

98-12-02a Colossians

Let's prepare ourselves for the study of the Word of God this evening with a moment of prayer. Father, we thank you for the privilege of studying your Word. We thank you for the hundreds of daily provisions that you make for us and for all of the many graces you've bestowed on us that have brought us to this point.

We thank you for the fellowship of believers of like mind. We thank you for the ministry of your Spirit. And we pray that as we study tonight, these things will be clear to us and be a part of the resources that transform us and bring us into closer conformity with your will and your purpose.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We resume tonight our study in Colossians chapter 2 where Paul is now beginning to square off and address the specifics of the problem that has been brought to him by Epaphras.

I think I've reviewed that situation enough that you know kind of where we stand here, what's going on in the church, outside ideas are coming in. Epaphras goes to Paul because it's a little beyond his pastoral ability to cope with. He wants to bring in the big guns, as it were, to help the congregation there in Colossians and actually throughout the Lycus Valley deal with these attacks, these subtle, insidious, distracting ideas and teachers and so forth.

And we've talked about that as we've looked at the foundation that Paul lays in the first chapter or so of this letter. Now Paul is going to start grabbing the bull by the horns. He has said in verse 2, or chapter 2 rather, verse 1 through 4, he's talked about the conflict that he has and his purpose in his ministry that believers' hearts in verse 2 will be encouraged, knit together in love, actually instructed in love as we saw when we looked closely at that word, with a view toward all the riches of full assurance of understanding unto the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

This is a recurring theme. This is one of the central ideas that Paul keeps returning to. We saw him come to this idea a couple of times in chapter 1, didn't we? And he re-emphasizes it here, that it is Christ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are to be found.

And we saw that complementary relationship between wisdom and knowledge, those Greek words. We had sunesis and so forth there where you have the knowledge of something, you have the facts, you understand the principles, and then your second part there is how to apply those, when and where and how to make use of that knowledge so that it becomes practical and meaningful. Paul says, the reason I say this, in verse 4, is so that no one will deceive you with persuasive words.

This now, you can just see Paul kind of squaring off like a wrestler against an opponent here. He says, here's the problem. You've got some people coming in with persuasive, seductive ideas, and I don't want you to be deceived.

I don't want you to be led astray. That's why he's communicating these things to us. And this helps us put what we've learned so far in this letter into perspective.

What is the purpose of everything we've learned in the last several months in Colossians? It's to keep us from being deflected. It's to keep us from being deceived. It's to keep us from being drawn off the path, away from the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Sometimes we hear ideas. I've mentioned this to some of you all recently. I see a really strong push against the theology that has developed in this century.

Really, in the last hundred years or so, great advances were made in the understanding of the Word of God. There were things that had not really been understood in earlier generations by the earlier church fathers. They just dealt with these things in general terms.

And through scholarship and through finding more manuscripts and a finer understanding of Greek and Hebrew, we've reached a pinnacle of scholarship in this century where many things that weren't clear and were just understood in broad outline have been refined and have been closely studied, and our understanding has been greatly enhanced. And all of the teachers in my generation, pastors and teachers, stand on the shoulders of men who have been very diligent in refining our understanding of the Scriptures. And it's a wonderful progress, and it also reminds us that we're getting close to the end of days when God told even Daniel these things will be sealed up until the time of the end.

Well, around the time of the end, some of these things are going to start to yield their meaning. And I believe that has happened in this century. We've come to understand and refine our interpretation of passages that have either been neglected or obscure for many generations.

Well, this would include the details of the distinction between Israel and the church, what has come to be identified as dispensationalism, understanding the layout of Daniel's 70 weeks, understanding the distinctives as well as the coherence of God's plan for Israel and for the church, where are they similar, where are they different, how do they come together in Christ, what is Jesus Christ's relationship to Israel, what is Jesus Christ's relationship to the church, what is the church's relationship to Israel, and vice versa. These things were not as well understood until recently. However, now it reminds me of a wave that comes crashing up and rolls up onto the shore and reaches a high mark on the beach.

And then you watch it recede away. And you can see where it's been, but the water has gone back to where it was before. And in recent days, in the last 20 years I would say, beginning in the 70s, there was sort of a regression away from those understandings and almost an attack on them.

In fact, not almost, there has been an attack on it. And now you have, even within what people try to identify as a camp or a theology of dispensationalism, even within it, scholars have decided to

redefine it and change it all around. The bottom line is that a lot of the great understandings that make our path clear in the Word of God are being abandoned.

