is so easy to see how what was being promoted in Paul’s day because the religious system of Rome***

in due time. May many who are caught up in these systems take full note here, for this is satan's religious system, not the true worship of the Lord. Amen and amen.

II. Our Defense Against Threats By New-Age Religions Is Sure — Know!

[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.

- ***“If” == 1st class conditional meaning “since” or “assuming the truth of”***
- ***This is positional truth, not conditional truth — these are statements of fact except for verse 2 with its exhortation.***
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- ***This will require some serious risk taking. Why?***
 - ***Because the world system itself is aligned against us***
 - ***Because our own nature seeks confirmation from around us***
 - ***Several key words are found in Paul's detailed exhortation:***
 - ***“Mortify”, “Put off”, “put on”, “dwell” in Christ's fullness of peace and the word indwelling with thankfulness with all gracefully! Enjoy!***
 - ***This is the reckoning that counts!***

III. Only the Reckoning That Counts Makes the Difference in Life — Mortify!

- ***So reckoning is the key to living above and beyond this world system. That is Paul's teaching and that is one of several truths that have changed my life. For there is such a dramatic difference (and eternally important between focusing our lives on gaining a practical, works-focused kind of righteousness on the one hand, and orienting our thinking on the other hand upon what Christ has already accomplished for us fully.***

In the one case we open up ourselves to the desire of the flesh to fulfill a law (and this encourages the flesh even further according to Paul in Rom. 7) but on the other hand taking God at his word by faith

allows ultimately our fruit-bearing as generated and empowered by the spirit of God.

- *But one might say that depending on this kind of motivation cannot be enough in comparison with what can be produced by our human nature. Witness the amazing things accomplished down through the ages of human history by the largest and most successful (it might seem) so called “christian” organizations with their truly awesome temples and world-wide good works campaigns. Compare that with the mostly invisible works of pastors, teachers, and missionaries with small budgets and little visible fruit, or house church ministries like this one.*
- *But what does Paul say?*

[READ] Col. 3:5-7

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.

- *But comparing these verses with what has been written in Romans and Galatians, we see there the hidden truth as to what these special words “Mortify”, “Put off”, “put on”, “dwell” really mean. This is most clearly taught as we have already seen in Romans chapter 6 where Paul uses a different word for the same thing, the word “reckon”:*

Rom. 6:9-15

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. [the positive]

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. [the negative]

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: [another negative] but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are

alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. *[the positive]*

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

- *Verse 14 here is so critically important. Law cannot help defeat the power of the indwelling nature of sin because it can never deal with the root of the problem. But the power of the flesh is effectually thwarted when we reckon as he writes later in the letter:*

See **Rom. 8:13**: For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall *[or about to, literally]* die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

- *So the reckoning that counts makes the difference. The promise of Rom. 8:13 is realized, he writes here in Col. 3, when we reckon [the “mortifying”] as he writes now here in this letter, that we have already put off, as it were, “the old man with his deeds” through our identification with Christ in his death.*
- *Having put off the old man, by reckoning on the identity we now have in Christ Jesus, having “mortified the deeds of the body”, we then also need to put it on, also by reckoning! The clothing analogy is used again here of removing the old so that new clothing may be put on in its place. It is a good analogy of the dynamic of living under grace. We will look into this next time, Lord willing! Amen. Enjoy the Lord of glory and grace!*

===== NEXT TIME =====

I. Only the Reckoning That Counts Makes the Difference in Life — Put Off!

- *[CLARIFY] So the reckoning that counts makes the difference. The promise of Rom. 8:13 is realized, he writes here in Col. 3, when we reckon [the “mortifying”] as he writes now here in this letter, that we have already put off, as it were, “the old man with his deeds” through our identification with Christ in his death.*

[READ] Col. 3:8-9

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;

- ***[REWRITE] Having put off, by reckoning on the identity we now have in Christ Jesus, the “mortifying”, we then also need to put it on, also by reckoning! The clothing analogy is used again here of removing the old so that new clothing may be put on in its place. It is a good analogy of the dynamic of living under grace.***

II. Only the Reckoning That Counts Makes the Difference in Life — Put On!

- ***So we see the whole dynamic of christian living here unfolded before our very eyes.***
- ***This is a dynamic situation, moment by moment, as the need expresses itself. It is not all at once and forever the same as so many teach through their perfection teachings or second blessings of pentecostals, charismatics, or the perfectionists. The next verses make that so clear and also highlight how important it is to have the knowledge that Paul is sharing here:***

[READ] Col. 3:10-14

10 And have **put on** the new *man*, which is ***[being]*** 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.

14 And above all these things **put on** charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

- ***As Christ sees it, all has already been accomplished and it may be incrementally accomplished in us moment by moment as we reckon upon the truths concerning what he has done and who he is. What we need is only to let him be who he is and not get in the way trying always to accomplish what we can never do. As always, the issue revolves around what God is doing today under grace — and what he is not doing.***

III. Only the Reckoning That Counts Makes the Difference in Life — Dwell!

15 And **let the peace of God rule in your hearts**, to the which also ye are called **in one body**; and be ye **thankful**.

16 **Let the word of Christ dwell** in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing **one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing with grace in your hearts** to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** to God and the Father by him.

- ***True Thanksgiving is not just a matter of the words chosen or spoken. True Thanksgiving is Grace Receiving ... the words in the Greek have the same root word meaning “free” or “undeserved”, “unearned”.***

IV. The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living – Even When It Is Hard!

Col. 3:18-25

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

20 Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged.

22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Chap 4 (Conclusions and many names)

1 He exhorts them to be fervent in prayer;

5 to walk wisely toward those who are not yet come to the true knowledge of Christ.

10 He salutes them, and wishes them all prosperity.

Col. 4:2-6

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.