

## W\_89\_Colossians.mp3

[00:00:02] This is a recording of a Bible study given at the chapel of the opened book. Under the covering titled The Aroma or the Fullness. This evening we commence another section. It will which will be complete in itself. We have reached the epistle to the Colossians, and instead of merely focusing our attention upon the word fullness that comes there, we are taking this opportunity to survey the Epistle as a whole. Now, those of you who are listening to this recording may care to join us as we read together Colossians Chapter one. If so, will you switch off for a little time and join us? As we said earlier, we have reached in our quest the way in which this word for Roma is used, the great epistles of the Apostle, written when he became the prisoner of Jesus Christ for US Gentiles. And last time we were together, we were examining the four occurrences in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Well, now coming to the epistle to the Colossians, we have not yet put on record an exposition of that epistle. And so we felt it would be an opportunity that we ought to seize, not only to focus attention upon the references to the fulness which occur, but to see some of their context and give this epistle a survey. We often speak of the four prison epistles. There are five, actually. Philemon is one that stands alone and does not contribute positively to new doctrine, but does give us a very gracious picture of what sort of people we should be.

[00:01:47] But we can usually speak of four great epistles that are the scriptures that belong to our calling. They are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and second Timothy. Now, those of you who know those epistles at all will see that they automatically fall into two groups. Philippians speaks of the prize of the high calling, and second, Timothy speaks of the crown. Philippians says he would be willing to depart and be with Christ. And second, Timothy says, the time for my departure has come. There two episodes. Well, if you take two away from four, usually it leaves just two more. And you can't help yourself, can you? Ephesians and Colossians must be another pair. Well, now. There's no word mystery in Philippians. There's no word fullness in Philippians in Philippians, but in both Ephesians and in Colossians, you get the word dispensation, you get the word fullness, you get the word mystery, you get Christ as the head and the church, which is the body and members one of another. They're a perfect pair. But that doesn't mean to say it's a vain repetition. The apostle wrote two epistles very near to one another, and he was teaching the same thing to two little companies. But he varied his

approach so that what we lose on one, we gain on the other by comparing one with the other.

[00:03:14] You will find, for instance, that he compresses some part of the teaching of Ephesians into a very small space. We get a big emphasis on the relationship of husband and wife, parent and child servant and master in Ephesians, and I think that occupies about 22 verses. Well, there's the same subject ran over in Colossians occupying nine verses. And what he saves in compressing certain lines of truth in Colossians is devoted to that, which is its peculiarity. Chapter two is an extraordinary section and takes a good deal of care in handling and begins with a word beware. So those of you who not only are listening, but have this structure in front of you, you see, I've put in the middle of it this triangle which we use as a word of warning. Beware. Well, now, just a word or two with regard to this structure, because some look upon it as a little fanciful pet idea of mine. Uh oh. We don't usually see him, and so we must put up with it. From my point of view, it's an exceedingly solemn thing. To sit at your desk. And suddenly see the whole thing opened in front of you is almost as near to having the voice of God speak to you as I think you'll get in this dispensation. Without being irreverent, I feel sometimes when it's dropped into its pattern, I've almost seen God lean over my shoulder and put a blue led under it and say, There you are.

[00:05:01] That's given me his direction. He says to me, Follow those key words and you've got the scope. You know what the apostle was out to teach. And moreover, you'll be independent of good many of the opinions of other people. So that's a valuable thing. Of course, I do know this, that you can get outlines and they are useful, but they are not authoritative. They don't bind you. I mean, if you get alliterations artful aid and it's all beginning with the letter W or the letter C or something, well, that's all right. But this is not the same thing. We're actually lifting out the words that God has said and putting them in their place. And whether you believe it or not, you cannot shut your eyes to the fact that it's there. So that's the reason why we use this method. It helps us to see what the subject is all about, because many times when we are speaking one to another, we we have little structures. Although you may not know it, you start with a subject. You then go off to explain something. And when you see the person is looking at you as though he understands, you come back and pick it up and so on. That's a the a C, very simple. Well, then sometimes a bit more complicated. And sometimes when we start,

they're so complicated that when we get home and it's all over, we think I never finished it.