And people say, well, that's not the historic faith of the church. Augustine and Jerome and Luther and Calvin didn't understand it that way, so it can't be right. Your understanding can't be correct because I don't find any old guys back in the early days of the church that understood it that way.

So it must be wrong. And this has a persuasive tone to it, doesn't it? You say, well, I want to be in the historic faith of the church. I want to be orthodox.

There's a persuasive element to the argument that says, well, if it's new, it must not be right. If it's unheard of. And see, this is the other thing, is what are we measuring this against? How much of the theology, how much of the biblical understanding of believers has survived down to the present day from the first thousand years of the church? There's just a handful of writings.

We have the writings of a few of the early church fathers. We have a writing of a few of the scholars. But you look around today, look at the theology of the church today that's recorded in the media.

Look at what comes across on the Trinity Broadcast Network. Capture a day's broadcasting on Trinity Broadcast Network. Put it in a time capsule and dig it up 500 years from now and measure the understanding of the church by what you see on that channel.

If you get my meaning. The fact that somebody's writings have survived, that doesn't mean that that's the only way anybody in the church ever understood it. And somebody watching 500 years in the future what we have on Trinity Broadcast wouldn't know what you and I believe because it's not taught on there.

So they say, well, nobody ever believed this way until the present. Perhaps not. Like I say, I think we've made some great advances because God has given us greater tools.

We've got technology. We've got more manuscripts and the ability to collate them. We have better communication among scholars because of media and so forth.

But at the same time, I think a lot of these principles have been instinctively realized by careful students of the Word of God all along. But they're not necessarily published. They're not necessarily up in the great canons of the Catholic Church or canons of the Reformation or whatever.

And so people say, well, nobody ever thought that way until recently. Well, there's no way to really prove that. I don't think that's a valid argument, but it sounds very persuasive.

And so a lot of people say, well, oh, all that dispensationalism. Why? Nobody ever even thought of a dispensation until John Darby in 1880. And the only reason it ever got popular is because

they put it in the Schofield Reference Bible.

And Schofield was just so darn popular with his Bible. That's what made that idea scatter around. And if it wasn't for that awful old Schofield Reference Bible, why this terrible heresy wouldn't have ever entered the church.

Well, this is the kind of thing that's floating around today. And unfortunately, people say, well, that's all wrong. And so they tear apart and erode away and pull the rug out from under understandings of all these passages that go together to make such a beautiful tapestry of the plan of God.

And they replace it with nothing. They replace it with a patchwork and a hodgepodge that's inconsistent, contradictory, makes no sense out of the word of God, can't discern the difference between Israel and the church, can't filter out. As soon as you, by the way, I mean just as one example, as soon as you say there's continuity between Israel and the church instead of a unique complementary program between the two that God has woven together, it's the difference between taking, I watch in the mornings when the girls are getting ready for school and their mom braids their hair.

You take these strands, you get three strands, and weave them together and it makes a really nice looking hairdo if you do it right. But those three distinct strands are necessary to make that really nice looking braid. And the braid is what you're after.

Well, you could say, well, we don't want to make these distinct strands. We're just going to mess it all up and just kind of make a hunk and just kind of gather it together into sort of an uncombed rat's nest in the back and wrap a big rubber band around it. And this is kind of what's happening to theology because people are rebelling against or fail to see the truth of what has been discovered and what has been perhaps rediscovered in our century in terms of theology and with persuasive arguments are leading believers away from an understanding of the word of God and into confusion because it's replaced with the cultural Christianity that mirrors the values of the culture.

What I'm looking for is a Christianity that meets my needs. What I'm looking for is a Christianity that solves my problems. What I'm looking for is a Christianity that makes me feel good and supplies me with friends and a nice environment and doesn't force me to look at the work that needs doing in my own soul.

I want to look outward. I want to look at the work that needs doing out in other people's lives. I don't want to have to deal with what's going on in my own soul.

I'm called to go out and impact other people instead of God making a difference in my own soul. So we have this happening today. This is the kind of situation that Paul is addressing in Colossians where the true faith has been taught and now people are saying that's not the true

faith, that's not the whole thing.

Your knowledge is incomplete. Your knowledge is wrong. You've been taught.

You've been led astray. And with persuasive arguments, people are being deceived and led into an empty philosophy. But the thing about these philosophies is the words are persuasive.

