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## **Colossians 2.**

(2013).

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## Colossians 2.

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### Topics.

- The riches of the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ.
- In Christ is all the wisdom and knowledge for salvation.
- In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.
- Circumcision made without hands, and a circumcision of Christ.
- Buried with Christ in baptism, and raised with him through faith.
- God nailed to the cross the legal demands of the law.
- Do not handle, do not taste, and do not touch
- Let no-one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism.
- In Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world.

### The Previous Chapter.

In the previous chapter Paul stated; in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and that Jesus was God's gift of grace and the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. He said, "By Christ all things were created in heaven and on earth, Christ is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Paul spoke of the Gospel being proclaimed in all creation, of a mystery being revealed and of people being delivered from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of God's Son.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

Paul told the Colossians to have this letter read to the church in Laodicea and instructed the Colossians to read the letter he had written to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16).

### The Riches of the Knowledge of God's Mystery, which is Christ.

Colossians 2:1-3 ----- <sup>1</sup>For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup>that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

**Laodicea:** was a Greco-Roman city in Asia Minor on a river bank in Turkey, 8 miles from Colosse so the Colossian and Laodicean brothers and sisters would have been able to go for a two hour walk and visit each other.

**NOTICE:** Paul addresses this letter not only to those who know him, but also to those who have never seen him which means that what he is saying to the Colossians and Laodiceans applies to Christians of all generations.

### Paul's struggle within himself was driven by the following two things: -

1. His deep and earnest desire that the Colossians and the Laodiceans would be knit together in love, meaning that they would be spiritually mature adult Christians who were not only humble, but willing to show each other compassion, kindness, grace, mercy and be quick to forgive when offended in contrast to being infants in Christ behaving in human ways i.e., being prideful and causing strife, arguments and contention etc.

Paul's eager passion and heart felt desire that brothers and sisters would grow from being spiritual infants in Christ to being spiritual adults is so that they could then be an encouragement to each other as opposed to causing hurt, harm and divisions amongst those within the Lord's body.

It is certain that Paul, (suffering as he did for Christ's sake) was fully aware of the hardships many Christians may face from the outside world because of their faith and for this reason desires that the church would be a safe haven for those who are devoted to the Lord and a place of warm and comforting fellowship with others who belong to the eternal family of Christ.

- 2 Paul's inward struggle not only for the Colossians and Laodicians, but for brothers and sisters in Christ of all generations was driven by his earnest passion that everyone in Christ would be fully assured and fully understand the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in who is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The wisdom and knowledge Paul has in mind here is not the wisdom of the world, but all wisdom and knowledge that relates to being saved to eternal life.

It is Paul's deep desire that those in Christ would be fully convinced that Jesus is the Son of God, that he was sent by God to lay his life down for all mankind so that whether Jew or Gentile all would be saved in the same manner and that every brother and sister in the Lord would be fully assured that their righteousness that leads to eternal salvation was solely dependent on their faith and God's grace in contrast to being dependent on self-effort and striving to attain to righteous by keeping religious laws, customs and traditions etc.

### **The Riches of the Mystery in Christ.**

The riches of the mystery in Christ that was planned and purposed in God's eternal mind before the foundation of the world began is that salvation would not be limited to God's chosen people the Jews only, but would also embrace people from all nations (i.e. the Gentiles) through faith in God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The mystery that is now revealed is that the Gentiles would become eternal partakers with Israel in all the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

It was this knowledge and wisdom that Paul was anxious the Colossians and those of Laodicea would understand and that they would be fully convinced that they cannot be saved by good works and self-effort in keeping religious laws, rites, customs and traditions because even though some of these maybe good in themselves and may reap eternal rewards not one of them has any power to save a person to eternal life.

Paul's concern was that those in Christ (of all generations) would not fully understand and arrive at these abundantly rich humbling and awe-inspiring truths and therefore never have the full assurance and confidence that they are saved to eternal life solely by their faith in Christ and by God's grace and not by works of the law.

### **The riches of God's mystery in Christ that are now revealed are: -**

- Jesus is the seed promised in (Gen 3:15) that would bruise the serpents head.
- Jesus is the promised prophet to come like Moses.
- Jesus is the promised seed of Abraham and of David.
- Jesus is the promised Messiah and Christ of Israel.
- Jesus is the only way to God the Father and eternal life.
- In Jesus are all the promises God made to Abraham, David and Israel.
- Jesus is the ultimate King of kings and Lord of lords who will return to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

Paul knowing the abundant richness of the love of Christ dwelling in him earnestly desired that every brother and sister in Christ would know the Lord in the same intimate way, but was fully aware that without a full understanding of faith in Christ and God's abundant and boundless grace a brother or sisters relationship to Christ to some degree would be hindered not only from attaining full mental peace free from condemnation, but would also be hindered from attaining to spiritual and heavenly places in their spiritual relationship with Christ.

