

# *Holding Fast to Christ*

## Col. 2:18-19

Today is Memorial Day. As Americans, we have a lot to be thankful for including those who gave of their lives for our country to give us independence and freedom in the states.

This week also commemorates the day of Pentecost. The day of Pentecost occurred 50 days after Easter. We started the series of sermons on the book of Colossians on Nov. 1st. Since then 18 sermons have been preached from the first two chapters and 7 sermons have been preached for Christmas and Easter. When sermons are spread over such a long period of time, it becomes difficult to remember all of the sermons and be able to tie them together. I thought it wise this morning to spend **some** time hovering over the forest, if you will, and tie the first two chapters together in order to understand why Paul was writing the letter.

I have entitled the message this morning "*Holding Fast to Christ*".

### All Stand and Read Scripture

Colossians 2:18-19 (NASB)

<sup>18</sup> Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, <sup>19</sup> and not **holding fast to the head**, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

### Prayer

#### INTRODUCTION:

#### **A View of the Forest.**

The book of Colossians is a Prison Epistle (letter written while in prison probably in Rome). Paul wrote it somewhere around 60-62 A.D (approximately 30 years after Christ's death). It was written to counter and respond to false teachings and encourage believers to serve Christ by "**walking in a manner worthy of the Lord**" as we see in Paul's prayer for them in **1:10**.

#### **I. The Divinity of Jesus Christ.**

It is apparent that false teachers were spreading heresy by rejecting the deity of Jesus Christ, probably teaching that He was just a "unique man". Paul warns not to allow anyone to lead them astray with Philosophy and empty deception (or trickery) in **2:8**.

NOTICE WHICH teachings they are to avoid: teaching according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world.

Paul's purpose is to refute the Colossian heresy. To accomplish this goal, he exalts Christ...

- as the very image of God (1:15)
- the Creator (1:16)
- the preexistent sustainer of all things (1:17)
- the head of the church (1:18)
- the first to be resurrected (1:18)
- the fullness of deity in bodily form (1:19; 2:9)
- and the reconciler (1:20-22)

Thus Christ is completely adequate. We "have been made complete in Christ" (2:10).

We **MUST** understand the significance of the deity of Christ. **Deity is being fully God and fully man.** This explains how Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus had to be man so that He could die and had to be God so that His death could pay for our sins. Without a proper understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what He accomplished, we are subject to false teaching.

An in-depth study of Christ causes an incredible impact on our daily life. As we delve into the heart of Jesus, we begin to grasp the amazing concept that He, being fully Man and fully God, loves each of us with a never-ending love the extent of which is hard for us to imagine.

On the other hand, the Colossian heresy was altogether inadequate. It was a hollow and deceptive philosophy (2:8), lacking any ability to restrain the old sinful nature (2:23).

**Thus theme of Colossians is the complete adequacy of Christ as contrasted with the emptiness of mere human philosophy.**

## **II. The Colossian Heresy.**

Paul exposes the false teachings he opposes in the Colossian letter. The nature of the heresies must be inferred from statements he made in opposition to the false teachers.

These false teachings seem to fall into two categories, **Jewish and Gnostic**. It is likely, therefore, that the Colossian heresy was a mixture of an extreme form of Judaism and an early stage of Gnosticism. Both groups were trying to mix their Jewish legalism and Greek philosophy with Christian theology.

Gnostic philosophy taught that matter was evil. In order to avoid having their pure god create evil, they had created a system of lesser deities that overflowed from their god.

These lesser gods were far enough removed from the pure god that they were able to create the universe (which was composed of evil matter).

They named this lesser deity the Jehovah God of the Hebrews.

Some of the elements of its teachings were:

- A. *Reliance on human wisdom and tradition.* **(2:4,8)**.
- B. *Depreciation of Christ.* This is implied in Paul's emphasis on the supremacy of Christ.
- C. *Legalism.* **(2:16)**. The Jewish Christians had lived under Old Testament law. They found it very hard to accept the new found freedom in Christ. So radical was the concept of salvation by grace apart from works that those steeped in Old Testament law found it very difficult to grasp. Their tendency was so suggest that Christians should still observe Jewish tradition and tried to impose it on other Christians. (Last Week)
- 1. Circumcision
- 2. Acceptable foods to eat or drink
- 3. Monthly feasts
- 4. Rest on the weekly Sabbath
- D. *Self Abasement* **(2:18,23)**.
- E. *Angel worship.* **(2:18)**.
- F. *Secret knowledge.* The Gnostics boasted of this (see [2:18](#) and Paul's emphasis in [2:2-3](#) on Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom").
- G. *Asceticism.* "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" ([2:21](#); cf. [2:23](#)). **Asceticism, which is simply outward works that is actually a form of self-righteousness (2:16-23).** (Next Week)

## **BODY:**

### **Back Among the Trees**

#### **I. Legalism.**

Romans 14:1-6 (NASB)

14 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.* <sup>2</sup> One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only.* <sup>3</sup> The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

<sup>5</sup> One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike.* Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

Last week we talked about some of the Jewish laws that some Jewish Christians were trying to add to Christianity.