The arguments carry weight in the mind. They're seductive. They're attractive.

They find a hook in our soul. They find something to latch onto. This is the reason we sin, isn't it? We don't sin because we say, you know, I think I'll just grow horns and a tail and commit some really black, awful deed and harm somebody in my immediate periphery and just make everybody feel bad, disappoint God, refute my salvation, trample underfoot the Son of God and put Him to an open shame.

That sounds like a good idea. I think I'll do that. Why do we sin? Because at the moment when the opportunity presents itself, it feels good.

It has an attractive component. We want to justify ourselves or vindicate ourselves or we want to elevate ourselves by de-elevating someone else. We want to, there's some hook in our soul that that temptation gets a hold of and then we go for it.

You know, you hear the fishing reel noise and we're off the track. So we have enough problems without someone coming in with persuasive arguments and deceptive words and leading us into not just a failure in a point of time, which is what our sin is, but into a pattern of error that can lead us actually into evil. This is what Paul is arguing against.

And when he says in chapter 2, verse 4, I say this lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words, he's telling us the answer. There is a way to avoid being deceived. There is a way to avoid being persuaded of something that's wrong.

I think all of us probably at some time or another, and I think every teenager reaches the point where you start kind of sticking your head out from under the eaves of your parents' roof, realizing there's a big world out there and not everybody agrees with your parents. Not everybody has been taught the way you were taught. There's a big world of ideas.

There's all kinds of viewpoints, lots of gods, lots of religions, lots of ways to live life. And at some point, I think everybody asks the question, well, who's to say that I'm right and everybody else in the world is wrong? Who's to say that I just happen to luck out and be born into a family, or I just happen to luck out and get into a church, or I just happen to be fortunate and come under the ministry of the one strand of the one religion that's actually totally right. Everybody else in the entire planet is wrong.

You begin to think, you know, it's possible that maybe somebody else is right and I'm wrong, or

maybe nobody's right. Maybe everybody's all just grasping, groping blindly in the dark and none of us really have any kind of a clue as to what life and God are really all about. Well, that is going to be true for an awful lot of people in the world.

The difference for us is, what is it that distinguishes us? What makes it different? We have the Word of God. Paul here says, I am telling you some things so that you won't be deceived, so that you won't be persuaded of a falsehood. We ultimately have to go all the way back to the beginning.

When you look around and you look at creation, you realize that where there is design, there is a designer. There is no way around it. There is no way.

Science itself says that left to itself, this is the second law of thermodynamics for you scientists out there, left to itself, a system will always tend toward disorganization. Paul Simon wrote a little song called, Everything put together falls apart. And that is just another way of saying the second law of thermodynamics.

Things tend to disintegrate over time, left to themselves. You have to put energy in. You have to put effort in.

You have to have an outside force come in to organize something. Think about this. How many times have you seen, I saw this happen this morning.

I set a cup of coffee down and then moved and knocked it off the table, on top of all of my books, by the way. But, and this thought actually flashed through my mind because I was thinking about Colossians. But if you think, you've seen this in slow motion sometimes on TV.

They show a glass and it's falling to the floor. They're advertising spill master carpet or some such thing. You see the glass coming down.

What happens to the milk or the liquid that's in it? It starts globbing out and spreading and when the glass hits the deck, hits the floor, what happens to the liquid? It splashes and scatters. Sometimes you see people run those films in reverse and it's a real weird thing. It never happens in nature, does it? That you see all the random milk in the carpet fibers rise up out of the fibers, glob together, jump into the glass and you don't see the glass, all the pieces of the glass that shattered, rush together, glue themselves into a cylindrical shape and then jump up onto the table.

Why is that not a reversible process? If it can fall off and disorganize, why can't it spontaneously organize and become what it was to begin with? Well, there's a law in nature that it only works one way. You can shatter something but you can't unshatter it. You can spill milk but you can't unspill it.

It's the second law of thermodynamics. Well, look at nature. Is this spilled milk or is this organized

milk? Is this a cylindrical glass or is this shattered pieces? Science, with the theory of evolution, tries to say the shattered pieces of the glass and the spilt milk rushed together and formed a wonderful glass of milk sitting on the table.

Well, it just defies observation. It defies mathematics. It defies everything.

