

# (Colossians) 01 Paul Thanks God for the Colossians Part I

by Bob Utley

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*Bob Utley explores the significance of Paul's letter to the Colossians, emphasizing the supremacy of Christ and the challenges posed by Gnostic teachings.*

**Duration:** 41:40

**Scripture:** Colossians 2:3, Colossians 2:8

**Topics:** "Colossians"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of studying the Bible deeply and not just relying on surface-level readings. He warns against the danger of false teachings that distort the message of the Gospel, particularly those that deny the person and work of Jesus Christ. The speaker highlights a specific false teaching that believed in the existence of two eternal entities, one good (spirit) and one evil (matter). This teaching claimed to have secret knowledge from Jesus and promised a path back to God through angelic spheres. The speaker urges listeners to be discerning and to have a genuine personal encounter with Jesus as their Savior.

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## Transcript

It is really my honor over the next weeks and months to get to share with you Paul's message to the Colossians. I am committed to interpreting the Bible through books, and this is one of the highest Christologies in the entire New Testament. Written to a group of churches, Colossians is really written to three churches in the Lycus River Valley, Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea, and none of these churches were started by Paul.

But Paul became knowledgeable of the problems that were in these churches through a man named Epaphras. So if you would give me just a minute, I want to do a background. For those of you who were here over a year ago, this is the same background that I did to the book of Ephesians, because of course Colossians and Ephesians are part of the prison epistles.

Colossians was written first and Ephesians was developed somewhat on the same outline sometime very soon after Paul wrote the book I'm going to share with you. I would like to ask you to begin to read Colossians. It's not a long book.

I'd like you to read it through in one sitting and to ask yourself, what do you think is the major truth of this little book? And then I'd like to ask you to read it again, maybe in a different translation, and see if you can outline this book. What are the major truths? What are the major issues? What are the major subjects? And if you would do that, I think you would get much, much more out of this study. We learn from the book of Acts that Paul stayed longer in the city of Ephesus than he stayed anywhere else.

He stayed 18 months in the city of Corinth, but he stayed 24 months, and during that time a wonderful, wonderful revival began. The book of Acts describes this revival as God opened the door for the gospel. Isn't that a beautiful metaphor? And many, many people were being saved.

And Acts tells us that one of the ways you know how real and vital and life-changing this revival was is that people who were caught in the occult came and publicly burned their magic books. Now, they could have sold these books for a large amount of money, but to show their once and for all break with the past, they came and burnt these books before the Lord. It was during this time that a man named Epiphra was saved.

He was a lay person. He had never heard Jesus speak. He only heard Paul preach about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But he trusted Christ and was wonderfully saved. And he wanted this message to impact his home area. So now as you can think in your mind, Ephesus is located on a little river called the Meander River, and about 200 miles up the Meander River in a little volcanic valley is a small tributary called the Lycus River, and that's the home of Epiphra.

And he started these three churches. You can see these three cities across this little valley, Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. Now, apparently, the gospel was doing really well in these cities, and people were coming to know Jesus Christ, being freed from their paganism.

These churches were mostly Gentile, although there may have been a few believing Jews there. But something happened, and maybe you're somewhat familiar with what happened, because I remember the confusion that the movie The Da Vinci Code caused in the church. I can remember the phone calls I got from all kind of people that I thought should know better.

And the Da Vinci Code, of course, is based on a Gnostic gospel, never found in Greek, only found in Coptic in the second century, called the Gospel of Thomas. And the Gospel of Thomas is a heretical gospel from a particular group of false teachers that we have tagged them as Gnostics, which is from the Greek word for knowledge, gnosis. And they were the main enemy, the main combatant, the main theological challenge of the Orthodox Church for the first two to three hundred years.

This was no small contest of ideas. Now, Gnostics, I want to quickly tell you about them so you will see how crucial what Paul says to these Colossian Christians and the churches of the Lycus River Valley. He's going to mention a lot of words that don't sound that important until you recognize why he says these kind of words to a group of people being influenced by false teachers.

The Gnostics were primarily Greek thinkers. They liked some of the emphases of the but they wanted to make the gospel relevant to Greek thought. Friends, the gospel is relevant because it's from God.

Amen? I can't make the gospel relevant. Every time I hear somebody tell me they're going to make the gospel relevant, I want to run because they always twist it. They always change it.

And that's true of these Greek false teachers. Yes, they use Christian words. Yes, they met with Christian congregations.

Yes, they seem to have a facade of godliness, some of them. But on the main points, which is the person and work of Jesus Christ, they totally changed the gospel message. So let me quickly summarize this problem.

First of all, they believe there was always two things. Two things were eternal. One was spirit, God, and it was good.

And one was Adam's matter, and it was evil. Now, if you know anything about Greek writing, the Greeks blame the flesh for evil. Have you ever heard about the Greek writing that talked about it? Death, the divine spark, and every man got to leave the prison house of the body to return to the, like a drop into the cosmic ocean.

