

THE COMBAT-READY CHRISTIAN SOLDIER  
Colossians 2:6, 7

Intro: When you read the sixth and seventh verses of Colossians 2, you might ask, How can we get the idea of spiritual warfare, or readiness for warfare, out of those two verses?

My answer is that that idea runs through the first five verses of the chapter.

In verse 1 we have the idea of a struggle, a conflict. And Paul was carrying on this conflict by prayer, as his requests in verse 1 show.

Then I hope you remember the ideas that are suggested by the word "order" and "stedfastness" in verse 5. "Order" speaks of the spiritual discipline that the church at Colossae had experienced; "stedfastness" speaks of the solid front, the unbroken ranks, with which they faced the enemy. The Colossian church, according to Paul's commendation, could have sung that old hymn,

We are not divided, All one body we,  
One in hope and doctrine, One in charity.

There were no divisions in the church. The people stood together in their opposition against Satan and all of the forces of evil. It is no wonder that Paul was rejoicing over them as he, thinking about them, could visualize what a mighty, united force they were against the enemy.

Very few churches, I am sure, have ever deserved such a commendation as this! And yet this is what every church should strive for: unity in our hope, unity in our doctrine, and unity in love--thinking of the hymn I quoted a moment ago. When there are divisions in a church, and the people of the church are in conflict with each other, their power against the Enemy is greatly weakened.

So I hope that you can see why I have entitled my message, The Combat-Ready Christian Soldier. Perhaps I should have called it The Combat-Ready Regiment, but while verse 5 seems to speak of the Church, in going on to verses 6 and 7 the emphasis necessarily is upon each one of us individually. And so, first of all, I want to call your attention to:

## I. THE WORD, "THEREFORE."

This is a connecting word, an adverb, which points, in this case, to a sequence, or to the next point, in the thinking of the Apostle Paul. This shows that what Paul was saying in verse 6 is based upon what he had said in verse 5.

To remind you of an old saying, "When you come to the word "therefore," remember that it is there for a purpose."

As Paul went on with his letter, he was speaking to the whole army of believers in Colossae, and yet what he had to say could only be put into practice individually.

And so we come to:

## II. THE EXHORTATION (Col. 2:6).

The Christian life is a life of spiritual conflicts. It is a constant warfare with the Enemy of our souls. And that warfare is complicated by the fact that we have an old rebellious sinful nature within us, and we are living in a world which, as another hymn says, is no friend to grace! As the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 2:16,

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,  
the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,  
is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And so, believe it or not, the one thing that we need to be careful about is our walk, our daily living. And this is why I say that it comes down to how each one of us is going to respond to what the Apostle Paul wrote here.

This not the first time Paul has mentioned our walk. Cf. Col. 1:10a. In Paul's prayer in chapter 1 he indicated that one of the greatest reasons we have for knowing the truth of God (verse 9) is so we will be able to "walk" in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

In chapter 3, verse 7, Paul actually defined this word walk for us. (Read it.) To walk is a Biblical expression which indicates how we live! To walk in the way that pleases the Lord means that we are living in the way that pleases Him. We have been over this a number of times lately, but I want to make sure that all of us know what it means.

The word is found again in Col. 4:5. (Read.)

Paul's exhortation in our text is, "So walk ye in him." And to help us understand what is involved in walking in Him, walking in Christ, the first part of the verse linked with the latter part of the verse says,

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord,  
so walk ye in him.

Now look at the first part of the verse. What was Paul talking about? What does it mean to receive Christ Jesus the Lord? Why, this is what we did when we were saved;

we received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior! It was not long ago that those of us who are studying the Gospel of John each Tuesday morning discussed the verse that confirms this. Most of you know what that verse is:

But as many as received him (the Lord Jesus Christ), to them gave he power to become the sons (children) of God, even to them that believe on his name (John 1:12).

This verse tells us that receiving Christ is equal to believing in Christ, or believing "on his name." To become a child of God a person must put his trust in all that is represented by the Name: the Lord Jesus Christ, or as Paul stated it in our text, "Christ Jesus the Lord."

Becoming a Christian is not just a matter of agreeing to certain doctrinal statements. It includes that, but it is more than that. It is not joining a church. It is not turning over a new leaf. It is not trying to do better. A person who is a Christian will certainly want to get into a good church. He will want to live a different kind of a life. But those are all results of becoming a Christian. To become a Christian means that we trust in Christ, in Who He is, and in what He did on the Cross, in order that our sins may be forgiven and we may be the children of God.

As I have said before, salvation is not God's reward to us for anything good that we have done. Nor is it something which we and God do together. Salvation is a work of God, and we simply receive it by grace as God's free gift to us. Salvation is by faith, and faith alone. When we trust Christ to save us, we are admitting that we cannot save ourselves, that He must save us or we will not be saved!

But notice another thing in our text.

Paul said, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord."

There is a controversy going on among several Christian leaders as to whether or not, when we receive Christ as our Savior, we receive Him also as our Lord. Paul answered that question very clearly here, didn't he? He said that those Colossian believers had received "Christ Jesus the Lord." Of course, if He is our Savior, He is also our Lord. And if He is our Lord, then we owe Him the greatest amount of obedience that it is possible for us to give Him. He is the One Who has redeemed us, and He is the One Who has sovereign rights over our lives.

Recently our newspapers have been full of news regarding various countries which have been behind the iron curtain whose people have thrown off the yoke of their communist leaders. And we have seen pictures of people celebrating in various ways. And we have seen tears of joy. I think it still remains to be seen what the final outcome of all of this is, but it looks good for the present.

But as I have listened to the news, and looked at the pictures, while I know that it has been terrible for those people to live under God-less tyrants, yet I have asked myself several times, Are these people going to find that their "freedom" is as great as they think it is going to be? Is this what we need?

Let us look at our own country. We are a so-called "free nation." Are we a happy people? Are we safe in our homes and on the streets of our cities? When people are "free," do they make the right choices, the choices that lead to happiness and security?

Or let me state it this way: Do those of us who are Christians have the right to do whatever we want to do? Is this what our liberty in Christ means?

No, that is not what liberty in Christ means. We as Christians are the happiest and the freest when we live as those who are the bondservants of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are left to ourselves, to make our own decisions, we will make as many mistakes as anyone else will make. But when we trust the Lord to lead us, to control us, to guide us, to bless us, and when we live the way He wants us to live, THAT IS WHEN WE EXPERIENCE THE GREATEST PEACE, THE GREATEST JOY, THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR HUMAN BEINGS TO HAVE!

We have been set free from our sins. We are free from eternal judgment. We are free from the bondage of sin and death. BUT WE HAVE A NEW LORD. HIS NAME IS JESUS CHRIST. AND IT IS ONLY AS WE CONTINUE TO LIVE IN OBEDIENCE TO OUR WONDERFUL LORD THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE IN A STATE OF READINESS TO FACE OUR ENEMIES, THE DEVIL, THE WORLD, AND THE FLESH, AND OVERCOME THEM! Paul told us earlier in this Epistle that God has  
 ... delivered us from the power of darkness,  
 and hath translated us into the kingdom  
 of his dear Son (Col. 1:13).

WE HAVE TRUE FREEDOM WHEN JESUS CHRIST IS OUR LORD, AND WHEN WE JOYFULLY SUBMIT TO HIS AUTHORITY OVER US.

This is the way we are to live--trusting in the Lord, submitting to His rule over us, seeking above everything

else to do what pleases Him! "Walk ye in him" means to keep on walking in Him, trusting Him to enable you to do what you would not want to do, nor would you be able to do it, by yourself.

But what does verse 7 have to add to what we have already seen? This is:

### III. AN ELABORATION (Col. 2:7).

An elaboration is an enlargement, an expansion, a greater explanation of what has just been said. If we are to "walk in him," i.e., in Christ, this will mean that we need to be:

Rooted and built up in him,  
and stablished in the faith,  
as ye have been taught  
abounding therein with thanksgiving.

There are four participles in this verse which add to our understanding of what it means to "walk in" Christ. They are:

- 1) "Rooted."
- 2) "Built up."
- 3) "Stablished."
- 4) "Abounding."

#### A. "Rooted."

This verb indicates that when you and I were saved, we were "rooted" in Christ. But the form of the verb suggests that we were "rooted," we continue to be "rooted," and we shall be forever "rooted ... in him." We did not root ourselves. The participle is a passive, suggesting that someone else rooted us. And we know that that Someone was none other than the Holy Spirit. It suggests that just as a tree draws nourishment from the ground in which it is rooted, so we as believers continue to draw life and strength from our Lord. This the first step in what it means to "walk in Him." We cannot live to please God unless we are continually drawing upon the life of our Lord.

#### B. "Built up."

The figure of speech changes to that of the construction of a building. And it does not speak of a finished product, but of that which continues to be "built up" toward completion. This also is passive. Someone else is doing this for us, and it is the same Holy Spirit by Whom we are built up in Christ. We

trust Him, but we are learning to trust Him more. We are like Him, but we are increasing in our likeness.

C. "Established in the faith."

Do you remember what I have told you before about that expression, "the faith"? This is probably the closest expression that we have in the NT to a Doctrinal Statement. It speaks of the doctrines of Scripture. And it is in "the faith" that we are continually being established, or confirmed, or strengthened in what we believe.

The Colossians apparently first heard about Christ and the Gospel through Epaphras. See 1:7. But everything that Paul told them confirmed what Epaphras had told them, and so would it continue to be as they learned more and more about the Word of God.

Be sure to notice here how Paul brings Christ and the Scriptures together. If we are being taught the Scriptures in the right way, we are being taught of Christ. He is the central theme of all Scripture. If we are to "walk in" Christ, we need to be continually confirmed and strengthened by an increasing knowledge of the Word. This, too, comes to us through the Holy Spirit. He may use people, but He does the work.

Finally,

D. "Abounding therein with thanksgiving."

How tragic and disillusioning it is going to be for many east Europeans to find that life with political freedom can be just as enslaving as life under a dictatorship. Only Christ brings true and lasting joy. It does not come through democracy. We are learning that "the government of the people, and by the people, and for the people" can lead people farther and farther away from God and from Christ and from the truth of God.

Paul was indicating here that the safest and happiest life that it is possible for a person to live here on earth, one in which we can be continually "abounding therein with thanksgiving," is a life "rooted and built up" in Christ, and, at the same time, one that is being confirmed and strengthened daily by the precious and eternal Word of God: "the faith."

Concl: Next week we are going to learn more about the nature of this spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. But let me just say this much as I close today: The person who has been rooted in Christ, who is daily being built up in Christ, who is daily being established and confirmed more and more concerning the truth of the Bible, is not only the person who will be overflowing in the joy that he has in the Lord, BUT HE WILL BE ONE WHO WILL NEVER BE MOVED AWAY FROM CHRIST, WILL NEVER ACCEPT ANY SUBSTITUTE FOR CHRIST.

Look at Col. 2:6-8, and see how Paul said what I have just said to you, only in better words. (Read.)

I do not know who wrote the words that I want to read to you now, but whoever it was, he or she had really grasped the heart of what Paul was saying here in Colossians 2. And I close with these words:

O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found,  
And found in Thee alone,  
The peace, the joy I sought so long,  
The bliss till now unknown.

I sighed for rest and happiness,  
I yearned for them, not Thee;  
But while I passed my Saviour by,  
His love laid hold on me.

I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,  
But ah! the waters failed!  
E'en as I stooped to drink they'd fled,  
And mocked me as I wailed.

The pleasures lost I sadly mourned,  
But never wept for Thee,  
Till grace the sightless eyes received,  
Thy loveliness to see.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,  
None other name for me;  
There's love, and life, and lasting joy,  
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

THE BATTLE FOR YOUR MIND  
Colossians 2:8-10

Intro: My text for today is Col. 2:8-10. I have mentioned several times since we started Colossians that this is a chapter of warnings. And this is the first warning--a warning against "philosophy and vain deceit, ... the tradition of men, ... the rudiments of the world ..." And the warning is sounded by the word, "Beware"!