Where there's design, there's a designer. When we look at the universe, we know that an outside agent acted on it to organize it, to create life, to organize life in all of its diversity and all of its wonder. The sophisticated systems in every different body, animal, human, plant, whatever it may be, the interaction of enzymes, the endocrine systems, the immune systems, the circulatory systems.

You look at the wonder of it all. Science, with all their brilliance and all their computers, still don't know a tenth of what makes the human body work. They're just now starting to tinker with genes and starting to get down into the blueprints of life, and it's so beyond them.

You look at the human genome project, and just to write the thing down took so many billions of pages. So we start knowing that there is a God. The second thing that we know is God desires to reveal Himself, and He has done so in a meaningful way.

He's done so in His Word. The Bible is unique in the world. There is no other book like it.

There's no other book that puts man in his place and shows man in his hopelessness and uselessness. Every other religion, every other book that's ever been written by humankind always shows man building himself up. Every piece of literature, piece of art.

You look at Star Trek. Man, by his own bootstraps, has pulled himself up to where now there's no war, there's no hunger, there's no greed, there's no this, that, and the other. Man has just evolved beyond all these petty, primitive things if you watch Star Trek.

Well, it's utter nonsense. You look at the history of man, and so far, if anything, we're just going from bad to worse. The Bible is the only truth that talks about that emperor without any clothes and says man is hopeless, helpless, and useless.

The Bible is the only source of true, lasting, inner change because it embodies and communicates the power of God. It is living. It's powerful.

It gets in at the root of the problem. Every other system, because they're powerless, all they can do is treat symptoms. All they can do is paint over the measles.

All they can do is try to push in the swollen spots, try to disguise and cover the sores. They can't get into the heart of it and cure it. The Word of God does.

God exists. God has communicated to us through this Bible. Even men who have started out to

prove the Bible to be just a collection of Hebrew myths and so forth, the more closely you look at it, if it was something that just kind of got pasted together and seemed like a pretty good thing to use for a religion, it would fall apart under close scrutiny because any human product, no matter how hard you try, winds up having flaws, contradictions, errors, irreconcilable differences within it.

This is 66 books written over a period of 2,000 years by a bunch of different authors. But you can go and study the original languages, as I have done. You can look at it under the magnifying glass.

You can look at it under the microscope. You can stand back and look at it from a distance. And from the macro to the micro, from the greatest to the smallest, it is incredible.

It's like looking at creation. When you look at it, you realize there is one voice speaking in this book. There is one God communicating his truth through human authors using their personalities and everything else.

But under the inspiration of God, truth is contained in this book. Once we have those two facts, God is there, God has communicated, and this is where he did it, in this book, the only thing that remains is to become as knowledgeable and as well-schooled in this book as we can be. To absorb and reflect this truth is our life's goal.

And that's why we can have confidence. This is what Paul is reminding the Colossians of because this book tells us about Jesus Christ. From Genesis 1-1 all the way to Revelation 22-14, whatever the last verse is, it communicates Jesus Christ.

And in him, everything we need, everything we need to know, everything God has for us is communicated here. So our goal is to not be deceived because things have been spoken to us. And that's what Colossians 2-4 reminds us of.

This is what Paul is reminding us. These things are communicated, everything he said about Jesus Christ, so that we won't be deceived if we stick to what we know from this book. And this is the corollary.

We as believers can't take someone else's word for what the Bible says. We superficially affirm that, but you stop and think about that for a moment. This means you can't take your pastor's word for it.

You can't take a good teacher's word for it. We each as believers have to have our own feet planted solidly in the truth of Scripture. One of the mistakes that has been made and one of the ways that we've been deceived and led astray is to think, well, I must have a right pastor.

I must have a guru who will lead me about in the Word of God. I dare not go there myself because I'll misunderstand it. I'll wait for him to speak.

I will take his words as the words from the mountain, and that's what I will rest my faith and my confidence in. Well, this is how Catholicism got started, where you have to broker your relationship with God through a man. The only man that brokers relationship with God is Jesus Christ.

And we each, we weren't saved by a pastor. The pastor didn't get up and die on the cross. The pastor didn't go up and sit at the right hand of God the Father and intercede on our behalf.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ. And you can't, there are people who actually sort of hide behind their pastor. Well, so and so is my right pastor, and he says thus and so.

Well, you cannot imagine the embarrassment that those people are going to experience when they stand before God and God starts asking an account of how their lives were living. And they start trying to point over at the pastor, and the pastor is not going to be there to point to. It's just the believer and God.

