

98-11-20b Colossians

We resume now our study in Colossians chapter 2 where Paul has moved forward from the concepts that he has reviewed and discussed in chapter 1, his great comprehensive sweeping view of faith, hope, and love on the part of believers, the worthy walk before God, the purpose for it all, and the means of it all in Jesus Christ, and his mission, his apostolic ministry of encouragement and of authoritative instruction in the faith so that believers who have never even seen his face will know how to bear that fruit of the spirit of love. And he returns to briefly remind us of that extensive hymn to Jesus Christ as he finishes up in verse 2. He says again, I want you to know what a great conflict, a great agony I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts, all of these different ones, wherever they may be, will be encouraged being authoritatively instructed in love with a view toward all the riches of the full assurance of sunesis, of knowing what to do with that knowledge, knowing how to exercise love in a way that reflects the character of God and pleases God. And then there's another preposition, *en*.

That in itself is a stepping stone to an even grander goal. Unto the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ. If you think about it, you have one of the simplest verses that children memorize in their early years, God is love.

If we come to the riches of full understanding of love, both the joy of expressing it and the structure in which it has to operate to be divine love and to reflect the character of God, you understand both what you can do in love and what you cannot do in love. Some facets of this have been discussed under the category of tough love. And there's a lot of good truth in those things by Dr. Dobson and so forth.

But when we see the way love works, when we come to understand genuine love, the love that comes from God, this of course gives us great insight into God himself. We can see why he does what he does with the world. The sending of his son, the great sacrifice of his only son.

I was thinking about this the other day. One of the things we don't often remember, and maybe other people do and I just didn't, but in some ways I did not fully appreciate the gift of God's son. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

When I thought about John 16 for these many years, I always thought, well this is God giving his son over to death. But I had a perspective on that, that God knew he was going to raise him back up. So this was just sort of a temporary thing and it was awful and there was a lot of pain and it was certainly the most incredible happening in the universe.

But I always had this perspective, well God gave his son to die but he raised him again. So that was the framework within which I understood that. But I was actually doing some work on a different subject, the idea of theophanies.

In Genesis we're going to be coming up before long on appearances of God in a personal form to Old Testament saints. We've got to do some work on that. Who is that? Is that God the Father in a temporary body? Is it a vision of God? Is it an angel speaking for God? Is it Jesus Christ in a Christophany as they call it, a pre-incarnation appearance? There's lots of work to be done.

So I was working on that and it occurred to me when you consider the fact that before the events that we're going to be celebrating next month and Christmas and the incarnation and so forth, Jesus Christ, God the Son, existed co-equal, co-eternal, one of the members of the Trinity. And the way in which he existed with God the Father in the beginning was the Word and so forth, that will never be again. The way that Jesus Christ was with God the Father in eternity past and all the way through the Old Testament, it's never going to be that way again.

There's been a permanent change in the status between God the Father and God the Son because Jesus Christ is now not only fully God, but he is also fully human and he is a resurrected human being and he always will be. He's not going to take that off like a suit of clothes and say, well, you know, I used that to get the world saved, but now I'm just going to put it in the Smithsonian of Heaven for people to come and see. Jesus Christ, it's permanent.

In a sense, there can never be the same relationship between God the Father and God the Son because of the incarnation as there was before. It doesn't mean that it's diminished or that it's second best, but it's different. And we know the way we feel about a change.

You may leave a house and move to a better one. We've had the experience of living in a mobile home for many years and then moving into a house in town and the house in town is nicer and there's lots of conveniences and so forth and it's certainly, everybody kind of looks askance at living in a mobile home. You figure, well, you're poor folks, you're, you know, lots of white trash living in mobile homes, that kind of thing.

And somebody says, well, you live in a, of course they like to say you live in a trailer, do you? I don't ever use that term of mine. Wonderfully built, well-constructed mobile home. But it's a step up.

You have a nice house with a firm foundation. You're not as worried about tornadoes and so forth. But it doesn't mean that you're not wistful sometimes for certain things about that experience.

It may be a change even for the better, but it doesn't mean that you don't remember with fondness the way things were back then. I trust I will never live in a mobile home again, but I have very fond memories of living there with my wife and having our family start there. It was by comparison a humbler dwelling, but I wouldn't trade those years for anything.

