

# COLOSSIANS



Day 277

## “Colossians, An Overview”

October 4 - Colossians 1:1-23

**A**t one time people thought the earth was flat. Think about how daunting that idea would be for someone who wanted to explore the world. To think that they might drift off of the face of the earth probably put a tremendous amount of fear in their hearts. Did they really need to be afraid of a fall? Of course not! They were operating under false premises.

This is where we all fail. We sometimes operate under assumptions that are not founded on the compass of God’s direction. What we believe in will mark our path in life.

One of the most common misconceptions is that if people got to know you for who you truly are, they would not like you. Because of this fear many of us, like many of the would-be explorers, do not venture out and make new acquaintances. The truth is that when people know the truth about us, they appreciate that we are human like them and have many of the same challenges. But let’s face it; many of us still believe that we do not have much to offer others.

We tend to act on what we believe. If we believe people won’t like us, we stay at home. If we think we can make friends, we try to get involved with others. Do you believe that “practice makes perfect?” Then you will practice. Do you believe that education will lead to your future success? Then you will get into a good school. Do you believe that it is important to keep the law? Then you will be a responsible citizen. What we believe defines the steps that we take. Those steps then define who we are.

This is the approach Paul takes in his letters. He

tells us the truth about God and then he makes applications based on that truth. If you believe the truth, you will act accordingly. The reason we act poorly is not because we have a poor self-image, it is because we have a poor view of God. If you have an accurate and truthful view of God, you will act much differently. That is also the reason why many new believers do not make life changes after coming to Christ. They believe in Jesus, but do not add His truths to their thinking process, and they are left with the old thought patterns that were primarily self-centered. They end up seeing God through themselves rather than seeing God as He is and allowing that understanding to change them. Does that make sense?

In Colossians, chapters 1 and 2 are teachings and chapters 3 and 4 are an application of those truths. And, just like in a number of his other letters, Paul is challenging false beliefs about Jesus and the Christian life. There was a group in Paul’s time that had some really bizarre views on Jesus Christ. Of course, much like modern cults, they believed they had a corner on the truth. The problem is that they had mistaken views about Jesus. One of their views was that Jesus was not really human. In their opinion, He couldn’t be God, if he was a true man.

Paul’s emphasis in this little letter is the supremacy of Jesus. To Paul it is the life and death and life of Jesus that should center our faith and our lives. It is the cross that frees us from the real guilt we owe to a holy God. We are now free from sin and alive to God because of the cross. The cross is central, not rules laid down by any man. The cultists may say you

have to do this and do that, but Paul says you have to appropriate the cross. When you do that, you will be able to grow in Christ.

The outcome of this relationship with Jesus is a life of love. Love for God first, and then for others—especially those in the church, but also to those without the gospel. The life of Jesus in you will produce a new set of morals and ethical standards. These qualities of the new life are a result of focus on the Savior. Paul says, “Set your mind on things above...”

Let’s think about what we believe. Let’s apply what we believe. These beliefs are much more important than the shape of the earth or our self-confidence level. These beliefs provide the foundation for the rest of our lives. Now you have a reason not to lie, Paul

asserts, because you have put off the old man with his deeds. This is that same “crucified with Christ” thinking that pops up in all of Paul’s works. The reasons not to sin are not about earning a place in heaven. They are clearly about expressing the new life that comes from your belief in Jesus.

What you believe will impact you today. I encourage you to take the things you believe seriously. Let them be tested over and over. Truth will stand and cannot be upended. Charles Spurgeon, when asked about his defense of the Bible said, “Defend the Bible? I’d just as soon defend a lion.” Truth will endure.

God’s blessings are centered in Christ,  
Pastor Steve

was going on.

Needless to say, different religious structures have certain rites and rituals that are sometimes difficult to understand. All of these systems are more akin to the occult than to historic Christianity. They create these in-group patterns to make themselves distinct and separate. Groups that use these clandestine practices are also very controlling. The Watchtower of the Jehovah’s Witnesses is a good example of this. They set up rules and regulations for their members that put great pressure on the average guy. He may work to fulfill the demands, but he will end up feeling guilty because the requirements are more than any one person can do. I am also leery of their meeting halls. There are no windows. Again, this probably doesn’t prove anything, but it adds an element of secrecy that may pull some in, out of curiosity.

