

W341_Colossians_1.mp3

[00:00:00] For keeping the commandments of God and walking according to new creation. He didn't start a new denomination and say, oh, Pete is the is the minister of the of the circumstances in the epistle to the Colossians. Most of us who are associated with this witness in any way will remember and realize that the great classic epistle to which we turn when we seek to examine or to explain to others the high calling of the church of the dispensation of the mystery, the revelation given to Paul as the prisoner of Jesus Christ to US Gentiles, and the wonders of this grace that has been manifested to such as we. We go to the Epistle, to the Ephesians, and you may say, Well, why bother to supplement and go to the epistle to the Colossians? Well, that says why bother to have an epistle to the Colossians that's criticizing the Word of God, isn't it? Will you cast your mind back for a little in this sense? When man was made and came from the hand of his maker. He was perfect as a man. Complete as a man and you to know what God said about the man he made and put on the earth. Perfect and complete, is it? It's not good for man to be alone. I will make a help meet for him and not to. Those two Were there. Was there complete? See. I believe that that runs right through the creation and runs right through the scriptures.

[00:01:43] A man's point of view and a woman's point of view differ not because they're in opposition, but because they're contributing. I believe much of the delinquency of my children is because modern life has robbed a child of one of its parents. It's beginning to rob the child of both of its parents. As far as we can see, very soon. But for right from my early days. I knew my father went out early in the morning. I heard the little ritual. Go on. Well, goodbye, dear. Yes, goodbye. Have you got your bag, Dad? Yes. Bang goes the door. My dad was off and he didn't come back to a fairly late. Now, in some places, the child hardly knew the father, and so he had a mother's love, which was immediate. Looking after him now. And the father's love that says, What's that kid going to be like in 20 years time if he does that? That wasn't there. And so he grew lopsided. So as we come through the scriptures, we find there is this the getting perilously near to our subject of last evening, aren't we? The battles of Scripture. How is the Bible constructed in its first great division? Old Testament and new promise or fulfillment? All the subdivisions afterwards are within that. But still. There it is. This has come for a moment to other Paul's epistles. If you read the epistle to the Galatians, you've got a tremendous

witness concerning that basic teaching which belongs to the Apostles gospel justification by faith without works of law.

[00:03:29] But if you never supplement it by the parallel epistle that comes at the end of that part of the ministry, the epistle to the Romans, you have missed a tremendous lot. He didn't pack it all into one epistle. He wrote two epistles on the same subject from two different points of view, handling it in a different way because of the state of the times. But to see both together make a complete whole. Who did you come to? Remember that he wrote one epistle to the Thessalonians. Where he spoke about the work of faith, faith and labor of love and patience, of hope. And then he wrote a second epistle to the Thessalonians, where he commenced very creditably on their faith and their love. I think he doesn't say the word hope. It leaves that out and puts patients. But he says, you know, you haven't quite got me with regard to this question of the Second Coming, the hope. So he gives a second epistle or if you come to one Corinthians, if you want an interesting study that will be valuable to you, watch for the key words in one Corinthians and then see how they repeat themselves in two Corinthians with little additions to them. So we've got two Thessalonians. Two Corinthians. Now we have we haven't got the first epistle to the Ephesians and the first Epistle to the second Epistle to the Ephesians.

[00:04:59] It's the other way around. We've got one epistle called the Epistle to the Ephesians. One epistle called the Colossians. And they both present us with the fact of Paul being a prisoner. They both emphasize the dispensation of the mystery. They speak of the place where Christ is sitting at the right hand. They emphasize about principality and power. They speak of the church, which is the body. I speak of Christ as the head. And you say, Oh, well, I thought I did suggest to be a repetition. Oh, no, Paul didn't have a typewriter and a bit of carbon paper. Oh, no, he wrote out of a burning heart. The thing that was uppermost in his mind. But he took a little different turn. And it's that little different tone that I think is valuable. So you who are listening, if you have the epistle to the Ephesians well in mind and heart, you will value the fact that just where you expect he's going to say something, he says something a little differently and that will pull you up a little bit and help you to search and see even more the wonder of his calling and some of its responsibilities. Now before you is a chart. It's very battered about, but I think it's good enough for the purpose and I want to use it in this opening study to just sort of focus your attention upon outstanding, distinctive features.