And we are accountable for our own understanding, and we have to search the Scriptures and see that these things are so. We have to have our own understanding. The pastor can communicate.

He can shed light. He can organize. He can offer truth as he understands it, and hopefully he's going to be right a lot of the time.

I hope and pray that I'm right more often than I'm wrong. But I am human. Pastors, teachers everywhere are human and are not always going to be right.

And once in a while you're going to hear something, and maybe what's being taught is not correct. Maybe it's not the best understanding. Maybe it's based on a faulty perception someplace.

Well, then what protects us against that? What protects us from what Paul is talking about here? With all the best of intentions, the pastor had the best of intentions, the listener had the best of intentions, but we've got a wrong idea being presented. What protects us? Well, what's the other thing God has given us? He's given us his Word and he's given us his Spirit. And the Spirit of God, Jesus promised, will lead us into all truth.

Our sensitivity to truth versus error is going to be directly proportional to how badly we want to know the truth. If we have a very apathetic attitude about the truth, it's going to be very easy to slip falsehood in on us and we're not going to know the difference. If you're not hungry and somebody pushes some food at you, and you have to eat because it's a social occasion and somebody's feelings are going to be hurt, you're not really hungry, you don't really want any food, but somebody says, well, so-and-so slaved all night on these hors d'oeuvres, please eat one so it won't hurt their feelings.

Well, you don't care how it tastes, you just eat it because you have to. If you, you know, there's a health craze going on today and then fitness is really trendy and so forth, and so a lot of people are really paying attention to what they eat, what's in it, how is it prepared, how was it grown, did they inject the animals with chemicals and so forth? Well, if you're really concerned about what you're taking in, you're going to be aware of those things. You try to eat healthy, you don't eat the bad cholesterol and you watch out for too much sugar or imbalance in your diet because the more concerned you are about your health, the more concerned you're going to be about what you eat.

And those of us that are running roughshod over our physical health pretty much just have to rely on the grace of God to put us somewhere where somebody prepares good meals without our active involvement. But the point is, if you want to know the truth, God is going to ensure that you know the truth. Jesus told the story of the child who comes to his father and asks for bread.

If we go to our father and ask for bread, he's not going to give us a rock or a snake or a serpent. God is canvassing the earth looking for people who will care enough about him to seek out the truth. And when he finds someone who's interested in the truth, he's not going to let them sit there in error.

He's not going to let them be led down a wrong path. God is just leaning forward. He's so anxious for any of us to develop enough interest to know the truth.

And when he finds someone like that, you or me, a believer, he is going to make sure that that truth is available and he's going to give us just as much as we can possibly hold. So if we want the truth, it's there. If anyone lacks faith, let him ask of God.

God will provide. Look at Proverbs 2. If we seek, if we search, if we lift up our voice, if we apply our heart, we will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. This is the kind of person that Paul is talking to here.

He says, I'm giving you truth so that you won't be deceived. We can have confidence that our instinct, our spiritual instinct, which is there by the grace of God, is in the presence of the Holy Spirit. You'll know.

It'll just seem wrong. You may not be able to put your finger on what's the matter, but you'll just not, it won't ring true. We use that phrase, well, that rings true or that doesn't ring true.

Where does that come from? It's a very subjective sort of measure. But if you're actively seeking the truth, you will know the truth when you find it, and you'll also be suspicious of something that isn't true. It's an instinct just like a child has or animals have.

God built it into the animals. Animals know instinctively not to eat poisonous berries and poisonous plants. They just know.

And the taste tells them something. The smell tells them something. And we'll have those same sorts of instincts about the truth if we care, if we're looking for it.

So we can have confidence. It's really important for us to be aware of these things as we approach the study of the Scriptures because this is our life. This is our connection to Jesus Christ.

You and I cannot have a connection to Jesus Christ apart from an understanding of the Scripture. You can't. There is no way.

God the Holy Spirit does not speak from himself, does he? Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes, he's not going to speak from himself. He's not going to just start talking out of his own mind. He's going to take the things belonging to Jesus Christ.

He's going to communicate. Well, the pages of this book contain the truth about Jesus Christ, and this is the area where God the Holy Spirit does his work. If you take away this book, you take away the voice of the Holy Spirit in your life.

So with all the confusion, all the religions, all the denominations, all the permutations of theological understanding and all the differences of opinion about this passage and that doctrine and one thing and another, if you stop and think about it, it's really pretty simple. God is there. God speaks to us through his Word.

