



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Number 11



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible (1995), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

WATCH OUT FOR MEN

“ 2:4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. ⁵ For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. ⁶ As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: ⁷ Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. ⁸ Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” ^{KJV} (Col 2:4-8)

INTRODUCTION

Salvation is being accomplished in the arena of conflict and opposition. Although we have been raised up and made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places (Eph 2:6), there are certain dangers that we face. **The dangers are as real as our positioning in the heavenly realms.** Failing to see this will disarm the human spirit, creating a “*place*” in which Satan will be able to work (Eph 4:27).

Because of man’s natural tendency to gloss the Word of God, thus regarding salvation as an instant and complete possession, all manner of erroneous doctrines have filtered into the church. These doctrines have a philosophical tone to them, moving men to assume more than the doctrines actually state. They

rely upon human reasoning rather than Divine affirmation. Some examples will serve to illustrate this difference.

SOME FALSE DOCTRINES

✦ **The grace of God is irresistible.** This doctrine correctly sees the grace of God as lifting us from the quagmire of sin, independently of human merit. However, it assumes that the grace of God brings salvation to an unwilling heart as well as a defiled one.

✦ **Once you are in grace, you will always be in grace.** Here the grace of God is perceived as moving God to ignore sin as well as make provision for its remission. It misrepresents God by suggesting He is tolerant of

sin in His people, even though he will not abide it in sinners, and the devil himself.

✦ **Eternal life can never be lost.** In this doctrine, “*eternal life*” is viewed as an irreversible condition rather than the state of knowing God, as Jesus presented it (John 17:3). Men are viewed as presently possessing eternal life in its fulness – even though dwelling in a mortal body.

✦ **Once you are saved, you are always saved.** This doctrine represents salvation as a state into which one is eternally locked. It completely ignores the presence of a mortal bodies and “*the flesh.*” It does not take into account the

OUTLINE

- ▶ BEGUELEMENT WITH ENTICING WORDS (2:4)
- ▶ I AM WITH YOU IN THE SPIRIT (2:5a)
- ▶ JOYING AND BEHOLDING (2:5b)
- ▶ THE STEADFASTNESS OF YOUR FAITH (5c)
- ▶ AS YOU HAVE RECEIVED CHRIST (2:6a)
- ▶ WALK YE IN HIM (2:6b)
- ▶ ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN HIM (2:7a)
- ▶ ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH (7b)
- ▶ AS YE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT (7c)
- ▶ ABOUNDING THEREIN WITH THANKSGIVING (7d)
- ▶ MEN CAN SPOIL YOU (8a)
- ▶ PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT (8b)
- ▶ THE INHIBITING EFFECTS OF THE TRADITION OF MEN (8c)
- ▶ THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD (8d)
- ▶ NOT AFTER CHRIST (8e)

requirement to crucify the flesh and resist the devil. Its chief error is its failure to consider that salvation is “by faith,” and that faith must be “kept.” It fails to take Israel’s deliverance from Egypt into account, even though the Spirit makes a point of paralleling it with salvation.

- ✦ **Once you become a Son you can never lose that status.** Here is a most subtle doctrine. It parallels being a child of God with a father having children in this world. The reasoning is that no matter what the children do, it does not really effect their status as children. The flaw in the reasoning is that all sons are not accepted as rightful heirs – such as Cain, Ishmael, and Esau. It also does not account for the fallen angels (and angels are called “sons” – Job 38:7).
- ✦ **Satan is powerless.** This doctrine presents Satan as totally powerless and helpless, having been utterly defeated by Jesus. Men, therefore, have nothing to fear from him, and may shout him down at will. The doctrine overlooks the fact that men are warned about his ferocity, and that he has targeted the people of

God (Rev 12:12). Sobriety and vigilance are actually taught as absolute requirements (1 Pet 5:8-9), and fear is now expressed about infantile believers being again snared by the devil (2 Cor 11:3; 1 Thess 3:5)

- ✦ **God loves you, no matter what you do.** This heresy represents God as having “*unconditional love*.” The idea reasons that since God loved us when we were “*enemies*,” His love is unaffected by human conduct. The doctrine overlooks the fact that God loved us “*in Christ*,” and that the experience of that love is directly related to our personal response to Jesus. The Savior took great care to make this clear (John 14:21,23; 16:27).

- ✦ **God is with you, wherever you are.** In this teaching, men are left with the impression that God is unaffected by earthly environments. Believers may thus wander into wicked realms, or conduct themselves in an ungodly manner, still receiving Divine protection and care. The doctrine conveniently overlooks Cain, the flood, Esau, king Saul, and Israel. It ignores Samson, Judas, and a host of others. It forgets there was a place where Jesus “*could do no mighty work*” (Mk 6:5). The promise of God’s presence presumes the individual is living by faith.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

There is also an perspective of *Christianity* that perceives the approach to God to be primarily one of routine and exact procedure. There is little heart in this approach, with hardly any emphasis on faith, hope, and love. A minimal list of the imagined essentials is presented with the promise that adherence to the perceived rules may very well qualify one to dwell forever with the Lord. In this approach, time is primary, and eternity is vague. There is very little talk about

glory, and eternal things are rarely mentioned.

Others, while vigorously opposing such doctrines, live as though they were true. Their lives are not characterized by strong faith, a dominating hope, and fervent love – yet they see themselves as being accepted by God. They do not see the world as dangerous, and thus flirt with it, exposing themselves to all manner of worldly enticements. Others see no real need for being with the saints of God, ingesting the Word of God, or putting on the whole armor of God. They imagine there is safety in mere human goodness, and thus give very little of themselves to the Lord.

Particularly in America, professing Christians have learned to live with these attitudes, treating them as though they were relatively harmless. **However, they are not harmless, for they tend to erode a consciousness of God.** They also minimize faith, and encourage spiritual lethargy. The general condition of the American church confirms this.

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

Our text has been written with the doctrines of men in mind – particularly the impact they can have upon the child of God. They are not incidental, nor are they harmless.

There is an unavoidable clash between the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God. This is affirmed with unusual pungency by the Spirit.

- ✦ “*For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God,*

There is also an perspective of Christianity that perceives the approach to God to be primarily one of routine and exact procedure.

it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:19-21).

✚ *“Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet **not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought**: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which*

*concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and **overthrow the faith of some**” (2 Tim 2:18).*

This is why Paul was careful not to couch the Gospel in words of man’s wisdom. That tactic, however valued it may appear, voids the power of the cross, making it ineffective. As it is written, *“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of*

employment of this wisdom in things pertaining to life and godliness.

- ✚ God will destroy such wisdom, bringing it to nothing (1 Cor 1:19).
- ✚ God has made it foolish (1 Cor 1:20).
- ✚ It has no utility when it comes to knowing God (1 Cor 1:21).
- ✚ Paul did not employ it in the preaching of the Gospel (1 Cor 1:17).
- ✚ It cannot unveil a single thing God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9).
- ✚ It is foolishness with God (1 Cor 3:19).
- ✚ It is vain (1 Cor 3:20).

In our day, a strange and powerless vocabulary is rapidly spreading in the Christian community. Its key words are taken from psychological textbooks, Bible interpreters, lexicons, and the likes.

none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor 2:6-9).

✚ *“For **the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God**. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, **that they are vain**” (1 Cor 3:20).*

When the wisdom of this world, or the thoughts of *“the natural man”* (1 Cor 2:14) are brought into the realm of *“pure religion,”* they have an incalculably damaging effect upon the soul. Thus we read, *“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and **oppositions of science falsely so called**: Which **some professing have erred concerning the faith**. Grace be with thee. Amen”* (1 Tim 6:21). And again, *“But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that **they do gender strifes**”* (2 Tim 2:23). And again, *“But shun profane and vain babblings: for **they will increase unto more ungodliness**. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who*

words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Cor 1:17).

In our day, a strange and powerless vocabulary is rapidly spreading in the Christian community. Its key words are taken from psychological textbooks, Bible interpreters, lexicons, and the likes. These words and expressions include the following: “addiction,” “depression,” “anxiety,” “hereditary,” “anger management,” “grieving process,” “fundamentalist,” “eternal security,” “cheap grace,” “New Testament Christianity,” “the plan of salvation,” “the great commission,” “missions,” “praise and worship,” “full time service,” “the original language,” etc.

Each one of these represents a body of thought. Frequently the Word of God is read with such terms in mind – terms that have been created and defined by men. In many circles, questioning these expressions is tantamount to heresy and a denial of the Word of God. People are evaluated, and often judged, upon the basis of such language.

Keep in mind **what God has said** about the wisdom of this world – regardless of the form it takes, or the one who espouses it. He has spoken with unusual candor on these matters. **This has particular regard to the**

The articulation of such wisdom has caused some to err concerning the faith (1 Tim 6:21). **The words emitting from the shallow well of man’s wisdom can eat at the soul like cancer, and even overthrow ones faith** (2 Tim 2:18). I hardly see how anything could be more serious, or introduce such jeopardy. Yet, the people of God have grappled with such things from the very beginning.

The warning that follows is particularly important in a day when worldly wisdom is being exalted, and academia has been enthroned in the pulpit. **This is a day when many preachers have little more to recommend them than their educational credentials.** Whatever may be said of formal education, it must be made subordinate to faith. Also, it is secondary to the enabling gifts that are distributed to the church through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:4-7). The Lord not only places every member in the body of Christ where it has pleased Him (1 Cor 12:28), each are endowed with spiritual aptitudes that are designed to edify the other members of the body. **Divine placement and enablement are exclusive qualifications that bring true benefit to the body of Christ.**

This is not to be construed as a repudiation of education and the appropriation of valid knowledge.

However, when it comes to the building up of the saints, the increase of faith, and the enhancement of hope, the world is

utterly impotent. These are not, and cannot be, accomplished through the world and its vain wisdom. Truth is too

voluminous and too weighty to be held in the rotting paper bag of worldly wisdom – a “*bag filled with holes.*”

BEGUILEMENT WITH ENTICING WORDS

²⁴ *“And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.”*

THIS I SAY

“... *And this I say . . .*” Other versions read, “*I say this in order that,*”^{NASB} “*I tell you this so that,*”^{NIV} “*I am saying this so that,*”^{NRSV} and “*I say this to make sure.*”^{NJB}

Paul has expressed his profound desire for the Colossians: “*For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea*” (2:1). You might imagine some of the Colossians saying, “Why is Paul so concerned about us? We have faith in Jesus, and love all of the saints. What need is there to treat us as though we were standing on the precipice of ruin? He must be overstating the case. Surely we can be in no real danger. We have been doing real well, and now Paul speaks as though we were new Christians?” It is not unusual to hear people reason in this manner when warnings and admonitions are issued.

Paul does not write the Colossians because they are in a backward stance, or are about to overthrow the faith. Rather, there are dangerous and eroding influences at work among them. His words are not the only ones they will hear. **It is a serious error in judgment when a preacher or teacher addresses the people as though he is the only one who will ever have access to their minds.**

It is possible for one to become “*dull of hearing*” because of the solemnity of the message being delivered. Perhaps a humorous anecdote will make the word more palatable – or a reference to some everyday and common experiences. I cannot begin to tell you how many people have said to me, “Lighten up, Given. Don’t be so serious!” Rest assured, no such words will be spoken on the day of judgment, when one’s eternal destiny is

about to be announced.