[00:06:21] Now, the first thing that strikes your eye, I suppose, is the red triangle, and that is the signal that we've accepted. And we have to remember along the pathway of life, traveling today has to be watched. And even then, accidents happen so tremendously. This is the danger signal, isn't it? Warning. Now, that's one of the characteristic differences of Colossians. There are hints in Ephesians as you go through the practical section of being possibly sidetracked and losing some of the high aspirations at the beginning, but not so insistently as we have here. So will you notice. That when you come to chapter two in Colossians, he then ceases after a certain few verses to give you a further development of doctrine. But he begins to give you a warning. Shall we take notice of that? To Colossians chapter two verse. Eight. Beware. As this words you see, beware. A warning. If you glance at the end of chapter one, you'll see he's already uttered the word. Verse 28. Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching warning. That's twice if you look further down. Chapter two, verse 18. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels and so on. That's a warning. So evidently. The apostle realized and was blessed by God in the realization of it, that it's one thing to tell people the positive truth of their high calling.

[00:08:16] But it is also necessary to tell the negative truth of the pitfalls and the snares that will always be there ready for them. Because the God of this age and the prince of this world is still active. He doesn't say, Oh, well, I mustn't touch these. They belong to the high calling. He says, Oh, they're fair game for me, if I can only trap them. So we've got a little different approach you see, in the very center of it. Beware. You may be beguiled. On either side of this triangle or in the middle of the triangle. Of course, I've got the word he'd mystery. We'll see that in a moment. But you've got three words inside. Now, of course, when we're going along the roads in the car, you have all sorts of symbols. It says cattle crossing here, school here and all sorts of other notices. But there's no cattle crossing here or school. But he says this is what you've got to watch out for, particularly. So we're again in chapter two, verse eight, Beware, lest any man spoil you make a spoil of you. You see, it's one thing to spoil a thing. That's one use of the word. It's another thing to be made a spoil of by a captor or a conqueror. Beware, lest any man make a spoil of you through. Now our version says philosophy and vain deceit. What does that mean? Is philosophy one thing and vain deceit another? No.

[00:09:50] There's a recognized figure of speech which emphasizes a thing by putting it a little bit out of its strict order and to put it back into English. We would read like this. Beware, lest any man spoil you through a vain, deceitful philosophy. He didn't say philosophy is vain and deceitful. Because if a thing is a true piece of philosophy, it will be right. It will be true. Philosophy is the word that means to love wisdom. But of course, if the wisdom is the wisdom of this world and you call light darkness and darkness light because of the ignorance that is in you. Well then if people follow your lead, it will be a disaster, won't it? So he says, You watch out. You're living in a Greek speaking world. You have a tradition already of this great philosophic teaching which has influenced the thought of men for 2000 years and more. Such names as Plato and Socrates and Aristotle that came at the end give you a little indication of the wisdom. The way to go went into this philosophy, and Paul would be the last man to deride them or ridicule them. But all he said, as he said to the Corinthians, who were expecting words of wisdom from him, always said, the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God and the very thing that the world calls foolishness is the very center of our faith. The Corinthians were told that they were saved by the foolishness of God and by the weakness of God.

[00:11:38] Can you imagine it? That's something that the ordinary philosopher could hardly endure. So he said, Beware. Again, he said not only philosophy, but the tradition of men. The tradition of men. And thirdly, the rudiments of the world. I don't know whether you have the book of Job in the back of your mind enough to realize that right in the beginning and here in this new commencement, we've got the same sort of thing. Three men came to Joe and one argued from this point of view, one argued from that point of view and one from this point of view. And it all seems so genuine and real. One says, Oh, you've never seen anybody treated like you, Joe, by God, unless he was a secret sinner. Oh, you old sinner. We found you out. Another one comes along and says, Everybody's treated according to their merits. Another one comes along and appeals to the traditions of men. That what it always has been, what it always will be. And Joe said, miserable comforters are you all. And at last, God says you three men are not spoken of me as my servant job, in spite of all their wisdom. So he says here. The traditions of men, the rudiments, the elementary principles of the world. Now, does it mean to say that you better take a course of study? You devote one year to vain, deceitful philosophy.

[00:13:10] Philosophy to find out how bad it is. And then you have another year on the traditions of men, and yet a third year on the elementary principles of the world. And then you come out all properly qualified for what now is it? I'm only telling you that to tell you the positive. All this. Can be looked at from one angle. Where does Christ come in it? That's it. And not after Christ. He takes the same line presently in the same chapter when he says about this voluntary humility and intruding into those things which he hath not seen vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. That's verse 18 and not holding the head, See? Not after Christ. I've adopted the something of that principle without knowing it. I have to review quickly many a book and they say, you don't need to tell me you've read that book. I said, I read all I want to see in that book. He said, What have you done? I looked at the index. I see the word atonement. I look up the article. I say, if he's if he says that about the atonement, the rest of it's valueless or it may be some other distinctive feature. I'd only do we wade through 4 or 500 pages if the man says that about the finished work of Christ. So said the apostle. You see, you've got it all in him. Look at chapter two, verse two.