He's given us his Spirit to ensure that we have a right understanding of his Word. The only thing that's required for that whole system to work in our life is the same thing they told me when I applied to go to Annapolis. You have to want it.

If it's going to be a success in your life, if you're going to reach the goal, you have to want it because this system is designed by God to work on the basis of desire. If you don't desire it, it doesn't work. If you don't, it's like a marriage.

Just walking down the aisle and having the preacher say, I now pronounce you, doesn't make you truly married. It's when you want to be married. It's when you care about your spouse and you desire to live life with them.

You desire to have a relationship with them, and it's a daily pursuit and it has its ups and downs, but it is a pattern of life that says this is a commitment, this is a truth, this is a priority in my life that I want, and I want it to succeed. I want it to be the best that it can be. Well, that has to be true in our spiritual life, and when it is, the very simple and yet extremely powerful resources that God has placed at our disposal happen.

So it's a short thing here in verse 4, but it's an extremely important truth. The things that Paul says, and by extension, the things that the Bible says, these things keep us from falling into error.

They will enable us to avoid sin, to avoid evil, to avoid error, to avoid wasting our life on a false trail.

None of us want to get to the end of life and stand before the judgment seat of Christ and discover, well, what do you know? I was misled all the way down. I should have been doing A, B, and C, and I was over here doing X, Y, and Z. None of us want that. And pretty much everybody thinks that they're on the right trail.

So if all these people down at the such-and-such denomination and the such-and-such religion, they've got their success stories and they've got their anecdotes and they've got their statements that they have peace and that they have a wonderful joy and they have a close relationship. Everybody will say everything that sounds great about what they're believing and about how they're living, and they'll talk about how they see the power of God in action in daily life and this, that, and the other, and you begin to wonder, well, am I on the wrong side of the fence? Well, we can have confidence because there are these very simple truths. God is there.

He's spoken through His Word, and He has promised that if you want to know the truth, He will make sure that you know it, and you'll have confidence. And I think we have confidence from the things that we've seen in God's Word that it coheres, it makes sense, and God the Holy Spirit gives us a confirmation and gives us that ringing sense of truth when we see these things confirmed in passage after passage after passage. When, as we travel through the Word of God, things begin to make more sense instead of less.

It weaves together and we begin to see the warp and the woof of that tapestry and the wonderful painting of God's plan that it reveals rather than constantly coming up with more questions and thinking, well, you know, we're just having our brow furrowed with more and more wrinkles. So this is our confidence that God is in it, and it depends on God, not us. We don't have to strive with our tremendous intellectual brain power to make sense out of the plan of God.

We just have to want to know God will do the work through His Word and through His Spirit and give us accurate understanding and an understanding that changes our life and that pleases Him and that leads us squarely in the center of that narrow path that leads to the straight gate to righteousness. So, having said that in verse 4, Paul says, even though I'm absent in the flesh, we don't have, unfortunately, it would be wonderful if we had the Apostle Paul here today. I would love to hear some of his sermons about current events and interpreting for us how the plan and purpose of God is working itself out today and where it's not being accomplished.

But he says, I'm absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, verse 6, so walk in Him. And we go here, and I'm not going to do a detailed exegesis because we want to move forward in chapter 2, but notice the difference here.

You have a passive and you have an active idea in that verse, don't you? You have received

Christ Jesus the Lord. That's a passive thing. How did we receive Christ Jesus the Lord at the point of our salvation? It was by trusting God.

All we did was place ourselves in God's hand. And God, I acknowledge that I have an insolvable problem. I am hopeless, helpless, useless.

I am sinful. I am claiming Jesus Christ as my Savior to make me acceptable in your sight. We believe that God honors that attitude and that He fulfills His statements about salvation, that we have an eternal destiny with Him on that basis.

So we receive Jesus Christ by faith. We trust in some specific things that God has communicated in His Word. Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

We believe that. Well, as you received Christ, now go from the passive to the active. When you walk and you put one foot in front of the other, we know that walking is the classic picture of living life, going through the day.

But even then, we talk about the Christian walk. We talk about the walk through life and about life in general. I used to smile to myself, and I'm sure there's people listening to me smiling to themselves, but I would listen to one particular teacher on tape, and in life was a phrase that just cropped up about every fourth or fifth sentence.