Let us look then, first of all, at

I. THE WARNING (Col. 2:8).

One of the functions of the Word is to warn us. Cf. Psa. 19:11, "More over by them is thy servant warned..."

Actually Paul had prepared the Colossians for this warning by his words in verse 4. (Read.) To "beguile" a person is to mislead him, to deceive him. And to do this it is common to use "enticing words." These are words which are designed to persuade you of something. They may be reasonable and convincing, and yet at the same time they can be contrary to the Word of God.

What Paul was actually saying in that verse was this: There are two great kinds of wisdom in this world. We have the wisdom of man on the one hand. On the other hand we have the wisdom of God. The wisdom of man takes many forms, as all of us know. There are many philosophies of life, but they all have two things in common: (1) they are humanistic; (2) they are not theistic. They may recognize the existence of a god of some kind, or even of one true God. But they are not dependent upon God. They are dependent upon man.

The wisdom of God is revealed wisdom. This is what we have in the Bible. It is wisdom that man could never have discovered if he had all eternity in which to do it. Man by himself is utterly incapable of understanding the wisdom of God. In fact, the Bible tells us that it is foolishness to him. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14.

Paul called this human wisdom "philosophy." This is the only time that this word is used in the Scriptures, but the idea of philosophy is referred to over and over again throughout the Word of God.

Literally "philosophy" means a love of wisdom. Our English word is a transliteration from the Greek. Paul was not criticizing true knowledge, nor was he condemning true education, but he was warning them about teachers, whether they be anyone from a university professor to some friend we know, or a perfect stranger who comes to our door--anyone who seeks to re-interpret the Word of

God, or anyone who adds to the Word of God, or anyone who completely ignores the Word of God. They are not out to rob us of something we have, i.e., not immediately anyway. They are out to win us over to their way of thinking. They will "spoil" us in the sense of leading us astray, leading us away from the truth of God, leading us away from Christ!

And what complicates the matter even more is this: what we believe affects the way we live. Creed affects conduct. Belief affects behavior. Doctrine always includes duty. Precept leads to practice.

Paul did not mention particular philosophies at this point. He was making a general statement, describing the true nature of all human philosophies, to tell us what the main problem with them is.

All human philosophies, although they may have some good things about them, as actually "vain deceit." Paul wrote this so that we could translate the beginning of this verse, "Beware lest anyone lead you astray through philosophy, which is vain deceit." That is, "vain deceit" describes the "philosophy." What Paul was describing were those systems of human philosophy which, when you examine them in their totality, you will find that there is really nothing to them. They will deceive you and get you to put your hope in that which is nothing!

Beware of the person who tries to tell you about God and about man, and how man should live, IF HE IS NOT DEALING WITH THE BIBLE AS IT IS. Much if not most of Christian psychology and philosophy today is nothing but humanistic teaching with a few Scripture verses thrown in to make it acceptable to Christians. But when you stand back and look at it, you see that it is not really according to the Bible, and it has no place for a pre-eminent Christ.

Paul gives them two other names to describe what he was talking about:

- 1) "The tradition of men." "Tradition" is not a bad word. Paul spoke of his own teaching as "tradition" in 2 Thess. 3:6. The word actually means the substance of what a person teaches. In 2 Thess. 2:15 Paul exhorted the believers in Thessalonica to "hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." It is a word for teaching, a giving over of instruction, whether it be by word of mouth, or by writing. Cf. Thayer, p. 481, 482.

But false teachers also are passing on their

traditions. Our Lord denounced the scribes and Pharisees with these words:

For laying aside the commandment of God,  
ye hold the tradition of men,  
as the washing of pots and cups:  
and many other such like things ye do  
(Mark 7:8).

But there is another term here that we need to understand:

- 2) "The rudiments of the world." Human wisdom is primarily concerned with this world, this life, what Lenski (p. 98) calls "physical, material things, with humanly invented rules and regulations regarding these things." Man's wisdom is concerned with the here and now, not with God and the hereafter. We continually hear that if man will do such and such things, then his problems will be solved. Listen to the teachers of this world's wisdom. If God is brought into things, it is only that He might help the troubled through their trials, but not that there must be complete dependence upon Him, and that He might get all of the credit and glory for the accomplishment of His will.

But the most condemning statement of all regarding the philosophies of men, although many of them are religious in character, is that they are not "according to Christ"! This means that they are not His truth. They are not personified by Him. They are not founded upon Him and His work. They are not dependent upon Him for their power and effectiveness. They are not glorifying to Him.

Years ago Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas wrote a book called, Christianity Is Christ. That is absolutely true. Take Christ out of the Bible, and you no longer have a Bible. Take Christ out of salvation, and there is no salvation. Take Christ out of the Christian life, and the commandments of Scripture are placed completely beyond the realm of possibility for any person.

Two very important world leaders are meeting this weekend in Malta. I am speaking of our President, George Bush, and the President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail S. Gorbachev. They represent two entirely different ideas of human government. They are concerned with peace and freedom and prosperity throughout the world. Let me ask you, How much time do you think that given to talking about the Lord Jesus Christ? Paul said to beware of any philosophy, be it communistic or democratic, if it is "not according to Christ."

This past week Mr. Gorbachev and the Pope met--again representing two great powers, one political, and the other political-religious. How much time do you think that they spent talking about the Lord Jesus Christ? And yet Paul told us to beware of any philosophy that is not according to Christ.

Think of all of the problems that we are facing in our nation--political, social, criminal. We have a crime problem that we cannot handle. We have drug addicts. We have people who are enslaved to drink. We have broken homes. There is dishonesty in government, in business, in the military, in personal lives. We have overwhelming problems wherever you look. And millions of hours are spent every week by people who are counseling those who are in trouble, whether they be "professional counselors" or just some friend offering advice, telling them how to get out of their troubles. Let me ask you: How much time do these counselors spend talking about the Lord Jesus Christ?

But let me ask you a more serious question than any of those others. There are thousands of churches throughout our land, and throughout the world. How many of them are proclaiming today the Person and Work of Christ as the only way of salvation, as the only way to God? How many of them are really preaching the Word of God as it is for people as they are?

BEWARE OF THE TEACHER WHO CLAIMS TO HAVE THE ANSWER TO THE MANY NEEDS OF PEOPLE TODAY, BUT HAS LITTLE OR NOTHING TO SAY OF CHRIST! BEWARE! BEWARE! BEWARE! CHRIST IS THE ANSWER! CHRIST IS THE SAVIOR! CHRIST IS THE ONE WHO SOME DAY WILL BE THE KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS! CHRIST IS THE VICTOR OVER SIN AND THE GRAVE AND HELL.  
THE PERSON WHO GIVES YOU HOPE, BUT WHO DOES NOT GIVE YOU CHRIST, IS GIVING YOU A FALSE HOPE. AND A FALSE HOPE WILL NOT ONLY LEAVE YOU IN YOUR SINS NOW, BUT IT WILL LEAD TO A CHRISTLESS ETERNITY IN AN ETERNAL HELL!

I implore you to listen to what people have to say about Christ. If it gives Him the place He is given in the Bible, the pre-eminent place in creation and in the church, they accept what they say. But if it does not, turn a deaf ear to them. There is no real truth apart from Christ.

But let us look at the reasons that Paul gave for saying what he said in verse 8. His reasons go on down through the rest of this chapter, and the rest of the Book, but I am thinking especially of verses 9 and 10.

## II. THE REASONS FOR THE WARNING (Col. 2:9, 10).

Remember that Paul was writing to "the saints." He was writing to true Christians, those who were saved, those who believed in Christ as their Savior and Lord. The second reason, especially, applies only to the Lord's people.

## A. Reason #1: Col. 2:9.

Just think for a moment about what this verse tells us. This is a statement which cannot be made of any other person who has ever lived! Do you realize that? There can be no question as to whom the Apostle Paul was referring.

Do you remember Col. 1:15 and 17 and 19 and 20 and 21? Do you remember Col. 2:3 and 6 and 7?

When you and I have Christ, we have GOD! And what could be greater than that? Or who could be greater than God is? All that is in God Almighty, is in Christ.

And it is in Him "bodily," meaning that He was not "the fulness of God" only in His preincarnate state, before He became a man, but even as a Man He continued to be "the fulness of God," and so will He ever be!

If you turn away from Christ, you turn away from God and all of the sufficiency of God, the God to Whom nothing is impossible. And the only place you can turn is to some finite creature, even though he might be an angel, and certainly if he is a mere human being like you are.

But there is another reason for not turning away from Christ.

## B. Reason #2 (Col. 2:10).

Will you think about this for a moment? What a tremendous truth this is!

Not only is all of God in Christ, but all of Christ is in you. And if you have Christ, who else do you need? God asks nothing of you that you do not have in Christ. Nor does God expect anything from you except what Christ can and will enable you to be and to do.

I can understand why those who are not Christians would seek help from humanistic councilors, and follow human reasoning and advice, but how can you explain a Christian who turns from the Christ of the Bible to AA, or to non-Christian advice wherever it might come from?

And how did Paul describe our Lord here?

He is "the head of all principality and power." This is an expression of our Lord's supreme authority. He is sovereign over all created powers, whether it be Satanic, or the good angels, or Presidents, or Dictators, or generals, or governors, or mayors, or whatever authority there might be. CHRIST is THE HEAD over them all. They do His bidding (whether they know it or not), and are under His authority.

So, if He is sovereign over the greatest, it goes without saying that He is sovereign over everything else. And He is sufficient for your problem, whatever it may be, but your problem must be handled in His way, not yours.

Oh, what a wonderful Savior we have! And what a pity it is that we trust Him so little, and usually as a last resort!

Concl: Satan is behind all of the false philosophies of men. Even in the Garden of Eden he was pushing his philosophy of life. And the battle to control our minds has continued from that day until this. The last days are to be marked (and are marked) by people who turn away from the truth of God to fables (cf. 2 Tim. 4:4)--and that is all that is left when we forsake the truth.

Oh, dear people, stand by the Word of God. Search its pages. Ask God to teach you, to open your eyes and your ears and your heart to the Word and to Christ. The only way you can recognize error is by know the truth of the Bible, which means knowing Christ Who is the truth. It is always easier to lean on somebody we can see rather than on Christ whom we cannot see, but we need to be like Moses who forsook Egypt, its power, its position, and its philosophy, "for he endured as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27b).

The battle for our minds is fierce and continual, but holding fast to Christ we can be kept walking in Him victoriously and joyfully--all to the glory of God.

UNION WITH CHRIST  
Colossians 2:11-13

Intro: One thing we can always be sure of in the work of the Lord, and in our lives as Christians, is that we are going to face opposition. Temptations will be put in our way. False teachers are always around. We, ourselves, are very often inclined toward discouragement. Just yesterday I was reading in The Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne, that he wrote these words on May 22, 1936:

O Lord, when Thou workest,  
all discouragements vanish;  
when Thou art away, anything is a discouragement  
(p. 42).

And then he spoke of those days in which we see God at work as "one of a thousand."

The Christian life is a constant battle, and the same is true of the work of the Lord. The Enemy and his demonic forces see to it that we are being bothered by trouble from the outside, or from trouble within. Living in a world like this, with men's hearts (including our hearts) like they are, and the Devil doing what he is doing, it is amazing that we see any good days at all. But thanks be to God, and to Him alone, we have many good days. However, we can never let our guard down. We always need to be on the alert for trouble.

All that I have been saying was true of the Colossian church back in the first century. The world was the same then that it is today. The same Devil was at work then, tempting people either through their flesh or the minds, or both. And the Colossian believers were just like we are: on their way to perfection, but not fully perfected.

We can see from verse 5 that there was much to be thankful about in the Colossian church. (Read 2:5.) But from that point on the whole chapter speaks of imminent danger, danger from false teachers and false teaching. Some of it pointed backward to the Mosaic Law, teachers who were trying to revive the Law with its ordinances and ceremonies and special days, such as we have in verses 16 and 17 and 20 through 23. On the other hand there were teachers who were claiming to have revelations which went beyond the Scriptures, and beyond the teaching of the Apostles, and beyond Christ, such as we see in verse 18.