[00:14:40] I pray that their hearts might be comforted being 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. Well, he says, if that's a fact, if in Christ has been deposited, the treasure of wisdom and knowledge, why turn aside to these broken systems that can hold no water when he is the water of life freely? Well, that's what we're going to see a little bit more in detail as we go on. Well, now, on either side of this triangle, I've got two smaller ones. And in the middle of that triangle, I did have a third one. And you say, where is it? It's somewhere downstairs, friends. But in the course of years, that gets awful chaos. But you say, why don't you be methodical? Well, Fred, just as I'm going to take one of those charts downstairs, somebody buttonholes me and he wants an explanation of some part of the scripture. Over the time I've done with him, everybody's looking at me and wanting me to go. So I take the thing and I sling it in there and then I lose it completely because I'm not yet quite perfect friends. You see, somebody else used to adopt the principle of saving a stamp and putting in my hand a few shillings for something to do with the brain.

[00:16:11] And I knew no more than the man in the moon who it was or what I've got to do with it. That's not treating me fairly, is it? So I give it them back and say, Well, you

pay it yourself. I can't walk about with a pocket full of money and not know who it is. I've got my work to do. And so I apologize that I haven't got in the middle of the word hope. But you put it there by imagination, faith, hope and love. Would you look at chapter one? Verse three. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Praying always for you. Since we heard of your faith as the first thing he says. That's caused me thanks to give thanks giving to her to have heard of your faith. If you want a larger exposition of the way in which the Apostle considered the place of faith, read the second chapter of one Thessalonians. It's all. When I heard about your faith, I sent him to inquire about your faith. I wondered whether your faith was giving way. You see faith? Without that, all the rest is impossible. But he said not only heard about your faith in Christ Jesus, but your love, which you have to all the saints. So he is the brotherly love which is stressed elsewhere. Faith and love. And then he says, for the hope which is laid up for you.

[00:17:36] The hope. Well, now you can remember other passages in Paul's writings where he brings those three together. The one outstanding one that we all remember is now abide faith. Would you say you authorized version says now abideth faith. I say, doth it because even the authorized version slipped up there Now abide. Hey, hope, love these three. And if you look at the apostles writings. And if you would, extract from his epistles all that he says about faith and all that he says about love and all that he says about hope with all their appurtenances thereof, you'll have very little left. And I would suggest to you that you guard these three. Let now inroad be made possible in your faith. Nothing coming between you and the Lord in whom you believe. Let nothing in danger or sour or in any measure cripple the love that you have to him or to his people. And nothing becloud the hope that is before you. If you have a believer whose faith and love and hope can like the apostle give thanks, I think you have got someone who is well on the way to glory. That's true of us all. So we've got that there. Well, now. Underneath this exhibition. I don't know whether you can read it from the distance. I've got in small letters something which is blotted out. And in this second chapter, it disposes of many things that were for the time being, practiced.

[00:19:27] I've got there. The word circumcision, baptism ordinances, shadows, rudiments of the world, doctrines of men and neglecting of the body. That's only a few of the things that were now creeping into the church and taking away from the fullness that the believer has in Christ. You see how he goes on in Chapter two? I'll read once more,

verse eight to go straight on. If I don't trip myself up and stop myself again. Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ for. For the logical writer. He got a reason for saying this. I'm not sweeping aside these things and giving you nothing in return. For in him. Dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And is that in any measure true? What fools we are to search for heavenly wisdom somewhere else? You see its bodily. That has to do with the fact that Christ came here and lived here. We haven't got to go afar off. He's brought it to us. It's walked about in the guise of human flesh. It's some repository of truth that's beyond our estimation, as he says, in whom I hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So he says here, for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. But he goes further. And geo complete. Now that word fullness and the word complete, of course, to an English mind seem alike.

[00:21:17] But they are alike. And you could go on and say this. The fullness of the Godhead, bodily and ye are filled to the full in him. Well, this is if you already filled to the full in him. Why go to this disappointing source? Then he begins to enumerate them. In whom? Also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands. He said, What does that mean? Well, if you didn't interrupt me, he would have told you in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. By the circumcision of Christ. Putting off the things to do with the flesh. It's obvious. What is the circumcision of Christ buried with him in baptism, wherein also he has risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead. And if baptism is to be taken as literal water baptism, what are you going to do with circumcision? Which comes in the verse before? But inasmuch as circumcision is now retranslated into its spiritual equivalents? Well then the baptism, which is also a parallel, must be kept in the same context. Or we'll see all that, I hope, presently. Verse 14. Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. And that's a recognized figure in not only Old Testament and New Testament times, but even in our own times to nail a theme.

[00:22:57] We use the expression even now, even though we don't use a physical hammer, a nail to nail a lie. Can I leap to the counter? And this piercing with a nail was an exhibition of the thing was canceled. I have been told that in the East, when a person had settled a bill and the whole thing was paid for, he nailed that bill to his doorpost that the villagers should see that it was finished. He does it. Well, that's what God has done.