**Thus:** the reason Paul is so anxious those he ministers to would understand the full spiritual riches there are in Christ and why he proceeds in the following verses to explain God's total plan of salvation and the relationship Christ and God his Father have together in redeeming sinful man back to a right standing with the one and only true and Holy God the Father, creator and source of all life.

### **No one should delude you with plausible arguments**

Col 2:4-7 ----- <sup>4</sup>I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. <sup>5</sup>For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ <sup>6</sup>Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

**NOTICE:** Paul is afraid that brothers and sisters in Christ will be deceived by teachers putting forth plausible arguments (v4) (meaning their reasoning is believable, credible and conceivable).

This shows that deceptive teaching is going to sound realistic, intelligent logical and rational if it didn't it would not have the power to deceive or rob a brother or sister from not only knowing the full riches that are in Christ, but also robbing them from experiencing the warm comfort his love and the boundless wonder of God's grace.

### **In Christ is all the Wisdom and Knowledge for Salvation.**

Paul is troubled that false teachers are leading the Colossians and Laodiceans away from Christ, most likely by telling them that they must keep Moses laws of purification, circumcision and Jewish religious rites, customs and traditions to be saved, thus the reason he is so earnest and passionate about explaining to them that all the wisdom and knowledge of God they need to know for eternal salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of Paul's greatest struggles was preventing new-converts from being enticed back under the law by Jewish religious leaders (especially those who had great authority and were gifted with oratory skills). Thus the reason Paul is constantly trying to encourage the Colossians and Laodiceans who had been taught the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believed in the Lord to remain steadfast in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and not be led astray by persuasive false teachers.

### **Absent in Body, yet with you in Spirit.**

Paul's statement, "I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit" (v5) simply means that though Paul cannot be present with the Colossian brothers and sisters he is mindful of them. It is an expression that shows someone deeply cares, it could be likened to when a person who cannot attend their best friend's birthday says, "I will be with you in spirit" meaning they will be thinking of them, but it also carries the thought that though Paul is not present with the Colossians they would also be mindful of him and act and behave as though he was with them so they would be a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and not get deluded by the plausible arguments of the false teachers (v4).

### **Elemental Spirits of the World, (Rudiments of the world in KJV).**

Colossians 2:8 ----- <sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive (spoil you in KJV) by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, (rudiments of the world in KJV) and not according to Christ.

**SPOIL;** the word spoil now commonly means, to corrupt, to decay and to perish as fruit is spoiled by keeping it too long, or paper is spoiled by wetting and crops are spoiled by long rain and mildew. But the Greek word used here means to spoil in the sense of plunder and rob, as when plunder is taken in war.

The meaning is, take heed lest false teachers by philosophy and false hope deceive our mind and strip us of our spiritual armour and thereby lead us away from the faith and the hope we have received from Christ and rob from us the rich treasure of the 'Good News' of the gospel with all its spiritual privileges and blessings as an invading army robs a country of all that was valuable.

The words, through philosophy and empty deceit (v8) refer to philosophy blended with Christianity. Paul was fully aware that when the Good News of the Gospel is mixed with man's reasoning and shallow and superficial human knowledge by the teachers of such philosophies. It matters not how much they may promise prosperity and happiness in this world and eternal life in the next and how well their teachings and speculations about things of God may please peoples fancies and tickle their ears their teachings cannot accomplish what they promise. This is because mixing and blending the Good News of the Gospel with man's philosophies rob the Gospel from the power to save.

**Elemental;** means rudimentary, fundamental and basic.

The words, "Elemental spirits of the world" (Rudiments of the world in KJV)" (v8) refer to the idea that a person has to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life by self-effort to be counted worthy by God and to be saved to eternal life. At the time of Paul it applied to both the Jews and the Gentiles.

To the Jews the elemental spirits of the world refer to: -

- Those who believe they can be saved by strictly keeping the laws of Moses and Jewish customs (i.e., eating of meats, drinks and washings, etc.), and by adhering to their religious system of ceremonial rites and their teachings as taught according to the legalistic minds and harsh and traditional interpretations of the Chief Priests, Pharisees and Scribes.

To the Gentile the elemental spirits of the world refer to: -

- Those who believe they can be saved by self-discipline and self-denial and by spiritual symbolic mysteries and initiatory rites used to attain God's favour and eternal life.

The elemental spirits of the world are things religious teachers tell their followers they must keep and maintain to earn eternal salvation and the things people of the secular and unbelieving world do to earn righteousness so that God will accept them into heaven. This is why Paul immediately follows his statement with the words: -

- Not according to Christ (v8).

Meaning, they are not seeking salvation according to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Anything a person does to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life makes void the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and nullifies what he achieved on the cross since they are setting about to earn their own righteousness and their own salvation by their own self-effort and religious works.

**NOTE:** earning salvation by self-effort and religious works has an appeal to the flesh (self, ego and pride) and especially to those who do not have a humble or right heart before God because though most people clearly see the faults and sins of other people without the working of the Holy Spirit they rarely see how deeply sin like a cancerous virus has infected us all nor do they see their own-selfishness, ego and pride and therefore they are able to attain to their own standard of righteousness.