It is in order for those who speak for God to deliver their message in a way that leaves the listeners thinking it is important. **There is enough entertainment and distraction in the world, without having it pour out of the pulpit.** Whatever may be said in favor of entertainment and humor, they

(Matt 10:17), “*Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees*” (Matt 16:6), and “*Beware of the scribes*” (Mk 12:38). Speaking of religious men, particularly some of the aggressive Jewish teachers, Paul warned, “*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision*” (Phil 3:2). Peter said, “*Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before,*

Those who are in Christ ought to be as persuaded of the vanity of worldly wisdom, as they are of the indispensability and purity of godly wisdom.

do tend to promote spiritual sleep and a forgetfulness of the Word of the Lord.

Those who are in Christ ought to be as persuaded of the vanity of worldly wisdom, as they are of the indispensability and purity of godly wisdom. As soon as a person comes in the name of the Lord, holding worldly credentials and success before us, we are to question their message. Things pertaining to life and godliness are never wrapped in the wisdom of this world. It is not the manner of God to deliver His truth to us in the shabby container of what He has said is “*foolishness.*” However, all men do not have this knowledge, and therefore Paul elaborates on WHY he has spoken in such somber tones and with great and godly concern.

ANY MAN

“... *lest any man should . . .*”

Other versions read, “*lest anyone should,*”^{NKJV} “*that no one may,*”^{NASB} “*lest any man should,*”^{GENEVA} and “*that no one may be able to.*”^{NLT}

Jesus said, “*Beware of men*”

beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Pet 3:17). These words were not spoken to children, but to the whole body of Christ. **These are solemn notes of warning that spiritual contamination can come from our peers.**

Warnings Alert the Soul

Warnings alert the soul to imminent dangers. No inspired man ever left his listeners disarmed, suggesting there were no genuine dangers in this world. They never used expressions like “*unconditional love,*” “*eternal security,*” “*God loves you no matter what you do,*” or “*once saved always saved.*” While there may be an element of truth in some of these phrases, it is overshadowed by the unfavorable impression they leave upon the soul. They contribute to lethargy, and tend to make the individual put down his guard in “*this present evil world.*”

BEGUILE YOU

“... *beguile you . . .*” Other versions read, “*deceive you,*”^{NKJV} “*delude you,*”^{NASB} and “*be turned away.*”^{BBE}

Those in Christ Jesus are not to allow any of their peers to turn them from the way of truth— by Given O. Blakely

The word “*beguiled*” means “to reckon wrong, to cheat one by false reckoning, to deceive by false reasoning.”^{THAYER} It is leading a person to think wrongly, reason incorrectly, and be brought to improper conclusions. A person who has been “beguiled” has been led to reason amiss about spiritually critical matters.

This is what the devil did to Eve, leading her into erroneous thinking. Even though God had clearly stated the consequences of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, yet Satan beguiled Eve about the matter. Once deceived she reasoned, “*that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise*” (Gen 3:6). Humanity is still living with the consequences of that deception.

Can We Still Be Beguiled?

Perhaps there are those who

His sight” (1:22). Yet, the Spirit does not allow us the luxury of relying upon our spiritual maturity, of itself, to keep us from being beguiled. **In this world, we never reach a point where we can disengage from the good fight of faith** (1 Tim 6:12), **remove the whole armor of God** (Eph 6:10-18), **and cease to press toward the mark** (Phil 1:14-15). While we are in the body, there is no state where we can cease being vigilant (1 Pet 5:8), stop resisting the devil (James 4:7), or discontinue trying the spirits to see whether they are of God (1 John 4:1).

Faith Must Be Active to Be Effective

Faith must be in an active stance, dominating our hearts. Faith will not function while placed into the background. It cannot survive if it is not the motivating principle in our lives. This is because the child of God is constantly subjected to the aggressive wiles of the

cannot rely on worldly wisdom and natural resources to protect them. The devices of the devil cannot be thrown down by worldly-wise arguments, statistical surveys, or institutional identity. **There is a certain vanity in the wisdom of this world. It cannot keep us from being deceived, or beguiled.** Thus Paul declares that he had spoken with the greatest sobriety “*lest any man beguile you.*”

ENTICING WORDS

“... *with enticing words.*” Other versions read, “*with persuasive words,*”^{NKJV} “*with persuasive argument,*”^{NASB} “*fine-sounding arguments,*”^{NIV} “*plausible arguments,*”^{NRSV} and “*loftiness of words.*”^{DOUAY}

We must ever be mindful that the power is in the truth itself, not in man’s representation of it, or the method in which it is made known. That being the case, one might think that persuasive words and convincing arguments are suitable in matters pertaining to life and godliness. This is true IF the words are not “*words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words*” (1 Cor 2:13). But that is not the point of “*enticing words.*”

“*Enticing words*” are words and arguments that move men to adopt views that contradict the revelation of God. It may be an eloquent and supposedly logical argument that states “*the resurrection is past already*” (2 Tim 2:18). The speaker may weave together a tapestry of Scripture that meets with all the criteria of men in the flesh. Yet, those who embrace such words will find it results in the overthrow of their faith (2 Tim 2:18).

Let it be clear, **if the Word of God does not asseverate what a person is affirming – in the words that person is using – no believer is under obligation to receive them as truth.** In fact, the point being declared may be nothing more than a heresy that will cause damnation (2 Pet 2:1). There are countless doctrines and preachments that are based upon human interpretation, institutional creeds, religious slogans, and human hypotheses. They become aphorisms by which men are judged and denominations are maintained.

When we throw ourselves into the good fight of faith, the Lord strengthens us for the battle – but only so. The strength of the Lord is not dispatched to idle Christians who are quite willing to limp through life while remaining as close to the earth as they conceive is possible.

reason that such delusion is not possible to those who are in Christ Jesus. After all, we have received remarkable benefits. Of course, those who think in such a manner forget that Eve was innocent when she was deceived. She had never sinned before she was beguiled. She was morally perfect before she was led to think incorrectly. Beside this, Paul reasoned with the Corinthians: “*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*” (2 Cor 11:3).

In this text we see the necessity of being “*grounded and settled*” (1:23). You may recall this was declared to be necessary if we are to be presented “*holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in*

devil. Temptations are hurled at believers, while principalities and powers strive to wrestle them down from the heavenly places into which they have been raised (Eph 2:6).

Not In Our Own Strength

We do not confront these adversarial powers in our own strength – however, we DO confront them. **When we throw ourselves into the good fight of faith, the Lord strengthens us for the battle – but only so.** The strength of the Lord is not dispatched to idle Christians who are quite willing to limp through life while remaining as close to the earth as they conceive is possible.

Not only is it imperative the saints try the spirits and beware of men, they

While men have become accustomed to such approaches, they are wholly unacceptable. **No man, regardless of qualification, scholarship, or position, can demand the embrace of a statement that God Himself has not made.** When elaborate arguments are presented to buttress such statements, there is an attempt at beguilement, whether intentional or not.

No inspired person ever anchored teaching to the original language, best manuscripts, oratorical skills, or philosophical reasoning – and neither should we! **Those who resort to such methods to establish their message are tempering their syllogistic house with untempered mortar. We are to beware of such men, lest they beguile us.**

AT their very best, *“enticing words”* are articulated sophistry. They are spoken as though they were weighty and laden with blessing. But they are only wisps of darkening smoke that tend to blind the eyes of the understanding. They are too small to carry truth, and to fleeting to be of lasting benefit. They are nothing more than clanging symbols that are offensive to sensitive ears.

I AM WITH YOU IN THE SPIRIT

“^{5a} For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit . . .”

Paul is not writing as an uninterested religious philosopher, dwelling in his own comfortable habitation. He is not sending a formal letter to them as a religious professional who offers advice and counseling for a fee. Colossae is not hearing from a self-acclaimed expert who is filled with statistics, historical data, and a knowledge of the trends and demands of the times. The truth of the matter is that God has placed no such offices in the church. **There are no spiritual gifts deposited with those who have no personal interest in the saints of the most high God.** Jesus has given no gifts in the church (Eph 4:8) that are impersonal and withdrawn from the household of faith. Jesus Himself has a heart for His people, and gives them no ministers who lack that interest.

Notwithstanding this circumstance, the modern church is filled with religious professionals who have no real heart for the people, and do not seek their edification – an objective that characterizes every gift and ministry placed within the church (Eph 4:11-16). Paul now expresses the spirit of this reality to the Colossian brethren.

ABSENT IN THE FLESH

“For though I be absent in the flesh . . .” Other versions read, *“absent in body,”*^{NASB} *“not present in the flesh,”*^{BBE} and *“far away from you.”*^{NLT}

The phrase *“absent in the flesh”*

is a refreshing reference to his physical circumstance. **Actually, Paul was in prison at the time.** This is confirmed by his reference to being *“my sufferings for you”* (1:24), and *“in bonds”* (4:3,18).

hearer, the leader and the follower. It first dwelt in Jesus, who Himself is *“meek and lowly of heart”* (Matt 11:29). Because the disciple is not above his master (Matt 10:24), this characteristic is found in

Most men would have written a biography of the suffering and inconvenience of the prison. Paul wrote out of a profound concern for the people of God, choosing to “prefer” them above himself

Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon, written about this time, also refer to Paul’s imprisonment: *“the prison of Jesus Christ”* [Eph 3:1], *“my tribulations”* [Eph 3:13], *“the prisoner of the Lord”* [Eph 4:1], *“ambassador in bonds”* [Eph 6:20], *“my bonds”* [Phil 1:13,14,16; Philemon 1:10], *“a prisoner of Jesus Christ”* [Phile 1:9], and *“the bonds of the Gospel”* [Philemon 1:13]).

Most men would have written a biography of the suffering and inconvenience of the prison. Paul wrote out of a profound concern for the people of God, choosing to *“prefer”* them above himself (Rom 12:10).

Herein the nature of the kingdom of God is made known. In Christ men obtain a new nature that moves them to consider others “better than themselves” (Phil 2:3). This is a trait that is found in the teacher and the taught, the Apostle and the

those who live in fellowship with the Son (1 Cor 1:9).

A Perspective of Scripture

There is a spirit in Scriptures that can be seen only if they are approached properly. This spirit is the channel through which life comes to those exposed to the Word of God (Lk 4:4). It is what produces edification, joy, and profitability. That spirit is nothing less than *“the mind of Christ”* that is projected in the words of the Apostle. That *“mind”* has a genuine interest in those for whom Jesus died, and compels Him to seek their welfare.

This spirit can be missed if men approach the Word of God with inferior motives. If, for example the Scriptures are approached as a cold and lifeless manual of conduct, a pattern for organization, a means of exposing error, or a historical document, this spirit will be missed. Such approaches take the heart out of Scripture, and are wholly lacking of

power. Some of us know this by firsthand experience.

If I can perceive the heart of Scripture, both Divine demands and promises will more readily be seen. Understanding will be more fruitful, obedience more joyful, and hope more dominant.

By saying “*absent in the flesh,*”

church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24).

These associations are very real, and may be perceived only by faith. It is

religion that comes in the name of Christ.