[00:06:17] Well, that's not the case with God. He doesn't forget, however long the epistle may be. You remember he Hebrews, where we get Christ when it speaks about He is the same. Yes. That he changes, not chapter one. Then look at the argument through Hebrews, all the things that are said. But the Apostle comes right out. The last chapter and says Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever. That's the key to Hebrews. Everything may go. Priests fail, sacrifices, cease, tabernacle be folded up. But as long as Jesus Christ remains, he said, we're not going to worry too much. And you need not either. So here we have these epistles. Now, when you think of Ephesians chapter one, you're taken back before the foundation of the world. Now that as far as we interpret it goes back to Genesis one, verse two, when the Earth became without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep. But the Colossians takes you one step further back, for it. Says he was the firstborn of all creation, for by him were all things created, whether in heaven or earth, visible and invisible? So Ephesians goes to Genesis one, verse two, and Colossians goes to Genesis one, verse one. So they are helping one another, you see, not merely repeating. Or we have in chapter two of Ephesians, the reconciliation effected between the two sections of the church, the boats.

[00:07:46] It says the boats or the twain. The two by one. But when you come to Colossians, he's not so much concerned about the reconciling of the two members, the Jew and the Gentile element that was existing before. He's concerned about the whole church being reconciled to their new glorious position, for they've got to be on parallel and on par with principalities and powers and thrones and dominions. So each one, you see, contributes its quota. We have in the Ephesians that the goal of the church and the ministry which the Lord gave was unto the perfect man. And then he says in Colossians. Yes. And don't forget that that's not merely an ideal to which we're all going in the future. He says, I am warning every man and teaching every man that I may present, every man perfect in Christ Jesus as a personal thing, you see. And he says, not only so, but my faithful fellow servant, he is doing the same, praying that every man may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. So look, this evening we're going to spend our time in just letting this structure unfold. The line of teaching, which is in this epistle in its sections, and don't think it's a waste of time for if once you've got that and

you never hear anybody explain it again for the rest of their life, you've got the, as it were, the keys, the pointers to it.

[00:09:14] And God himself can use it over and over again as you meditate in his presence. If these meetings are the beginning and the end of your study of the epistle to the Colossians, well, it's quite all right. But it's not good enough, is it? These meetings will serve their purpose most if it stirs you up to say, Well, I never I didn't realize it was so much in that epistle I'm going back to. Oh, yes, friends, that is going to please the Lord and be a blessing to you and through you to others. So now should we look? It starts. And it ends with a salutation. The man who wrote this was in prison, and I can believe that he was about the worst possible man to be in prison for if ever there's a champion of liberty in the New Testament, it's Paul. There must have been some grace for that man to endure without showing some irksome ness. Prison, with all its irritation, with all its frustration, with all its apparent uselessness. I have a sort of a horrible feeling as to what I should be like if I were in prison. I don't know what the warders would think about me or what they'd say. And yet this man, when he writes to the Philippians, he's the one who says, I'm telling you to rejoice.

[00:10:37] Or you say there's something here that we can't explain on natural terms, can we? And so in prison, this man, he doesn't sweep aside the conventions that were accepted in his day. He sends a salutation. I'm not saying that he didn't mean it, but if you were to see ordinary letters that have been preserved from the very days of the apostle. They follow much the same pattern. They open with a salutation. They have a little wish for their benefit and so on. Then they get to their subject. Then they end up with another little salutation. But he can go better for these poor people. They couldn't send a salutation which included grace, mercy and peace from God, our Father or the Lord Jesus Christ, or they couldn't do that. But he adopted the method and he went on with it and filled it out to the full. Now, you and I, we know what it is to be under pressure, don't we? The days in which we live, we've hardly got time to think, have we? But don't say that excuses you from being rude to other people, will you? Because you come back to this. And look at this. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ for the will of God and Timotheus our brother to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which art at Colossae grace be unto you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[00:11:56] No hurry about it. Is He just approaching them in the right spirit as his meat? And at the end of the epistle? Verse 18, The Salutation by the hand of me, Paul. You notice that? Earlier in another epistle in the epistle to the Thessalonians second Epistle, he said, I hear that you have been deceived. It has come to you. A letter purporting to be written by me. Now, he said, I want you to notice that in every epistle I write like this. Do you know there are some people who would know that I've written a letter because they say, Well, you don't know what it's all about, but I'm sure he wrote it, you see. And of course, if they bring it to me and it sometime I don't know what I've written myself, but still, it would be in evidence, wouldn't it? Well, you see, they were just as sensible as we are. They could look at that piece of writing and say, That's Paul writing. And so he says, in every episode I write like that and the words he writes for them to investigate are these. Grace We you, we elaborate. It puts it this way and that way. But every epistle has got that in it. Grace We, you and the epistle to the Hebrews has got it at the end. And that's a very misleading thing.