Blindness to the sin of one's own life often leads to self-righteousness and in self-righteousness a person not only feels superior to others, but can look down on

those who don't attain to their standard of righteousness or their commitment in keeping religious works or their intellectual knowledge of the Bible and in their aloofness not only is pride and ego energized, but they feel wonderfully superior and spiritually exalted such is the deception of the flesh (ego and pride).

**TODAY:** the phrase the elemental spirits of the world applies to the general populations of the world who believe in spiritual teachings and gods that suit their own thinking, lifestyle and concepts of God, and to trusting in religious rites, customs and traditions etc., to be righteous in contrast to following God's ways and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace alone.

Whoever believes they have to attain to righteousness that leads to eternal salvation by self-effort and keeping religious rites, customs and traditions is held captive to the law and religious works. Paul is warning every brother and sister in Christ to be careful of false teachers who imply that salvation comes through works or tradition or any other method or way other way than by faith in Christ alone.

Paul is saying that only in Jesus the Son of God and in him alone is the fullness of God the Father's plan of salvation for all mankind, there is nothing a brother or sister in Christ can add to the Gospel of salvation in Christ or do to make themselves more saved. Every faithful brother and sister is made complete in Christ meaning they are totally justified and redeemed in Christ and in him alone, because he is the fullness of God's plan of eternal salvation for all mankind from the beginning, manifested in bodily form on this earth and resurrected to eternal glory, thus the reason Paul says: -

- In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (v3) (Referring to knowledge that leads to eternal life).

#### **Philosophy and Empty Deceit.**

This is why Paul was warning the Colossian brothers and sisters to take heed, lest any religious teacher spiritually hurts them. Paul was fully aware that there were false teachers amongst them (as there is amongst the church today) who were not only thieves and robbers, but men serving their own selfish ambition and not God.

Paul in his previous letters wrote: -

- False apostles and deceitful workmen, disguise themselves as apostles of Christ and even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light so it should be no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness (2 Cor 11:13-15) and

Jesus himself said: -

- Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matt 7:15).

These wolves in sheep's clothing are in the ministry to serve self, ego, pride and their own selfish ambition they love importance, power fame riches and the accolades and praise they receive from their followers. Being driven by these things and not by the 'Spirit of God' they deceive innocent minds for their own selfish gain and not only exploit their followers, but also use them as merchandise to achieve their own goals or establish their own religious empire (2 Peter 2:3).

**In colloquial language;** Paul is saying, whoever pins their faith on another man's sleeve and accepts a gospel that is clothed in human philosophy and reasoning is in danger of being robbed of all the spiritual riches and heavenly treasures that are hidden in Christ Jesus.

#### **In Christ dwells all the Fullness of the Godhead.**

Colossians 2:9 -----<sup>9</sup>For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

The King James Bible says: -

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

**Godhead:** the word Godhead comes from the Greek word (theos) and means godlike, divinity or divine deity (especially the supreme divinity). Figuratively theos can refer to an immortal deity, to God, to a goddess, a magistrate or to an idol that people worship as a divine being. It has the sense of being extremely or exceedingly godly and the thought of eternal power and divine nature and carries the idea of eternal plans, purposes and promises.

**The following are the only three verses that use the word Godhead.**

All verses are cited from the King James Bible.

1. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God (the Father), we ought not to think that the Godhead (the divine being in ESV) is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device (Acts 17:29).

In these verses the Godhead has nothing to do with the Lord Jesus Christ the expressing is applying to the divine nature and eternal power of God the Father contrasted with idol's.

2. For the invisible things of him (God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead (divine nature in ESV) so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

Paul in this verse is saying: -

- What can be known about God is made plain.
- All of creation declares God's existence.
- God's invisible attributes are clearly seen in creation.
- Creation declares God's eternal power and divine nature.
- There is no excuse, to say God does not exist.

The word Godhead in this context is about the nature and eternal power of God. It has nothing to do with Jesus.

3. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead (deity in ESV) bodily (Col. 2:9).

Paul in this verse is teaching that God has not only given Jesus all power, all authority and all rule and the right to forgive sins and grant eternal life, but also given him authority over every principality and power. At Jesus water baptism God gave His Spirit to Jesus without any limitations. In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily is not saying that Jesus is God, it is declaring that everything a sinner needs for salvation and eternal life is in Christ, in Christ is all the power of God that a repentant sinner needs for eternal salvation.

Paul is saying: -

- In Christ is all the knowledge of God's mystery concerning salvation.
- In Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God.
- In Christ is the fullness of God's Spirit dwells without limitations.
- In Christ is, all rule, power and authority.
- In Christ all the faithful are united to God his heavenly Father.
- In Christ God has forgiven all repentant sinners.
- In Christ God has cancelled the debt of the Law with its legal demands.
- In Christ God nailed the record of debt that stood against us to the cross.