Oh, yuck. Now, because they split God from matter, made one evil and one good, then a holy God, not only did he not create matter, he could not form or structure matter. Now, the problem with this is when the Bible says that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, that dichotomy doesn't fit.

So they had to depreciate either his humanity or his deity. And what they depreciated was his humanity. They would certainly affirm that Jesus was God.

Now, for many of them, the Christ spirit came upon the man Jesus at baptism and left the man Jesus on the cross before the man Jesus died. There's all kinds of inferences because we don't really have a full Gnostic system until the second century. But it is a depreciation of the fully God, fully man.

I want to remind you of 1 John 4, 1-3, which says that if you deny this, you are of the little a Antichrist spirit. So this is no minor Christological issue. Secondly, they would say between a holy God, there has to be a series of gods or angels.

They call them eons. They call all of these together the pleroma of God. Now, the word pleroma is the word for fullness or fill.

So when Paul's going to call Jesus the fullness of God, he is taking false teacher terminology and reworking it into his Christology. Paul does that all the way through this book. So there's a series of angels or eons or whatever.

And so salvation is not Jesus dying, the sinless one dying on behalf of the needs of sinful man. Oh, no, no, not for these guys. If you join their group, they'll give you the secret password, the secret information which only they got from Jesus orally.

And if you join their group, they'll give it to you. And then you can pass through the angelic spheres back to God. Well, Paul did not take this lightly because this has changed the gospel message.

Now, it sounds like the gospel and it may look like the gospel and the terminology may be from Jesus' own words, but it changes the emphasis. And Paul has some of his harshest, harshest statements for these false teachers. Now, if you would look at your Bible with me beginning, I'm going to do just the first paragraph.

The first, really the first little couple of verses are a typical introduction to all of Paul's books and for that matter, all of Greek letters of this period. But the first paragraph is really one sentence in Greek and it runs from verse three to verse eight. So that is what I'm going to try to deal with today.

I want to look at these first two verses quickly because in the introduction to these Greek letters, there is tremendous theological insight into the letter itself. And then I really want to show you how much is available behind these first two sentences because I think we get used to just reading these English texts and never thinking about their implication to the first century readers. And there's so much more here than a cursory or surface reading of English quickly.

And what we do is we just buzz through these books like reading through the whole Bible in one year. Yuck! You may get a pen but you don't understand anything reading that fast. Now, it's interesting to me that we call him Paul.

As you know in the beginning of Acts, he's called Saul of Tarsus. Now, it's quite possible that he had two names. Many of the Jews who lived outside of Palestine had a Greek name and a Hebrew name.

So it's quite possible his parents named him Saul and Paul. But it surprises me in Acts where all of a sudden we're talking about Saul and Saul and Barnabas and Saul and Barnabas and then suddenly it's Paul and Barnabas. Now, something has happened.

Now, I don't know exactly what's happened. Something has happened and we're never told what happened. Now, there's two possibilities.

One of them from a second century non-canonical book, which is really the concluding chapter of a larger book, but it's called Paul and Thelka. It's a story of a love affair between Paul and a widow in Thessalonica. Don't you know Paul loved this? This was like the Inquirer of the second century or something.

The only reason I bring it up is because this little book, obviously not true, but it's from a city where Paul was and it is the only book I know that describes Paul physically. Now, we have so much admiration for him. Many of us think that he was tall and eloquent and handsome.

No, no, friends, that's a polis. Paul is short, dumpy, and he looks so ugly the Corinthians said, we think you stayed in too long. Now, that is not a compliment.

Called him an afterbirth. That is not, that's not nice. And they also said you can't preach well either.

So Paul is not the eloquent one, he's just the highly informed one. Oh my, oh my, would I have a, would I have loved to, love to hurt him. I, I just, just a point here.

I, you know, I taught for so many years with college students and people would come to our chapel, hardest place to preach in the whole world, Baptist Chapel. Some of them had the most wonderful content, wonderful content, but because their delivery was not a certain kind, Baptist young people could not receive it. And others came with a very ornate and fiery presentation with cruddy content and the kids went, oh glory, just made me want to throw up.

Can we tell the difference between form and substance? Man, I hope so. We, we've got to have our experiences trained on a knowledge of the Word of God. So when someone speaks, it's not how they're

dressed or what they wear or where their degrees from, it's what they say.

Short, bow-legged, bushy eyebrows, protruding eyes. He wasn't a handsome fellow. So maybe it's the short, because Paul means little.

Um, I have come to think that the number of times Paul says, I am the least of the saints because I persecuted the church. I really think Paul may have killed some Christians. I know he imprisoned some.

I know he was gung-ho for the persecution of the church before that Damascus Road experience. I think Paul may have taken this name little to describe his own estimation of himself and the wonderful mercy that broke into a gung-ho rabbinical student life that turned him around. I think Paul, if I could speak for Paul, which is sure, sure dangerous, but I think he would say God had mercy on me because I did not understand.

It's not because I knowingly turned away from him or knowingly hurt his, I just didn't get it. Now in the Old Testament, you can have forgiveness for what you don't get. There's no sacrifice for intentional known sin.