The false teachers would have argued that they had the same objective that the Apostle Paul had: How people can live above their weaknesses and temptations, how they can break their bad habits and living happy, peaceful, and perhaps, prosperous lives.

Paul's big argument in the this Epistle is that the child of God has all that God intends for him to have in Christ! And Paul taught that the child of God has all that he will ever NEED in Christ! Christ gives us victory over sin. Christ gives us victory over the world. Christ gives us victory over the Devil. To put it all "in a nutshell," Paul was declaring in this Epistle, THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST!

What do I mean when I speak of THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST?

I mean that it is the teaching of Scripture that Christ is all we need to make us pleasing to God now, in this life, or hereafter. Christ is all we need to live victoriously over temptation and sin. Christ is not only our Great Example, but He is our Life. Teachers who stop short of Christ, or teachers who want to take us beyond Christ, are the voices of antichrist. They do not believe that Christ is enough.

This is a note which needs to be sounded today in our churches. Listen carefully to the teacher who impresses you. He may say a lot of good things, a lot of sensible things, but that is not the main thing to be concerned about. You want to listen to what he (or she) has to say about Christ. If their teaching is not dependent upon Christ, if it is not glorifying to Christ, if it is not teaching that you can clearly see in Scripture, you are listening to one who is an enemy to Christ and to the truth.

And remember that the Devil is the Master Deceiver. And also remember that you and I are easily deceived--very easily deceived. That is the reason God has given us His Word, and that is why He has given us the Holy Spirit to teach us His Word. So, as Paul said in verse 8 of this chapter, "Beware." Just as surely as you and I are here this morning, the Devil is going to be doing all that he can toward all of us, to get us away from trusting only in Christ, and believing only in the Word of God.

Now let us look at our text.

Before I get into the explanation of these verses, let me say two things about them, and then point out two phrases which are the key to these verses.

The two things are these:

- 1) This is probably the deepest and most difficult passage in this Epistle.
- 2) This is probably the most important passage in the Epistle. If we understand what Paul has written here, and see its relationship to the problems that he was discussing, and then by faith act upon these truths, the victory will be ours. I am not offering you some little

plan I have worked out. My plans are no better than anyone else's plans. I want to give you God's truth. Then you can be sure that you are hearing what you need to hear.

Now, the two phrases I want you to notice are these:

- 1) "In whom."
- 2) "With him."

The child of God who does not understand these little phrases does not really understand, as he or she should, what a Christian is, nor how the Christian life is to be lived.

Let me repeat that. (Repeat it.)

"In" is a preposition; "with" is also a preposition. These are words which link a noun or pronoun to some other word in the sentence to make the meaning clear. Other prepositions are words like by, for, to, at, and many others.

Prepositions are among the most important words in your Bible. So you young people pay close attention when your teacher at school is explaining to you about prepositions (or any other part of speech). Let me explain what I mean about prepositions.

Look at verses 1 and 2 of our Epistle. (Point out how Paul used prepositions.)

Now let us look at our text.

#### I. UNION WITH CHRIST (Col. 2:11-13).

- A. "In whom ye also are circumcised" (v. 11).
- B. "Buried with him" (v. 12).
- C. "Risen with him" (v. 12).
- D. "Quickened together with him" (v. 13).

By "union with Christ" I mean that something happened to Christ, and because we were united by God to Christ, what happened to Him also happened to us.

We are told in this passage of "the circumcision of Christ" (v. 11b), and that we were circumcised in Him. We are told about the burial of Christ, and that we were buried with Him. We are told about the resurrection of Christ, and that we were raised with Him. And we are told about the quickening of Christ, and that we were quickened with Him.

We are talking about the work of Christ from God's point-of-view. What happened to our Lord on the Cross, in the grave, on that resurrection morning, and ever after that was not as our Substitute, in our place. And all that Christ accomplished by His death and resurrection was for our benefit. We died with Him. We were buried with Him. We were raised with Him. And we were quickened, or have life, with Him. Our salvation is inseparable from Christ. If Christ is taken from us, we have nothing. That is the reason you and I need to be careful that our teachers are talking about Christ, and only Christ, where salvation is concerned.

But now let us see what Paul had to say about circumcision, burial, resurrection, and quickening.

## II. THE WORK OF CHRIST (Col. 2:11-13).

Let us think, first of all, about

### A. "The circumcision of Christ" (v. 11).

We know from Luke 2:21 that our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised when He was eight days old. But this verse cannot be talking about that because we are told that our circumcision "in him" was "made without hands." So this means that the Apostle Paul was speaking of something that happened to our Lord, which also happened to us, that is pictured by the OT teaching regarding circumcision.

Circumcision is first mentioned in Genesis 17:9-14. It was a token, or seal, of the covenant that God had made with Abraham. Romans 4:11 tells us this:

And he (Abraham) received  
the sign of circumcision,  
a seal of the righteousness of the faith  
which he had yet being uncircumcised:  
that he might be the father  
of all them that believe,  
though they be not circumcised;  
that righteousness might be imputed  
unto them also.

The important thing about circumcision was not the act, but it was what it pointed to. It was done in faith. It pictured salvation in the sense that it was a cutting away of the flesh and the purification of the circumcised person through faith.

Circumcision, therefore, shows that which is necessary for salvation:

- 1) The renunciation of the flesh.
- 2) Purification to make the sinner acceptable to God.

Now, when you see "the circumcision of Christ" placed just before Christ's burial, resurrection, and quickening, what can it mean but the death of Christ. "The circumcision of Christ" was the death of Christ.

"The circumcision of Christ" indicates that by His death He put away our sins so that they were no longer on Him. But it also indicates that He conquered sin in our flesh, thus clearing the way for us to be acceptable with God.

The Jews of the OT and of our Lord's time, and perhaps down to the present day, have interpreted circumcision as having a saving benefit in itself. But without faith, and without the eventual death of Christ, the rite of circumcision meant nothing.

Let me remind you of Romans 2:28, 29:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

What did the circumcision of Christ accomplished? Verse 11 tells us that it was the "putting off the body of sins of the flesh." Christ died in a human body, and by His death He put to death, He completely conquered our sins, not only those sins which had been committed, but the source of those sins, "the body of sins," that is, the nature which produced those sins. We will not benefit fully from this until we are with the Lord, but the provision has been fully made at the Cross.

But let me now go on to speak of

#### B. "Buried with him in baptism" (v. 12a).

Again, let me say as I said about circumcision, we are not speaking here about an ordinance. If that is what Paul meant, i.e., water baptism, you would have baptismal regeneration. We would have to teach, then, that you cannot be saved unless you are baptized. But that is not the teaching of Scripture. No, what we are concerned with here is the meaning of

baptism. What is it?

Obviously it pictures a burial. And it pictures a cleansing.

Do you remember Micah 7:19?

He will turn again, he will have compassion  
on us; he will subdue or iniquities;  
and thou shalt cast all their sins  
into the depths of the sea.

The burial, pictured in baptism, speaks of the finality of the work of our Lord. Our sins were put away, never to be remembered against us any more.

But we are not through.

C. "Risen with him" (v. 12b).

Here we see the triumph of the Lord over death, over the grave, and, what is most important, over S-I-N! And we show that we are benefiting from that death by our faith, faith in "the operation of God. The true child of God does not look upon salvation as a work of his own, but as a work of God. God raised our Lord back to life, and God thus guaranteed our salvation and, eventually, our resurrection as well.

And then one more point. I will deal with verses 14 and 15 next week, the Lord willing.

D. "Quickened together with him" (v. 13).

Quite obviously, in order to be raised there had to be a quickening, a return of life. But Paul evidently added this to show the continuing nature of our salvation. He traced the whole story of salvation in this verse:

- 1) What we were.
- 2) What has become of us.
- 3) Why it will continue on forever. If God has forgiven us "all trespasses," and He has, then our case is closed, and our salvation is assured forever!

Concl: Now let me ask you a question in conclusion--maybe a couple of questions. Do you believe that every person who has ever lived was crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, raised with Christ, and guaranteed life in Christ? If you do, then you have to believe that everyone will eventually be saved. If we died with Christ, it could not have been when we accepted Christ; it had to have been

when He died! The same is true of His burial, and of His resurrection, and of His life forevermore! And so it must mean that Christ died and accomplished a complete and effective work for all who had believed in Him, and all who would ever believe in Him. Christ did not die just to provide salvation in the hope that some would trust in Him. He died to guarantee the salvation of all whom the Father had given to Him from all eternity. The Bible calls them "the elect of God."

Let me read these three verses again as I close, but I am going to read from the New American Standard Bible.

And in Him you were also circumcised  
with a circumcision made without hands,  
in the removal of the body of the flesh  
by the circumcision of Christ.  
Having been buried with Him in baptism,  
in which you were also raised with Him  
through faith in the working of God,  
who raised Him from the dead.  
And when you were dead in your transgressions  
and the uncircumcision of your flesh,  
He made you alive together with Him,  
having forgiven us all our transgressions.

There is no salvation but in Christ. He is the Savior provided for us by God. The promise is made to all who will believe. The doctrine of election is God's way of telling us that there are many who will believe. We preach to all, and we promise salvation to all who will believe. And, as sinners turn to Christ, then we can see who the elect are, and then we can know in that respect what God has known from all eternity.

THE CROSS, THE LAW, AND THE DEMONIC BEINGS  
Colossians 2:14, 15

Intro: This is the time of the year when the world is made conscious of the coming of Christ into the world. At Easter the focus is upon the death of Christ on the Cross. Both of these events are extremely important to every true Christian. But often you will hear people discussing the question, Which is the most important, the birth of Christ, or the death of Christ?

When we come to the Scriptures we see that they are inseparable. The death of Christ would have been impossible without the birth of Christ, and the reason for the birth of Christ is most clearly seen in His death. But it is important that we believe what the Scriptures teach about His birth, i.e., that He was the Son of God Who became a man, or His death has none of the significance attached to it that is at the foundation of Biblical teaching.

The birth of Christ teaches us that God was doing something that had never been done before, something which could only be accomplished by the incarnation of His eternal Son. And understanding the death of Christ enables us to see what God was really doing. So, the birth of Christ made possible the death of Christ, and the death of Christ shows us why our Lord was born.

Let me compare the two events in another way.

I have been saying on Tuesdays at our Bible Class that is held in this room, that our Lord had two reasons for coming to the earth:

- 1) He came to earth to complete the revelation that God had been making of Himself from the beginning of creation. The OT tells us much about God. The prophets reveal to us His righteousness and His mercy. But it was not until our Lord came, being "in the form of God," that the revelation was complete.

But He had another purpose in coming.

- 2) He came to provide salvation for sinners. All who lived and believed in the promises of salvation were dependent upon His death for their salvation. Without His death their faith would have meaningless. But all who would live after His death were likewise dependent upon His death--and not only His death, but also His resurrection. The Bible, which is God's word, does not recognize any salvation except that which God has provided for us in Christ. That is the reason we can truthfully say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Now, in coming to the Epistle to the Colossians, Paul has emphasized both of these points, the two purposes that the Lord Jesus Christ had in coming into the world:

- 1) We have the first one, His incarnation, in Col. 2:9.
- 2) We have the second one, His sacrifice on the Cross, in, for example, Col. 1:20.

These are not the only places that Paul referred to these two important truths concerning our Lord, but they will serve to illustrate the fact that he, Paul, has included both:

Christ's Person (which is traceable to the miraculous nature of His birth), and Christ's Work, a term which is usually applied to His work on the Cross.

So both of these are important, and it is foolish to try to determine which is the most important.

Now I have covered all of this to raise two questions to show us why Paul has written as he has in chapter 2, this chapter of warnings. The first is this:

- 1) Since Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who could possibly tell us more about God than He can? Or, to state us another way, since He is the Son of God, who could possibly show us more of what God is like than He can?