What Paul Means

When Paul says he was “*with*” the Colossians “*in the spirit,*” he is referring to his own spirit. It is another way of saying his love and affection for the Colossians could not be held within a prison. It moved across the boundaries of space in a very real fellowship. It is much like saying his heart was with the Colossians, joined to them through faith and love.

Paul expressed this same thought to the Corinthians when addressing the issue of a fornicator among them. “*For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed*” (1 Cor 5:3). In both cases (the Corinthians and the Colossians), Paul had been moved by a faithful report. With the Corinthians, Paul heard the report that there was fornication among them (1 Cor 5:1). With the Colossians, Epaphras had given a faithful report of their “*love in the Spirit*” (1:8). **In both cases, Paul was so knit with the people that he knew precisely what needed to be done, even though he was not “on site,” so to speak.** He did not have to come and investigate the circumstances in order to give a proper appraisal.

Here was a fellowship that was enhanced by hearing what was occurring among the brethren. The common bond they had in Christ, the versatility of the renewed spirit, and the work of the Holy Spirit enabled Paul to be touched by the report just as though he had personally been with the Colossians. He was with them “*in the spirit*” – in his inner man, where real fellowship is experienced. The fellowship was real and so was the perception found in it.

Newness of life, for example, cannot come to men through scholarship, language expertise, historical knowledge, or any other facet of the wisdom of men. Spiritual realities are not confirmed in the body – the part of us that remains under the curse, and cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Paul has diminished his own circumstances and accented his love for the brethren, and interest in their spiritual welfare and advancement. He has taken the spotlight from himself, and thrown it upon matters requiring godly attention.

WITH YOU IN THE SPIRIT

“ . . . yet am I with you in the spirit . . . ”

There is a fellowship in Christ Jesus that transcends both time and space. This is declared in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. “*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and*

as men walk in the Spirit and live by faith that they become aware of these realities, and benefit from them. The awareness of them cannot be realized in the flesh – as in seeing apparitions or having sensational feelings. Not only can flesh and blood **NOT** inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50), it can in no way realize or experience its benefits. “*Spiritual blessings*” cannot be experienced in the flesh, or by fleshly means. **Newness of life, for example, cannot come to men through scholarship, language expertise, historical knowledge, or any other facet of the wisdom of men.** Spiritual realities are not confirmed in the body – the part of us that remains under the curse, and cannot enter into the kingdom of God. This, as you might suppose, is highly disruptive of much

JOYING AND BEHOLDING

“^{5b} . . . *joying and beholding your order . . .*”

The Apostle now reveals the impact the report of the Colossian’s faith and love has had upon him. That effect

was just the same as if he had personally been with them. This is a most remarkable circumstance, and decidedly enlarges the scope of our experience in Christ Jesus. If we **can** be favorably impressed and spiritually enlarged and

strengthened from the reports of faithful brethren, there are countless marvelous advantages we have been given in being “*one*” with the body of Christ!

JOYING

Those in Christ Jesus are not to allow any of their peers to turn them from the way of truth– by Given O. Blakely

“... *joying*...” Other versions read, “*rejoicing*,”^{NKJV} “*delight*,”^{NIV} and “*I am very happy*.”^{NLT}

This is the only place in the KJV where the word “*joying*” is found. The specific Greek word from which “*joying*” is translated (*χαίρων*) is only used four times in the New Covenant Scriptures (Lk 15:5; 19:6; Acts 8:39; Col 2:5).

- ✦ (Luke 15:5) “*And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.*”
- ✦ (Luke 19:6) “*And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.*”
- ✦ (Acts 8:39) “*And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*”
- ✦ (Col 2:5) “*For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, **joying** and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.*”

The idea in all of these instances is that joy was marvelously joined to the circumstances with which it was associated. The circumstance itself caused joy, and the joy brought the recollection of the circumstance. Thus the shepherd who found the lost sheep and brought it home on his shoulder was rejoicing in the circumstance itself (Lk 15:5). Zacchaeus was rejoicing while receiving Jesus into his house (Lk 19:6). The Ethiopian eunuch was made glad by his baptism into Christ, and in the recollection of it went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39).

This is **not** the kind of joy the world associates with humor – which joy rapidly fades, and has no redeeming

value. It is an insightful joy that recognizes the good that is perceived, bringing refreshment to the individual. It is **not** the kind of joy the disciples had when they first saw the risen Jesus. It is

to the naked eye, or any other fleshly sense. In this case, Paul saw something in the report Epaphras had given of the Colossians – something that brought insightful and refreshing joy to his heart.

Here, something has been perceived as the work of God among His people. It is a condition in which the Lord Himself takes great delight, and thus insight into that condition brings an invigorating joy to those who discern it.

written of that joy, “*And while they yet **believed not for joy**, and wondered, he said unto them, *Have ye here any meat?*” (Luke 24:41). Here, something has been perceived as the work of God among His people. **It is a condition in which the Lord Himself takes great delight, and thus insight into that condition brings an invigorating joy to those who discern it.***

An Observation

When men choose to live on the surface of spiritual life (if, indeed, such a thing is even possible), this kind of joy is forfeited. **Real insight, or “wisdom and spiritual understanding,” cannot be experienced on the periphery of the kingdom, or in the outer court of spiritual life.** This kind of joy is associated Divine fellowship – where the individual is given to comprehend with “*the mind of Christ*.” It is an aspect of the “*fellowship*” with Christ, into which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9).

BEHOLDING

“... *and beholding*...” The “*eyes of*” our “*understanding*” (Eph 1:18) can perceive things that are not accessible

This kind of beholding is possible because spiritual life has certain characteristics – characteristics that only the insightful can put into words. When we the saints are “*speaking the truth in love*” (Eph 4:15), all manner of advantages will be ministered. Our text is a case in point. Epaphras brought a discerning report of the work of the Lord in Colossae. **The manner in which he gave this report provided a context in which the Holy Spirit could minister both understanding and joy to the imprisoned Apostle.** This brought refreshment to his spirit, which in turn enabled him to elaborate on certain kingdom realities that needed to be perceived in Colossae. That perception was related to their survival.

A Thought

Where the truth of God is not articulated, and faithful reports of His works are not provided, a sort of spiritual robbery is taking place. Frothy religion closes the “*wells of salvation*” (Isa 12:3). It is then that all manner of religious pretense breaks forth, defiling all who are exposed to it. Truth is ever the environment of progress.

YOUR ORDER AND THE STEADFASTNESS OF YOUR FAITH

“^{5c} ... *your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.*”

Paul now elaborates on what he perceived in the report brought to him. He speaks as one who lives in communion

with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14) and fellowship with both the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3). These are the privileges

Those in Christ Jesus are not to allow any of their peers to turn them from the way of truth— by Given O. Blakely

of everyone who walks in the light *“as He is in the light”* (1 John 1:7). There are sacred privileges vouchsafed to those who live by faith and walk in the Spirit. One of them is being able to see refreshing realities that cannot otherwise be seen.

YOUR ORDER

“ . . . *your order* . . . ” Other versions read *“your good order,”* ^{NKJV} *“your good discipline,”* ^{NASB} *“how orderly you are,”* ^{NIV} *“your morale,”* ^{NRSV} *“how well-ordered you are,”* ^{NJB} and *“you are living as you should.”* ^{NLT}

The word *“order”* is pregnant with

not to be lived in this manner, it is that is CANNOT be lived in this way. **Divine resources are not designed to be experienced when the heart and mind are disengaged.** They all presume faith and involvement on the part of the receiver.

Therefore, when Paul beholds the *“order”* of the Colossian brethren joy and gladness come to him on the wings of his love for them. It is not that they have excelled, reaching plateaus of spiritual life that are not available to all of the saints. Rather, it is that they have seen what God has prepared for those who love Him, and

(Rom 4:20). It is a faith that stands under great adversity, like Joseph maintained his trust in God and integrity before Him in Egypt. *“Steadfast”* faith causes its possessor to stand up when thrown down, keep fighting the good fight of faith when assaulted by trouble and perplexity, and keep believing when persecuted (2 Cor 4:8-9).

A person who is *“steadfast”* is the opposite of one who *“for a while believes, and in time of temptation falls away”* (Lk 8:13). Such a one does not vacillate, moving from hot to cold, having continual setbacks, failures, and the likes. Such individuals are exceedingly rare – that is why Paul declared he was *“joying”* as he beheld the steadfastness of their faith.

A Word on Orderliness

Some people are of the opinion that *“order”* is out of place in the assembly of God’s people. They prefer to have an open environment, where everything is done on the spur of the moment. They are of the opinion that the Holy Spirit is prone to work in such an unordered environment. They equate being *“led by the Spirit”* with being in a state of empty-headedness and casualness. Such notions are wholly without merit, and reflect an unacceptable way of thinking.

God has placed certain gifts in the church that contribute to the maintenance of order: Apostles, prophets, teachers, governments, etc (1 Cor 12:28-29). In fact, the people of God are likened to a *“body”* having diverse and interdependent functions (1 Cor 12:14-25). Ponder the way the Spirit speaks of orderliness.

✚ **Luke presents the Gospel and the acts of the Apostles in an orderly manner.** *“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us”* (Luke 1:1). *“It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus”* (Luke 1:3).

✚ **The priest’s office was executed in an orderly manner.** *“And it*

Our lives are spiritually “ordered” when Christ is the Object of them, and they are lived as a thank offering to God. Actually, no other type of life is acceptable to the Lord

meaning. **It carries the idea of being able to keep rank,** as a hard-hitting military battalion. Such were the fighting men of the tribes of Zebulun, the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh (1 Chron 12:33,38). That is, even though dangers were looming among the Colossian brethren, still their spiritual rank had not yet been broken. They were striving together for the faith of the Gospel (Phil 1:27), fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), and joined together by that which every joint supplied (Eph 4:16). They continued to have faith in Jesus and love all the saints.

The word *“order”* also carries the idea of disciplined, or **consistent,** living. Spiritual life cannot be lived ad hoc, or without regard to the wider implications of life. Life must be characterized by purpose (Rom 1:13; 2 Cor 1:17; Eph 6:22; 2 Tim 3:10), determination (1 Cor 2:2; 2 Cor 2:1; Tit 3:12), and deliberation (Phil 3:13). **The race that is set before us cannot be successfully run without focus and consistency.** A race cannot be run inadvertently, without cause, or independently of effort. Life cannot be lived *“unto God”* (Rom 6:11,13; 7:4; 12:1; Gal 2:19) casually or sporadically.

It is not that spiritual life ought

have shaped their lives around those realities. Their response is the one that God has determined to bless.

Our lives are spiritually “ordered” when Christ is the Object of them, and they are lived as a thank offering to God. Actually, no other type of life is acceptable to the Lord.

THE STEADFASTNESS OF YOUR FAITH

“ . . . *and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.* ” Other versions read, *“stability of your faith,”* ^{NASB} *“how firm your faith is,”* ^{NIV} *“the firmness of your faith,”* ^{NRSV} *“your unchanging faith,”* ^{BBE} and *“your strong faith.”* ^{NLT}

The word *“steadfast”* means that which has been made firm, stability, and firmness. ^{STRONG’S} That which furnishes a foundation; on which a thing rests firmly, support. ^{THAYER} This is the only place in the entire Scripture where this precise word is used. The English word *“steadfastness”* is only used twice in the Scriptures: *“the steadfastness of your faith”* (Col 2:5), and *“your own steadfastness”* (2 Pet 3:17).