He's nailed it there. He's nailed it to the cross of Christ. Now, one of the reasons why we should watch, particularly all this question of the ordinances and ceremonials and things, you may say, Oh, well, they're perfectly innocent, or they may be, but they can gradually dominate until that becomes your faith and hope and love instead of the real thing. So he says here, and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly triumphing over them in it. That's rather complicated verse that waits for exposition. And now he brings it to a conclusion. Let no man, therefore, judge you. A meet. Or a drink. Or in respect of a holy day or of the new moon order the Sabbath day. The extraordinary thing is he puts the Sabbath days in. You say, why? Extraordinary. Well, one man broke the law of the Sabbath and Moses was in a perplexity.

[00:24:33] He said to the Lord, What shall we do with that man? And the Lord said, He must be stoned to death. Our Sabbatarians got to watch his step, for he never does what God says. Would you tolerate the idea that because somebody broke the seventh day. Well, we should be all stoning one another, shouldn't we? Well, it's a monstrous perversion, you see. And here the apostle says, Let no man judge you Now, Why? Just as he set aside philosophy and tradition and rudiments. He again sets aside these things because of a positive statement. He says, I am setting them aside because they are shadows, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ and that doesn't refer to the church, which is the body. It's the word which is in opposition to the word shadow. He says You've got the substance in all that God has done in Christ. Why chase all these shadows then? How foolish. So we sang a hymn just now. God spake in days of old. In divers times in ways. But he, who spake by signs and wonders and miracles and ordinances have now spoken by his son, is the idea. And so we find the dominating text of Colossians is that Christ is all and in all. Philosophy. Tradition. All these ordinances, whatever value they may have. You're not lose the value, you'll find them in reality in him.

[00:26:24] Well, then we come to a sort of shield at the bottom of this post. Well, now, who am I to lift out the most important doctrines in this epistle? The only thing I can say. Well, I've tried. Now you try. And if we all differ, we shall all say. Oh, what wonders there are for us? To explore what treasures are given here. But let's look at 1 or 2 of them are put there. The first one I have is the word made meat. Colossians 112. Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. What that making meat means we should have to consider in detail.

But isn't it a blessed thought to know that even though you do not know what you'll require when you get to glory, God does. And he provided it. And he doesn't ask you to supplement it and spoil it. You accept what is given? You know the parable. How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And you know what argument? That man had nothing. He was speechless. You know the other beautiful picture in the book of Esther. All the other women were given an option to choose whatever paraphernalia they like to put on. They could have peg top dresses or they could have crinolines. They could have satins and silks and velvets. I don't know.

[00:27:56] They could have staggered the man who made the great term films and the Ten Commandments and put him into the shade. They could choose whatever they liked to go into the presence of a Persian monarch. What a temptation to a woman anytime. But Esther said to the one over here, she says, Whatever you give me. Oh. My Shiva is. Why? Do you say that to the Lord? Yes. Whatever is provided. Good enough for me, Lord. And she's the picture of the one that went in was accepted in spite of all the settings and silks and velvets. And I don't know what that had been piled on, you see. So we've got now he's made us meet. Oh, what a complete neatness that is accepted in the beloved. Accepted in the beloved. Seated together with him, all these things in Ephesians as he crammed into this one little expression. Then our second or third name could be Enoch. Is he been telling some folks that without the deed of poll, I've changed my second name. It really is Charles Henry Welsh. But now, just among a few of us, it's Charles Hopalong because limp of anything. But I don't tell anybody because it's too sacred that I've got a another word that I don't write down as Enoch. He was translated right back in the Old Testament times. And he says here. He hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear son.

[00:29:36] We are the translated people. Our home is actually heaven itself. Although personally, for the moment, we're not quite there. Well, then we go on to this great word, reconcile. Verse 21. I knew there were some times alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works. Yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death reconciled? What a theme that is. I pick that word out to give the title to that second volume that's now printed the apostle of the reconciliation. Peter doesn't use it. James doesn't use it. John doesn't use it. Paul is the apostle of the reconciliation. I think we have presented. Verse 22, in the body of his flesh through death to present you. Holy.

And amiable and reprove evil in his sight. What a thing that is. And then we've already quoted from chapter two. Ye are complete in him. Verse ten. You are complete in him. You can't add to completeness. Don't try to only try to work it out. As God gives you grace. And then in chapter three, the summing up text. He says in verse ten, You have put on the new man. Which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him where there is neither Greek nor Jew. Circumcision nor uncircumcision. Do you remember that Paul didn't belong to the Anti-circumcision party? It could swing over to the other side and make another denomination of it. He says in Galatians. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision are any value.