I am sure that we would all agree that no one could surpass our Lord in either case.

But let me ask a second question:

- 2) Since Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and has fully satisfied God by His death, what could any other teacher, or any other person, do for us that we do not already have in Christ? Did our Lord leave anything out in providing for our salvation? Was His work on the Cross incomplete in any way?

Again we would have to answer that His work was perfect. Nothing needs to be added. Nothing can be added. He is, as Heb. 7:25 tells us,

... able also to save them to the uttermost  
that come unto God by him,  
seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

"To the uttermost" means completely, or perfectly. What can be better than that?

Now I hope you see that I am putting you into a corner.

Let me state it this way, then: IF CHRIST IS THE COMPLETE REVELATION OF GOD, AND IF CHRIST, BY HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, HAS PROVIDED A PERFECTION SALVATION FOR US, WHY SHOULD WE THEN LISTEN TO ANY TEACHER EXCEPT THAT TEACHER WHO WILL BE ABLE TO HELP US TO KNOW CHRIST BETTER AND TO UNDERSTAND HIS WORK AT CALVARY MORE THAN WE DO NOW? AND SUCH A TEACHER IS NOT GOING TO LEAD US AWAY FROM THE BIBLE, BUT INTO THE BIBLE IN GREATER DEPTH.

This is what Paul was doing here in this Epistle to the Colossians. He was trying to show them what they had in Christ so that they would not be tempted to turn to other teachers who would lead them away from Christ. If "Christ in you" is "the hope of glory," then any other hope is a false hope, and can only lead to despair and to final judgment.

If every Christian could only ask and answer these questions truthfully, false teachers would not have the success that they do in pulling people away from the truth.

Last week, from verses 11-13 here in Col. 2, we saw that:

- 1) When Christ died, all true believers died.
- 2) When Christ was buried, we were buried.
- 3) When Christ was raised, we were raised with Him.
- 4) When Christ was quickened with a life that cannot end, the same was true of us.

We did not enter into that until we were saved, but He did all that He did for us, and we were in Him. Everything that Christ accomplished on the Cross was for us! He is our sufficient Savior and Lord. He has not only delivered us from sin's penalty (eternal death), but from sin's power, and, as we learned in Col. 1:22, He guaranteed by His death that we will be present before God and in God's sight, "holy and unblameable and unreprovable."

Since God is satisfied with the work of Christ, why should we seek anyone but Christ.

The Colossians were in danger of following teachers who did not believe in the sufficiency of Christ, that Christ Himself is all we need.

The two verses we are considering today are really a part of the three verses we had last Sunday. They complete what Paul was saying about the work of Christ at this point in the Epistle. And I need to take the last phrase of verse 13 to add to verse 14 so that we will get the full meaning of what Paul was saying. (Read vv. 13b-15.)

Here Paul was thinking about

I. THE CROSS AND THE LAW (Col. 13b, 14).  
2:

We are about to learn something else about the death of our Lord upon the Cross, and this will explain more fully why He had to die.

It concerns "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us."

By "the handwriting of ordinances" the Apostle Paul was

speaking of the Law which He gave through Moses. The word "ordinances" is the translation of the Greek word from which we get our word, dogma. It speaks of "rules and requirements" (Thayer, p. 154) which carried with them threats of punishments for any who did not abide by them. Paul was referring to these when he wrote in Eph. 2:15 about "the law of commandments contained in ordinances."

Exodus 31:18 tells us this when the Lord gave the law to Moses:

And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end  
of communing with him upon mount Sinai,  
two tables of testimony, tables of stone,  
**written with the finger of God.**

Going back to Col. 2:14, Paul said two things about this Law:

- 1) It "was against us."
- 2) It "was contrary to us."

This means that it was down upon us, and opposed to us. The Law did not reflect what man was capable of doing; the Law expressed what God required. And it was "against" man and "contrary to" him from the very beginning because, while requiring the highest standards of him, it gave him no help, and so utterly condemned him in the sight of God! As Paul wrote later in Rom. 3:20b, " ... for by the law is the knowledge of sin." And later in Rom. 7:13 he wrote,

Was then that which is good made death to me?  
God forbid. But sin, **that it might appear sin,**  
**working death in me by that which is good;**  
**that sin by the commandment might become**  
**exceeding sinful.**

And in Rom. 4:15 Paul said that "the law worketh wrath."

So the Law of Moses never saved. It could not save because man could not do what God required. The Law condemned. All people stand utterly condemned by the Law of God.

But what else does our verse say?

It says that the Lord has done two things to the Law:

- 1) He blotted it out.
- 2) He "took it out of the way."

He has wiped it out. He has canceled it.

Does this mean that the Law no longer exists? No, it remains as God's standard of right and wrong. It still makes sin "exceeding sinful." The Law helps us to

understand what sin is.

But it is wiped out, canceled, blotted out, taken out of the way, because its demands have been satisfied. The Law demands death for all offenders. James 2:10 teaches us,

For whosoever shall keep the whole law,  
and yet offend in one point,  
he is guilty of all.

But One Who is of infinite value has offered a sacrifice of infinite value, so that the debt has been canceled for all who are "in Christ Jesus."

I need no other argument, I need no other plea;  
It is enough that Jesus died,  
and that He died for me.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians churches (3:10) he wrote,

For as many as are of the works of the law  
are under the curse: for it is written,  
Cursed is every one that continueth not  
in all things that are written  
in the book of the law to do them.

But then he added in Gal. 3:13,

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,  
being made a curse for us: for it is written,  
Cursed is ever one that hangeth on a tree.

WHEN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS, HE, IN EFFECT, NAILED THE LAW TO HIS CROSS, INDICATING THAT HE HAD MET EVERY DEMAND OF THE LAW, AND SATISFIED IT FULLY IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

The teachers of the Law would have you trying to do that. But you and I would have to spend eternity in hell if we were to try to save ourselves. Why would we ever turn from that which has satisfied God to some system that has not satisfied Him?

But I have one more point:

## II. THE CROSS AND THE DEMONIC, SATANIC FORCES (Col. 2:15).

Not only did our Lord by His death satisfy every demand of the Law, but He forever triumphed over Satan and all of his demonic forces. This is what v. 15 tells us.

The "principalities and powers" that Paul mentioned here are the same as in Eph. 6:12 where he wrote,

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,  
but against principalities, against powers ...

These are "the top brass" in the armed forces of Satan.

Earlier in this Epistle Paul had given thanks to God  
 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,  
 and hath translated us into the kingdom  
 of his dear Son.

Here we see that He did that at the Cross. This is where  
 the Devil and his forces were completely and permanently  
 defeated.

Our Lord "spoiled" them.

The word that Paul used here may have originated with  
 him. It is not found in Greek literature before his  
 time, and only afterwards when writers had Paul's  
 writings before them. Not only is it used here, but in  
 Col. 3:9, and the noun is in Col. 2:11. Bishop Lightfoot  
 suggests that Paul used it to picture the completeness,  
 the finality of our Lord's victory over Satan and all of  
 the forces of evil. They had repeatedly attacked Him  
 during His ministry, but our Lord's work at the Cross  
 sealed the doom of Satan forever.

(or by him (Christ))  
 i.e., by the cross.

He did this "openly, triumphing over them in it." He did  
 it boldly, confidently, assured of what He had done, and  
 that it would never have to be re-done. The Lord is  
 pictured here as the mighty Conqueror Who leads His  
 captives in His triumphant march.

Who else has conquered the Devil? Who else can enable us  
 to live in victory over the Evil One? There is no other.  
 Only Christ.

So again I ask, Would we leave the One Who has given us  
 victory over all of the powers of hell, and turn to  
 someone else who is himself a bondservant of the Devil?

We have not yet seen our Lord crowned as the Victor, but  
 that day is coming. In the meantime, what a blessing it  
 is for us to know that Christ has paid the penalty for  
 our sins, that He has delivered us from the power of sin,  
 that He has satisfied every charge that God has had  
 against us, and that He has soundly and permanently  
 defeated the Enemy of our souls.

Thus our Lord has crushed the serpent's head. He has led  
 captivity captive. The prince of this world is judged.  
 There has never been a war in which so much was won, and  
 won forever, as that in which our Lord came forth  
 victorious because of his death and resurrection.

Concl: Those who pervert the Word of God are still with us

today. Those who would turn us from Christ are still with us. But no one can give us what Christ gives. How could we ever turn from Him to anyone else, or anything else, which can never meet our needs before God.

Only by Christ can our sins be forgiven. No one but Christ can give us victory over sin in our daily lives. Christ is the only way to the Father and to heaven. He has satisfied the Law so that no charges remain against us in the courts of heaven. And our Enemy, while in the providence of God he still goes about seeking whom he may devour, yet is a defeated foe, and as Martin Luther wrote long ago, "his doom is sure."

How reasonable and important does Paul's warning in Col. 2:8 sound to us now, after seeing what we have seen in verses 9-15!

Therefore, make sure that He is your Savior, and never, never turn away from Him. "Christ is all" (Col. 3:11b). All others by comparison are nothing.

SHADOW OR SUBSTANCE—WHICH WILL IT BE?  
Colossians 2:16-19

Intro: Since it has been several weeks since I last spoke from this Epistle of Paul to the Colossians, let me give you a brief, four-point outline of the Epistle. This will serve as a review of what we have covered, bringing us all up-to-date, and will help us to anticipate what is coming. My text for today is verses 16 through 19 of chapter 2. But before we go to that, let us look at the whole Letter which Paul wrote.

Chapter 1 is Personal and Doctrinal. Paul introduced himself to the Colossian church, told them how he was praying for them (which caused him in verses 12 through 22 to bring out some very important points of doctrine. Then, from verse 23 on to the end, he told them why he had the authority to write to them as he was writing as he briefly described his calling and the nature of his ministry.

But when you think of the first chapter, think of the words, Personal and Doctrinal.

Chapter 2 is Admonitory and Doctrinal. An admonition is a warning. Paul was warning the church in this chapter against three errors:

- 1) Intellectualism, or human wisdom.
- 2) Legalism.
- 3) False mysticism.

The first one is in verse 8. The second is in verses 16 and 17. And the third is in verse 18. In verses 20 through 23, at the end of the chapter, he seems to have combined all three together in a final warning.

So, when you think of chapter 2, think Warning and Doctrine.

Chapter 3, and the first six verses of chapter 4, are Practical. Paul has touched on some practical matters in chapters 1 and 2, but the emphasis on the Practical is reserved for chapter 3:1 to 4:6.

From verse 7 to the end of the Epistle we have the Conclusion of the Letter. In it Paul told them he was sending Tychicus and Onesimus to them so they could tell the church things about Paul's circumstances in Rome about which he had not written. And then after sending greetings from others, as well as from himself, he brought the Epistle to a close.

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Now, in preparation for the verses we will be considering today (2:16-19), let me remind you of the nature of the

verses which lead up to verse 16. Let your eye run down from verse 9 through verse 15, and you will see that they are doctrinal--doctrine having to do with Christ, Who He is (v. 9), and then our completeness in Christ, "the head of all principality and power. Following this Paul told the Colossian church how believers have benefited from the death of Christ, His burial, and His resurrection. He concluded in verses 14 and 15 by telling them that Christ by His work on the Cross had completely satisfied the Law with all of its charges against them, and that He, according to verse 15, had defeated Satan and all of the forces of evil.

Paul's point in all of this seems to be this: If Christ has done all of this for us, what is there left to do? If He has provided for the forgiveness of our sins, if He has fully satisfied God, if through Him we have eternal life, if the Law no longer threatens us, if the Devil and his forces are defeated, what is there left to be done? And if there is nothing left that is necessary for our salvation, then why listen to teachers who are trying to add to what Christ has done?

Do you see what Paul was actually saying in these verses?