A *“steadfast”* faith is the kind Abraham had, who is described as being *“strong in faith, giving glory to God”*

came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God **in the order** of his course" (Luke 1:8)

✚ **Peter rehearsed God's dealings with the Gentiles in an orderly way.** "But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it **by order** unto them, saying" (Acts 11:4).

✚ **Paul traveled for Jesus in an orderly manner.** "And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia **in order**, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23).

✚ **The assembly is to be characterized by godly orderliness.** "Let all things be done decently and **in order**" (1 Cor 14:40). "Let the prophets speak **two or three**, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace" (1 Cor 14:29-30).

"Order" is not an end of itself. **However, when it is governed by**

faith, it provides an environment in which the Spirit works productively.

What About You?

What about your faith? Is it steadfast? Are you able to maintain your trust in God and joy in the atonement when you are under duress? Do trials tend

tossed. **For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.** A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:6-8).

In America, professing Christians have been left with the impression that faith can be seasonal, and effort to please

"Order" is not an end of itself. However, when it is governed by faith, it provides an environment in which the Spirit works productively.

to bring you down, or cause doubts to arise in your heart? The psychologists will tell you that such responses are all right, and God will work with you through them. But they have not presented a proper picture. The person who vacillates and doubts is not even to think they will receive anything from the Lord. As it is written, "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and

the Lord sporadic. But this is a wholly inaccurate assessment of the case. In fact, it is a dangerously disarming mind-set that will eventually lead to an overthrow of the faith. **There is no attitude or accomplishment that can compensate for a lack of steadfast faith.** No amount of religious activity can make up for such a deficiency. There is a void where steadfastness is not found.

AS YOU HAVE RECEIVED CHRIST

"^{6a} **As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord . . .**" Other versions read, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord,"^{NIV} "As, then, you took Christ Jesus the Lord,"^{BBE} "And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord."^{NLT}

The significance of this expression is seen in the fact that it is used as a basis for sound spiritual thought and determination. We will be urged to do something upon the basis of this experience.

The expression "received Him" refers to our beginning – when we were experientially "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom" of God's "dear Son" (Col 1:13). There are a number of ways our beginning in Christ is described. Each of them

emphasize a particular facet of that entrance. None of them are optional. They are not different ways of entering into Christ, but different aspects of the precious gate of "pearl" that brings us into the "city of the living God" (Rev 21:21; Heb 12:22).

Our Beginning Described

In Prophecy

- ✚ The circumcision of the heart to love the Lord (Deut 30:6).
- ✚ Creation of a clean heart (Psa 51:10).
- ✚ The renewing of the eyes, ears, and heart (Isa 32:3-4; 35:5).
- ✚ Given a heart to know the Lord (Jer 24:7).
- ✚ Receiving a new heart and a new

spirit (Ezek 36:26).

✚ God putting His Spirit within us (Ezek 36:27).

In Apostolic Doctrine

- ✚ Receiving the kingdom as a little child (Mark 10:15).
- ✚ Born of the water and the Spirit (John 3:5).
- ✚ Born of the Spirit (John 3:6).
- ✚ Drinking of the water that Jesus gives (John 4:14).
- ✚ Entering through the Door, which is Christ Himself (John 10:9).
- ✚ Gladly receiving the Word and being

Those in Christ Jesus are not to allow any of their peers to turn them from the way of truth— by Given O. Blakely

baptized (Acts 2:41).	and death (Rom 8:2).	✚ The washing of regeneration (Tit 3:5).
✚ Added to the church (Acts 2:47).	✚ Receiving the Spirit of adoption (Rom 8:15).	✚ God begetting us through the word of truth (James 1:18).
✚ God granted repentance unto life (Acts 11:18).	✚ Called into the fellowship of God's Son (1 Cor 1:9).	✚ Begotten again to a living hope (1 Pet 1:3).
✚ The door of faith opened (Acts 14:27).	✚ Put into Christ by God Himself (1 Cor 1:30).	✚ Purified your souls in obeying the truth, unto unfeigned love of the brethren (1 Pet 1:22).
✚ When we were illuminated (Heb 10:22).	✚ Baptized by the Spirit into one body (1 Cor 12:13).	✚ Being born again by the Word of God (1 Pet 1:23).
✚ The heart being purified by faith (Acts 15:9).	✚ Sealed and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Cor 1:22).	✚ Born of God (1 John 3:9; 5:1,4).
✚ Turning from darkness to light (Acts 26:18a).	✚ God shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the	✚ Passed from death unto life (1 John 3:24).
✚ Turning from the power of Satan unto		✚ Enlightened (Heb 6:4a).

The phrase "received Christ Jesus the Lord" gathers all of these facets into a single expression, for all of them are received when Christ is "received."

God (Acts 26:18b).	glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus (2 Cor 4:6).	✚ Tasted of the heavenly gift (Heb 6:4b).
✚ Receiving the forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:18c).	✚ Being made a new creation (2 Cor 5:17).	✚ Made partakers of the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4c).
✚ Receiving an inheritance among those who are sanctified (Acts 26:18d).	✚ Beginning in the Spirit (Gal 3:3).	✚ Tasted of the good word of God (Heb 6:4d).
✚ Baptized into His death (Rom 6:3).	✚ Baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27).	✚ Tasted of the powers of the world to come (Heb 6:4e).
✚ Buried with Christ by baptism (Rom 6:4).	✚ We were quickened (Eph 2:1,5; Col 2:12).	
✚ Rising to walk in the newness of life (Rom 6:4).	✚ First trusted in Christ (Eph 1:12).	
✚ Becoming dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God (Rom 6:11).	✚ Raised up and made to sit in heavenly places (Eph 2:6).	
✚ Obeying from the heart the form of doctrine delivered (Rom 6:17).	✚ Created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph 2:10).	
✚ Being made free from sin (Rom 6:18,22).	✚ God beginning a good work in you (Phil 1:9).	
✚ Delivered from the Law (Rom 7:4).	✚ Circumcised by Christ, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh (Col 2:11).	
✚ Being made free from the law of sin	✚ Turned to God (1 Thess 1:9).	

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the references to our beginning in Christ Jesus. Yet, I have shown no less than fifty-one Apostolic references to the time when our life began in the Son. These are not fifty-one different ways of new life being initiated. Rather, they are expressions that look at that single beginning from differing and complementary views.

The phrase "received Christ Jesus the Lord" gathers all of these facets into a single expression, for all of them are received when Christ is "received."

It is with some element of shame and embarrassment that I must acknowledge my background was **not** one in which this language was used. The idea of **receiving** Christ was not at all common. Some of my peers were even of the opinion that the language itself reflected a denominational persuasion.

However, this **is** spiritual language, or “words” that the Holy Spirit has taught (1 Cor 2:13).

John equates believing on Christ’s name and our new birth with receiving Christ. “He came unto His own, and His own **received Him not**. But as many as **received Him**, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13).

Jesus spoke of those who received Him. “He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that **receiveth Me** receiveth Him that sent Me” (Matt 10:40; John 13:20).

Receiving Christ is being made a “partaker” of Him (Heb 3:14). This takes place when the conditions specified by Jesus are met. That is, Jesus is received on HIS terms, not ours. When it is written that His own (the Jews) “received Him not,” it means they did not accept Him as He represented Himself. The people would gladly have received Him as the Provider of their bread (John 6:26). But they refused to receive Him as one who reigned over them (Lk 19:14).

The idea is that abiding in Christ is by the same principle as receiving Him. There is no point in the life of faith where we begin to operate by a new principle, through new power, or through a different kind of faith. **The very fundamentals that were instrumental in beginning new life in Christ are the means by which that life is maintained.** This is stated in a number of ways by the Spirit.

✦ **THE GOSPEL.** “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; **by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain**” (1 Cor 15:1-2).

✦ **BEING PERFECTED.** “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? **having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?**”

(Gal 3:2-3).

✦ **REMAINING FREE.** “Stand fast therefore **in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage?**” (Gal 5:1).

✦ **FAITH AND THE GOSPEL.** “Only let your conversation be as it **becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or**

“Let us **hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)**” (Heb 10:23).

✦ **ABIDING.** “If ye **abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you**” (John 15:7).

✦ **CONFIDENCE.** “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we **hold the**

Receiving Christ is being made a “partaker” of Him (Heb 3:14). This takes place when the conditions specified by Jesus are met. That is, Jesus is received on HIS terms, not ours.

else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for **the faith of the gospel**” (Phil 1:27).

✦ **OBEDIENCE.** “Wherefore, my beloved, **as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**” (Phil 2:12).

✦ **A PLEASING LIFE.** “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that **as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more**” (1 Thess 4:1).

✦ **BEING TAUGHT.** “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and **hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle**” (2 Thess 2:15).

✦ **CONFIDENCE AND REJOICING.** “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we **hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end**” (Heb 3:6).

✦ **THE PROFESSION OF FAITH.**

beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Heb 3:14).

There was a certain spirit, or frame of mind, that characterized us when we received the “Christ Jesus the Lord.” There was an awareness that He was “Lord of all,” and therefore we unhesitatingly submitted to Him. We did not seek convenient ways to come to Him, but the way that was sanctioned by God. We wanted to know what He desired from us. Our hearts were tender, and our wills were yielded. Sin was repulsive to us, and forgiveness was precious. We wanted what He offered, and would go to any length to obtain it.

These attitudes were the result of faith – **our belief of the Gospel**, the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). All of that is involved in “as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord.” That time was characterized by a certain frame of mind, and a certain spirit. There were resolves, intentions, and determinations that accompanied that beginning. We were intent upon obeying the Lord, doing His bidding, and entering into life. Our view of sin had been radically changed. Our perception of God, His will, and His purpose was fresh. We were determined to run the race, finish the course, and be pleasing to the Lord. We had a strong appetite for the Word of

Those in Christ Jesus are not to allow any of their peers to turn them from the way of truth— by Given O. Blakely

God, and a disdain for the things of this world.

Now, our text calls upon us to consider that time – when we

“received Christ Jesus the Lord” – and to bring that manner of life to bear upon our present situation. Our beginning was good – good by Divine intention. However, it will be of no

use to us if we do not continue to walk in that newness of life. New life in Christ Jesus must be sustained. It must remain the focal point of our lives. The means of maintaining it must be held high.

WALK YE IN HIM

“^{6b} . . . so walk ye in Him.”

Other versions read, “continue to live in Him,”^{NIV} “so live in Him,”^{NIV} “so on in Him,”^{BBE} and “now live your lives in Him.”^{NJB}

3 When we consider our beginnings in Christ, the frame of mind we had at that time, and the resolves that dominated our hearts, it is as though the Lord speaks in our ears, “This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isa 30:21). That is not only the way to

another domain.