[00:13:20] If Paul didn't write it after all that, isn't it? Well, now he says, that's my salutation by my own hand. Chances are that's all that he wrote. If you were to spring the question upon somebody, say, who wrote the epistle to the Romans, we most need. We'd say Paul, wouldn't we? Then you turn to Romans 16 and it says, I tertius who wrote this epistle salute you in the Lord Jesus. Tertius Who was he? Oh, he was a slave. His name means number three. There's another slave in the scriptures called Secundus. Number two, there's another one called Quartus. Number four. So they were. So Paul dictated his epistles, as most people did in those days. It was very few who could really write properly in those days, or at least nothing like a professional slave who was trained to it. But he took the pen and with his own hand, he sent the last salutation. You mentioned these things to some of those clever people who say, Well, how do you know Paul ever wrote them at all? And then you see, as I've got stuffed in their pocket and ask them how do they know whether anybody wrote them at all? It's exactly the same and exactly the same footing that we live day by day. They're a bit too clever, you see. Now we come to the Epistle itself. And that starts with verse nine. Chapter one for this cause.

[00:14:41] We also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you. Now, that's characteristic. If ever there was a busy man, it was Saul of Tarsus who became Paul the Apostle cares of all the churches on him, travelling places, sometimes having no

settled lodging place and whatnot. And yet he could put down in scripture that he prayed without ceasing. Therefore, prayer must have been to the apostles something more than going aside, shutting his eyes, putting his hands together. That's all right. I don't say we shouldn't. I say we should. Even if we're alone in the presence of God, we mustn't be slipshod, for we are dealing with the most high. But then prayer is not a convention. I suppose the briefest prayer that is recorded in Scripture was uttered by Nehemiah when he stood in the presence of the King and might have lost his head for what he was about to say. He said, I prayed unto the Lord and I said unto the King like that. And he never shut an eye and he never put his hands together. But he was heard. So this man, he could continually remember, in the midst of all his pressure, the believers who were dependent humanly speaking upon him. And so we have got a light upon prayer life, which doesn't mean friends. It doesn't mean that when there's a bit of work to be done, you suddenly have to go and have your quiet time.

[00:16:06] Have you met them? Oh, I know what to call those people. Oh, of course. We've got to be gentle. Oh, yes. Oh, they're the ones who have to have their quiet time just when there's a lot of work to be done. Well, I think that must be displeasing to the Lord. But that wasn't the case of the apostle. He had very little quiet time. And yet, in the midst of the battle, he could be having a moment's worth with his Lord. And so one of the studies we shall have to have in this series is a comparison of the prayers of Ephesians and Colossians, because these prayers are a part of Scripture. They have been put there in Scripture. Now there's hundreds and thousands of God's children who could recite. The Lord's Prayer from Matthew. But there are very, very few comparatively who could at least stumble through one of the prayers of Ephesians or Colossians from memory. And yet they've been written for our learning. Don't you see that you could gauge a person's spiritual growth and just where he stood if you could hear his private prayers. You get him nearer than all the pulpit utterances in the world. You can't tell what I'm like speaking to you now. You're only making guesses. But if you could have all my. This recording business when it's only myself and the Lord.