In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily is not teaching that Jesus is God, but that everything we need for eternal salvation and to know God the Father is in Christ.

The words: -

- For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (KJV) and the words, For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (ESV) (Col. 2:9).

Mean that all the heavenly treasures and spiritual riches of God needed for salvation and eternal life are in Christ and that all the following spiritual blessings are in Jesus and in him alone: -

- Forgiveness of sins and redemption to eternal life.
- The inheritance and eternal promises made to Abraham, David and Israel.
- Entry into the Kingdom of God, eternal life and everlasting glory.
- Full assurance of salvation and all the wisdom and knowledge of God.

When Paul said, "In Jesus the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily," (v9) he was not mystically or secretly implying as some religious ministers teach that Jesus the Son is actually God the Father (if that was the case Paul would simply say so) rather Paul was saying that God gave Jesus: -

- All dominion and a name above every name.
- The highest authority to rule and judge and the power to give eternal life.

Every power and authority that God has, He gave to Jesus His Son it is in this sense that Paul is saying, "In Jesus the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily," (v9).

It means that Jesus is the perfect mirror reflection and image of God the Father's character, power, promises and Spirit, because Jesus was filled with God's Spirit without limitation. Paul is not implying that Jesus is God, but that he has the Spirit of God and all the power of God dwelling in him without any limitations.

**In Christ dwells the fullness of God also carries the following two ideas: -**

1. Jesus Christ was the fullness of God and the perfect image of God in that he was God's word manifested in the flesh (human body) displaying the wisdom knowledge love, kindness, compassion, grace and mercy of the invisible God in heaven in absolute perfection while here on earth and the majestic miracles he did revealed God the Father's love for a lost and dying sinful world.
2. Jesus was the complete fulfilment of the eternal plan of redemption and salvation for all mankind that God had purposed and planned in His eternal mind and foreknowledge. It is in this sense that Christ is spoken of as having, "The whole fullness of the Godhead dwelling in him." Paul is saying that Jesus Christ is not just another human man or great prophet, but the only begotten Son of God the Father, in who is the entire plan of God's eternal salvation.

It means that in Christ alone is salvation in contrast to all other great prophets of the Bible who only had the power to lead people to Israel's Messiah, the Christ and Saviour of the world, whereas in Christ alone is forgiveness of sins and eternal life, he is the final Lamb of God without blemish to be sacrificed for man's sin and in him God's complete plan of eternal salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike is fulfilled and in this sense the whole fullness of God dwells in him.

**Paul told the Ephesian brothers and sisters that they could: -**

- Know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephes. 3:19).

No one reading this today believes that a brother or sister who is filled with the fullness of God actually becomes God, rather we all know that Paul is saying that we can be filled with God's Spirit, so why is it when Paul said: -

- For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Col. 1:19).

That certain religious teachers based on these words of Paul's proclaim that Jesus the Son became God the Father? Rather than accept that God by His Spirit dwelt in Christ without any limitations in the same way that God's Spirit (with limitations) dwelt in the prophets and apostles and in all who faithfully trust in Jesus and follow Him.

### **Moses and the Abundance of God's Spirit.**

Moses and the seventy prophets are a good example of God's Spirit being poured out upon believers with varying levels of power. The following verses show that God is able to take a portion of His Spirit from one person and place it onto others as He chooses: -

- Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD and he gathered seventy men of the elders and placed them around the tent then the LORD came down in the cloud and took some of the SPIRIT that was on him and put it on the seventy elders as soon as the SPIRIT rested on them, they prophesied. but they did not continue doing it and two men named Eldad and Medad remained in the camp and the SPIRIT rested on them and so they also prophesied (Numbers 11:24-26).

These verses clearly show that God is able to pour out His Spirit in varying portions on whoever he chooses. Though brothers and sisters in Christ can be filled with God's Spirit, no one thinks they can become God no matter how much of His Spirit they maybe filled with, yet when Paul talks of Jesus being filled with God's Spirit it is used to support the mistaken theory that Jesus is God, but Paul is not teaching that Christ is God, but that he is filled with the fullness of God's Spirit in every way and without any limitations.

### **The Father and the Son are the Saviour.**

Throughout the Bible both the Father and the Son are referred to as the Saviour this is because God the Father planned and purposed salvation in His eternal mind before time began and Christ fulfilled that plan in his ministry, death and resurrection thus the words, "For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" mean that in Christ alone is the fullness of God the Father's plan of salvation for all or mankind.

There is nothing a believer can add to the Gospel of salvation of Christ to make themselves more saved. Those who belong to Christ are complete (for eternal salvation), meaning they are totally justified and redeemed in Christ and in him alone because in him is the fullness of God's plan of salvation.

This is what the Bible means when it says: -

- For in the Son dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in Christ"

Both terms simply mean that in Christ is God's full plan of salvation. Jesus the Son of God is the fullness of the complete and entire eternal plan of God's salvation for all mankind which God in His eternal mind purposed before time, began. There is no other plan or way for man to be redeemed. Jesus is God's promise of eternal life and it is through faith in him that all faithful believers are complete, meaning they are fully forgiven, fully justified and fully redeemed and counted worthy of eternal life.