When you run into opposition in life, when you're suffering in life, when you're blessed in life, and it was just kind of an add-on. It was almost like when some of us say of, well, this person would say in life. And even that phrase becomes sort of an abstraction.

To walk in life, when you're actually going, see I just said it, in life, to walk in life. When we actually pedestrianize down the road here, we put one foot in front of the other. It's a mechanical action, and you can see it in slow motion, all the joints and the shifting of weight and the muscles contracting and relaxing and so forth.

It's a process that requires an active set of decisions, and we generally establish a direction when we walk. We're going from point A to point B, and that's why we're walking. Walking has a purpose.

Even if it's just for fitness, we say, well, I'm going to walk this four-mile section out in the country or I'm going to walk this block or I'm going to do whatever. So what does it mean, as you have received Jesus Christ, so walk? Well, how did we receive him? By faith. So now we're going to walk by faith.

We say, well, in the grand Christian walk, I'm going to live my Christian life by faith. It has to be more specific than that. When we were saved, when we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, we put our faith in some very specific things, didn't we? We believed that there was a hell, and we

believed that there was an angry God ready to put us there.

We believed that we couldn't meet his standard of righteousness, and we believed that Jesus Christ was the only way to solve that problem. And we believed that God would honor the work of Jesus Christ and apply it to our case. Those are some very specific truths, and that's our saving faith.

We didn't just have sort of a nebulous, there's lots of people that have kind of a nebulous faith that, well, God won't hammer me too hard. I'm basically a good person. That's not saving faith.

Faith in Jesus Christ and in him alone is saving faith, and you have to understand what Christ did and that it is transferable, that his work is transferable to us. You have to believe that to be saved. You have to claim him as Savior and make your case before God, as it were, saying, I know that I'm condemned and guilty, but I'm claiming the blood of Christ.

He's my Savior. I'm clinging to him, and that's why I know you're going to redeem me and take me into the eternal future for blessing. Well, as you receive Christ Jesus, so walk.

Our walk in the Christian life is not just kind of a nebulous, well, now that I'm saved, all things work together for good. It's the same need for specific faith, faith in specific statements of the Word of God, promises, principles, and doctrines in the Word of God. That's why we're working on memorizing some of God's promises and some of the statements in the Word, because we want to be sure that we can put our faith in something concrete, one foot in front of the other.

That's a concrete action. And to walk in Christ, to live our lives daily, means not just walking around with sort of a holy attitude or kind of a one-eye-on-the-sky attitude. When you engage in some task tomorrow during the day, whether it's changing a flat or putting gas in the car or washing dishes or opening and closing a door and going out and about, is that something that we do in faith? Do we look at it from the perspective of its place in God's plan? The mundane, ordinary things.

This is what we have missed. This is what the Word of God teaches from beginning to end, is that God demands our, in this age in particular, God demands every second of our day. He's not looking for people who will go knock on a door two or three times a week or hand out tracts or attend church two or three times to present our bodies a living sacrifice.

It's a minute-by-minute thing. Take every thought captive for Christ. As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk in him.

And the walk is every little thing. Dealing with children, dealing with spouse, dealing with co-workers, dealing with the rest of the world, dealing with the person that calls up during supper time on the phone trying to sell you siding. Every single thing.

Take that thought captive. What is the proper application of my standing in Christ in this

situation? I have just been unfairly used by someone. I have just made a mistake.

Or someone has just made a request of me. In every action, in every decision point, everything that takes up the time of our day, to keep it in the context of life in Christ. That's walking by faith.

It's specific. It's detailed. And it's a high calling.

This is why people like to think, oh, we're not under law, we're under grace, so this is easier than the old Mosaic law. Not at all. It's harder.

It's more demanding. Mosaic law, you can get through the day and there might only be 12 or 13 Levitical regulations that apply to what you did. Did you dig a hole today? Well, you've got to put a fence around it.

Is it the Sabbath? Well, there are certain things you can and can't do. As long as you obey the rules, you're off the hook under the law. Not under grace, under the law of love and the law of liberty and the law of supreme sacrifice.

The functioning under grace that we experience, God demands our thoughts and our intents. So, this is what Paul is getting at. It's a hopelessly huge task for us in our own strength, but the same power that will keep us from falling into error will propel us down the right road of truth.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see the description of how that takes place. Paul is going to give us some detail about how this monumental thing is accomplished.

And if you're like me, we need that. We need to know how this is going to be accomplished because it's a high calling. That's what we'll see when we come back.