Even when Israel entered into the promised land, that entrance was itself not the fundamental thing. At the very threshold of the land, they were required to overthrow Jericho (Josh 6:1-21). God gave them power to do this, but they did have to overthrow the city. Even then, with this initial victory, Israel was required to possess the land, driving out its inhabitants. Long before they entered into the land, Moses solemnly told them, “But if ye will not

What would an insightful Israelite have said to a person suggesting the main thing was to get out of Egypt? How would they have responded to the proposition that the main thing was to get into the promised land?

“get saved,” as some are wont to say, it is the way to live!

THE MAIN THING

Those who imagine that the main thing is to get into Christ are too short-sighted. That is like saying the main thing for Adam and Eve was to get in the Garden, or for Israel it was to get out of Egypt. God has nowhere suggested that beginning is the fundamental thing. It is essential, to be sure. Abraham could not come to the place God was going to show him until he left Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 15:7). Israel had no hopes of getting into Canaan until they first left Egypt (Ex 33:1). In fact, with both Abraham and Israel, the purpose for coming out was that they might enter into

drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell” (Num 33:55).

What would an insightful Israelite have said to a person suggesting the main thing was to get out of Egypt? How would they have responded to the proposition that the main thing was to get into the promised land? God has never affirmed or encouraged such a thought. It is pure imagination. Yet, throughout professing Christendom people are being told this very thing – that beginning is the main thing.

Not A Strange Way of Thinking

This kind of reasoning should not sound strange to us. Paul encapsulated the nature of spiritual life in the words, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14). If one imagines this attitude was unique to Paul, he, through the Spirit, adds, “Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you”^{NASB} (Phil 3:15).

What Paul described in Philippians is the “walk” of Colossians 2:6. It is continuing to live with the same kind of determination and objective that characterized our beginning in Christ Jesus. The way we thought when we initially came to Christ is the only acceptable way to think.

WALK IN HIM

What does it mean to “walk ye in Him?” This is nothing less than walking “in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). It is the process whereby we “grow up into Him in all things” (Eph 4:15). This has to do with the process through which the Spirit changes us “from glory unto glory” (2 Cor 3:18), and in which we are being conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). Walking “in Him” emphasizes our personal participation in this process. The Spirit changes us, but it is within the framework of our willing involvement in the process. We are the ones who live by faith and walk in the Spirit. It is something that is deliberate and preferred.

The Continuance of Life

This has to do with the

continuance of spiritual life. Life *“more abundantly”* does not continually automatically. Some, failing to see this, equate the expression *“eternal life”* with a sort of reflexive experience that continues independently of human activity. Thus believers in this world are thought to be eternally alive by a sort of Divine decree. If this were the case, Divine supplies would be superfluous and without meaning. If eternal life is maintained automatically, there can be no need for *“all things that pertain to life and godliness”* (2 Pet 1:3). In such a case, man really does not *“live by every word of God”* (Lk 4:4), but by Divine decree.

In this world, there can be no such thing as spiritual life without means. It is not possible to sustain a relationship to God in a hostile environment without determination. It is inconceivable that, while we remain in a cursed body (Phil 3:21), and hounded by *“another”* competing law within our members (Rom 7:24), life in Christ could continue without availing ourselves of Divine provisions. Those who declare the possibility of such a thing insult our intelligence and betray their own unbelief.

Walking in Christ is maintaining the life that was initiated when we were raised from our death with Jesus (Rom 6:4). It is continuing on *“the way”* that *“leads to life”* (Matt 7:14). It is finishing the course, or race, that we began when we were added to the church (2 Tim 4:7; Heb 12:2).

The point of our text is that spiritual life is continued the same way it was initiated – **not by the same routine, but by the same principle.**

A Proper View of Christ

Walking in Christ involves maintaining the proper view of Christ – the view that is reflected in *“the record God has given of His Son”* (1 John 5:10-11). When we *“received Christ”* there were two dominating considerations of Him that were received from the Gospel: *“Lord and Savior”* – and in that order. Four times Peter refers to Jesus in this way (2 Pet 1:11; 2:20; 3:2; 3:18). He also first declared Jesus to be *“both Lord and Christ,”* with *“Christ”* referring to His appointment as the Savior of the world (Acts 2:36).

A proper walk *“in Him”* involves maintaining those primary perspectives – *“Lord and Savior.”* It is never proper to view Christ in any other primary role – such as a resolver of problems and the likes. **As soon as a person views Jesus as something other than what the Gospel has presented Him to be, the walk *“in Him”* comes to a grinding halt.**

A significant part of contemporary

righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” begin to wane in perception and importance, death begins to gain dominance. To walk in Christ, we must remain in Him – where God has placed us. Jesus referred to this as abiding in Him, affirming it was essential to Divine acceptance and approval (John 15:4-7)

There is altogether too much speculation and philosophizing in the

A significant part of contemporary Christianity has very little, if anything, to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. Within the framework of institutionalized religion it is too easy to forget about Christ.

Christianity has very little, if anything, to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. **Within the framework of institutionalized religion it is too easy to forget about Christ.** That is why so many forget they were purged from their old sins, and therefore fail to add to their lives essential graces (2 Pet 1:9). **Let it be clear, it is not possible to sustain spiritual life without a due regard for and perception of Jesus Christ!**

Staying Where God Put Us

Walking in Christ includes staying where God has placed us, and thus going on to perfection. When we *“received”* Christ, God *“raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 2:6). There, in those blessed realms, He provided *“all spiritual blessings”* (Eph 1:3). There is no provision for spiritual growth outside of those *“heavenly places.”* No person can be brought to maturity outside of them. Abundant life cannot be maintained independently of them. It simply cannot be done!

God is also said to have put us *“in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”* (1 Cor 1:30). Newness of life cannot be maintained outside of that blessed surrounding. **As soon as *“wisdom, and***

religious community about sustaining life in Christ. All manner of views are espoused, from some mystical form of automation to the discipline of a Sinaitic-type law. However, life in Christ is sustained the same way it was initiated, and blessed is the person who sees it.

THE APPOINTED MEANS OF PROTECTION

Our text is not a mere creedal statement. **Rather, it is the declared means of protecting us against seducers and those who beguile.** This army of deceivers operates under the auspices of the devil himself. It is said of our adversary and his cohorts, *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Cor 11:13-15).

How Can We Do It?

How are we to protect ourselves against this invasive army? For some, isolation within a sectarian environment is the solution. By taking such measures, the simple soul assumes the truth is being faithfully maintained by their group. This assumption is helped along by the use of

Those in Christ Jesus are not to allow any of their peers to turn them from the way of truth— by Given O. Blakely

God will not allow spiritual stability or advancement to take place independently of personal involvement with His Son. There is no safety apart from abiding and walking in Jesus.

phrases like the following: “We are the true New Testament church,” “Our church was established on the day of Pentecost,” “We know our position is right,” “our movement was pure in its origin,” and other similar statements.

While these hackneyed phrases may appear quite innocent, they are not. **They remove the focus from Jesus, and do not make for spiritual growth.** Concepts and statements that are not anchored in the Person of Christ consequently compete with Him and dull our perception of Him. That actually makes growth in Christ impossible, for they create a spiritually sterile environment.

When the eye of attention is not focused upon Jesus, abiding in Him and growth into Him are not possible. **God will not allow spiritual stability or advancement to take place independently of personal**

involvement with His Son. There is no safety apart from abiding and walking in Jesus. There is no theological position or religious creed that can protect the soul from being beguiled or deceived. Human innovations cannot insulate the soul against Satanic initiatives.

Those who confront beguiling and deceiving teachers in the energy of such things will become like the seven sons of Sceva. When confronting souls dominated by evil spirits, they resorted to as traditional and sectarian approach. *“We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth”* (Acts 19:14). They soon found that approach was utterly impotent. It is written of them, *“And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded”* (Acts 19:15-16).

This may very well account for the devastating experiences that are being experienced within the Christian community. All manner of immortality is breaking out among those who say they are “New Testament Christians.” Leaders are falling, homes are disintegrating, a younger generation is being lost to pleasure, and all manner of covetousness and vile affections are showing themselves. **Somewhere along the line, people must be brought to see they are confronting iniquity with the wrong weaponry.** Satan is not overcome by stereotyped approaches, religious slogans, and a claim to spiritual uniqueness. Rather, it is personal faith (and there is no other kind) that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4-5), and faith must be kept, fought for, and maintained.

Our protection against Satan’s “devices” is found in a consistent walk, or manner of life, in Christ. This is precisely the point John makes in his First Epistle. *“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him”* (1 John 2:27). Now heed the admonition to *“walk ye in Him.”* It is your protection.

ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN HIM

^{7a} **Rooted and built up in Him . . .**

The Spirit now elaborates on the phrase, *“walk ye in Him.”* He does not leave it to us to assign a meaning to what He has said. Here is what is involved in walking in Christ. This is the outcome of abiding in Christ, continuing in the faith, running the race set before us, and keeping the faith. If these things do not come to pass, it is because of a deficient walk and a weak faith – neither of which is acceptable in Christ Jesus.

ROOTED IN HIM

“Rooted . . .” Other versions read,

“firmly rooted,”^{NASB} and *“let your roots grow down into Him.”*^{NLT}

The word “rooted” means “to strengthen with roots, to render firm, to fix, establish, cause a person or a thing to be thoroughly grounded.”^{THAYER} The accent here is on stability, firmness, and immovability.

Notice, the text does not suggest that rooting is a goal – i.e., walking in Christ in order that we may become rooted. Rather it is something that is already accomplished: “rooted.” One version accents this meaning by reading, *“HAVING BEEN firmly rooted.”*^{NAU} The meaning is that walking in Christ

postulates spiritual stability. A consistent life in Christ Jesus is the **result** of being “rooted.” It is not the cause rooting.

The book of Ephesians affirms this very thing in other words. In it the Spirit states the purpose for all valid ministry is the edification, or rooting, of the people of God. That process will result in a stability that will **not** allow for beguilement and deception. Here is how this is stated in Ephesians. *“And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we*

Those in Christ Jesus are not to allow any of their peers to turn them from the way of truth— by Given O. Blakely

all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even

declares rooting to be the means of avoiding being beguiled and deceived.

Rooting Must Be Proper

It is possible to be rooted in the wrong thing. Thus John the Baptist spoke of the ax being “*laid unto the root of the tree*” (Matt 3:10), and Jesus said “*But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*” (Mat 15:13). **The rooting must be “in Him,” else it will count**

of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:17-19).

The gravity of the situation is seen by the results of Christ dwelling in our hearts. These are progressive accomplishments, and they are most remarkable.

- ✚ Rooting and grounding.
- ✚ Able to comprehend the magnitude of salvation.
- ✚ Knowing the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge.
- ✚ Being filled with all the fulness of God.

EPHESIANS 4	COLOSSIANS 2
Perfecting of the saints	↔ Rooted and built up
Edifying of the body	↔ Established in the Faith
A perfect man	↔ Walk ye in Him
No more children	↔ Avoiding being spoiled

Christ” (Eph 4:15).

The Spirit twice spoke through the Prophets concerning being rooted. The words particularly apply to the time of the New Covenant. “*And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward*” (2 Kgs 19:30; Isa 37:31).

Rooting Is Essential

In a religious culture that does not emphasize spiritual maturity, rooting is of little consequence. However, it is most important in the salvation of God. **Jesus affirmed that a lack of rooting would result in falling away.** “*And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away . . . Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended*” (Matt 13:6,21). Luke stated the parable in this way: “*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away*” (Luke 8:13).