**For further information see the title: -**

- Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity).
- In, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

## **You have been filled in Him who is the Head of all Rule and Authority.**

Colossians 2:10 ----- 10 and you have been filled in him (complete in him in the KJV) who is the head of all rule and authority.

Paul statement that the Colossian brothers and sisters and by extension all who trust in Christ and faithfully follow him have been, "Filled and are complete in Christ" not only means that through faith in Christ everyone is filled with everything they need for salvation to eternal life, but also that there is nothing more they can do to add to it because God's salvation in Christ is not only complete in Christ, but a free gift and whoever is saved in the Lord is saved in Christ alone.

### **Jesus is the Head of all Rule and Authority.**

Paul's words, "Jesus is the head of all rule and authority" (v10) immediately transcend the spiritual mind to the beautiful letter Paul wrote to the Corinthian brothers and sisters in which he said: -

- God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:27-29) (see also Ephes. 1:22-23).

These verses clearly show that God has exalted Christ as the Head above all things, but they also tell us something more and that is, "When all things are subjected to Christ then he will also be subjected to God so that God will be ALL in ALL. The expression, "God will be ALL in ALL" in this context lifts the mind of the ardent Bible student at lightning speed and transcends it forward in time to the glorious and majestic vision of a godly man on the isle of Patmos who wrote: -

- I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, *the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.*" And he who was seated on the throne said, " *Behold, I am making all things new*" (Rev. 21:1-5).

Here we see an eternal age in which God is All and in All. This is the splendour the glory the wonder of the climax of God's promise to Abraham made many thousands of years ago and the inheritance of all who are children of Abraham by faith and brothers and sisters of Christ. Is there any other religion on earth that proclaims such a glorious eternal hope? (This author has not found one).

### **Circumcision made without Hands, and a Circumcision of Christ.**

Colossians 2:11 ----- 11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.

Circumcision in the Jewish mind was without doubt deemed to be one of the highest standards of righteousness. They believed that an uncircumcised person was separated from God and therefore unclean. Because of this mindset no religious Jew (especially those in high position of leadership) would willingly put themselves in the company of an uncircumcised person since they considered them to be unclean.

The reason the Jewish nation held circumcision in such high regard was because God made the following covenant with Abraham and his offspring saying: -

- Every male among you shall be circumcised and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised it shall be an everlasting covenant and any male who is not circumcised shall be cut off from Israel because he has broken my covenant (Gen 17:10-14) (Gen 17:23-27).

Though circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Israel (Rom 4:9-12) many in the Jewish faith had turned it into the means of salvation i.e., as long as they were circumcised they were right with God. Certain Jews accepted Christ was their Messiah the Christ, but denied that salvation was in him alone and therefore continued to teach that even those who did believe in Christ must still be circumcised and keep the laws and customs of Moses to be saved.

**Remember:** the Jews had believed in the covenant of circumcision for over four-thousand years and now Paul is telling them that it is not necessary to be literally and physically circumcised because they have already been spiritually circumcised, but not by human help but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Circumcision of Christ.**

The expression, "The circumcision of Christ" (v11) refers to the life changing moment when a sinner in repentance humbles themselves before God and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. In this climatic and spiritual life changing moment not only is their heart (inner most being) filled with God's Holy Spirit which transforms their mind and their passions from craving after the things of this temporary and mortal world to desiring the things of God's eternal world, but they are also by the Spirit, by God's grace and by love united in union with Jesus himself and from this union desire to live their life to honour his name.

**NOTE:** though the desire to honour God is in the heart it does not mean every wrongful action or inward attitude is instantly changed, this is an ongoing process as one spiritually grows in the Lord from being a spiritual child to being a spiritually mature adult full of the fruits of the Spirit, (i.e., compassion, grace, mercy, kindness and forgiveness etc.).

**NOTE:** Old Testament circumcision was a sign that a person was separated for God (Rom 4:9-12) today this has been replaced by water baptism.

### **Buried with Christ in Baptism, and Raised with Him through Faith.**

Colossians 2:12 ----- <sup>12</sup>having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead.

The resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ is every brother and sisters guarantee that God will raise them to eternal life as He raised Christ from the grave to die no more, so likewise all who belong to the family of Christ will be raised from the grave to eternal life and everlasting glory instead of being condemned by the law and judged guilty because of sin and sentence to eternal death.

Thus Paul's words, "Buried with him in baptism" (v12) is alluding to the immersions practised in the case of adults, wherein the person being baptised appears to be buried under the water. This is because water baptism is identification with Christ who died for our sins, was laid in the grave, where he continued for a while and then rose on the third day to eternal life and everlasting glory.