Well, there's been a change, and not to talk about the quality of the change that Jesus is better or worse off as united with the human race forever, but it's different. When God gave His only

begotten Son, He was willing to make that change. There is a little bit of a distance put in there because you've got the humanity of Christ there that wasn't there before.

I'm sure the nature of that change is well beyond our comprehension, but whatever it entails, God was willing to do that. It wasn't just being willing to send Christ to the cross, it was being willing. This is like when parents raise a child, whether it's a son or a daughter, and at a certain point they're going to get married.

Well, you want that for your child. You rejoice, especially when they find their soul mate that's been divinely designed to fulfill and complete them and so forth. You could not be happier.

It's the proper way for things to go, but it's a change. It changes the relationship in different ways. Now there's somebody that they're closer to.

Parents used to be the person they're closest to, hopefully, and now they're closest to someone else. Well, Jesus Christ is very close to us. He has partaken of our flesh in a permanent way.

So I say all that to say that the love that God expressed toward the world when he gave his only begotten son, how can we gain insight into that love? It's through the truth that Paul is teaching us about Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the full expression of God's love. So to understand Jesus Christ is to understand love, to be authoritatively instructed in love, and it is also to come to a greater understanding of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved the Father and who willingly fulfilled the Father's plan out of love for the Father and out of love for us.

So it is inextricable. You can't separate understanding love from understanding God. To understand one is to understand the other, and to have our relationship with God blossom and flourish and grow in this great way.

This is what Paul is moving to in verse 2 of Colossians 2. Their hearts may be encouraged, having been authoritatively instructed in love, with a view toward all the riches of the full assurance of understanding. The assurance. It's not just the riches of the understanding, but the assurance that comes with it.

Confidence. Peace. Knowing where you stand.

Knowing what it means to do something else. With a view toward the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ. To understand love.

To gain a sunesis of love. Not just seeing love expressed in the Bible. Not having the book, How to Do Almost Anything.

I didn't look in the L's to see if there was a chapter on how to love. I suspect it's not in there. But in the Word of God, we see love expressed by God to Israel.

The love between the Father and the Son. The love of Jesus Christ. The love that the apostles had for the church and so forth.

We have many wonderful examples. I was reminded as I listened to a great lesson by a good friend of mine, alluding to Ruth. The wonderful story of Ruth.

That's a great love story. You have the love of Ruth for Naomi, her mother-in-law. You have the love of Boaz for Ruth.

He's willing to act the part of the kinsman redeemer where the other kinsmen would not. Throughout the Bible you have these things. You could know those stories inside out.

You could write papers and describe the love of God and describe what love should be. You see these books all the time in Christian bookstores. Here's the 12 steps to a more loving marriage and so forth.

But it's not the same as sunesis. To have a working knowledge of it. To be gaining experience in it day by day as you put this into practice.

I was reading that one about the mitered corners. It sounds so easy when they write it down. Well, clamp your vice in such and such a way and place your saw, a 22-tooth saw, start at the back end of the saw and pull vigorously and do this and do that and the other.

And when you're all done you have this perfect 45. Well, you go out there with a board and a saw, a hand saw, and try that. And reading about it is one thing and actually going out and doing it is something else.

And we find this experience in our Christian life where we read about things in the scripture, walk in love as Christ also loved you and gave himself for you, have forbearance, have patience, you know, all of these wonderful descriptions. But sunesis is when we say, oh, I can do this. I know how to do this.

I can put this into practice. Here's an occasion where I need to put this into practice. Part of sunesis is recognizing this is a time to apply this knowledge.

This is a place to apply this principle. Wow, this is a test of that concept. You just kind of have one of those V8 experiences where you hit yourself in the head and oh, I can do this.

This is the application. That's Paul's goal because when we come to that point where spiritual truth becomes our daily reality, that's when we come to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ. By the way, we're not all that worried about apologetics, which is the science of arguing other people into agreeing with you.

But this verse is documentation for the deity of Christ, knowledge of God, the Father, and of

Christ. If you look at the structure of the sentence, Paul is saying here, the Father is God, Christ is God. For some reason there are people who try to put forward the idea that Christ is not God, that he was just a wonderful prophet of God or something.