It is human nature, sinful human nature, to want to be special in some way or to feel above the rest. We want to think that our group is the “in-group.” Sometimes we can be easily deceived when we want our group to be right no matter what. Recently someone came to me with a book I had loaned to someone else. The person I had given it to read it and passed it on to this second person. The second person came to me because she had heard a number of bad things about the author of this book. I was able to tell her why I had loaned the book in the first place, and I was also able to say that while I didn’t line up directly behind this certain author, I did appreciate some of the strengths of his views. I think careful challenges like this are healthy. This creates dialogue, as it did the day I spoke to this particular person. I am usually willing to be corrected or challenged when it comes to the truth.

OK, let’s put aside all rules and regulations and the quirks of any group we have been involved in. Then let’s open God’s Word to test these thoughts.

First of all, Paul does talk about a mystery. He says it is something that has been hidden for a long time. There was a time when the mystery of God was still unknown. Prophets and priests and kings desired to know the secret of this great mystery, but it seemed like it would never be revealed. There were clues all over the Old Testament. But remember that there were 400 years between the Old Testament and

the New. During that period of history there was not much spiritual light. Like the dark times of the medieval age, these pre-Christ times were pretty bleak.

During the Roman period, any group who did not pay tribute to the Emperor was oppressed. In some ways the Jews were tolerated, but there was no mistaking the fact that the Romans were in power and that there would be no rebellion. One of Jesus’ disciples was called a Zealot. This was a group of Jews who were openly rebellious of the Roman rule. Interestingly, Matthew was a loyal tax collector for Rome. I wonder how those two guys got along.

The Romans had been ruling with an iron fist. They had improved roads, perfected travel on waterways, and developed a system of commerce next to none. Rome had extended its sovereignty throughout the known world. It was into this consolidated world that God sent His Son.

The mystery was unveiled in a person—Jesus Christ. He is the mystery. He is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament dreams of a Deliverer. He came, and the mystery went. The unknown became known. The unreal became real. The darkness became light. “He was the true light that lights every man coming into the world.”

Embrace Christ, and embrace the mystery. No secret meetings required. No special or exclusive wisdom needed. Only Jesus. Take Him and you will have all the wisdom you will ever need.

Paul put it ever so clearly in 1 Corinthians 1: 28f., “God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

So many people get hung up on the methodology of the church. They are unhappy about this or that. They may even think there are hypocrites in the pews. They may think very little about Jesus, but dwell on the way their church does ministry. If they are happy about the way things are going they applaud, but if they are a bit disgruntled they complain. Their focus is on the church and not on Jesus. He is the point.



## “The Mystery”

October 5 - Colossians 1:24-2:5

I think all of us want to think we have some exclusive inside information. That could be why we join clubs and teams. Do you remember when you first joined a group and you had to learn the rules or the secret codes? My dad and I joined Indian Guides. That name wouldn’t be politically correct these days. We wore vests and headdresses and lots of beads, and we had secret sayings, and we went on campouts and had weekly meetings. I thought it was really cool.

Growing up is kind of like this too. The more we learn about the “secrets” of how life works, the greater the curiosity we have about the adult world. Kids have all sorts of misconceptions about the world. When a family has a fair amount of money I think the kids sometimes think that it grows on trees. When you grow up in the Midwest it must be hard to believe that the ocean really exists. I grew up just a few miles from the Pacific and believe me, I did not take the easy access to the beach for granted. Just recently I

learned something I didn’t know. Five years ago Native American tribes lowered the blood line requirement to 1/16 in order for a person to receive the benefits of inclusion. I got kind of excited because my great grandmother was full-blooded Cherokee, I have been told. Another group that I could be a part of! Come to think of it, maybe that’s why my dad and I got into the Indian Guides.

My grandpa was a Mason. It’s kind of like a club in the secretive pseudo-religious category. It is very hard to pin down what a Mason really is. I remember my grandpa had a hat in a glass case with lots of sparkly stones on the front. It had a tassel on top made of gold thread. It kind of reminded me of the hat Fred Flintstone wore at the meeting of the Water Buffaloes. Do you remember that? It also gave me a sense of wonder about the mysteries of the group. A Mason must be a really cool thing to be because it was so unknown. You had to be on the inside to know what

Let's put our focus on Him today and talk about Him before we talk about our methods of serving Him.

"It is Christ in you, the hope of glory." He dwells in you. Realize this and let it penetrate into the way you

think today.

Rejoice in Jesus Always.

God's blessings have been revealed in Jesus,

Pastor Steve



## "Reality Is In Jesus"

October 6 - Colossians 2: 6-23

**G**reetings in the Triumphant Name of Jesus, Just how clearly can you describe and praise the King of the whole universe? Put up with me for a minute while I give you a rough illustration.