He was saying that the main reason false teachers win a hearing among the people of God is because the people of God do not know the truth of the Gospel as they should. When we know Who Christ is, then we will realize that NO TEACHER could possibly be as great as He is. And when we have even a general idea of what He accomplished for us on the Cross, then we know that what He did is all that needs to be done. So why listen to the teachers who claim that they can add to Christ and His work?

Make sure that you understand the Gospel. Continue to learn more and more about Christ and His Work on the Cross. The two things that will give us the greatest protection against false teachers are these (as we learn from Paul's Epistle to the Colossians):

- 1) A true and growing knowledge of Christ and the Gospel.
- 2) A life lived in obedience to the Word of God.

If we are weak in either of these points, we are going to have a lot of trouble handling the false teacher.

So you can see that verse 16 is not to be lifted out and considered by itself. The fourth word in the verse is the word, "therefore." This ties verse 16 in with what Paul had been saying, and shows us that if we know the truth about Christ, and understand His work, we are not going to be deceived by the Legalists. So let me call the first point of my text,

## I. THE WARNING AGAINST THE LEGALIST (Col. 2:16, 17).

What do we mean by the term LEGALISM?

Let me give you the dictionary definition of the term.

Legalism is defined in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, as "strictness, or the doctrine of strictness, in conforming to law, or, in theology, to a code of deeds and observances AS A MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION (emphasis and italics mine--p. 572).

I would add just three words to that definition. They would be "AND/OR SANCTIFICATION." So the definition would then read that Legalism is a code of deeds and observances as a means of justification and/or sanctification.

Some people believe that we are saved by keeping the Law of Moses. There are others who believe that it is necessary to add our obedience to what Christ is done in order for us to be justified before God. But I think that the biggest problem among many professing Christians is that they feel that we are sanctified by keeping the Law. And the interesting thing about present-day legalism is that it focuses its attention upon the observance of the Sabbath Day--even doing that which is never done in Scripture, MAKING THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK THE SABBATH! The Sabbath Day is the seventh day, Saturday, not the first day of the week. One word of credit we need to give to our Seventh Day Adventist friends is this (even though we do not accept all of their doctrine): THEY KNOW WHAT THE SABBATH DAY IS!

I want to be very clear on this. When I say that we are not under the Law, I do not mean that we no longer are responsible to avoid idolatry. I am not saying that it is now all right to swear, or to dishonor our parents, or to murder, or to commit adultery, or to steal, or to lie, or to covet. All of these are forbidden in the NT. But you can search your NT from beginning to end, and you will never find the command to keep the Sabbath Day.

And isn't it interesting that Paul put the observance of "the sabbath days" (plural), meaning all of the Sabbaths under the Law along side of eating only certain foods, the drink offerings, the feast days, and that which was to be done on "the new moon"--all of that is placed with "the sabbath days."

These are merely "a shadow of things to come; BUT THE BODY IS OF CHRIST."

Let me ask you to turn to Hebrews 10. I want to read to you the first part of that chapter (down to verse 18). This is the climactic part of the Book of Hebrews, the main point, the culmination of all that had been written up to this point. (Read.)

Let me add this.

Paul indicates in Romans 14 that some Christians feel that they can please the Lord better by being only certain foods. He does say that those who only eat herbs are "weak," weak spiritually. But he grants them that privilege. And he goes on to say that some believers feel that they should observe a certain day differently from what they do on other days. And that is all right. But we need to observe two precautions:

- 1) Do not make it a law that all Christians have to do what you are doing.
- 2) Don't make the restrictions you place upon yourself the basis of your fellowship with others. The substance, the reality, the body, is CHRIST. Our standing before God is in Christ, not in any of our needs. There was a day when people were to keep the Sabbath Day, but when Christ died on the Cross, that whole order came to an end. We are no longer concerned with the shadow, the Law, but with Christ!

If you know the doctrine of Christ, you will readily agree.

But now let us move on to the second point:

## II. THE WARNING AGAINST FALSE MYSTICISM (Col. 2:18, 19).

Some call this asceticism. In either case we are dealing in verse 19 with those false teachers who claimed to have special revelations of truth which were not known to others, revelations which went beyond and superseded the teachings of the Apostles, teachings which we now have in the completed New Testament.

There always have been, and always will be, those who claim to have a special connection with the unseen world. And they are particularly dangerous when they begin with Scripture, and then move on. Such seems to have been the case with some false teacher in Colossae.

Note his inconsistency. He taught humility, but he was "vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." The implication here seems to be that he was not a true believer, i.e., "his fleshly mind." Humility can be, and often is, used as a trap. True humility is attractive to the people of

God, but that which appears to be humility is often the greatest pride in disguise. That was the case here.

There are a number of problems connected with this verse, but the interpretation is not really affected that much by the differences. For example, some take the expression, "worshipping of angels," as meaning to worship the way angels worship. It does not seem to me that that would be a problem since angels often set the pattern for believers in worship. The other has to do with whether or not this person has seen "those things," or has not seen them. In a sense, both ideas are true. He claims to have seen them, but he really hasn't.

Therefore, I am going to take the verse as it is in the Authorized Version. We have here:

- 1) False humility.
- 2) Worshipping angels, which would be idolatry. But several reasons could be given by false teachers:
  - a) Angels were higher beings than men.
  - b) Angels assisted in the giving of the Law.
  - c) Angels were often commissioned by God for special works.

However, regardless of how great the good angels might be, they were still creatures in comparison with our Lord, the Creator.

- 3) Claiming to have special revelations.

The setting of this verse is the prize that is awarded as the result of winning in athletic competition. One commentator suggests starting the verse like this: "Let no one intercept the prize" (Eadie, p. 182). Perhaps we could illustrate it this way: A football player goes out to receive a pass in the end zone, a play which will win the game and perhaps secure the Heisman trophy for him. But just before the ball reaches him, it is intercepted by a player on the other team, and the game and the honor is lost.

Paul was not suggesting that the false teacher can take away a person's salvation, but he does say that it can mean a loss of rewards. What joy and honors await those who have faithfully stood by Christ and His Word, turning a deaf ear to all who would either corrupt the Word, or add to the Word in any way.

But what is the chief problem with such teachings as we read about verse 18, in addition to the obvious fact that they are not true?

It is that the false teacher, and all who follow him, are "not holding the Head...." What does this mean?

Let me quote what one writer has to say about this. He first mentioned that the word "holding" suggests a tenacious hold. We need to be so devoted to Christ that no one nor any thing will cause us to release our hold on Him. But all false teaching has the character of drawing us away from Christ. This is how it would happen in Colossae according to this commentator:

If they worshipped angels, they could not adore His person. If they insisted on circumcision and ascetic penances, they depreciated the merit of His work. If they preached the permanence of Mosaic ceremonies, they mistook the spirit and lost the benefit of the system which He had founded. They did not hold the truth as to His person or His work, His government or His dispensation. Those errors on vital points were fatal. So long as cardinal truths are held, many minor misconceptions may be tolerated; but when the former are lost, Christianity becomes a worthless and nominal profession (Eadie, pp. 191, 192).

Christ is the Head of His Church. Apart from Him there is no nourishment for the Church. Apart from Him there is no unity. Apart from Him there can be no true growth for the Body of Christ.

Concl: And so, which will it be with you, THE SHADOW OR THE SUBSTANCE?

Will you take the Law with its ceremonies, its feast days, its Sabbath, its circumcision, or will you take Christ? Will you worship the highest of all creatures, or will you worship the Creator? Will you take the foolish speculations and professed visions of men, or will you abide by the revealed, unchanging, completed Word of God?

You cannot tenaciously hold on to Christ, and yet let the Word of God go. Nor can you tenaciously hold on to the Word, and let Christ go. If you want Christ, you must take the Word. If you want the Word, the Word offers you no one else but Christ.

May God enable all of us to be so rooted and grounded and built up in Christ that we will never be turned away from the Word or from our Lord, but may go on into heaven faithful to both to claim our reward if for no other reason than to be able to have something to cast at His feet.

MAN'S WAY, OR GOD'S WAY  
Colossians 2:20-23

Intro: A subtitle for the passage that we have today could be, A Lesson in Sanctification. Paul did not give the whole doctrine of sanctification in these four verses, but he was dealing with the question, How can the child of God live in victory over his sins?

Every true child of God knows that becoming a Christian does not put an end to temptation. Nor does it mean that the child of God is suddenly and permanently delivered from the possibility of sinning. In fact, it is usually the case that one who has been truly born again becomes more conscious of the presence of sin in his life, and the power of sin which is with him every day. Such an awareness of sin may even make the newborn babe in Christ feel that he has not really been saved.

However we may experience the continuing power of sin in our lives, it is this which gives the false teacher his opportunity. He works to show that those who belong to Christ that being saved is not enough. Christ may be able to deliver us from the penalty of sin, but, they declare, it takes something beyond what we have in Christ, something in addition to Christ, if we are to conquer sin and sinning in our lives!

Therefore, the false teacher will try to get the child of God interested in certain rules, or in certain ceremonies, as the solution to the problem of sin. This is the thought behind the verses at the end of chapter 2 which I want to consider with you today.

The first point that Paul made in these verses is the last point that I would like to discuss with you. But since Paul put it first, I will take it up first. I may come back to it again, however, before I finish my message. It is this:

## I. THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST (Col. 2:20).

You have it in those words, "If ye be dead with Christ...." A better translation would be, "If ye died with Christ...." But a still better translation than that would be, SINCE ye died with Christ. By the way in which Paul said this in the original Greek, he did not mean to express a doubt, but he meant to affirm something that was true. He was saying that they had died with Christ!

He had been teaching this in verses 11 and 12 and 13. All of those for whom Christ died, died with Him when He

died. This is a very clear teaching of the NT. Not only did He die for us, but we died with Him! And, as Paul taught in verses 12 and 13 of this chapter, we not only died with Him, but we were raised with Him! That is what Paul came back to in the first verses of chapter 3! The eternal life that we have is the life of Christ. We have no life apart from Him.

And so we need these two truths:

- 1) That we died with Him.
- 2) That we were raised with Him.

And it is just as important for us to keep these two together with reference to ourselves as it is to keep them together when we speak of Christ. The Gospel is not only the proclamation of the death of Christ, but it is the proclamation of the resurrection of Christ.

So it is with us. We not only died with Christ, but we were raised with Him. When Paul mentioned our Lord's death in the first part of verse 20, he mentioned His death, but he would have been implying His resurrection also in that one term. We do not have a dead Savior. He lives! He is alive forevermore! This truth of our oneness with Christ in His death and resurrection is a very important one which we must believe even though we may not be able to explain it even to our own satisfaction. This is a spiritual reality. This is what God saw when Christ died. He saw all who ever had been saved, and all who ever would be saved, as being with Christ and in Christ on the Cross.

The same was true of the resurrection. When Christ was raised from the dead, God saw all who ever had been saved, and all who ever would be saved, as being with Christ and in Christ in His resurrection. This teaching means that Christ was not only our Substitute, but that we were actually united with Christ in His death and resurrection.

I do not want to oversimplify the truth, but perhaps I could express the truth we have here in this way. I hope it will help all of us:

- 1) We have in the death of Christ the truth of our justification.
- 2) We have in the resurrection of Christ the truth of our sanctification.

As the death of Christ anticipated His resurrection, so our justification also anticipates our sanctification.

This was Paul's basic starting point.

I hope you can see from this how important it is for us

to be well-established in the truth of the Gospel. Only then can we be prepared to recognize and resist the false teacher.

Take your NT and look up all of the cross references that you can find on this subject. And then pray that the Lord will help you to understand what it means.

Galatians 2:20 is a familiar verse of Scripture which teaches what I have just been trying to explain to you. (Quote Gal. 2:20.)

Let us move on to a second point.

## II. PAUL'S QUESTION (Col. 2:20b-22).

His question is, "Why....?" Since it is true that we died with Christ "from the rudiments of the world, WHY ....?"