Likewise when a repentant sinner is baptized they are covered with water as if they were buried in it, because water baptism is a representation of the burial of Christ and a representation of our burial with him, as being dead to sin, to the law, and to the world by our faith in Christ and a testimony of a total change of life as a marriage is to a relationship of love.

### **In regards to water baptism three things should be noted: -**

1. The words, "Buried with him in baptism, and raised with him" (v12) shows that water baptism was performed by covering the whole body in water because no other form of administration of baptism, as sprinkling, or pouring water on the face, can represent a burial and a resurrection in such majestic fashion as going down into the water and being under it, represents Christ's descending into the state of the dead, and his continuance in it, so the emersion, or coming up out of the water, represents his rising from the dead, and that of his people in him, in order to walk in newness of life.

2. There is nothing spiritual in the sign or ceremony of water baptism itself since without repentance before God and faith in Christ and his death and resurrection water baptism will be of no use. The person being baptised is simply being dunked in water, but when a person has a right heart toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ and enters the waters of baptism in faith, God by His Spirit responds accordingly.
- In climates where total immersion is safe the normal method of biblical water baptism and the one most in accordance with Scripture is full immersion, but where total immersion would be inconvenient (i.e., a third world country where there is not even enough clean water to drink) or where it could be dangerous to a person's health or life (i.e., sickness) to insist on total immersion in such cases is not only enforcing legalistic ceremonialism that is devoid of the Spirit of God and ignoring the faith of the one being baptised, but is also placing unnecessary hardship on the repentant believer since in these circumstances God who sees the honesty of the heart and responds to faith accordingly will accept any form of sprinkling or dipping in water that is administered in faith.

**For further information on Water Baptism see the title: -**

- Water Baptism (ON WEBSITE MENU).

### **God Nailed to the Cross the Legal Demands of the Law.**

Colossians 2:13-15 -- <sup>13</sup>And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup>by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands (KJV ads, which was contrary to us). This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

**Dead in Trespasses:** (v13) means that without Christ the law has every right to condemn us to eternal death. This is because the universal law of Sin and Death that affects all mankind states, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23) meaning if a person sins they are judged and sentenced by the law to death.

**The uncircumcision of your flesh:** (v13) refers to those who remain held captive to the law of Sin and Death in contrast to those who by faith in Christ have been set free from the law's power to condemn to death.

**The record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands:** (v14) refers firstly to all our past sins and secondly, to the law's demand that it must be kept in every aspect, because whoever breaks one part of the law is held guilty before the law and judged and condemned to death. It does not matter that we might only break small parts of the law we are still held guilty. It is like someone who steals \$5 dollars, it's not much in the grand scheme of crime, and drugs, bank robberies, rape and murder nevertheless they are still guilty of stealing.

### **The Law, "You shall not Covet."**

The law does not have mercy or compassion its demand on those that are under it is strictly official, formal and legal and enforced without compassion or any sense of sorrow toward its condemned victims. The universal demand of the law states; "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23) meaning if anyone fails to keep the law in any aspect they are guilty of breaking the law it then without mercy rightfully and legally judges and sentences its guilty victims (all mankind) to death. It is futile to attempt to attain to righteousness by keeping the law since the law states: -

- You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's" (Exod. 20:17).

In today's world this would be stated: -

- You shall not covet your neighbour's house, his wife, his very successful business, his new car, beautiful boat or anything that belongs to him.

Added to this the Royal law states: -

- You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Rom 13:9) (James 2:8).

Jesus says all the commandments regarding mankind are summed up in the words of the Royal law because the spirit underpinning the Royal law is desiring the best for others contrasted to the spirit underlying coveting which is craving the best for self.

**Covet:** (covetousness) means; to set the heart upon, to desire, long for or lust after (rightfully or otherwise) it carries the idea of holding onto or desiring more than one has or needs (the practice of greediness) and embraces those who live a lifestyle of unlawful sex, orgies adulteries and sexual immorality to fulfil their own lust and to anyone whose heart is craving after and worshipping and exalting another person as a god (an Idolater).

**By implication covet:** can refer to those who are not honest and true and who use pressure or coercion to force or entice others to fulfil their own selfish need or ambition and to anyone who intentionally deprives somebody of money or property by dishonest means because they are greedy and eager for gain.

The commandment “You shall not covet” exposes human selfishness, pride, ego, lust, and greed etc. It reveals the dysfunctions and aberrations that are imbedded within our fallen corrupted human nature that hinder us from attaining to the perfection of God’s Holy law, it exposes our self-centredness in our desires for more than we need, our excessive avariciousness toward materialism, our overeating of tasty foods the craving to be important or esteemed, our sensual and lustful thoughts, the desire to be rich and have abundantly more than we need etc.

The commandment, “You shall not covet” shines a spotlight on our self-interest, it highlights our lack of willingness to give to those less fortunate and those in need, it exposes our degrading, resentful, bitter and jealous thoughts of others and the list goes on.