[00:17:33] You get the real man, then Friends. How shall we have? The prayers are associated with the teaching. When our Savior gave the Lord's Prayer, it was a response to a request. The disciple said, John the Baptist teaches his disciples a prayer. Will you not teach us one? And that was entirely in harmony with the custom of the time. For every new teacher that arose in Israel was expected to do two things. He

was expected to frame a prayer that would, in some measure, envisage what he was teaching, and he was supposed to answer a stock question, which is the greatest commandment in the law. And you could find in the rabbinical writings all sorts of answers to those questions and all sorts of prayers. Well, now the apostle is the apostle for us, and he has given us not prayers that we should print and just read, but prayers that should guide us as to what we should pray for and what is well pleasing unto the Lord. So I hope you and I hope myself are beginning to think to ourselves, Oh, dear, yes, friends, if it only makes us sit and think that we've perhaps missed the model, we shall come to the Lord with more acceptability as a consequence. So there we have this prayer. Now, the prayer in Ephesians one is directing that we may know what is the hope of his calling. The prayer of Colossians one is directed that we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

[00:19:06] So you see, it's making hope, not merely a visionary thing, but it's linking it with a walk that is worthy. They are that where the words are lifted out from this context, in the first two lines which are printed in black at the top here. Wisdom, Spiritual understanding. Thanks. Pleasing and inheritance. Now if you run your eye down to the letter C and to the letter A in the middle there, you get those words wisdom, spiritual songs, their spiritual understanding, giving thanks, pleasing, and the inheritance. Now, that cannot be accident that those words are gathered up again and put into a new context. Just turn with you to that passage. Chapter 316 and look at the 16th verse. Colossians three Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. So there we have in chapter one, at the end of verse nine, Wisdom and spiritual Understanding. And we have in chapter three wisdom and spiritual songs. Well, the same thing goes on. The inheritance in chapter one is in verse 12, We give thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light and in Chapter three servants are to obey in all things they are masters, and if they do so, they will receive the reward of the inheritance.

[00:20:46] Two aspects of the inheritance. One a sheer gift that you cannot inherit. You're made for it. And the other a reward attached to the inheritance. If you serve the Lord as heartily as unto Him, are not men pleasers. Now just because I've turned to Colossians. 316 Let us get another point. This says, Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Now you see the value of comparative study. Ephesians Chapter

five. Verse 18 and 19. Ephesians 5:18 and 19. And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess but be filled with the spirit speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Now those two are perfect balances, aren't they? They say the same things. Now, let yourself in, Ephesians. You might think that that was Pentecostal to be filled with the spirit. But when you get the apostle saying it all over again to the Colossians, he says no such thing. He says, Let the Word of Christ dwell in you. And then you go back to Ephesians. You discover that the grammatical construction of the passage doesn't mean the spirit enters you, but the spirit is taken the things of Christ and putting them into you. So you see, we get these truths coming out far more insistently because they were written from two points of view than if they were all crammed into one epistle.

[00:22:20] We shall learn a lot by comparison, if we will only put it into practice. That is one instance. Well, now we come back again. To chapter one and the second section. Verses 13 to 23 and it starts with an emphasis upon creation. And it gives us the title of Christ. Look at it in verse 15. Who is the image of the invisible God? The image of the invisible God. It is insisted in Scripture more than one passage that no man hath seen God at any time. That in the past it insists in the same scripture that He dwells in light, unapproachable, which no man hath seen or can see in the future. So that God is invisible. Always has been, always will be. Oh, you say, Where do I come in? You only come in because Christ is the mediator. If he's not there, God has no contact with you and you have no contact with him. Christ is absolutely essential that we should ever be brought back to God. And He, long before he became Man at Bethlehem, was the image of the invisible God right from the beginning. When it says in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, it says here. For by him were all things created. And if you're not sure what he means, he says, In heaven and in earth, visible and invisible.

[00:24:04] But if this not universal creation, I don't know how to say it. Fringe. Do you? So that you see here we have a revelation which we've got to ponder. This one in the very chapter that it says that says in the body of his flesh through death. Now, how a person might ask, how can you tell me that the creator of heaven and earth, visible and invisible, could have a body of flesh and die? I said, Don't ask me friends. All I know it's that overwhelming teaching of Scripture that the God against whom we offended in some way became man, that he might redeem us. And if you expect me to explain that, I shall be running counter to the Scripture which says Confessedly great is the mystery

of godliness. But he goes on to say, But God was manifest in the flesh. And I think I'd rather wait till I stand in his presence. And then if I've gone up a little bit in the school, he may be able to tell me just a bit more. That is a possibility. Friends, that when we get to glory we shall still find there are things to do with God that will still be in front of us. Like the prayer in Ephesians that you may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. And so we'll just rest content, I hope.