Paul was saying in a slightly different way, but using some of the same words, what he had said earlier in this chapter. I tried to bring that out last Sunday. It amounts to this: If we have Christ, then why do we look for anything more than Christ? If we are complete in Him, as Paul said in verse 10, how can we be more than complete? Instead of looking for something more than Christ, we need to learn more of Christ to see that what we THINK we need, we already have in Him!

But let us notice what Paul wrote here.

He said that we died with Christ "from the rudiments of the world."

Do you remember that we had this expression, "the rudiments of the world," in verse 8 of this chapter? It is an expression which points to the ABC's of life in this world, the basic principles that people who do not know the Lord use to overcome their problems. Problems can be handled in one of two ways: in GOD'S WAY, or in MAN'S WAY. The most pathetic, and really tragic, thing that you will ever see is a child of God handling his problems, or trying to handle them, in the world's way.

And so Paul's question means, Since you died with Christ to the way the world lives and deals with problems, WHY ARE YOU GOING BACK TO THE WORLD AND ITS RULES FOR YOUR DELIVERANCE FROM SIN? He was asking them, "Is it possible that the Savior who justified you before God is unable to sanctify you in your daily life?"

How do people in the world try to handle sin (if they are

willing to call it sin)? They do it by imposing certain rules on themselves.

"Subject to ordinances" is one word, a verb, in the original language. And it is the verb from which we get our English word, dogma. Dogma means doctrine. It is teaching. The world has its doctrines, and the Bible has its doctrines. The doctrines of the Bible are the doctrines of God, and they are completely different from the doctrines of the world. When you go to a non-Christian counselor, or to a "Christian" counselor who has gotten his training from the world, you are going to get the world's doctrines, which Paul called (at the end of verse 22), "the commandments and doctrines of men."

The way the world tries to settle problems is by imposing rules and regulations. Or, to state it another way, it is by law. The world tries to change man's attitudes and his habits by imposing rules upon him from the outside, hoping to change him on the inside.

And so the world say, "Touch not; taste not; handle not." This is a kind of legalistic asceticism. Those false teachers were ignoring the fact that when the Pharisees criticized the disciples because they had not ceremonially cleansed their hands, our Lord said,

Hear, and understand:  
Not that which goeth into the mouth  
defileth the man,  
but that which cometh out of the mouth,  
this defileth a man (Matt. 15:10b, 11).

There might be times when it is wise not to touch (cling to) certain things, nor taste them, nor handle them, but sanctification does not come through abstaining from eating things which God has provided to be accepted with thanksgiving.

You see, the false teacher does not talk about what Christ can do for you; he talks about what you need to be doing for yourself! Man's way is to start with man; God's way is for us to start with Him, and with Christ! Those things which the false teacher would keep from you only perish with the using. We need something that is abiding and powerful.

So man tries to solve his problems by working from the outside in; God works from the inside out--and only God can do that!

But now let us look at verse 23. We have two things here, and the first is:

III. THE ATTRACTION OF FALSE TEACHING (Col. 2:23a).

What comes from man is always more attractive to man than that which comes from God.

Paul mentioned three things that make the false teacher effective.

A. "A show of wisdom in will worship."

This is not worship that God has asked us to give, but it is man doing what he wants to do, and what he thinks will be pleasing to God. But it has no authorization from God in the Word.

Millions of people profess to worship God who have never stopped to ask, "Does God really want what I am doing? Do I have the right to worship Him any way I want to, or just because somebody has told me to do this?" Ritualism can seem so worshipful.

Worshipping in a certain place can seem so right.

Our Lord said,

...true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.  
God is a Spirit:  
and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23b, 24).

B. "And humility."

We had this in verse 18. It is a false humility, a false appearance which is a cloak for a puffed up "fleshly mind."

But this appeals to people. It makes them feel good to think that they are humbling themselves, but they do not know that, while

...man looketh on the outward appearance,  
but God looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7b).

C. "Neglecting of the body."

Man can starve his body until there is nothing left but skin and bones. He can inflict punishment upon his body with the hope of purifying it. "Neglecting" here means to punish the body.

But are these the way to sanctification? Is this the way to rid ourselves of sin, and to make ourselves holy? Let us get our answer from the Apostle Paul.

## IV. THE TRUE VALUE OF MAN'S WAY (Col. 2:23b).

The AV says, "Not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." The NASB says, "But they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence." The NKJV says, "But are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh."

What does the statement mean? It means that all that man does by his various rules and regulations is worthless as far as restraining sin is concerned. In fact, all of the ritualism and legalism is in itself sin because it ignores CHRIST! It may look good, and it may sound good, but it will not work because it ignores CHRIST!

Concl: So where does this leave us? It leaves us with Christ! Man by his own works cannot justify himself with God. Neither can man by his own works sanctify himself. Christ, by His death and resurrection, justifies and sanctifies. He makes us new creatures, and just as we were in Him at the Cross, and we were in Him in the tomb, and when He came out of the tomb, SO HE IS NOW IN US AS OUR VERY LIFE, AND IT IS THROUGH THE POWER OF HIS LIFE WITHIN US THAT WE ARE BEING DELIVERED FROM OUR SINS AND ENABLED TO LIVE VICTORIOUSLY TO THE GLORY OF GOD!

Colossians 3 and 4:1-6 have been written to show us the true way which God has ordained for our deliverance from sin, and for our conformity to Christ Himself. The Lord willing, we will begin to examine those important verses next week.

But for now let us remember that we died with Christ, we were raised with Christ, and we live by Christ. Christ is the One Who has met, and continues to meet all of our spiritual needs. Having Him, we need no one else; we need no plan which man has devised. As Paul has already told us in Colossians, if we live so as to please God, walking in Christ, we will experience freedom in Christ from the bondage and power of sin.

IN PURSUIT OF THINGS ABOVE  
Colossians 3:1-4

Intro: As we pass from chapter 2 into chapter 3 of Colossians, we come to a part of the Epistle which is definitely more enjoyable, and profitable. One writer has said, "For though it is needful to refute error, it is more pleasant to inculcate truth" (Eadie, p. 212).

Verses 1 through 4 are definitely the high point of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Here he is moving from the first part of the Epistle where he has taught some very necessary doctrine, and issued some solemn warnings, to the latter section where we are going to learn how to walk so as to please God in everything, as Paul stated it in his prayer in chapter 1, verse 10, or, to state it another way, how to "walk in him, i.e., in Christ, as he exhorted them to do in chapter 2, verse 6. Paul was not only concerned that they KNOW the truth, but he was concerned that they LIVE the truth. We cannot live it until we know it, but we must not stop with knowing it. In fact, the proof that we really know the truth of God is that the truth is changing our lives to make us more pleasing to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me state this another way from what we have seen in this Book so far. The key to all of the truth that we find in the Scriptures, is Christ. The person who fails to understand this will never be able to understand the Word of God. BUT IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT CHRIST IS THE ONE WHO ENABLES US TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. He is not just our Teacher; He is our life. Verse 4 of chapter 3 tells us this. So the Christian life is not just following certain rules and regulations. God has given us commandments to show us what we are to do, but the One Who enables us to keep those commandments, is CHRIST! We must never forget this. This is what Paul sought to make clear in the four verses at the beginning of chapter 3.

Last week as we considered the four final verses of chapter two, my first point was, THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST. That is my first point today. Only instead of speaking about our relationship with Christ in His death, we now are going to think about a truth equally as important, a truth full of glory.

## I. THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST (Col. 3:1a).

Do you remember what I said about the word "if" in Col. 2:20? I said that Paul was not questioning whether or not they had died with Christ; he was declaring that they had IF they truly knew Christ in salvation. And so it

would be appropriate to translate the word "if" as since!

The same is true here. We can read the beginning of Col. 3:1 like this: Since ye then be risen with Christ. We not only died with Christ, but we were raised with Christ. This is true of only those who have been born again. But it is true of ALL who have been born again. The life that we have is Christians is not something apart from Christ, but it is Christ. The Apostle John wrote, "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12a). Christ lives in us. This is one of the many things that makes the Christian faith unique. It takes time and prayer for this to sink into our understanding, but it is true, wonderfully true. We were raised with Him, and we live by Him. Take Christ away from us, and we are hopelessly lost. With Christ we will never perish. Without Christ it is impossible to live so as to please God. With Christ such a life is possible for the weakest saint.

Paul was teaching this truth in Col. 2:12, 13. (Read.)

But let us go on. Paul followed this declaration of truth with

## II. TWO IMPORTANT COMMANDMENTS (Col. 3:1b, 2).

These two commandments are very similar, and yet there is a difference which we need to note.

- A. The first commandment: "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

The verb "seek" is in the present tense in the Greek NT, and so the NASB translates it, "Keep seeking the things above." This is a quest, a pursuit, an aim, an objective, which you and I as the children of God, are always to be seeking. This is a goal which we will never reach finally until we get to heaven. Paul's exhortation means, Seek, and keep on seeking--never stop! This is to be the main purpose of our lives. We are students, we are parents, we are workmen of various kinds, we are housewives, we are children, we are doctors, dentists, people of other professions, but whatever our occupation may be, our goal is to be "those things which are above."

But, you say, can you make that a little clearer? What does it mean to "seek those things which are above"?

Our text tells us. The "things above" are the things of Christ. They are the things of God--because Christ is seated at the right hand of God!

Now if we are to seek the things of Christ and of God we must seek, and keep on seeking, to learn of Christ. The same is true of God. We know God as our heavenly Father, and we know Christ as our Savior, but there is much more that we need to learn about God and about Christ. Didn't the Lord tell His disciples, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me"? We need to know more about His glory, His grace, His love, His wisdom, His faithfulness, His holiness. And we need to know about pleasing Him, more about being like Him, more about exalting Him.

And so, whatever your occupation may be in this world and in this life, you have no greater purpose in life, nor do I, than to make sure that we are pleasing to God.

We will be looking at some of the details of this as we go on in chapter 3, and into the first part of chapter 4. But let me say here that if we are going to do this, it will mean a real break with sin in every form. And this is not easy. It will mean that we will not be living primarily to see how many things we can get, nor how we can have the most fun in life. God blesses us with many things. We here in America have an abundance of conveniences and material blessings of all kinds. And it is not a sin to have a nice home, nor to own a car, nor to graduate from college, nor to go on a vacation to have a good, restful time. It is not wrong to be interested in sports, nor is it wrong to seek to excel in sports. It is not wrong to make money. BUT what Paul was saying here is that any or all of these things can become wrong IF THEY BECOME THE THING THAT IS MOST IMPORTANT IN OUR LIVES!

I have heard it expressed this way: It is not wrong to have possessions, but it is wrong when your possessions possess you! Let the greatest ambition of our lives, the ambition that limits and directs all other purposes that we have in life, be to live lives that are pleasing to God and to Christ, lives that are Christ-like.

As Paul mentioned a couple of times in chapter 2, there is a way that the people of the world have of living, and there is a completely different way that

God would have us to live. If we are seeking those things which are above, we are seeking to learn of Christ, and to be like Christ, so we can be pleasing to Christ. Let us make it our ambition, as Paul made it his ambition, to be pleasing to God. Anything else, anything less, is wrong for us as the Lord's people.

Now let us look at

- B. The second commandment: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2).

What did Paul mean by the expression, "Set your affection"?

Paul was telling the Colossians (and us) in this commandment how we can achieve what he told us to do in the first commandment. If we are to keep on seeking the things which are above, we will have to set our affection on them.

However, this verb as it is translated, "set your affection," needs a little clarification.

Our affections are certainly involved in this, but Paul was placing an emphasis upon the way we think, how we exercise our wills. If we are to seek the things of Christ, it requires discipline. Alexander Maclaren, one of the great preachers of Great Britain who died in 1910, said in his message on this text, "If a man wants to love Jesus Christ he must think about Him" (Vol. 9, p. 141).