Well, this is one of the verses that reminds us that Paul clearly understood that son of God means equal with God. It doesn't mean a favored human being by God. You know, you have the other passages that Jesus was, like in Paul's writing where he says Jesus was proved to be the son of God by the resurrection from the dead.

I think that's in Romans chapter one. And people say, well, that just means God really liked him a lot, raised him from the dead. It doesn't mean he's equal with God.

This is one of the passages that clearly states that the Father and Christ are God and that we can come to a knowledge. Some people say, well, you know, you're so arrogant that you think you can understand God. You're so arrogant that you think you can solve the puzzles that have cropped up over time in the Word of God, that you can think that you have the answer for these great cruxes that the great theologians of history have wrestled with and so forth.

It isn't arrogance to claim the promise of God that if you ask and if you seek and if you knock, these things will be revealed. You and I have every bit as much opportunity as any believer you want to name in any age of history and more so in this age where the progress of revelation has unfolded to the point where things that were sealed in Old Testament days are revealed in New Testament days. Paul says the whole point of his ministry in teaching us and instructing us about Christ and about love is so that we come to a knowledge of the mystery of God.

The mystery is something concealed. We are going to come to a knowledge of it. It's going to be revealed.

The concealed is revealed in this age and is revealed to those who look, who are interested, who want to know. So don't let anyone tell you, oh, those are unsolvable puzzles. We won't know that until we get to glory.

God will have to explain that to us in the millennial kingdom or something. We can't understand the relationship of sovereignty and volition or the nature of the hypostatic union or the nature of the trinity. That's not what God says in His Word.

You cannot point to a scripture where God says, I don't want you to know these things. God has a timetable when things are revealed. He tells Daniel to seal up certain things until the time of the end.

But here Paul says the mystery of God, of the Father and of Christ, is designed to be revealed. We are supposed to understand it because we are going to live the same principles. We are going to learn to express the same love.

Do you think God knows how to express His love? Knows when to be merciful and when to discipline? That He knows when to have compassion, to have mercy for thousands and yet not to overlook iniquity? God knows exactly what He is doing in His love. We can come to that same knowledge and the same assurance. And come to a knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom Christ is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And once again in verse 3 you have the very same phrase that we saw in chapter 1 verse 9. Wisdom and knowledge. This is the balance we have to maintain. There have been many errors made down through the life of the church in imbalance toward one or the other.

Knowledge, if you focus on knowledge alone, it pops up. First Corinthians talks about the fact that you can have all kinds of knowledge. And if it doesn't work itself out in love, you are nothing, it accomplishes nothing, it's a waste of time.

And you can become a doctrinal giant and be able to write systematic theologies. But if you can't work any of that through your soul in relationships with your family and your friends and so forth, you are no better off than if you had played golf for your whole life. Nothing against golf.

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now this is also exceedingly important both for what Paul has said and what he is about to say. How many treasures of wisdom, which is the facts and the pieces of knowledge that we need, and how much of the ability to apply and put this into practice, how much of that is in Christ? Does it say great treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Substantial amounts of wisdom and knowledge? Once again, as he has throughout this letter, Paul says it's all there.

All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. Now some people have tried to reverse this and say, well every piece of knowledge is a part of Christ. If I go out here and discover that the tree in my yard is a maple and not a sweet gum, that's a piece of truth.

I thought it was a sweet gum, it turned out to be a maple. So the tree is actually a maple, that's a truth. Well that's all truth is God's truth.

You all may recall my long diatribe on all truth is God's truth. This is taught in virtually all the seminaries that I know about that you're doing a great service to humanity in general because you're bringing them closer to God by teaching them geometry or art or history or whatever. All truth is God's truth.

No it's not. All truth is not God's truth. All truth is not God breathe.

All truth is not profitable for doctrine or proof correction or instruction in righteousness. I was flipping through channels and one of these little tabloid shows, Entertainment Tonight or something, had something to say. I don't even know what it was.

It had something to say about Hugh Hefner and the Playboy Mansion or something. They were going to have a pajama party or some such thing. I don't know what it was.

Well there's some truth there. There actually is a guy named Hugh Hefner. He really does have some kind of a big house and lots of nubile misguided young ladies floating around there.