Years ago I was invited to a dinner where an Open Doors speaker was going to talk about the mission of the organization. The man up front said his name was Brother David. I have to admit that the "Brother So-and-so" thing has always struck me a little odd. Come to find out that I'm the one who is a little odd. Anyway, Brother David got up and very humbly talked about what God had been doing in his life. I really had no clue who this man of God was. Had I been paying better attention to the message I would certainly have hung out afterwards to meet him and bend his ear some.

This brother had led a mission to smuggle two million Bibles under the cover of darkness into China. Two million Bibles! I didn't grasp the significance of this until later, when I was reading his autobiography. Two million Bibles! I was in the room with greatness and I missed it. What was I thinking?

Well, for one thing he came across so humble. He didn't pat himself on the back or make a big deal out of what he had done. He was very careful to give all of the credit to the Lord for what was going on in his life. Maybe you've heard of his associate, Brother Andrew, who is famous for smuggling Bibles into the Soviet

Union in the decades after WWII.

My point is that sometimes we miss Jesus because of His meek and gentle spirit. And we forget that through Him all things were created, that in Him is ultimate reality, and that through His cross He spoiled (rendered spoiled or inoperative) the powers of darkness. We forget that Jesus has liberated all of those who have come to God through Him, so that they are no longer regulated by rules and regulations, but are heirs with Him of God. That is the Jesus who deserves all praise and in Whom we all should keep growing. We must be planted in him, abiding in Him, and not dependent on the world's philosophy to get us by.

Sometimes we are too easily swayed by the wind of our culture. If some deep baritone voice announces that we descended from apes, men are more often convinced by the inflection of the voice, than they are the truth of the matter and the evidence. At times we are swayed by the personality of some professor who catches our attention, but is anti-Christ in his thinking. Yet people flock to him because of his charismatic tenor. The Colossians were in this boat.

The fallacy of Gnosticism, which proliferated in the first century, was appealing because men could feel like they possessed secret god-knowledge that made them the insiders. This secret knowledge was merely a man-made philosophy designed to make its adherents feel like they were the "knowing ones."

They reduced Jesus to a non-man, kind of like a phantom; perfect, but because he wasn't really human He could not be considered a man. To the Gnostics, all material things were evil and only spiritual entities were good. And so they concocted a notion that God is a string of aeons—emanations of light or god—and that only those with special knowledge can enter into the light. This knowledge made them feel extra-spiritual, but they ignored the fact that Jesus lived among men as a man, eating and sleeping and walking and talking just like all other men.

To the Gnostic, knowledge was the road to reality, or progression to godhood, or light, but with Paul the truth or reality was in the man Jesus.

That's why Paul said, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form." Paul goes on to say

that because Jesus is the reality behind all things, we should not let anyone set up a phony spiritual standard through which we ought to become "spiritual." Jesus is all that's needed.

Are you in Jesus?

Have you committed your life to Him?

If so, then you are complete in Him. His fullness is your identity.

Your sins have been removed like a spiritual circumcision.

You are now attached to the Head, Jesus, and are strengthened and supported by Him.

God's blessings come from the Head,

Pastor Steve



## "A Word to Husbands and Fathers"

October 7 - Colossians 3:1 - 4:1

**I**'ve been a husband for 36 years and a father for 33 and a papa for 10. I am very fortunate to have the wife and kids that I have. We've had our share of difficulties like everyone else, but for the most part I have been very fortunate. Right now I feel very connected to them.

For me, the word "connected" has been the key to enjoying an ongoing growth in our relationships. You just can't grow when you are disconnected, just like you cannot communicate with someone when the line has been disconnected. You could yell and scream into the phone, but it would do no good because you are not hooked up any longer. There must be a connection with the person we want to be close to, or we will automatically grow apart.

How many people do you know that have said something along the lines of "we just drifted apart," and before you knew it they were not interested in

each other any longer. As a counselor I hear this scenario regularly. Two people who started out head over heels in love with one another can barely remember those times as they relate to me how far they have drifted away from each other. They are so isolated that it is tough for them to see a way back together. As they drifted they lost hope. Life became a drag and there seemed to be no end in sight the way they were going.

Staying connected with the people we love is a very important decision we must all make. If we don't, we will drift. That is the bottom line. If you were to ask me today if I am connected with my middle child, I could tell you. I know. I just know. Connection is a felt condition. Let me ask you, if you are married, are you connected to your spouse today? If you said "Yes," then my next question is how do you know the answer to that question?

Here's what I'd say. Let me give two realistic scenarios:

1. I feel connected because yesterday my wife and I were able to go to lunch and talk. We discussed a few goals and made plans to go out again next week. We both truly enjoyed our time together. We held hands, hugged some, and exchanged words of commitment.