This does not just happen. It must be something that we deliberately do. All of us need to ask ourselves, "How much do I think about Jesus Christ? How much of my thinking is directed toward Him as compared with the time that I think about other people, or other things?" If we learn to think of Him, and to talk to Him, and to love and please Him, when things are going well, then when emergencies arise we will be prepared.

So Paul was telling the Colossian believers that they needed to train themselves, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to think of Christ, exercising their wills toward knowing Him and pleasing Him and loving Him. The more Christ is pre-eminent in our lives, the greater will be our blessing, our joy, our usefulness.

But we have two other verses to consider. The reason that Paul has given us these exhortations, these commandments, is because there is what we might call,

### III. THE DIVINE RATIONALE (Col. 3:3).

Another way of saying this is that verse 3 gives us the underlying reason for the commandments which he gave in verses 1 an 2.

After all, Paul has made some very comprehensive, all-inclusive demands upon the people of God by those commandments in verses 1 an 2. How can even God Himself expect such complete devotion on our part?

Here is the answer:

For ye are dead (or, ye died),  
and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When we understand this verse, then we will understand why Paul has exhorted us to do the things mentioned in verses 1 and 2.

If you keep up with present-day trends and differences among Christians you know that there is a controversy today over the question of the Lordship of Christ. The question is, When I take Jesus Christ as my Savior, do I also take Him as my Lord? Or can He be my Savior, but not my Lord?

It seems to me that Paul was addressing that subject here. Why does the Lord have the right to make such thoroughgoing demands of us? Because when Christ died, we died in Him. When He was raised, we were raised to walk in newness of life, as Romans 6:4 says. And now our lives are hidden "with Christ in God." It was hidden, and continues to be hidden. That is, the source of life which enables a Christian to live as Paul was teaching is hidden. It is "with Christ in God." There are resources that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ by which we are both obligated and enabled to live for Him. These resources are not seen by the eyes of men, not even by our eyes. But the evidence can be seen as the Lord's people live to know the Lord, to please Him, and to be like Him. We are no longer our own. We are bought with a price. We are to live for God's glory because of what He has done for us. He is our Savior and He is our Lord.

God has, so to speak, invested the greatest He has in our salvation: His only begotten Son. Therefore, He has the right to expect all from us.

One more word.

#### IV. THE PROSPECT (Col. 3:4).

Where is all of this going to lead us? Look at verse 4.

Here we have the answer. (Read.)

I remind you that life as it is today is not going to continue forever. Christ is coming. He is going to "appear." This word does not just mean that He is coming, but it means that, when He comes, He is going to be revealed, will be manifested, so that people will be able to see Who He really is.

But this is not all.

Paul used the same word when he said that "then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Then, and not until then, will that which is hidden be fully manifested so that people will then be able to see what a Christian really is!

Paul was dealing with this truth in Romans 8. Please turn to that chapter as we close, and let me read to you verses 16 through 19. (Read.)

What did Paul say in Col. 3:4 about the time when Christ will be manifested? "Then shall ye also appear (be shown to be what you are in Christ) IN GLORY"!

Concl: What a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian! Not even we realize the full extent of what that means. We not only belong to Christ because we died with Him, and were raised with Him, but He is in us, our life, and our lives "are hid with Christ in God." You can I cannot possibly understand now what glory will be shown in us in that day. It is there now, but it is hidden. The day is coming when it will be hidden no more, and all the universe will be able to see what it really means to be a child of God.

In the meantime let us make sure, by the grace of God, that we are seeking those things which are above, the things of Christ and of God, and that we are setting our minds, our wills, and our hearts on those things of Christ and of God, not on the things that have to do with this life.

THE OLD LIFE  
Colossians 3:5-11

Intro: In our consideration of Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, last Sunday we entered into the practical section of the Epistle.

Chapter 1 was very personal, as Paul expressed his deep interest in and affection for the believers at Colossae. He told them that he was praying for them, how long he had been praying for them, how often he prayed for them, and what his specific requests for them were. And then, after speaking of various aspects of the doctrine of salvation, he told them about his ministry, and what his objectives were as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2 was full of warnings. False teachers threatened both the fellowship and the usefulness of the church at Colossae. Their teaching did not give the pre-eminence to Christ. The basic substitutes which were being offered to the people in place of Christ were legalism, ritualism, and asceticism. And Paul concluded that chapter by pointing out that those things were worthless as far as helping the people in their battle with the flesh.

So it becomes clearer as we go through the Epistle that Paul was primarily concerned with the doctrine of sanctification. And so he was saying that we are not sanctified, we are not made holy, by the Mosaic Law. Nor are we sanctified by any kind of ritualism. Nor are there things which we ought to know beyond what the Apostles were preaching, i.e., new revelations, which are necessary for our sanctification. Those things are of no value in giving us victory over sin.

This raises the question, "What is?" That is, what is the answer to our daily struggle with sin? We know that we as Christians are still capable of sinning. We also know that we do not have the strength in ourselves to refrain from sin. How can we have victory?

It comes by mortifying our "members which are upon the earth" (3:5). It comes by putting off the sins mentioned verse 8 and the beginning of verse 9. It would appear that these two expressions mean essentially the same thing.

But what do they mean?

Well, it seems to me that the best answer to that question is that is the opposite of the two exhortations that Paul gave in 3:1 and 3:2.

Those of you who were here last week will remember, I hope, that, by the exhortation to "seek those things which are above," Paul was encouraging the Colossian believers to take as their life-long quest, their pursuit for this life, their aim, their objective, their goal, to seek, and to continue to seek, the things of Christ, and the things of God!

We are to seek to know Him better--more about His love, His wisdom, His faithfulness, His power, His grace, etc.

Then to "set your affection on things above" gives the added idea of thinking about Him, seeking to love and to please Him as the greatest priority of our lives.

Now, if we are to do that, and do it consistently and effectively, we must also "mortify" and "put off" the sins which characterized our lives before we came to the Lord.

We all ought to know by this time that people sin because they want to sin. They think about sin. They are interested in sin. It is the goal of the natural man to have a good time, to enjoy himself, to do what he wants to do. To be sure, he is enslaved to sin, but that is what he likes. I have been using the word "sin," but that is not what the world calls these things. They are their pleasures. They are the things which they look upon as making life worth living.

When a person becomes a Christian, all of that is changed. The child of God has, according to verse 9, "put off the old man with his deeds," and he has "put on the new man." He is not the same person that he used to be. He has a new life. He (or she) has "put off the old man" and has "put on the new man." He (or she) can still sin, but sinning is not what he wants to do anymore. It no longer gives him the pleasure that he once had. And his friends are bewildered, wondering what has happened to him to make him so different.

Peter expressed this truth in this way:

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us  
in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mine:  
for he that hath suffered in the flesh  
has ceased from sin;  
That he no longer should live the rest of his time  
in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.  
For the time past of our life  
may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles,  
when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine,  
revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:  
Wherein they think it strange  
that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot,

speaking evil of you (1 Pet. 4:1-4).

So it is not only common for our friends from the old life to drop us, but they often become our enemies.

But the point is this: If we are going to have victory over sin, we have quit planning for it, quit thinking about it, and, in its place, think of Christ, learn more of Him, and make it our aim not only to know Him more intimately, but to please Him more fully in all that we do. AFTER ALL, WAS THIS NOT THE BURDEN OF PAUL'S PRAYER IN CHAPTER 1, BEGINNING WITH VERSE 9?

The true Christian must learn that the aim of his life is to please God, and to please Christ, and that it is no longer that he seek to please himself. But when he puts pleasing Christ first in his life, then he finds that in pleasing Christ he has greater joy than he ever had in the pleasures of the world in his old life.

I have given you a rather lengthy introduction to these verses, but I hope you that it will help all of us to understand what is involved in mortifying our members which are on the earth, or, as verse 8 teaches us, to put off these sins. By mortifying our sins we do not kill them, but we set them aside as being dead because we are now seeking those things which are above, where Christ is.

All right! Let us consider first

#### I. THE SINS WE ARE TO MORTIFY (Col. 3:5-7).

This is not a complete list. This is a sample list. There are other sins that Paul could have included here, but those he has given are sufficient for us to understand what he was talking about.

He only mentioned five sins here.

- A. "Fornication." This is a sexual relationship between a man and a woman who are not married.
- B. "Uncleanness." This is any kind of moral impurity, such things as would be totally unacceptable to God.
- C. "Inordinate affection." This is any depraved passion.
- D. "Evil concupiscence." This means an evil desire, or lust.

- E. "Covetousness, which is idolatry." Paul used a word here, "covetousness," which speaks of an intense desire, often aggressive, to acquire what belongs to somebody else. And, listed with the preceding sins, shows that it not only has to do with material things, but an intense desire for the things of sense, things which are abominable and displeasing to God. And the addition of the word "idolatry," shows that the things of sense, the satisfaction of man's fleshly desires, is the god of the man outside of Christ.

Cf. Rom. 1:28-32.

The last two verses of this section (vv. 6, 7) show why these sins need to be mortified:

- 1) Because this is why God's judgment is coming.
- 2) Because these, in varying degrees, make up THE OLD LIFE.

But then we come to another list.

## II. THE SINS WHICH ARE TO BE PUT OFF (Col. 3:8, 9a).

Here Paul mentioned six sins.

- A. "Anger." This is when a person gets mad, and stays mad, hoping for revenge.
- B. "Wrath." This is the person who blows his top, but then gradually gets over his madness.
- C. "Malice." This is the desire to injure someone.
- D. "Blasphemy." This can be toward another human being, or toward God. Probably the thought here has to do primarily with human relationship, although blasphemy toward God cannot be excluded. It is the attempt to bring reproach upon another's good name.
- E. "Filthy communication out of your mouth." This is dirty, obscene, foul speech.
- F. "Lie not one to another...." The child of God is never to depart from the truth.

What do you notice that all six of these sins have in common? They all have to do with the tongue. The inner man is involved, to be sure, but the evidence of the sin is in all of these instances related to the tongue.

So when we look at these two lists of sins we can see that the first has to do with the immorality of the body, the second has to do with the sins of the tongue. The child of God is not to be thinking of sexual desires, nor is he to use his tongue to injure others. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and our tongues are to be used to glorify God. And this would mean that we want to be a means of blessing to people, not of defilement.

But this leads again to what I referred to as the rationale, or the underlying reason for these exhortations. It has to do with

### III. THE OLD MAN AND THE NEW MAN (Col. 3:8b-10).

Paul was teaching here what I have said so often, that it is impossible for a person to know Jesus Christ as his Savior, and yet remain the same. You may see people who claim to know Christ who remain the same, but that is not possible for anyone who really knows the Lord!

"The old man" is the person you and I were without Christ. "The new man" is the person we became when Christ saved us. Being saved is being changed from the "old" to the "new." The "new" may not be perfect, but it is completely different from the "old." When you and I were saved, we "put off the old man with his deeds." And we also "put on the new man...."

Now the fact that this new man is not yet perfect is indicated by the idea that he is continually being renewed. And this is unto a fuller knowledge of spiritual truth concerning God and Christ and our life in Him. The result is that we are gradually becoming more like the One Who created us anew in Christ.

So, not only is a Christian a "new man," but he will become a better man, a more godly man, a man who is more like Christ in his character and in his behavior. If there is life, there will be growth. If there is no growth, there is no life.

What Paul had written up to this point was individual and personal. In verse 11 he adds to the personal that which applies to all of us together. Let us call it

### IV. "CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL" (Col. 3:11).

We still maintain our identity nationally ("Greek...Jew"), and our background religiously ("circumcision...uncircumcision"), and culturally

("Barbarian, Scythian), and socially ("bond...free").

We still look like we did. We still speak the same language. We still abide by the same customs and laws of the country where we live. We still have the limitations of our background. Our social status remains unchanged. But whatever any of these may be as they constitute certain differences between us, one thing that that unites us all is that "Christ is all," and He is "in" us "all!"

A Barbarian was originally a non-Greek, one who spoke a different language, and who was considered to be of a lower culture. A Scythian was an inhabitant of Scythia, a part of modern Russia, taken to be the worst of the Barbarians, vicious, warlike.