Well that's truth. Is that God's truth? Does that have any redeeming value? Is it of any use? Except as a rather poor illustration of the fact that all truth is not God's truth. The truth that's in the word of God is inspired and profitable.

That's why it says all scripture is God breathed. It doesn't say all truth is God breathed and profitable. It's the scripture.

The scriptures have taken that in the universe that is usable by God the Holy Spirit to build us up and that we can share with one another in love. That's what counts. All truth is not God's truth.

There is a satanic truth. These things are true. You can make a lot of money selling drugs.

That's true. But that's not God's truth and I don't know how anyone can say that it is. So the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ and they're there to be discovered.

They're there to be revealed. You see these programs about guys going down in the depths to find these Spanish galleons that have got all the gold inside and they've got their high technology and their sonars and their big vacuum pumps and so on. Would that we spent a tenth of that effort seeking the treasure that is hidden in Christ.

It's an eternal treasure. It is a transcendent treasure. It's the treasure that Paul is agonizing to reveal to us.

It bears the eternal fruit that pleases God and that reflects his glory forever. So Paul has sketched this out and we won't revisit what we studied in great detail about the truth that is hidden in Christ. We had that great doxology in chapter one that talked about Jesus Christ in his divinity, in his humanity, the unique way that he is qualified and fulfills the role in the Father's plan of bridging that great gulf between God and man.

He is Jacob's ladder. Angels ascend and descend upon the Son of Man. The gulf has been bridged by Jesus Christ and everything that we learn, every meaningful truth in the scripture is in some way related to him and it's available to us because of him.

Paul says this in verse four, why, lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. It is possible for believers to be deceived with persuasive words. Most believers alive today on the planet have been deceived with persuasive words.

You and I have been deceived with persuasive words. It is not only possible, it is probable. That's

the reason that Jesus says over Matthew 23, talking to believers, we haven't turned over there in a while, turn over to Matthew chapter 23, should you have the opportunity to discuss this passage with someone, it's probably a good thing I'm looking over there because it is a little further on in Matthew than 23.

Wherever it is, you remember this story. I didn't write it down, although I'm ashamed to say I did read it. I don't remember where.

I was looking in my other Bible. Do you remember when Jesus said, wide is the way and broad is the gate that leads to destruction? It is in the midst of his teaching to believers. Just before that, he talks to them about not being deceived by false prophets.

Just after that, he talks to them about their brothers. It's clear from the context when Jesus talks about the narrow way that he is talking to believers. He says, don't let your truth be corrupted.

Don't let yourself be deceived. Right in the middle of that, he talks to them about the narrow way and the straight gate. That tells us that it is possible for believers to be on the broad way.

He tells them, strive to enter by the narrow gate. Well, most people have understood this to be a picture of salvation. You don't strive for salvation, do you? There's no striving.

There's no effort involved in being saved. Salvation is by grace through faith. So when Jesus says, you need to strive, you need to work at entering the narrow gate.

Wide is the way and broad is the gate that leads to destruction, and it's a crowded road. Narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to life, and few there be that find it. He's talking to believers.

We have to be diligent to enter. If you're on the path of the truth, you will look at your right hand and at your left, and you will not see many at your side. In talking to my cousin earlier this week, this passage came to mind because in the mega church movement and the traditional church as it has evolved down to the present day, it is commonly assumed that numbers mean success, that you're really doing things for God when you're numerous.

Jesus says, if you're numerous, you better look around. You're probably on the wide road because the narrow road, Jesus says, there are not many on it. Few there be that find it, and it's a principle that is true in every dispensation, in every age of history.

Those that are truly seeking God are few and far between. Jesus said it, and it's true. So back to the Colossians, it is possible to be deceived.

People aren't going down the broad road because there's a big sign saying, this way to destruction. Here's the gate to the great pit of Gehenna. Come here and go up in a big puff of smoke and flame and the wood, hay, and stubble fire.

This road is going to be profusely posted with signs that say, this way to glory, this way to heaven, this way to the favor of God. Come right this way. Join your brethren in a mighty march to bring in the kingdom and so forth.

People are on that road because they think it's the right road. Nobody says, look, could you tell me what the wrong road is? I really want to find that wrong road. I want to be just as wrong as I can be.

I want to really disappoint God. I want to waste God's grace for my life. I want to be cut off from Christ.