2. I don't feel connected lately because just a few hours ago we exchanged biting remarks. We didn't even try to resolve the situation but left each other with a feeling of anger on both sides. I am thinking about how insensitive she was and I am telling myself that I will not talk about it until she comes to me. Dinner tonight should be a pretty cold occasion.

This is true when it comes to our kids as well. We know when we are connected and we know when we'd like to wring their necks. I was talking to someone lately who was having trouble with one of her kids. We got to talking about the challenges of disciplining a kid who was once again going through the "me" stage of life. As we chatted I told her about a time my two boys were fighting in the back seat of the car. Honest to goodness, I was tempted to pull over and let them out, then take off. I could feel my muscles steering the wheel to the roadside, and it was only reasonable resolve that forbade me from doing this foolish thing. But believe me, I wanted to do it. At that point we were pretty disconnected. You know what she said? She said that she had done that very thing. Of course she came back soon afterward and picked her kid up, but she had actually done it. She has more guts than I do.

Sometimes our disconnectedness from the kids can lead to tension in our marriage. Once we begin to disconnect with one person we will be more apt to disconnect with almost everyone. This is where some people turn away from the people they love and connect with Jack Daniels. The problem is that Jack will take us places that we never intended to go. Jack will lead us down the road of ISOLATION. When we disconnect from people, we will go down the people-less road that always leads to ISOLATION. Isolation is what we should try to avoid at all costs. Isolation is your enemy. Do not let yourself step one foot down that path.

Let's face it; there have been marriage problems from the very beginning. And troubles with kids go

way back as well. Remember that Adam and Eve may have been together in their disobedience, but the results were the death of their perfect relationship. Then the kids didn't get along and the one kid killed the other and then tried to cover it up. From the beginning, we knew we were in trouble.

Generally speaking, Jesus spoke to families indirectly. He talked about how families would be disrupted by the extent of an individual's commitment to Him. And He taught that we ought to show respect for all: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," for example. When we respect our mate and our kids we will stay connected. Jesus taught us to forgive those who had something against us. Forgiveness keeps us connected to the ones we love. Paul, on the other hand, was more specific about the duties of the husband and wife and kids. Paul probably got questions from members in the church who were struggling with God's will regarding their relationships.

Sometimes I'll hear, "I love my partner but I'm not 'in love' with him." Do you understand what is being said? I think they have a level of commitment, but do not have all of the happy feelings that a relationship sometimes brings. I tell them to love their partner if they love their partner. Show them your commitment even if you do not feel like it. Put one foot in front of the other and make a step in the right direction. Paul writes down here one of God's commands: for the husband to love his wife. He makes no allowance for how they may be feeling about things. Life is difficult, and our feelings go up and down, but love never fails. Also, what's done in love will create a stability and connectedness in the relationship that will prepare the couple for future challenges.

Paul qualifies this love with a very practical point: he tells the men not to be so harsh. Isn't that just what the doctor ordered? We are so tempted to be too harsh. We men like to take control by running over the very person we want to be connected with. Harshness doesn't translate into closeness. When we are harsh, we lose the respect of our wife and kids, don't we? I would admit that this has been a weakness for me over the years. I love my wife and kids, but I am often too harsh towards them. Usually for me that means that I raise my voice to a deafening level and demand that what I want done is done. Come to think

of it, I'm subtler with my wife; I can be mean with her without raising my voice.

If harshness is followed by remorse and a request for forgiveness, then you can re-connect. Make sure that the person you hurt is given enough time to truly forgive. Sometimes they may offer forgiveness because they think they have to, but inside they are still struggling with how you acted. You do your part, and let them process it. You will know when there is a genuine re-connect.

There is a point where we can be too tough on our kids. We can break their tender spirits. Paul says not to "embitter" them. Have you left a sour taste in your kids' mouths? If so, it is possible you disciplined them for the right reasons in the wrong way; you went overboard. I heard a story of a father who made his kid stay out in the dark all night even though the child

was scared stiff of the outdoors at night. That was too extreme. Kids can take only so much and then they get discouraged. They may then feel disconnected from their father and would rather not relate with him then spend time being pushed around.

How are you doing?

Are you connected with \_\_\_\_\_ today?

What do you have to do to reconnect? Go ahead and push Control-Alt-Delete and start over.