- Circumcision
- Acceptable foods to eat or drink

- Monthly feasts
- Rest on the weekly Sabbath

I would like to go into more detail on the Sabbath day. As Christians, we no longer rest on the Sabbath. I would like to go over a few scriptures so you can understand why.

First, we read that God created the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day rested.

Genesis 2:1-3 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. <sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. <sup>3</sup> Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

When Moses received the ten commandments from God, the fourth commandment was

Exodus 20:8 (NASB)

<sup>8</sup> “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

<sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

God also spoke to Moses about the Sabbath

Exodus 31:12-17 (NASB)

<sup>12</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>13</sup> “But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for *this* is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. <sup>14</sup> Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. <sup>15</sup> For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. <sup>16</sup> So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.’ <sup>17</sup> It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased *from labor*, and was refreshed.”

So why do we NOT observe the Sabbath today? Let's read from Heb. 4.

Hebrews 4:9-11 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>9</sup> So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. <sup>10</sup> For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. <sup>11</sup> Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.

God wanted to hand the promised land over to the Israelites, but they did not have faith. This caused them to have to wander in the wilderness for many years. This lesson from Israel's past is a **foreshadow to our deliverance from the bondage of sin**. Jesus has brought us out from under its rule and dominion by His victory on the cross. Sin was defeated once for all. When we hear this good news message the correct response to have is one of faith.

This brings us into the rest that **Hebrews 4** is talking about. **We rest from trying to work out our own salvation because Jesus provided this for us. He is the true Sabbath Rest and remaining in Him brings us rest on all sides.**

Another false teaching was self-abasement "**Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch**" **(2:21) which is simply outward works that is actually a form of self-righteousness.** We will be covering it next week.

Another false teaching was the...

## **II. Worship of Angels**

The word Gnosticism meant "*knowing*", but its knowledge, while sometimes *including* the Word of God, does not have it as its foundation. Instead, more than what was contained in Scripture, Gnostics valued what they experienced or what they learned from "angels," astrology, or chemistry.

Paul made it clear that Christ was the creator of all things and that He is before all things.

**Colossians 1:16-17 (NASB)**

**<sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.**

Paul also warns us about teachings contrary to God's Word in

**Galatians 1:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!**

## **III. Visions**

The KJV translates this as things which he has not seen. This is an inaccurate translation. The Gnostic prided himself upon the special visions of secret things which were not open to the eyes of ordinary men and women. They would try to impose these extra biblical ideas upon Christians.

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Later-Day Saints was started from a vision by Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820.

Again Galatians 1:8 applies.

**Galatians 1:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!**

## **CONCLUSION:**

We must know and understand the gospel so as not to be led astray by subtle forms of legalism and heresy. We must be on guard for any deviation that would diminish the centrality of Christ as Lord and Savior. Any “religion” that tries to equate itself with the truth using books that claim the same authority as the Bible, or which combines human effort with divine accomplishment in salvation must be avoided. Other religions cannot be combined with or added to Christianity. Christ gives us absolute standards of moral conduct. **Christianity is a family, a way of life, and a relationship—not a religion.** Good deeds, astrology, occultism and horoscopes do not show us God’s ways. Only Christ does. His will is revealed in His word, His instruction manual and love letter to us; we must get to know it!

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Don’t wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don’t clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

So we offer His invitation, realizing that there may be someone here who has never accepted Christ as their Savior. We plead with you. We appeal to you not to let this moment escape nor to let this window of opportunity pass you by.

If you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, then come now, confess that you believe in Him, be faithful to Him in Christian baptism, arise to walk in the newness of life. God’s invitation is offered to you. Will you come as we stand and as we sing?

### **He Is Lord!**

He is Lord, He is Lord. He has risen from the dead and He is Lord.  
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, That Jesus Christ is Lord.