[00:25:24] There. We have a hypothesis upon the creator and the image. Well, now, before we take anything further. Oh, one other one. The emphasis upon the supremacy of Christ. It says in verse 17. And he is before all things. And by him all things consist. And he is the head. And in all things, he might have the preeminence. Now take those three back with us to the other section, the same chapter three, 5 to 15. Just that letter B, and then the small letter B, chapter three, 5 to 15. And again, we have the word creation and image and Christ is all accident, no purpose. Let's. Let's get it then. What is he saying about creation now? Chapter 310. And you are put on the new man. Which is renewed in knowledge after the image. Of him that created him is an accident. Chapter one says he is the image and he created. Chapter three says. And he's dealing with you. God, who could touch the whole creation like that? Stoops to touch you and me. We are as much the creation as the very universe itself, and we are as much associated with Christ who is the image of the invisible God as the things in heaven and earth. This is the practical side. That is the doctrinal side. And if these two do not march together there, there's something radically wrong. You do. Now, there are some who have taken the line that when they studied the epistle to the Ephesians and get to chapter three, they said, We needn't bother about chapter 4 or 5 and six, for that's only practice.

[00:27:14] You see. Well, there may mean well, but it's a shocking line to take, isn't it? Because if all that we are learning and all that we are studying just ends up when we sing our closing hymn and at the end of it, till we come back again, there's something entirely missed, isn't there? It should immediately enter into life and practice and walk, as the Apostle has put it over and over again. He prays that they may put on the new man, that they may extend and exhibit by a worthy walk. That they do belong to this calling. So we've got those two, the image and the creation. And then if you look further down this chapter, you will find in verse 11 that Christ is all where there is neither Greek nor do you notice the Greek comes first. Now, when Paul spoke about the two in the

early Epistles, it's where there is neither Jew nor Greek. And I twist them round the other way, neither Greek nor Jew now because we've come over the line. Circumcision nor uncircumcision barbarian Scythian bond or free. But Christ is all and in all. So we all see he has the pre-eminence, whether it be in the material creation, whether it be in the church, which is the new creation, or whether it be the individual lives of his people.

[00:28:38] As I mentioned, I believe in another meeting. Somebody criticized my testimony, United States and thought it was a strange thing to say. It was a criticism, but I begin to gather it was because I've since learned that the one who passed this remark is leaning to modernism, and he's taking on all sorts of other things besides the teaching of Scripture and is rather sadly slipping. But he criticized my testimony in the United States. And when I heard that that was going to be repeated to me, I put my chin out so that I could have another one, because we get used to it. You see, we know what they're going to say, ultra dispensationalism, but I don't know what. But he said, Oh no. The criticism that he passed of you was that your testimony was christocentric. Putting it another way that Christ was all my I don't want anything better said of my ministry until I touched the tape and finish. I don't think anything could be said better. It's overwhelming to think that it could be said of me at any time, but at least that's the goal. That is the one thing that matters that Christ is center for. That's his place. And without him, God's invisible, inaudible, intangible. We don't know. We have nothing to guide us.

[00:29:56] We have no way of getting over the bridge. I am the way no man cometh unto the father. But by me. Is as much a truth for you and for me now as when we first put our trust in Christ. How long ago? It doesn't matter. And then we go back on the story in the first chapter. We have the forgiveness of sins. And here we have we have the forgiveness of sins. But do notice this, do notice this in the first chapter. It's your sins are forgiven by God. And in the third chapter, it's somebody else's. Listen. Verse 13. Forbearing one another and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any even as Christ forgave you. So also do ye see? Isn't it one thing to rejoice in the doctrine of the forgiveness of all our sins? Isn't it another thing to have that show in your heart that you can't help forgiving somebody else? Is there anyone here who is entertaining a grudge about anybody or just a Don't say that because we are members of the Body of Christ. But these people were in it as if any man have a quarrel. So he supposed it was possible to have a quarrel. Anybody here has never had a quarrel with

any other of God's. People would hardly believe you if you stood up and said so. Friends. In fact, we'd quarrel with you with us straight away.