I want to fail in as big a way as possible. Please show me the way to really miss the boat, to just be as big a disappointment to God as I can be. Nobody's doing that.

Everybody that has any pretenses of religion or spirituality believes or has convinced themselves and hopefully others, hopefully in their minds, convince others that they're on the right road. So deception, we have to learn how to identify a deception. Paul is going to help us do that.

Paul is saying everything that he's said up to this point so that we won't be deceived by persuasive words and the words are going to be persuasive. We've got to bring the gospel to a lost and dying world. That's our goal.

That's how you define everything else that you do. Is it important to bring the gospel to a lost and dying world? Yes, it is. Is it the defining statement of the Christian faith? Is it the mission? Is it the goal? No.

It is not the goal of the church to bring the gospel to a lost and dying world. That's the mission of God the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ has already brought salvation to a lost and dying world.

God the Holy Spirit convicts every living, breathing, sentient person, past, present, and future to a knowledge that salvation and relationship with God is possible. That's his job. The Apostles' Commission in Matthew 28.

I do know where that one is. Matthew 28, 19, and 20. It is not the Great Commission.

It is the Apostles' Commission. Go into all the world. Make disciples of all nations.

How people can go and claim that and arrogate that mission to themselves and say, it is my job. Because if you're going to do that, you need to get the whole thing. You need to go over to Acts chapter 1 and you need to start where Jesus told the Apostles to start.

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the outermost parts of the world. So if you're going to make it your mission in life to be a sole winner, you need to go to Israel and start in Jerusalem. And then go to Judea, and then go to Samaria, and then you can branch out to the rest of the world.

That every missionary and every Christian that says, I am an evangelist, I have the gift of evangelism, every believer has, then every believer needs to go and fulfill that. And you say, oh, you're being overly literal. Jesus had the ability to express that concept in other terms.

He told them, begin here in Jerusalem, and then it's going to spread out because that's the Apostolic Commission. That's their commission. It is not our commission.

There is not a single statement in any of the epistles to the church that says anything about going out and winning souls. Why? It's incredible. Here's a related concept for you while I'm waxing profound here.

We have this idea in the church that these are the things that have happened to the church. What happened to this truth? How did we get led down a deceptive path? We have been persuaded with persuasive words, and we have been deceived. Where did we get the idea that the church is a building led by a pastor, and that everything happens at and through the church? Where did we get that? Those are persuasive words that have deceived us.

Let me ask you something, and then I'll tell you the answer, because I already know it. How many times do you find the word pastor in the New Testament? Once. The word pastor occurs once.

He gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. In a teaching context, that word occurs once as a title, and people aren't even sure. They argue back and forth.

Well, you've got the Granville Sharp rule. Is it one guy that's a pastor and a teacher? Is it two different gifts and so forth? You've got one reference to pastor. Now, you think about all the Christianity that we have experienced.

How much time do we spend talking about pastors? As soon as you say, well, where do you go to church? I go to the XYZ church over here. Oh, well, who's the pastor? You turn on a TV set, and they're saying, well, we're televising the worship service from such and such. We've got the radio, and here's the lesson from such and such a church.

Here's the sermon. Who's the issue? Who's doing all the work? Who's the front man, the point man for the group? It's the pastor. The Bible has virtually nothing to say about pastors.

Now, how many times does the word brethren occur in the New Testament? Try about 450. There are like 450 references to the brothers. There's one reference to the pastor.

Now, how did we get to a view of the church that says, well, it's mainly the pastor? The church is defined by the pastor. The church is in a lot of places, and some of us have experienced this firsthand. The church pretty much says, well, we pay the pastor to do the visitation, and he knocks on doors, and he greets the new people that move into town, and he sits by the hospital bedside, and he organizes the ministries, and he runs the vacation Bible school, and he does

this, and he does that, and he does that, because he's the pastor.

That's his job. All the rest of us, we kind of get in there and cheer him on, and he goes out and does the work. Well, this didn't come from the Scripture.

The Scripture says that when there is someone, whether they're in some form of spiritual leadership, an elder, a pastor, a teacher, what do they do? They equip the saints for the work of the ministry. It's the saints. It's the brethren that are the focus of the New Testament, because it's primarily what happens in the souls of the brethren.