It is possible to imagine a person can remain spiritually infantile and still survive the assaults of the sun of trial. But this is only a figment of human imagination. Jesus affirmed what happens to those who are **not** rooted. Our text

for nothing. A person can be “*rooted*” in the knowledge of a movement or a creed, but that is of no value in the avoidance of deception.

BUILT UP IN HIM

“*. . . and built up . . .*” As rooting is to a plant, so “*built up*” is to a structure, or edifice. The word “*edify*” parallels “*built up.*” The beginning of spiritual life is like beginning to build a house. The beginning is not the point, but the full structure that has been determined. As a whole, the church is being built up for a “*habitation of God through the Spirit*” (Eph 2:22). As individuals, believers are intended to be those in whom the Lord walks and dwells (2 Cor 6:16). It is Christ “*IN*” them that is the “*hope of glory*” (Col 1:27), and that indwelling is not to be taken for granted.

Knowing the nature of spiritual life, and moved along by the Holy Spirit, Paul addressed the matter of Jesus dwelling within believers. He did not take for granted that this indwelling would take place. “*That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love*

These cannot be accomplished independently of Jesus Christ, or apart from Him dwelling in our hearts by faith. That is the clear teaching of the text, and is beyond all controversy.

In spite of this remarkable clarity, you will be hard pressed to find a body of professing Christians who are actually affirming this. Notwithstanding that apparent circumstance these things must be declared, and supplications for their realization presented before the throne of all grace. I am driven to the following conclusions by both the spirit and content of this text.

- ✚ No person is justified in thinking salvation can be fully realized by a soul that is **not** rooted and grounded, though ample time has been given for such to have occurred.
- ✚ No individual can expect to dwell forever with the Lord who is not making some progress toward the comprehension of the scope of salvation.
- ✚ If a person has been granted the grace of a long life in Christ Jesus, yet remains fundamentally obtuse concerning the love of Christ, that person is standing on the precipice of eternal ruin.
- ✚ Being “*filled with all the fulness of*

God” is the revealed objective of the gifts Christ has given to the church. If, to some measurable degree, this is not taking place, people cannot assume they are saved.

I do not suggest by these observations that we should behold

others, or ourselves, with a condemning eye. **What I am saying is that salvation is calculated to produce these things. If they are not happening, an abnormal spiritual condition exists—a sort of departure from the revealed objective of the salvation of God.** This is precisely why

believers are admonished, *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified”*^{NKJV} (2 Cor 13:5). **Our salvation is to be confirmed, not assumed! It is to be validated, not taken for granted.**

ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH

“^{7b} . . . and **stablished in the faith . . .**” Other versions read, *“established in YOUR faith,”*^{NASB} *“strengthened in the faith,”*^{NIV} *“strong in the faith,”*^{BBE} *“assured in the faith,”*^{DARBY} *“confirmed in the faith,”*^{DOUAY} and *“held firm by the faith.”*^{NJB}

What does it mean to be *“established in the faith,”* and why is such a thing even necessary. Those who have accepted the juvenile spiritual climate of our times, will find these words have a strange sound. They will seem irrelevant. Perhaps, at the very best, they may sound optional, as though intended for a choice few within the body of Christ. **What informed soul is not aware of the relative rarity of people who are established in the faith?**

PERILOUS TIMES

Such a condition confirms we are living in the *“perilous times”* mentioned in Second Timothy. Such times are **not** characterized by violence, as were the days of Noah (Gen 6:11,13). They are **not** the times of aggressive persecution as in the days of following the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1), and the time of Antipas, who was martyred for Jesus (Rev 2:13).

These are *“perilous times”* of another order. They are times of religious corruption, when professing Christians have not experienced a change of character – the new birth. The inspired description of these times is most arresting (2 Tim 3:1-5), causing great sobriety for those who live by faith. They will be marked by those who are

- ✦ **Lovers of their own selves.**
- ✦ **Covetous, or “lovers of money.”**^{NKJV}

- ✦ **Boasters.**
- ✦ **Proud.**
- ✦ **Blasphemers, “revilers,”**^{NASB} *“abusive,”*^{NIV} or *“scoffing at God.”*^{NLT}
- ✦ **Disobedient to parents.**
- ✦ **Unthankful, or “ungrateful.”**^{NASB}
- ✦ **Unholy.**
- ✦ **Without natural affection, “unloving,”**^{NKJV} *“without love,”*^{NASB} *“inhuman,”*^{NRSV} and *“heartless and intractable.”*^{NJB}
- ✦ **Trucebreakers, “unforgiving,”**^{NKJV} *“irreconcilable,”*^{NASB} *“implacable,”*^{NRSV} and *“bitter haters.”*^{BBE}
- ✦ **False accusers, “slanderers,”**^{NKJV} *“malicious gossips,”*^{NASB} and *“saying evil of others.”*^{BBE}

- ✦ **Traitors, “treacherous,”**^{NASB} and *“false to their friends.”*^{BBE}.
- ✦ **Heady, “headstrong,”**^{NKJV} *“reckless,”*^{NASB} *“rash,”*^{NIV} and *“acting without thought.”*^{BBE}.
- ✦ **Highminded, “haughty,”**^{NKJV} *“conceited,”*^{NASB} *“swollen with conceit,”*^{NRSV} *“lifted up in mind,”*^{BBE} and *“puffed up with pride.”*^{NLT}
- ✦ **Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, “preferring their own pleasure to God,”**^{NJB}.
- ✦ **Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, “holding a form of godliness, although they have denied its power,”**^{NASB} *“holding the form of religion but denying the power of it,”*^{NRSV} *“holding the outward form of godliness but*

What informed soul is not aware of the relative rarity of people who are established in the faith?

- ✦ **Incontinent, “without self-control,”**^{NKJV} *“profligates,”*^{NRSV} and *“unsubdued passions.”*^{DARBY}
- ✦ **Fierce, “brutal,”**^{NKJV} *“brutes,”*^{NRSV} and *“savage,”*^{DARBY}
- ✦ **Despisers of those who are good, “haters of good,”**^{NASB} *“not lovers of the good,”*^{NIV} and *“hating all good.”*

denying its power,”^{RSV} *“They will keep up the outward appearance of religion but will have rejected the inner power of it,”*^{NJB} and *“They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly.”*^{NLT}

These are described as the traits of a religious society. They profess a love for

God, but love pleasures more. They maintain the outward form of religion, yet are powerless within, for they have rejected the power of God.

These are the direct result of refusing to be “*rooted and grounded.*” Such conditions flow out from preferred spiritual infancy. The appointed means of avoiding such a condition is declared in the phrase “*established in the faith.*”^{”NKJV}

“*giving glory to God*” (Rom 4:20). Such a faith surfaced when Abraham was faced with an impossible thing. When he was childless, impotent because of age, and his wife barren, God said he would be “*the father of many nations.*”

When hearing this, Abraham did not remonstrate, affirming this was not possible. His faith took hold of the promise, even though Satan tempted him. The promise, as great as it was, did not

“*that what He had promised He was also able to perform*” (Rom 4:21).

That is being “*established in the faith.*” **It is being able to believe God when there is nothing in the realm of sense and time that supports what He has said.** It is what enabled Noah to build the ark, and Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt. It is what empowered Joshua to lead Israel against Jericho, and David to face Goliath.

A person is “*established in the faith*” when he lives by faith (Rom 1:17), walks by faith (1 Cor 5:7), and stands by faith (2 Cor 1:24). Such faith is also revealed when a person is overcoming the world (1 John 5:4-5).

You can count on a person who is “*established in the faith*” to believe God when everything required seems impossible. Such precious souls “*keep the faith*” under great oppression and duress. They “*fight the good fight of faith,*” unwilling to allow anything to move them from their hope. They keep believing when human reasoning says it is vain to do so.

A person is “*established in the faith*” when he lives by faith, walks by faith, and stands by faith. Such faith is also revealed when a person is overcoming the world.

ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH

Faith is the strong point of those established in it. This is the condition for which Abraham, the father of all who believe, was noted. As it is written, “*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith,*

“*stagger*” Abraham. He did not take into consideration his own body, “*already dead*” as regarding begetting offspring. Neither did he dwell upon “*the deadness of Sarah’s womb*” (Rom 4:19). Instead, “*contrary to hope,*” in the hope of faith, “*he believed*” God, being “*fully convinced*

AS YE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT

“^{7c} . . . *as ye have been taught . . .*” Other versions read, “*just as you were instructed,*”^{NASB} and “*as also you have learned.*”^{DOUAY}

As will be confirmed in the next clause, the reference is not to a compilation of theological statements, but to the faith that comes by hearing the Gospel (Rom 10:17). The teaching of reference has to do with keeping the faith, not with a particular teaching that was believed. That is, the people had been taught the role of faith in the divine economy – that without it, it is “*impossible to please God*” (Heb 11:6). They were taught that “*the just shall live by faith*” (Heb 10:38), and that “*by faith*” we have “*access into this grace wherein we stand*” (Rom 5:2).

In the Epistles (Romans thru Jude), there are 197 references to “*faith,*”

and 56 references to believing. **Faith is always presented as being primary, and never secondary.** The obtaining of righteousness, or justification, is “*by faith*” (Rom 3:28; 5:1). Access to grace is declared by “*by faith*” (Rom 5:2), and we “*stand by faith*” (Rom 11:20; 2 Cor 1:24). We “*walk by faith*” (2 Cor 5:7), “*live by faith*” (Gal 3:11), and “*are children of God by faith*” (Gal 3:26). Through the Spirit we “*wait for the hope of righteousness by faith*” (Gal 5:5), and Christ “*dwells in our hearts by faith*” (Eph 3:17).

Christ has been made a propitiation “*through faith in His blood*” (Rom 3:25), we receive the “*promise of the Spirit through faith*” (Gal 3:14), and are saved “*by grace through faith*” (Eph 2:8). It is through “*faith and patience*” that we “*inherit the promises*” (Heb 6:12), and “*by faith*” that “*we understand*” (Heb

11:3). All of the children of God are “*kept by the power of God through faith*” (1 Pet 1:5), prayers are to be asked “*in faith*” (James 1:6), and God has chosen “*the poor of this world, rich in faith*” (James 2:5).

The “*Apostles’ doctrine*” speaks of “*the law of faith*” (Rom 3:27), “*the righteousness of faith*” (Rom 4:13), “*the word of faith*” (Rom 10:8), “*the obedience of faith*” (Rom 16:26), “*the spirit of faith*” (2 Cor 4:13), “*the hearing of faith*” (Gal 3:5), “*the household of faith*” (Gal 6:10), “*the shield of faith*” (Eph 6:16), “*the joy of faith*” (Phil 1:25), “*the work of faith*” (1 Thess 1:3), “*the words of faith*” (1 Tim 1:6), the “*good fight of faith*” (1 Tim 6:12), and “*the prayer of faith*” (James 5:15).