[00:31:21] Now you see, the God is dealing with us as we are. And this is the practical side. We have been forgiven all. Then let us see to it that we remember the frailties, the temptations, the difficulties we have to face, and remember that our Saviour puts us a bit wise. When he said I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. And he called us and we do well to remember him. Well, now we leave that and we'll come a step further down in chapter 123 to chapter 21, we have another section. Chapter 123. He speaks about the fact that he was a minister at the end of the verse. He says in verse 25 that he was made a minister. He says it again, this time according to a dispensation of God which was given to him. Now here we come to our word fulness. One of the words not to fulfill the Word of God. It does not mean that. You see, if you say Isaiah said a certain thing and it was fulfilled, well, you know what you mean. But no, Isaiah said anything. It's contrary to the testimony of Colossians that he can find anything in the Old Testament that he is fulfilling. It's a brand new revelation, and the word is more correctly translated the same word in chapter two. Where we read in verse ten and ye are complete. It did not do full field, but put it the other way around.

[00:32:58] You'll feel full, huh? That's the idea, said the apostle. My ministry is completing the Word of God. Now, sometimes you know we are very wrong to take it all lying down. We let the other man chase us about and keep telling us that because we want to divide the word of truth, we are cutting the Word of God to pieces. Now you take the other way. You chase them about and say to them, Brother, and they shall rightly divide the word of truth. You haven't got a complete Bible. And of course, about that that would you say, look, what do you know about Ephesians? What do you know about Philippians? What do you know about Colossians? Well, if you're honest, I say precious little. So? Well, that's what I said. You haven't got a complete Bible. So right division instead of taking away gives you. Shows you that it's necessary. That puts the apex on the top and makes the whole pyramid complete. So we have now this emphasis. And then continuing. We have the personal. Beginning of the apostle for those to whom he ministered. He said in verse 28, whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man. Warning almost means danger. And chapter two is full of it that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. There is a strange thing. In chapter one, he

says, We are thanking God who has already made you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance already.

[00:34:37] And he says already in chapter one, verse 22, that you may be presented Holy Unblamable and Unremovable You're going to improve on that. You're going to be presented holy and unblameable. Now he says, I'm worrying about you, that I may present you perfect. What's his point? He says, I'm not questioning that you're accepted in the beloved. But the way you talk and the way you walk, I don't think you're very acceptable in yourself, brother. See the difference? It's one thing to be say I've accepted in the beloved. And it's another thing for some people to say to you, brother, if you hadn't told me, I wouldn't have known it. That's what his point is. Well, I can't improve on what God has done. But he says, I do pray that where you have reached in doctrine, you'll see that your balance a little bit in practice. Have you ever heard anybody preach in sovereign grace with a face like a thundercloud? Grace. Sovereign. Grace. Oh, my. You. So what's the word Grace mean? See? So. We run our eye down again to get this balance. That is letter D and there we have some of these words repeated. The mystery manifested in that place. He has a fiction, this place. He has bonds. And that is Paul speaking. Afflictions and bonds he uses together, you remember in other places.

[00:36:03] And there are two words that we must notice in this earlier. One. The word agonize and the word Laodicea. Right on the end of that. Now, look at that in. Thus 29 and Chapter two verse one. Whereunto. I also labor striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. For I would that she knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea. Now this word conflict and describing it gives us the English word to agonize. What we call agonistic terms have to do with wrestling and running and all the Greek sports. So when Paul wrote Second Timothy, he said, I have fought a good fight. He says, I have contested in a good contest. I have agonized in an agora. You see. So he says, I am agonizing in prayer for the of this for you. And he's speaking about Laodicea. Now, when you look at chapter four and there you have the outline and look at the two last words written on the chart. Agonize and they are desire. Is it an accident? They just come in the right place. Or is it a little evidence that God could superintend the very place where the word Laodicea, He shall come again? Verse 12 of Chapter four. Epaphus Who is one of you? A servant of Christ, saluted you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers. Now I've got a margin and it says Striving.