Obviously Paul was using all of these terms because the Lord had saved people in all of these groups. All had put off "the old man," and had put on "the new man." All were predestined to be conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. But the only hope that that work would finally be completely was to be found in Christ, Who was "all" (completely sufficient) for all of them, and, what was even more wonderful, Who was "in all of them.

Concl: Thus again, Paul brings us back to Christ! This is a passage that is full of great truth and wonderful hope.

Remember that you cannot put off the sins of the flesh unless by faith in Christ as your Savior you have put off the old man and have put on the new man. But once you know the Lord, your purpose in life, your aim, your goal, is completely changed from earthly things to heavenly things. And the more you and I seek the things above, the greater will be the change in our lives, and the greater will be our joy in bringing glory to God. All of us, regardless of our national and family ties, have the same Savior. Our resources are in Him. And He is in us, working continually to make us more like God has ordained that we should be.

Let us pray every day that the Lord will cause us to love what He loves, and to hate what He hates, that His will might be done in our lives, and that our joy might be full.

THE NEW LIFE  
Colossians 3:12-14

Intro: Paul's letter to the Colossians is extremely strong in its focus upon our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was His Apostle. Paul firmly believed that salvation from sin was only through Christ. He declared the Deity of Christ, that Christ was the Creator, that He was the Head of the Church, and that the Church, therefore, was His body. Paul taught that Christ indwells every child of God. Paul judged all religious teaching by the place it gave to Christ. He warned against any teacher who did not exalt and honor Christ. He taught that in our lives here on earth we should be constantly seeking the things of Christ in heaven, that seeking to be like Christ, and pleasing Christ, should be the aim, the goal, the objective, of our lives here on earth. The first exhortation of Paul's Epistle to the Colossians was that we are to "walk in him," i.e., that we are to depend upon Christ to give us both the desire and the strength to live the kind of life that He wants us to live. This would mean that we must not continue to live the way we lived before we were saved. Each believe is a new man, a new person, in Christ, and we are to show by our lives that the Lord has changed us so that we can never go back and be what we were before.

As we come to verse 12 of chapter 3 we see that it was here that Paul began in a positive way to show what we ought to be personally, as well as in our relationships with others. In these verses, going on into chapter 4 through verse 6, we see what we should be, what we should do, what our responsibilities are to each other in the church, as well as to the people in the world. It is a very comprehensive section, and worthy of our careful study. And so the Christian life consists not only of putting old, sinful things off, but of putting new, holy things on.

I plan to take just three of these verses today: verses 12 through 14. We will go on to the following verses week by week until we have looked into all of them. I trust that the Lord will make this very profitable for all of us, and that the Holy Spirit will bring into our lives the kind of changes that the Lord wants to see in all of us. I hope, also, that they are the changes that we want to see in our lives.

In verses 5 through the first part of verse 9, Paul described for us the old life. Beginning with verse 12 we see the new life. The description of the new life does not end with verse 12, but, as I have said, that is as far as we will try to go today.

To state it another way, in verses 5 through 9a we see what we are by nature; beginning with verse 12 we see what we need to become by grace. In verses 5 through 9a we see what we are in ourselves; from verse 12 on we see what we need to be in Christ.

(Read Col. 3:12-14.)

First of all let us consider:

I. THE EXHORTATION (Col. 3:12a).

"Put on therefore..." This is the exhortation.

In Col. 3:10 we learned that every child of God, everyone who believes in Christ as his Savior, has put on "the new man." Here in verse 12 we are told to "put on," to "seek ...after," to "set" our "affection on" those things of Christ which will make us be in daily life what God intends for us to be because He has made us new people in Christ.

As I mentioned last week, we are not incapable of sinning even though we are Christians, but we are different, very different, so different, in fact, that we can never be the same again. And the purpose of Paul's exhortation is that we will make it our aim in our daily lives to become more and more like we shall be when ultimately we are made like Christ. This is our "hope of glory." And it is only possible as we depend upon Christ within us to bring about these changes.

Now having said that, I hope you can see where the qualities we are going to be discussing can best be seen. They are the qualities which you find in their perfection IN CHRIST! But we will see more about that in a few minutes.

"Put on" means in the Greek what it means in English. It is what we do when we "put on" our clothing. The Greek gives an even more graphic picture of what is involved because it literally means to go into, or to be enveloped in whatever you are putting on.

But there is a major difference in putting on clothing as compared with putting on "bowels of mercies, kindness," etc. These are things which we must "put on" inwardly, not just outwardly like we do clothing. If we put these things on and off like we do clothing, then we are nothing but hypocrites. We put these characteristics on inwardly, as a new part of what we are, and from the

inside of us they are manifested outwardly in our behavior.

So we are not talking about putting on clothing, but about putting on character--the very character of Christ Himself!

But let me go on to a second point:

## II. THE PEOPLE TO WHOM PAUL WAS WRITING (Col. 3:12m).

He called them, "the elect of God, holy and beloved."

In Romans 8:33 Paul mentioned "God's elect." And he used the same term in Titus 1:1.

This is a title for all of the people of God, not just for a special few. We are all "the elect of God." This explains how we came to be the Lord's people. We chose Christ to be our Savior, but long before we chose Him, He chose us. In fact, Paul told the Ephesians in his letter to them that we are "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). We trace our salvation to God's sovereign choice of us, not because we deserved to be His children, nor because He saw something good in us that He did not see in others, but it was because He chose to set His love upon us, and to redeem us from our sins.

You and I cannot take the credit to ourselves for our salvation; all of the glory belongs to God. If He had not chosen us first, we would never have chosen Him. And we know that we have been chosen because we believe in Christ as our Savior.

But why did Paul mention election in this passage?

He mentioned election so that no one but the elect would try to put on the new man. They are the only people who are new people in Christ. It is hard enough for true Christians to do what Paul said here, but it is completely impossible for one who is not a Christian.

But Paul also called them "holy and beloved."

The basic idea in the word "holy" is that of being set aside. God has chosen us, and set us aside for Himself. We belong to Him. But the result of being set aside is that we will turn away from sin, and thus we will become in practise what we are before God: "holy."

Again referring to Eph. 1:4, Paul said that we are "chosen in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him..." So Paul was referring to what we are before God in Christ. We are a holy people!

But we are also "beloved," beloved of God, first of all, but I am sure that Paul also meant to tell them that they were people whom he loved, too.

So the exhortation to "put on" the new man is addressed to the members of God's family, and not to every person in the world. How wonderful it is to see what we are to God! That is enough to encourage any of us. When we get depressed because of what we are in ourselves, how wonderful it is to turn and look at what we are to God in Christ--because God never sees us apart from Christ.

Now we are ready (or are we?) for:

### III. THE CHARACTER OF A CHILD OF GOD (Col. 3:12b-14).

This is not a complete list, but it is a typical list. More qualities of character could be added, but, if they were, they would be of the same kind.

Let me try to describe the meaning of each of these characteristics, and then make some practical applications in closing.

- A. "Bowels of mercies." In some MSS "mercies" is in the singular. The word translated "bowels" in the Greek has reference to the upper part of the body, not the lower, and so we could render this, a heart of compassion (NASB). NIV: "with compassion." NKJV: "tender mercies." Another word that could be used is pity.

This could be described as sorrow for the troubles of another, coupled with a desire to do something about it—not holding back even if the afflicted person has brought his trouble upon himself.

God is called "the Father of mercies" in 2 Cor. 1:3. Mercies are needed for miseries. If God were not a merciful God, and if Christ were not a merciful Savior, we would still be in our sins.

- B. "Kindness." One writer (Trench, p. 233) said that this speaks of a person who is mellow, soft, gentle, rather than being harsh and austere.

Another writer says that "mercies" has to do with the feelings that a person always has in his heart, whereas kindness makes him feel that he wants to relieve the misery. The Lord used a form of this word "kindness" when He said in Matt. 11:30 that His yoke was "easy."

This is the quality which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to speak a harsh word about anyone.

- C. "Humbleness of mind." According to one Greek authority, this is not the kind of a person who lowers himself even though he considers himself to be great, but the person who lowers himself because that is where he feels that he belongs.

We see the great humiliation of our Lord because He used this word of Himself when in Matt. 11:29 He said that He was "lowly in heart." It was a part of His humanity that He, like His people, would sense His humanity which included His dependence upon God, and as receiving, day by day, all things from Him.

The person who has "humbleness of mind" is not self-confident, but God-confident, and happy to have it that way.

- D. "Meekness." A meek person (according to Trench, p. 152) is a person who, believing in the sovereignty of God, accepts God's dealings with him as good, and so is not resentful nor does he resist nor argue with God. David is a good example of a meek person when Shimei was cursing him. You may remember that he told Abishai, his sister's son who wanted to kill Shimei, "...let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" (2 Sam. 16:10). And two verses later it is recorded that David said,

It may be that the Lord will look  
on mine affliction,  
and that the Lord will requite me good  
for his cursing this day (2 Sam. 16:12).

And so the meek person who submits to the dealings of the Lord, does not do in a fatalistic way, but with the firm conviction that everything is in the hands of the Lord, and that the outcome will be good. Cf. Rom. 8:28.

- E. "Longsuffering." This is the person who refuses to be provoked into anger when under some trial. He is

not a person with "a short fuse." Moule says that he does not get tired of pardoning, hoping, and loving (p. 221). He is like the Lord in that he does not give up on people, and is willing to suffer at their hands in the hope that things will change in that other person's life for the better.

F. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving...." (Col. 3:13).

To forbear is to bear with. This is related to the other words that have gone before. "One another" indicates that Paul was speaking primarily of trouble between believers. The forbearing and forgiving person is concerned not only about pleasing God, but he is concerned about doing whatever will eventually result in the greatest blessing and spiritual progress for the one who has sinned against him.

This is not the common word for forgiveness. It is the verb formed from the word grace, and so it means to extend favor to a person who does not deserve it. And Paul compared what we need to do many times with what God has done for us, not just once, but many, many times. He has forgiven us when we did not deserve it. Our understanding of what God has done for us in Christ will be seen in our treatment of those who sin against us.

G. "Love" (Col. 3:14).

The exhortation that we have here can mean two things, both of which give us practically the same interpretation:

- 1) Some look upon this in the light of what Paul said in verse 12 about putting on these things. The garment now needs a girdle, or belt, or "bond." And that which holds everything else in place is "love."
- 2) Others say that this speaks merely of that which must be added to everything else: "love." It is love which makes all of the others what it ought to be. "Perfectness" could be translated, perfection. Without "love" all of the other things lose their meaning.

Concl: So we can see that Paul was not looking at these traits of character as each standing by itself, but as a blend of qualities which together make up a person who is like his Lord.

The question is: How much progress are we making in becoming a person who can be described in this way? Or to state it another way, Do you suppose that there are people who, when reading these three verses, not only think of the Lord, but who think of you, and who think of me? It is not for us to say, but we have been saved to be like the Lord. We have been chosen to be holy, and the only way we can be holy is to become like our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Apostle Paul was writing to the church at Rome, he stated the truth of these three verses in one verse. It is found in Rom. 13:14. Listen to it:

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and make not provision for the flesh,  
to fulfil the lusts thereof.

And let me remind you also of what our Lord said about another matter, but which applies also to what we have been considering today. He told His disciples,

If ye know these things,  
happy are ye if ye do them.

It is a blessing to go through the Word to find out what the words mean, like we have been doing today. And I hope you have been blessed. I have been praying that you would. But let me tell you how you can go on now to even greater blessing: It is by BEING AND DOING what the Lord has taught us in this verse we need to be and do. This is only possible by the enabling grace of God. And you might say that these things are beyond you. They are! But they are not beyond what the Lord can help us to do. He never gives a command but what He also stands ready to give us the strength to do what He has told us to do. And when we begin to see these very qualities becoming a part of us, then we can glorify God for His great goodness to us.

Let us begin anew today to seek to be like Christ.