"God, we want to be connected with You. We need Your help to connect with the people we love. Thank you for making us to be connected with others. Give us the courage to re-connect with those we have been too isolated from lately. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

God's blessings keep us connected,  
Pastor Steve



Day 281

## "Devotions"

October 8 - Colossians 4: 2-18

**W**hat do you do every day? I'm talking about something that you do without fail each and every day of the year. You are committed. You are devoted. You would rather keel over dead than not do this thing that drives you over and over again. Some people struggle with this; they can't think of one thing they do every day. They would even say there is a day every now and then that they don't brush their teeth.

Without talking too much about this, I'm sure you can see the benefits of consistently doing something every day. Practice makes perfect. Years ago I listened to some tapes by a guy named Earl Nightingale, and he said some things that stuck with me. One of the points he made was that a person could become an expert in any field by spending at least 15 minutes a day in that subject, either studying it or doing it,

whatever it might be. When you think about that it really does make sense. It may take 20 years, but think about the number of hours you would have put in by that time. To me it is common sense. You're going to spend those 20 years some way. What's better, becoming an expert at something you enjoy or watching TV? There's really no comparison, is there?

What is it that you are devoted to consistently? That's a little redundant, isn't it? If you're devoted to something, you will be consistently committed as well. Last weekend a gentleman approached me before church and, with tears in his eyes, asked me to pray for his mom, who had been dealing with some heart issues. His devotion to his mom touched me. I could easily tell that it would mean so much for him if I said a prayer for her. So we prayed right there in the parking lot. When I was done there were even more tears

in his eyes. Another example is my wife's devotion to our kids. She would not miss one of their games if she could help it. She even goes to away games and tournaments. Our three kids were in three different sports and they played all through the week, sometimes on the same day. She doesn't let that distract her; she went to one game and then the other. So it was soccer from 4-6 p.m., and then off to volleyball from 6-8 p.m. Then we'd come home and eat some dinner. She was devoted to her kids.

The best motivation for devotion is love. Guilt isn't good. Neither is self-glorification. Obligation is an OK motive, but it doesn't hold a candle to love. Look at young lovers. Man, are they devoted to one another. Unfortunately, later on the devotion seems to wane. Why? They begin to let their love grow cold. When the love diminishes, so does the devotion. If we set our affection on and devote ourselves to something, we will love it. And the reverse is true as well; if we love something actively we will commit to it and stand up for it and promote it.

Allow me to talk for a moment about another example. I love the TIP program. T.I.P. stands for Trauma Intervention Program. TIP people are well-trained individuals who show up on the scene of very difficult events in people's lives to administer emotional first aid. I have seen TIP in action. I have seen it work over and over. Where there has been a fire or a death or a bad accident or someone in serious trouble, TIP is called. A gracious TIP volunteer arrives on the scene and does what he is trained to do. TIP volunteers are devoted to helping perfect strangers during very difficult times. The people who are helped often meet that devotion with gratitude. At the scene, the victims are usually pretty oblivious to TIP's presence, but afterwards, when the emotional part of things settles down, then they express appreciation for the devotion and love of their TIP volunteer.

Let's get to our Bible reading today. Paul says, "Be devoted to prayer..." Paul says giving ourselves ever

more heartily to prayer is worth our time and attention. Why? I think because of the difference it had made in his own life, and also because he knew what Jesus had said about prayer. One of my favorite Jesus verses on prayer is Luke 18:1, "Men ought always to pray and not lose heart." So based on that thought and Paul's own experience, he commands us by the Spirit to devote ourselves to prayer.

When we are devoted to prayer, we show our devotion to the Lord. We are devoted to those persons with whom we spend the most time conversing. Has prayer had an impact on you yet? If not, it's time to try it on for size. Let's carve out some time today for prayer. If you have even 10 minutes to pray, go ahead and do it. Take the step to be alone with the Lord and begin talking to Him after a moment or two of quiet. Allow time to listen as well as talking. God will speak to you, usually through reminding you of something in his word. God speaks through His word.

I recommend a prayer group or prayer partner. Spending time alone is good, but also think about a small group to pray with. The other members will be able to spur you on in your prayers.

Also, don't forget to lean on the Holy Spirit as you pray. He will neatly lead you in your prayers. He will internally show you the way you ought to pray for things.

If someone asks you to pray for them, make sure you do it right away. If you can, pray with them right on the spot even if you are talking to them on the phone. Let's pray everywhere and in every way. Don't delay prayer; make it your first reaction.

What could you do this week to move in the direction of devotion to prayer? Let's write a few goals in this respect in the margin of our Bibles next to Colossians 4.

Rejoice in Jesus Always.

God's blessings are yours in prayer,

Pastor Steve