[00:37:43] And if you've got the original, you're back again. While this man agonizing. Fervently for you in prayers. Now, the apostle was agonizing for them by his ministry. His preaching, his warning and his sufferings. And the other man was praying. So he doesn't mean to say we've all got to do exactly the same thing to reach the same goal. One man preaches, another prays, and God honors both. Now, 1st May be more adept at one than the other. 1st May be called to one or the other, but they are all perfectly answering one another's needs that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. The other man was agonizing that he may present every man perfect. This man's praying. You may stand perfect. Will you take your choice? I don't think you get very much difference at the end. Would you? In that case? And then he says, for I bear him record that he hath a great zeal for you and them that are in Laodicea and then didn't hierapolis. So here comes in the exact spot associated with agonizing and perfect. I only mention that in case somebody in this meeting was still a bit reserved as to whether these structures are just an imagination, that little bit drops into its place anyhow, doesn't it? And if that does, so may the others. When we come back. To the two members that come on either side are the great warning chapter.

[00:39:18] Chapter two. Verse two that their hearts might be comforted. Be knit together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We may have to revise the closing words of verse two when we get to them. We'll leave it. What what an approach to this. There is hearts comforted. Knit together in love, then all riches. Understanding. Acknowledgement for what? To acknowledge that the mystery of God is Christ. And in him all the treasury of wisdom and knowledge hid in Him. Will you go to the other side of chapter two? You've got something else hidden which pertains to us. Colossians three. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead or he died. And your life is hid. With Christ in God. If we were to read Your Life is Hid and God said so, that would be lovely, wouldn't it? And if he says your life is hid with Christ, that's extraordinary. Wonderful, isn't it? But he goes and says, Your life is hid with Christ in God. And then he looks at you and he says, Oh, why are you so fearful? If that's true, you see, friends, what can touch us? Apart from this permit.

[00:41:10] And what can touch that life. Is he men? They do what they will with God's people. They never destroy this very body that God has given us. But if he said earlier in the Gospels, fear him, who is not only able to destroy the body, but also soul, indicating the others couldn't touch that. What about this? Is there a safe deposit that can get anything like this? Your life is hid with Christ in God. Then he goes on to say, When Christ, who is our life? Shall be made manifest or appear. They shall also be manifest with him. A glory. Your life is hid with him. The United States with him. It looks as I never got to be disassociated from it. And that will be, as the hymn puts it, glory for me and for you. So there we have the two hidden themes, and now we have the warning. Chapter two. Verse eight, Beware. Verse 18. Let no man be guide you. Beware. Now, what's the trouble? Well, in the earlier epistles. The opposing the opponents that the apostle had in mind were mainly from the Jews. Who felt that this was an invasion into their territory. The fact that the Apostle was delivering people from the bondage of legalism and ceremonial.

[00:42:57] And telling them that however much they struggled and tried to keep the law and the Ten Commandments, they never they never produce a righteousness that God would accept. And so they were the antagonists. He was fighting in the epistle to the Galatians of those who would put the child of God into bondage of legalism. And then when the gospel spread and went more into the surrounding lands, they began to touch another line of teaching. They began to get the philosopher on their track. You know, when Paul went to Athens, he began to speak to the philosophers, and the Corinthians had a little touch of philosophy. And so by the time you get to the Ephesians and Colossians, it's not so much the people who were advocating the law of Moses that were the trouble. It was those who were bringing all their philosophies to bear upon it. And some of those philosophies got taken into the church and have never been expelled yet. And they enter into sermons and teachings and hymns and ideas to this very day. So he says, beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit. Now, the apostle never said that philosophy was wrong, but there are more than one kind of philosophy. And he puts it this way We put it back into our English way of putting it. Beware, listen in and spoil you through a vain, deceitful philosophy. And that's what most philosophies will be, because it is the speculation of the highest form of mind that this world knows.

[00:44:41] To find out God who is unsearchable. The world by its wisdom. Do you not got? God has arranged that no man can find him out by searching, only being led by the Spirit of God and recognizing always the Christ of God as the means, the way, the truth and the life. Someone had a little dig at the philosophy and said all philosophy was like a man in a dark room looking for a black cat that wasn't there. Well, you don't want to spend your time doing that. Do you, friends? And that's you get all the philosophies together and listen to them. Are your conscious that there's an emptiness, there's a void, there's something that doesn't satisfy? I don't expect any of you going to start running into philosophy. But don't forget that Shakespeare, who sometimes I quote. Has got this statement, which is very true. To old country yokels are talking and he says, Hast thou philosophy shepherd? Or he says, When I'm hungry or want something to eat when it's cold or want something to wear. Well, that's philosophy for it's very limited, I know, but that's the beginning of it. But you've got all that and more in the Scriptures. Because we are not void of wisdom in this book, Friends. We've had it already in chapter one. We have it already again in chapter three.