That's the point. It's not what the pastor says. It's not what the church looks like.

It's not how many people attend a building. There were no buildings. There were no steeples, no parking lots, no education buildings, no young singles groups.

Here's the other thing, while I'm still digressing, sort of. If you went to Colossae, where this letter was written, what would your choice of churches be? How many choices would you have? You can go join the brethren in Philemon's house, or you can not assemble. The believers in Colossae assembled in Philemon's living room.

It wasn't like, well, this is the first happy church of Philemon, and over there we've got the first happy church of Epaphras. Down the street there, we've got all these different groups, and we don't speak, and we've got doctrinal differences, and we've got this, that, and the other. We have a choice, and we've got all these divisions and splits.

What does it say in Corinthians? You say, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos. Now we say, well, I'm a Baptist, I'm a Methodist, I'm a Presbyterian, I'm a this, I'm a that, I'm a the other. We just take it for granted.

It's normal. That is not the New Testament view of the church. The New Testament church says, if you're in a neighborhood and there's believers there, you get together.

Is your next door neighbor an Episcopalian? Is your next door neighbor a Presbyterian? Is your next door neighbor a Methodist, or a Baptist, or some other kind of ism within the realm of Bible-based Christianity? How come you don't have fellowship with them? What's the matter with the church? What happened to their concept of brethren? It was not so, and it wasn't designed to be so in New Testament days. We say, well, I am of this, and I am of that. I'm a Bible-thumping, verse-by-verse, expository preaching type.

They're a holy ghost, hand-raising, charismatic type. We just exchange pleasantries over the fence, and we don't really fellowship. We don't unite.

Well, I'm not saying we should go embrace everybody that's got doctrinal errors in their mind, but we've got to get over the idea that this is normal. It's not. If you lived in Colossae, and you were a

believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you knew the other believers in Colossae who believed in Jesus Christ, and you made an effort to be united in love, and in faith, and in hope.

And you didn't say, well, you know, I've got a great idea about what this particular statement by the Apostle Paul means. Oh, well, you know, Peter said this, and Paul said that's wrong. We've missed that.

We have been persuaded by tradition and history. We've come into a situation where all of these divisions exist, and we just take it for granted. Many of us, until fairly recently, thought, well, if you go to church, you go find a building with a parking lot, and doors, and a pastor, and programs, and so forth, and that's church.

And some of us only recently are learning that that's not what the church is all about. We even have these artificial distinctions where we say, well, there's the local church, and there's the universal church. I'm sorry, but that's not in the New Testament.

It doesn't say the local church and the universal church. When Paul says, when Jesus says in Revelation to the church at such and such a location, he's talking about that part of the church that is in that location. It's not like, well, they're a separate little entity.

It's just that part of his body that's located in that place. But he doesn't do it with the idea that they're separate and distinct from the rest. We're all supposed to be knit together.

Paul says, I can minister to all of these people who are scattered and haven't seen my face and instruct them in love. And part of being instructive in love is realizing that you don't restrict your love to your denomination or to your theological persuasion. It's love for the brethren.

It's love for believers in Jesus Christ. And it doesn't mean that we get into warm, sloppy hugs with everybody that is happy with doctrinal error and is apathetic and disregards the word of God and so forth. What it does mean is that we base our love on the authoritative guidance of the scripture.

And the authoritative guidance of the scripture tells us who to fellowship with and who to separate from. But it is not based on the denomination they belong to. It is based on their attitude toward Jesus Christ.

All of us came from somewhere. We were born into families that may have been in some weird strand of something in Christianity or not even Christianity. Wouldn't it be a shame if nobody had any toleration for you or had any interest in talking with you or speaking the truth with you until you got yourself all cleaned up and entered into perfect doctrinal orthodoxy with them? None of us would ever get anywhere.

The only reason we've learned anything is that somebody was patient and spoke the truth in love and helped us learn and grow out of our errors and our backgrounds and our misconceptions.

And we continue to do so day by day by day. This is what Paul is aiming for in Colossians.

He says, look, don't let anybody persuade you, don't let anybody deceive you into a false view of what the faith is, of what life in Christ is. Stick with what you've been taught by the apostles. Stick with what you've been taught by apostle-trained pastors.