There are references to being “*weak in faith*” (Rom 4:19), “*strong in*

Those in Christ Jesus are not to allow any of their peers to turn them from the way of truth— by Given O. Blakely

faith” (Rom 4:20), abounding “in faith” (2 Cor 8:7), “godly edifying which is in faith” (1 Tim 1:4), continuing “in the faith” (1 Tim 2:15), being “sound in the faith” (Tit 2:2), dying “in the faith” (Heb 11:13), asking “in faith” (James 1:6), and being “rich in faith” (James 2:5).

God fills us “with all joy and peace in believing” (Rom 15:13), it is in believing that we “rejoice with joy

unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet 1:8).

What makes more sense than to be “established in the faith?” **Such establishment brings all of the benefits of faith to us – which are ALL of the benefits God gives to us.** To be weak in faith is to be have, at the very best, a very frail hold on the blessings of God. Our adequacy is by faith, as well as our access to God and His grace.

This is woven throughout the Apostolic writings. The supremacy and necessity of faith is everywhere affirmed. **When our faith is deficient, we are deficient. When our faith is strong, we are strong.** It makes no sense at all for faith to be our weak point. In fact, in view of what is said of faith, it is a sin of staggering proportions to be weak in it. The aim is to be strong in faith, and everything about salvation provides for it

ABOUNDING THEREIN WITH THANKSGIVING

“^{7d} . . . **abounding therein with thanksgiving.**” Other versions read, “abounding in IT with thanksgiving,”^{NKJV} “overflowing with gratitude,”^{NASB} “overflowing with thankfulness,”^{NIV} and “giving praise to God at all times.”^{BBE}

The abounding thanksgiving of reference is perceived as proceeding from a twofold source. Objectively, it is the result of being “rooted and built up IN HIM.” Subjectively, it proceeds from our faith – “stablished in the faith.” **Where our commitment to Christ is not strong, thanksgiving will not be abundant.** When our faith is weak, the well of thanksgiving becomes dry. Conversely, the more pronounced our perception of Christ is, the greater will be our thanksgiving. When our faith is strong and unwavering, the spring of gratefulness always erupts.

THANKSGIVING

God-glorifying thanksgiving is not found in meager and sporadic supplies. Like faith, which is the mother of it, thanksgiving is to “abound” in copious measures – and where strong faith is found, it will!

“Thanksgiving” proceeds from the heart, but is more than an attitude. It is an **expressed** attitude – gratefulness put into words. It is the “giving of thanks” (Eph 5:4; 1 Tim 2:1), or a “sacrifice of praise.” As it is written, “By Him therefore let us offer **the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name**” (Heb 13:15).

The “giving of thanks” is to be “always for all things unto God” (Eph 5:20). “In everything” we “give thanks,” not allowing circumstance to dry up the well of praise (1 Thess 5:18). Thanksgiving is to accompany our requests to God (Phil 4:6), and in devoting ourselves to prayer, we are to “keep alert

God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11), and to the benefits that accrue to us through Him. It is written, “**But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**” (1 Cor 15:57). And again, “**Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh**

The degree of our thanksgiving is directly proportionate to the degree to which we are rooted and grounded in Christ and established in the faith. No person who stands aloof from Jesus can abound in thanksgiving.

in it with an attitude of prayer” (Col 4:2). Solemnly we are exhorted, “be ye thankful” (Col 3:15). In fact, “giving thanks” **IN** everything “is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess 5:18).

The degree of our thanksgiving is directly proportionate to the degree to which we are rooted and grounded in Christ and established in the faith. No person who stands aloof from Jesus can abound in thanksgiving. Nor, indeed, can a person who is not established in the faith excel in the giving of thanks.

True thanksgiving abounds in direct relation to what God has made known concerning His Son – the “record

manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place” (2 Cor 2:14).

When addressing the Corinthian brethren concerning their assemblies, Paul admonished them to seek to “excel” in “the edifying of the church” (1 Cor 14:12). One of the areas he addressed was that of “the giving of thanks,” and of saying “Amen” during that occasion (1 Cor 14:16). He admonished the Ephesian brethren to avoid coarse and unprofitable speech, choosing rather to give thanks: “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: **but rather giving of thanks**” (Eph 5:4).

It is good when faith is mingled with continual thanksgiving. Faith tends to produce

thanksgiving, and thanksgiving tends to strengthen faith.

Assemblies of the righteous should make provision for expressions of thanksgiving, both individual and collective. The

testimony of the Psalmist is still true: *“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High”* (Psa 92:1). **Thanksgiving is to the assembly what the incense was within the holy place.** It emits a sort of spiritual fragrance that is pleasing

to both God and those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose. It is prescribed as one of the activities among those who gather in Jesus’ name (1 Tim 2:1). There is no occasion or circumstance when giving thanks to God is out of order!

MEN CAN SPOIL YOU

^{8a} **Beware lest any man spoil you . . .**”

Now the Apostle begins to deal with certain dangers that were attempting to invade the Colossian assembly. He has carefully prepared the soil of their hearts for this word, for it is a most solemn warning. Those who take it seriously will find that it contradicts whole bodies of theological thought. The tone of this warning is anything but casual. It has a sound that affirms its seriousness.

BEWARE

“Beware . . .” Other versions read, *“See to it,”* ^{NASB/NIV} *“Take heed,”* ^{ASV} *“Take*

- ✦ TAKE HEED *“that no man deceive you”* (Matt 24:4).
- ✦ TAKE HEED what you hear (Mk 4:24).
- ✦ TAKE HEED, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod (Mk 8:15).
- ✦ BEWARE of the scribes (Mk 12:38).
- ✦ TAKE HEED to yourselves (Mk 13:9).
- ✦ BEWARE lest that which is spoken of the prophets come upon you (Acts 13:40).

3:12).

✦ SEE THAT ye refuse not Him that speaketh (Heb 12:25).

In each of these cases personal perception is required. Bewaring, taking heed, or seeing to it, involves spiritual understanding. It is being able to see something. In this text, it is being able to recognize when intruders have entered in among the members of the body of Christ. This requires alertness, vigilance, and consistency. Those who are to *“beware”* cannot fall asleep. They cannot grow insensitive, or be distracted to lesser things.

The salvation of God brings understanding to those who receive it. **This understanding is essential because our welfare, in part, depends upon it.** This is not salvation by works, but salvation through participation, or being made *“partakers”* (Heb 3:14; 2 Pet 1:4).

WHEN MEN SPOIL YOU

“ . . . lest any man spoil you . . . ”

Other versions read, *“cheat you,”* ^{NKJV} *“takes you captive,”* ^{NASB} *“makes a prey of you,”* ^{NRSV} *“takes you away by force,”* ^{BBE} *“lead you away as a prey,”* ^{DARBY} and *“carrying you away as spoil.”* ^{YLT}

Here the word *“spoil”* does not mean to cause to decay, like spoiled fruit. Rather, it refers to being taken away as *“spoil”* by an enemy. Here we are solemnly warned of the possibility of being captured by some man – taken away from the blessing we have been called to *“inherit”* (1 Pet 3:9). We are not told this is something that cannot happen, but that we are to see to it that it does not happen.

Doctrinally, it is a word connoting the responsibility of Christ’s disciples – areas in which their protection and benefit will depend partly on their own activity.

care,” ^{BBE} *“See that,”* ^{DARBY} *“Make sure,”* ^{NJB} and *“Don’t let anyone.”* ^{NLT}

The word *“beware”* is like a trumpet of alert. From the etymological point of view it means *“a sense of perception, to be able to see, be aware of.”* ^{THAYER} **Doctrinally, it is a word connoting the responsibility of Christ’s disciples – areas in which their protection and benefit will depend partly on their own activity.** Some of the admonitions using this word are as follows.

✦ TAKE HEED not to despise one of these *“little ones”* (Matt 18:10).

- ✦ Let him that thinks he stands TAKE HEED lest he fall (1 Cor 10:12).
- ✦ TAKE HEED that ye be not consumed of one another (Gal 5:15).
- ✦ BEWARE of dogs, BEWARE of evil workers, BEWARE of the concision (Phil 3:2).
- ✦ TAKE HEED unto the ministry thou hast received from the Lord (Col 4:17).
- ✦ TAKE HEED lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief (Heb

Of what are we to “beware?” In this case, it is not the devil, or demons, or circumstance, but “any man” – one of our peers. The matter we are charged with avoiding is being “spoiled,” or led away as

booty, like Jesus “spoiled principalities and powers,” triumphing over them in the cross (Col 2:15). In such a case, rather than obtaining “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14),

we ourselves become a prize, taken away from the blessing of God by the stealth of wicked men. Later Paul says such spiritual robbers will “beguile you of your reward” (2:18).

PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT

“^{8b} . . . through philosophy and vain deceit . . .”

Now Paul declares the means by which believers are victimized and robbed of the blessing to which they have been called. What is employed appears harmless to those who trust in the wisdom of this world, which tends to make men feel competent of themselves. However, and make no mistake about this, we are speaking of serious matters. **Anytime a person for whom Christ died becomes the spoil, booty, or plunder of another man, a condition is created that has eternal ramifications.** We do well, therefore, to give “the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb 2:1). In this case we would lose our hold upon them because we were taken captive by some man.

PHILOSOPHY

“ . . . through philosophy. . . ”

Other versions read “through hollow an deceptive philosophy,”^{NIV} “through man’s wisdom,”^{BBE} “seductive philosophy,”^{NAB} “the empty lure of a philosophy,”^{NJB} and “empty philosophy.”^{NLT}

The word “philosophy” means “love of wisdom, pursuit of wisdom” and is used of “skill in any art or science, any branch of knowledge.” In Scripture the word refers to human wisdom as compared to that which has been revealed by God. Within the earth, it may be a valid realm of knowledge – like physics, biology, geology, etymology, etc. **However, in matters pertaining to life and godliness, such wisdom has no place.** The container of “philosophy” is not only too small to carry the truth of God, it is not adapted to contain even the smallest jot or tittle of Divine wisdom.

Here “philosophy” is the

competitor of being “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” – which comes from God (1:9). It is the attempt of the wisdom of this world to invade the sacred citadel of truth.

Philosophy is couched in “words that man’s wisdom teaches” (1 Cor 2:13). The philosopher intrudes “into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up with his fleshly mind” (Col 2:18). Such are described as men

very best, on what men think He meant. Among the champions of such teaching were the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, and Lawyers. They thought themselves wise, and took men captive with their teachings.

Error – particularly religious error – enslaves the soul, for when one becomes “spoil” he becomes the vassal of another. What disciple is there who is not acquainted with this spiritual phenomenon? Who has not experienced

During the days of the Apostles such men were purported experts in the Law. Today the religious philosophers are not even up to that mark. We are now faced with experts in language, history, logic, and religious tradition.

“Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Tim 1:7).

During the days of the Apostles such men were purported experts in the Law. Today the religious philosophers are not even up to that mark. We are now faced with experts in language, history, logic, and religious tradition. The scholastics are a dreadful horde that have invaded the church taking captive “the souls of men” with their futile philosophy (Rev 18:13).

It should not surprise you that all manner of doctrines are being sown among the saints that fall into the category of “philosophy.” They are not based upon what God has said, but, at the

enslavement to some religious thought that had its origin with man, yet was presented as though it came from God? The perpetrator of the spoiling dogma may have woven it with selected Scriptures, and sprinkled it with affirmations that he believed this with all of his heart, and that God has shown it to him. Yet, when all was said and done, it was nothing more than a captivating philosophy that pillaged the church of God, leading men away captive whom Jesus had made free. It was the product of deception instead of revelation.