[00:46:09] Wisdom but wisdom from above, not wisdom from beneath. Fighting is about the wisest one, apart from God that we know of in Scripture. We don't want to follow him, do we? So it depends on where the wisdom originates and what its goal is that matters. So we've got that emphasis there. Beware. Lest any man make a spoil of you through philosophy and vain deceit. Then he elaborates it after the tradition of men. It's one school. You can get them very much emphasized in job one always appeals to what it has been in the past. That is argument all can't be true because it's always been, always will be. So you meet the person who says it was good enough for my father, it's good enough for me and he thinks that's an answer to all problems. Well, it's good to venerate your parents, but at the same time, we are not bound by the traditions of men. After the rudiments of the world, the elementary pencils of the principles of the world. One of the elementary principles of the world is a shrug of the shoulders in You say business is business. Or you must look after, number one, elementary principles of the world. But you've been delivered. And some of the most idiotic things that the world thinks are now the right things to do, you have to look after number two. Let this mind be in you.

[00:47:41] That was also in Christ Jesus, who didn't think of his own things, but spent himself for others. Who who's going to do that? So you see, here are differences. The

traditions of men, the rudimentary principles of the world. And then he puts it the other way and finishes. And not after Christ. So you see, after all, friends, you haven't got to wade through it all. Now, Ecclesiastics have to go at that. He waded through it to discover, after a long search that it was vanity and vexation of spirit. Well, you needn't do what he did. All you've got to do is to put the test. Where does Christ fit in all? Well, you see no place for him, right? No place for me. And that's the end of that. Of course, you'll be narrow minded. One of the things that I'm glad of. People call me a man of one track mind because I'm on the right track. I don't mind you. And so here we have this stress now a little bit further down. Verse 18. Let no man beguile you. Now, this word beguile is a compound word. In the Epistle to the Philippians. The word for a prize is Rabia, the Arab. Now this word Biggley's. Catta Bhabua. Have you got it? Same word, but with a cata in front of it. Let no man cheat you of your reward. Let no man cut across the path of winning the prize.

[00:49:16] It doesn't say Let no man rob you of your life. Why? Because if be an idiotic thing, who's gonna rob me of my life is hid with Christ in God, not the devil himself. So he never wasted his time trying to do that. But he'll try to cheat me of the reward. He will. And he does. So it all perfect clear truths, no mistakes, no slips all the way through. And then earlier it says, And not after Christ. Here it says. And not holding the head. We're back again. You know, Paul, I think you must be a bit christocentric. So nearly all their propositions and all your problems and all that you have to say brings us back again and again to the person and work of the Son of God. Who would like to know that Some people grumble because you can't go through these meetings very much in this chapel without the person of Christ and his finished work coming up somewhere. And I'm sure if I interpret you are right, you hope the day will never dawn when that will be. So here we get then this epistle. The salutation at the beginning and the end, the prayer and its challenging consequence in practical, outworking. The emphasis upon creation at the beginning and then the emphasis upon creation. Now you. He the image of the invisible God you all think created in the image.

[00:50:48] That's what Adam was. What an order has been put upon flesh and blood that they should, in any measure, be little echoes of that. And then the agonizing of the apostle when he thought about those who were related to his ministry and the other man who agonized in prayer for the same thing. And not merely resting on our laurels and saying, Well, I'm perfect in Christ. So yes, but surely the echo should be all now I

may be a little more perfect in my walk and witness and then do remember that this is no scare that he's inventing in chapter two. When we go through this chapter as we must and see all the things that are there opposed to the onward movement of the child of God, we shall realize indeed, we do need the whole armor of God that I may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. But we'll not anticipate that any more. I think I've nearly had enough, and possibly you have. I should only spoil by now going back to the beginning and starting on a few words in the first chapter. So I think we'll leave it there and may we come up, God willing, next time with a desire that some of the things which we have a glimpse of in this epistle, in this rapid survey, shall then divide us with their message and by the Lord give us grace that we may ever seek to translate them into the terms of work and acceptable witness.