And that's what we have in the New Testament and that's where we go for our truth. 450 references to brothers, one reference to pastors, and we've got it all backwards. The thrust of the New Testament turned to any page in the New Testament from Acts forward.

What is the teaching to the church? Grow in grace and knowledge. Be transformed. Word of God is a critic of the thoughts and intents of your heart.

Be full of the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be spotless, without spot, without wrinkle, without any such thing. It's all about personal transformation.

God at work in you to will and do his good purpose. Any page of the scripture, you will find that taught. What is the thrust of the church today? I'm going to go give the truth to somebody else.

That's my ministry, that's the mission of the church. Go give the truth to somebody else. It is the biggest illustration of subjectivity in history.

What is subjectivity? Eyes on people, eyes on self, eyes on circumstances. The church today is being taught and trained and has a long tradition of looking outward for ministry. And it sounds great, it's very persuasive.

Oh, we're loving the world, we're shining a light that there's all kinds of scriptural justification for going out and getting into somebody else's business, getting into somebody else's life. I'm going to bring them to the truth. I'm going to bring them to Christ.

I'm going to disciple them. I'm going to mentor them. I'm going to model the Christian life for them without having placed proper emphasis on what comes first.

And that is what the scriptures talk about for the church. Wisdom, knowledge, sunesis, having an inside-out knowledge of what love is, and the guiding principles that define it and that enable us to express it in a way that's pleasing to God and that reflects God and enables us to know God. We have been deceived.

We have been led astray with persuasive words. The church at large today is on the wide path through the broad gate that leads to destruction. It's not the destruction of hell, it's not hellfire, it is loss.

Loss of opportunity, loss of fruit. It's the dead-withered branch that didn't produce the fruit that the gardener husbanded the field and cultivated the plants and pruned and worked and fertilized and

rained on that ground to produce. And what does it say in Hebrews 6? If you've got that field that you've cultivated and you send the rain on it many times and all it produces is thorns and brambles, it is fit only for burning and is near to a curse.

And that's the church at large today. Don't let anyone deceive you that it's different. Don't let anyone make you feel small or unfruitful or uninvolved or somehow a second-class Christian because you're not subscribing to that falsehood, that persuasive, well-documented, neon sign-posted broad way that leads to destruction.

The reason people are on it is they're convinced that it's right and it's not. We find our truth in Christ. We find our truth in the teaching of the Word of God.

That's where we have to find our confidence and our assurance and the riches of understanding. This is what Paul, in chains, is struggling to get across to us. And you can just sense his frustration.

He hears that often Colossians people are coming in with persuasive words and Epaphras is having trouble keeping people focused on the truth that they've come to know through his teaching and through the teaching of the Apostle Paul. And so Epaphras comes over and says, Paul, people are being led astray. This is very persuasive.

It's so insidious. It's so subtle, the way the words are twisted, the way the truth is presented and misrepresented and it becomes falsehood. And so Paul writes this letter and he says, look, you've got to focus on these important things.

It's got to make a difference. It's got to turn from knowledge into sunesis. So our goal in the coming days is to take these things and have them be alive and active in our souls.

To seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit to help us perceive we're all going to be in circumstances tomorrow. We're all going to be in circumstances on Sunday and Monday and Tuesday. In these coming days we're going to be around people.

We're going to be in conversations. We're going to have tasks to perform and priorities to set and fulfill. While we do that we've got to be aware of who we are and what the goal is.

The church has been deluded into thinking that daily life is not all that important. It's just your ministry activities. It's just your church attendance.

It's just a few things here and there that define your spiritual life. And it's not. It's every waking moment.

That's why Paul says we've got to take every thought captive for Christ. You think about all the thoughts. Just thinking about your thoughts is a thought.

And that has got to be taken captive for Christ. What happened to that truth in the church? It's been whisked away in a flood of works-based spirituality. So we've got to recapture for ourselves this truth that Paul is struggling even now as we as we read his words 1900 years later to get across to us.

And when we do we're going to find Christ. Father we thank you for the privilege we have of being the recipients of the revelation of truth in Jesus Christ. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will show us these things not only as we look at them in your word but as we live our lives before you.

We pray that in all things our savior the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified. We pray in his name. Amen.