VAIN DECEIT

“ . . . and vain deceit . . . ” Other versions read, “empty deceit,”^{NKJV} “empty deception,”^{NASB} and “hollow and deceptive.”^{NIV}

“Vain deceit” is something that is fruitless presented by an impressive but pretentious show. It sounds good, but it is actually corrupt. It offers freedom, but promotes bondage. **It comes in the garb of intellectuality, but really promotes spiritual ignorance and stupidity.**

Peter says of such teachers,

“These are wells **without water**, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak **great swelling words of vanity**, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption:

for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Pet 2:17-19). That is a most vivid depiction of “vain deceit.”

Do not imagine that such men are very apparent, and easy to be detected. If that was the case, this warning would not have to be sounded. Beguiling souls can only be detected when we live by faith.

THE INHIBITING EFFECTS OF THE TRADITIONS OF MEN

“^{8c} . . . after the tradition of men” Other versions read, “according to the tradition of men,”^{NKJV} “which depends upon human tradition,”^{NIV} “going after the beliefs of men,”^{BBE} “according to the teaching of men,”^{DARBY} and “come from human thinking.”^{NLT}

The Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Lawyers were perpetrators of tradition. Jesus referred to their teaching as “your tradition,” declaring that it “made the commandment of God of none effect” (Matt 15:3).

He further elaborated on the

11:52).

✚ **SHUT UP THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.** “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Mat 23:13).

✚ **HINDERED THOSE WHO WERE ENTERING.** “Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were

15:6).

✚ “For laying aside the commandment of God, **ye hold the tradition of men**, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do” (Mark 7:8).

✚ “And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, **that ye may keep your own tradition**” (Mark 7:9).

Now, through the Spirit, Paul says that the “traditions of men” have a spoiling effect upon the saints. They capture them, making them slaves rather than free men. They move them away from “the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal 5:1).

The “traditions of men” are founded upon human wisdom, not Divine affirmation. They are the result of uninspired reasoning, which gravitates to the lower realms. **For doctrine to be valid, it must have a supernatural origin and be couched in “words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words”**^{NIV} (1 Cor 2:13).

I feel compelled to note that a denominational perspective must, of necessity, be maintained with “the traditions of men.” Some present day bodies of religious thought that are nothing more than “the traditions of men” include the following.

- ✚ Premillennialism
- ✚ Post-millennialism

For doctrine to be valid, it must have a supernatural origin and be couched in “words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words”

effects of their teaching.

✚ **BOUND HEAVY BURDENS.** “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Mat 23:4).

✚ **TOOK AWAY THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE.** “Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered” (Luke

entering in ye hindered” (Luke 11:52).

All of this was accomplished through their tradition – teachings that originated with men, not God. Jesus said of such tradition:

✚ “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God **by your tradition?**” (Matt 15:3).

✚ “And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect **by your tradition**” (Mat

- ✚ A-millennialism
- ✚ Preterism
- ✚ Pre-tribulationism
- ✚ Post-tribulationism
- ✚ Mid-tribulationism
- ✚ Eternal security
- ✚ The free will of man
- ✚ Total depravity

- ✚ The great commission
- ✚ Unconditional love
- ✚ New Testament Christianity

Doctrines like these use Scripture like vanilla, attempting to flavor an otherwise unsavory teaching. However, such doctrines neither start nor end with Divine affirmation, and thus cannot glorify Him or promote spiritual growth. They are built with flawed blocks of imagination and supposition, and daubed with the

untempered mortar of the wisdom of this world.

While these various doctrines may contain some truth, they are like jewels in a swine's snout (Prov 11:22). They are all founded on the conclusions of men, not the statements of God. This is a good place to recall a solemn word delivered by Isaiah, who also confronted vain traditions. *"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"* (Isa 8:20). The Word of God is both the foundation and building of truth.

THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD

^{8d} *"... after the rudiments of the world . . ."* Other versions read, *"basic principles of the world,"* ^{NKJV} *"elementary principles of the world,"* ^{NASB} *"basic principles of this world,"* ^{NIV} *"elemental spirits of the universe,"* ^{NRSV} *"theories of the world,"* ^{BBE} and *"elemental powers of the world."* ^{NAB}

The word *"rudiments"* means "first things." In language this would be the ABC's. In speech, it would be sounds. In physics it would be the four basic elements (earth, air, fire, water). In geometry, the axioms. In philosophy, the givens, or things taken for granted. ^{ROBERTSON} In a nutshell, these are the beginnings of the wisdom that the world obtained independently of Divine revelation. They would fall into the category of the various sciences, all of which are the compilation and classification of human observations.

Actually, "rudiments" is the highest form of worldly wisdom. It is the very best the world has to offer. Such things are not *"rudiments"* in the world, but in matters pertaining to life and godliness. In the world they are of significant value, but they will also perish with the world. **They are foundational in the world, but valueless in the Kingdom.**

Unlike *"philosophy,"* *"vain deceit,"* and *"the tradition of men,"* the *"rudiments of the world"* contain some

valid observations. **However, they do not transfer over to the kingdom of God.** They are of no value in deciphering the truth of God or understanding the

Another may try and expound the concept of the stewardship of money by citing certain financial principles and economic laws. Still another may attempt

The "rudiments of the world" contain some valid observations. However, they do not transfer over to the kingdom of God. They are of no value in deciphering the truth of God or understanding the mysteries of God.

mysteries of God. They give no advantage to faith, and cannot culture spiritual understanding. They cannot be used to open a text of Scripture, perceive a doctrinal error, or confirm the truth of God. They are *"rudiments"* when compared with *"the wisdom of God."* They also tend to *"spoil"* or rob the saints rather than to nourish and encourage them.

When an individual attempts to clarify the truth of God with a principle or observation originated in this world, he has only managed to obscure the truth. For example, it is possible to diagnose fallen man using psychological principles. An explanation for sinful human conduct may be provided using physiological principles, the diagnosis of certain aspects of the human anatomy, or perhaps some form of psychoanalysis.

to open the meaning of key Scriptural words and doctrines by appealing to "the original language," using lexical aids much like a man of God uses the Word of God. A study of the brain and its various functions may be used as a basis for interpreting Scripture, while the physiological differences between men and women may be the basis for explaining certain texts of Scripture. All of these are *"the rudiments of the world."* They may be fine for diagnosing certain illnesses, formulating a sound financial budget, fixing an automobile, or heating and cooling as building. **But when it comes to the things of God, they are out of place, for they have no utility in eternal matters.** They are principles of a cursed and decaying world, and cannot transfer into the world to come. **Therefore, no place is made for them in the declaration of the truth**

of God.

It should not surprise you that a phenomenal amount of contemporary religion is, at its very best, *“the rudiments of this world.”* Such things detract from

Jesus and enslave the soul. They minimize the great salvation of God and maximize life in *“this present evil world.”* When the church of God devotes itself to financial planning, mental and physical health, recreation, and the likes, it has

moved off of the foundation, and is headed for the broad road that leads to destruction. If it has not already done so, a church engaged in such activities is on the verge of spoiling the saints – taking them away from Jesus to lesser things.

NOT AFTER CHRIST

^{8e} *“... and not after Christ.”*

Other versions read, *“not according to Christ,”*^{NKJV} *“rather than on Christ,”*^{NIV} and *“not from Christ.”*^{NLT}

The meaning of this expression is that the SOURCE of the flawed teaching is not Christ Himself – He did not give the teaching. It did not come from His mouth,

two who appeared with Jesus *“in glory.”* The voice from the *“excellent glory”* left no doubt about who the appointed Spokesman was. *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: HEAR YE HIM”* (Matt 17:1-5; 2 Pet 1:17).

The fanciful and enslaving teachings to which our text refers

disadvantage when they do not believe.

In confirmation of the purpose of God, and the appointed means of fulfilling that purpose, the Apostle reminded the people that they were not to walk *“as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.”* Such people *“have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness”* (Eph 4:17-19).

And what was the antidote for such departures from the truth? Paul traced the answer back to the Lord Jesus, who is the appointed Teacher of the church. *“But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph 4:20-24).

When our text says *“and not after Christ,”* it means that the teaching against which the saints are warned **did not come from Jesus.** It came from man, and was anchored to this world. For that reason, it would turn people from Jesus and enslave them to the cursed order. Jesus is not central in such teaching, and thus His revealed purpose is pushed into the background. Novelty takes the place of spiritual staples, and fading things upstage eternal ones.

Now, let us hear the solemn warning once again. *“See to it that no-one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”*^{NIB}

The fanciful and enslaving teachings to which our text refers did not come from Jesus. They were not the result of hearing Him who is speaking from heaven

or from those He designated to speak for Him. **It is the source of false doctrine that makes it false.** Anything represented as coming from God that has not been given by Christ is false and enslaving.

This is a matter of revelation. *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds”* (Heb 1:2). When Jesus was transfigured on a *“high mountain apart,”* a voice came *“from the excellent glory.”* It was in response to Peter’s suggestion that they make three tabernacles: one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah – the

did not come from Jesus. They were not the result of hearing Him who is speaking from heaven (Heb 12:25).

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul dealt with some of the issues of flawed teaching. He declared that the purpose of God was that the church be edified and made suitable for the *“work of ministry.”* **This involved growing up into Christ in all things, and coming away from spiritual childhood, which is fostered by the “rudiments of the world.”** That childishness would cause them to be *“tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”* (Eph 4:14). When faith does not grow, spiritual vulnerability does. Men are always at a

Those in Christ Jesus are not to allow any of their peers to turn them from the way of truth— by Given O. Blakely

CONCLUSION

One of the great dangers of our day is the vaunting of education and purported scholarship. This by no means puts a premium on ignorance or glorifies a lack of learning. The purpose for these warnings is to keep the saints from appealing to worldly wisdom in things pertaining to life and godliness.

Those who lack wisdom and

spiritual understanding must not be put in places of leadership in the churches – regardless of their professed expertise. **It is not possible to gain eternal advantages and benefits from a wisdom that has this world as its source and locus.** No child of God can be advantaged before God by something the world has to offer. Truth cannot be buttressed with the “rudiments of this

world.” It cannot be fortified or clarified by the wisdom of this world, which God has counted “foolishness.” Such things are difficult for some to accept, but until that acceptance comes, growth will not occur.

The word of caution is a premier one for our time: “Beware lest any man spoil you!”

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 12/26/2003. In this session, we will be covering verses 9-15 of the second chapter. The title of our lesson is, “**COMPLETE IN CHRIST.**” Here is the heart of Apostolic doctrine – that we are complete in Christ, lacking nothing. The essence of all false doctrine is that it turns men away from Christ, seeking resources outside of Him. In this text the Spirit powerfully affirms the completeness received in Christ. In order to assist our understanding, our initial participation in this completeness is associated with our baptism into Christ. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

*The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, Jonathan, and Eva
406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801*

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Jonathan (Jonstalk@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)
Adah Hutchcraft (ALHutchcraft@milligan.edu), Jason Hutchcraft (hutchcraftj@esr.edu)

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>

COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>