In summary the command, “You shall not covet” embraces all those attitudes and thoughts that dwell within our members that are contrary to the law of love and the Holiness of God which means the entire human race is held guilty before the law and therefore it legally has the right and the power to condemn us all to death which it does without hesitation, compassion or mercy.

Thus, the Royal Majesty, the wonder and the glory of the Good News of the Gospel: -

- God through Christ has cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands” (the debt being all our trespasses and sins) (Col 2:13-14).

**Thus the majestic words:** “God set aside the laws legal demands, nailing it to the cross” refers to the fact that Christ fulfilled all the legal demands of the law throughout his life on earth and to his brutal and cruel death on the cross.

Jesus, before the eyes of men went to the cross as a common criminal, but before the eyes of God he was innocent and without sin and therefore through his death all the legal demands of the law were fulfilled. Christ took all the legal demands of the law to the grave with him and because he was without sin the law had no power to hold him in the grave and therefore God had full and legal right not only to raise him from the grave, but to raise him to eternal life and everlasting glory.

Jesus through his death and resurrection has become the royal robe of grace and majestic crown of righteousness that God clothes all who by faith trust in the Lord for their eternal salvation and in this manner: -

- The legal demands of the law have been nailed to the cross (v14).

Since Christ through his death broke the power of the universal law that states: -

- The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).

And superseded and overruled it with a far higher law that proclaims: -

- The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23).

This is the humbling, awe-inspiring Good News of the Gospel.

**God disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him: (v15).**

The rulers and authorities in this context refers to the Roman authorities and soldiers who crucified Christ and the Jewish religious leaders, the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes who held all the religious authority over the Kingdom of God and over the nation of Israel up until Christ's death and resurrection.

Jesus death and resurrection totally crushed and destroyed their power and the control they had over the people since his death and resurrection did away with the need for a human high priest, the Levitical priesthood and all the Sabbaths, feasts, holy days and ceremonial rites and customs of Moses Law and also every religious Jewish tradition, none of these things are needed for a person to be united to God and saved to eternal life.

In this way Christ triumphed over the chief priests, Pharisees, scribes (the rulers and authorities) who plotted his murder and in his resurrection put them to open shame since it proved he was who he claimed to be i.e., Israel's Messiah the Christ and Son of God.

**It should be noted:** that it is not only the religious leaders of Jesus era that Jesus has triumphed over, but every religious leader of all generations who would attempt to have power and control over their followers, since no-one needs another man to intercede for them or to unite them to God other than the Lord Jesus Christ, he is the only High Priest anyone ever needs to have union and fellowship with God the Father and be saved to eternal life.

It is in this way that Jesus has disarmed every religious ruler and authority of all ages. No brother or sister in Christ should ever be held under the bondage (as the lost sheep of Israel were to the religious leaders of their era) of another man no-matter how talented or gifted he maybe.

**NOTE:** this does not mean that we should not have religious leaders or listen to teachers of the Bible since they are God's gift to the church and we are called to honour those who are faithful, but it does mean that we should not depend on them for our fellowship with God and the Lord or for our eternal salvation nor should we allow them to take mental control over our minds or spiritual power over us.

### **Do not handle, Do not Taste, Do not Touch**

Colossians 2:16-17 -- <sup>16</sup>Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Paul's advice "Let no one pass judgment on you" (v16) is in reference to things non-sinful, there is nothing wrong in doing them nor is there anything wrong in not doing them, they are simply religious customs and traditions.

### **Some Practical Examples Today.**

certain brothers and sisters believe only Hymns should be sung in worship and certainly no hands should be raised while others believe in worshipping in a more lively style and express this by raising their hands, others feel men should wear suits and ties to church while other are comfortable to simply dress neatly and modestly in whatever clothing suits the climate.

Paul is saying neither of these should judge the other since what they are doing is not sinful or transgressing any laws, but is only religious behaviour that stems from their individual mindset and how they view the Scriptures.

These things only become wrong when a religious institution, a church or a religious leader imposes these religious traditions and customs on their followers. An example of this (there are many others) is seen in religious institutions that believe woman must wear hats in church, so this tradition is forced on every woman who wants to be accepted by this institution whether she believes it or not.

**Two tragedies result from this kind of judgment: -**

1. It forces the woman to go against her own conscience if she wants to be fully accepted by the group.
2. In regards to non-sinful religious customs and traditions the woman is forced to walk with her conscience before men rather than before Christ alone and in this sense is robbed from an individual, personal and intimate spiritual relationship with the Lord.

**NOTE:** this principal is not restricted to woman wearing or not wearing hats, but applies to all types of religious customs and traditions imposed on others.

**The Motivation of a Shepherd of Christ.**

Though gathering together is enjoyable, spiritually rewarding and certainly biblical the goal of every shepherd of Christ should be to bring their followers to a mature spiritual strength of faith in which they are fully dependant on Christ and Christ alone for their eternal salvation and their spiritual fellowship with God the Father in contrast to being dependant on a priest, pastor, church or religious institution for their right standing before God.

**The Substance Belongs to Christ.**

Paul's statement, "The substance belongs to Christ" (v17) means that Jesus is the core essence and basis of our faith, our union with God our righteousness our salvation and our inheritance to eternal life and everlasting glory.

Paul in these verses is basically saying, "Why judge other brothers and sisters by the non-sinful religious customs and traditions they might hold to and why impose these customs and traditions onto others who may have a different mindset since no religious custom or tradition counts for anything in regards to our union with God, our fellowship with Christ or our eternal salvation."

**Let no-one Disqualify you, insisting on Asceticism**

Colossians 2:18-19 -- <sup>18</sup>Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, <sup>19</sup>and not holding fast to the Head from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

Paul's warning, "Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism" (v18) means don't allow other peoples (especially religious leaders) strict, severe legalistic emphasis on self-discipline; self-denial and self-restraint disqualify you from following Christ. In other words be led by your own conscience before the Lord and not by other peoples i.e. don't allow others to impose their conscience on you in regards to religious customs and traditions.

**Worship of Angels.**

Paul's statement "Let no one disqualify you, insisting on worship of angels" (v18) is in contrast to exalting Christ as the Head of our life, our thoughts, our mind, and our heart. Many religious cults during Jesus era practised the worship of angels, but this warning of Paul's is still very relevant even today since much of modern spiritual teaching is focused on trusting in angels rather than Christ.

Many spiritual teachers who have no-idea of the Good News of the Gospel, but have a world-wide global following are writing books that teach their readers if they have faith in heavenly angels and trust in them the angels will bring into being their wishes and desires.

This is a Gospel that appeals to self, ego, pride, greed and selfish ambition thus the reason the authors of it sell so many books and the reason their teachings have such an enormous global following.

### **Boasting in Visions.**

Paul's statement "Let no one disqualify you going on in detail about visions" (v18) means don't be intimidated or feel downcast by people who boast in visions and exalt angels since they are only blowing their own trumpet from a spiritually prideful mind. The only time the apostles shared their visions was to teach the New Testament gospel to those who had never heard it.

No-one needs visions today since everything we need to know for eternal salvation is written and recorded for all to read in the Canon of the Bible.

**NOTE:** This does not mean that God will never give a vision to an individual to comfort them in a time of crisis, deep sorrow or great need, but if this happens is it individual and personal and not something that a brother or sister in Christ would use to puff ones-self up with by boasting about.

### **In Christ You Died to the Elemental Spirits of the World.**

Colossians 2:20-23 -- <sup>20</sup>If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— <sup>21</sup>"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" <sup>22</sup>(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? <sup>23</sup>These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

**The elemental spirits of the world:** in this context refer to outward religious things the world does to feel righteous or appear godly. It refers to religious rules, customs, regulations and traditions a person does to earn righteousness and to feel they are worthy to God. To the Jews during Jesus era it embraced not touching or eating anything that was considered spiritually unclean.

Today the words, "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (v21) embrace all self-discipline in keeping what is believed to be proper religious customs and traditions and abstaining from what is considered to be wrong religious customs and traditions.

Paul is saying to the Colossian brothers and sisters and by extension to all who are in Christ: -

- Why put yourself in bondage to these things especially since they are all temporary and will perish and are only human precepts and teachings according to mortal man's mindset and his particular view.

Added to this none of it affects or counts for anything in regards to our union with God, our fellowship with Christ or our eternal salvation.

### **Why, as if you were Still Alive in the World?**

Ever wondered why people feel good when they go to majestic and awe-inspiring Cathedrals with their stain glassed windows, religious statues and Priests robed in rich purple with gold braided trimmings.

Here Paul gives the answer, awe-inspiring Cathedrals and keeping religious customs and traditions, "Have an appearance of promoting self-made religion and holiness of the body (v23). By their outward religious appearance they deceive a person into thinking they are being spiritual and saved to eternal life, but in actual reality none of it, "Has any power or value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh (v23). This is the reason Paul is bewildered that the Colossian brothers and sisters would go back to trusting in outward religious works rather than trusting in Christ alone for their righteousness that leads to eternal salvation.

**NOTE:** none of these religious works, customs and traditions are sinful in themselves, in fact for some brothers and sisters in Christ they maybe good habits to develop or to keep, but when a person believes they have to keep them to be saved to eternal life they become sinful, because they not only put that person in bondage to them but also, "Nullify the grace of God, because if justification could be achieved by keeping the law or religious customs and traditions, then Christ died for no purpose."

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begins to justify themselves through the law they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value. Equally as horrific as this Paul stated in his previous letters, "When we forsake grace we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by grace that God made us alive in Christ. Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that; "It is only by grace that any brother or sister has been saved."

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God".

This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life thus the reason Paul is so shocked that brothers and sisters in Christ would submit themselves again to religious rites and ceremonies and to religious regulations, laws, rules, customs and traditions to earn righteousness that leads to salvation.

Thus; in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, Grace and Faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them.

(Gal. 2:21) (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5) (Eph. 2:8).

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End.