Paul says, I didn't know and God had mercy on me. Isn't that a wonderful story? I do not think Paul is a good example for us as far as trusting Christ. I mean, I remember hearing this radio station in Dallas called K-Sky.

Remember that? I was listening one day and they said, yes, if you're not struck blind facing Damascus like Paul was, you can't be saved. I thought, yuck, it'd be my luck. I'd be struck blind and face Corsicana and go to hell.

You know, I know that we have to emulate everything Paul did, but, um, I don't know how much choice Paul had really. I mean, if you're knocked down by bright light from heaven and the guy you're persecuting says, why are you persecuting me? What kind of choice do you have? I think I'll just sit here in the road and mope. No, get up, go to town.

You'll be told what you're to do. Ananias will come. So Paul is a trophy of the grace of God, uniquely equipped.

You'd think he'd be uniquely equipped to reach Jews because of his background, but no, he's uniquely equipped to take the Jewish milieu in which the gospel was formed, the Jewish messianic expectations, the Jewish understanding of the character of God, the Jewish understanding of the need to live righteously and to bring that powerfully into the pagan world. And that's exactly what he did. Now he's called an apostle.

There are two things in this phrase where Paul is saying, God called me. I have the right to speak for him. The first is the word apostle.

And the second is when it says by God's will, Paul is saying, I have the right to speak. Now he's very kind in the way he treats hearers, but he does assert in several of his books, I am an apostle by the will of God called. And he's, what he's saying is I have the same authority as the 12.

And we get into this in the book of Galatians, but not so much in Colossians. He is certainly claiming God's authority. Now, many times, particularly in the gospel of John, Jesus would say the father has sent me.

I don't, I don't send myself. I don't speak my own words. I don't do my own acts.

I only do what the father who sent me has told me to do. Now this word sent, there are several Greek words for sin. This is the one that became the catch word for those uniquely called and equipped to be with Jesus, hear Jesus and write down what Jesus said for the rest of us.

Now I would call this a capital apostle. Now people say, well, Paul never really was with Jesus, never really saw Jesus, but Paul would not say that. He would say, I, Paul's a little Jewish and he would kind of stick it to the 12 here.

He would say to them, you saw the Lord in his earthly body, but I'm the only one that saw the resurrected Lord because he is the only one that saw the resurrected Lord. Maybe he wasn't that tacky, but I think he was. And then when he calls him the Lord Jesus, I mean the Christ Jesus, I hope you realize there's far more here than a first and last name.

Now this word Christ is nothing more than the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word anointed one, which we get Messiah from. I mean, and I think this is a title if it's a Jewish audience, if it's a Gentile audience, it's trying, it's trying to bring some of those Jewish content elements. This is the special promised one.

Now he came in a way somewhat differently from the Jewish expectations. And because of that, the Jews, because of his suffering Messiah, the Jews rejected him because he came with a message of resurrection. The Gentiles rejected him.

And yet he still is. Just recently, we've gone through the book of Hebrews here on Sunday night. And in Hebrews chapter one, verses two and three, I think when John Calvin wanted to write his book on Jesus Christ, he took the outline from Hebrews one, two, and three, where Jesus is the prophet.

Jesus is the king. He sat down, right hand of God. And Jesus is the high priest where he offers a sacrifice once and for all for sin.

Those are all three anointed Old Testament offices united in the person of Jesus Christ makes him the ultimate anointed one, the special coming one. So that's what the title Christ brings. Now the word Jesus is a, really it's the, it's a, it's a name as all Hebrew names that tries to catch the character and flavor of the life.

Whenever there are no J's in Hebrew, that may be surprising to you because there's so many J's in the English new Testament, but there are no J's in Hebrew. All the J's are wise. I think the first people to do a word studies probably in the modern era were Germans.

There are no Y's in German. There are J's and that's where things like Jehovah came. I think we call God Jehovah.

He goes, huh? Jehovah is absolutely made up name. No one God's never been called Jehovah. His name is Yahweh.

We think I'm not sure about that. Whenever you put a J in a vowel at the beginning of a word or an I A H at the end of a Hebrew name, these are contractions for the covenant name for God, the ever living, only living God from the Hebrew verb to be Exodus six. Now the word Hosea, the prophet Hosea is the Hebrew word for salvation.

So if you got y'all, you got to supply a verb to these Hebrew names. They don't come with the verbs. Yahweh bring salvation.

Yahweh is salvation. Salvation is of Yahweh. This is exactly what the Hebrew name Joshua means.

Jesus and Joshua are exactly the same in their meaning. And remember that this was not Joseph or Mary's naming of this child. Remember the angel in Matthew 1 21 that says, you shall call his name Jesus because he shall save his people from their sins.

Now, friends, this is where we get the idea that we've got to remember that Jesus came to die. I want to remind you of Mark 10, 45, where Jesus said, I did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many. Hallelujah.

So this, uh, this knife trial and all this stuff with, uh, Anas and Caiaphas, that, that was not judicial miscarriage. If you'd let me jump to Acts, Acts 2 22, Acts 3 18. This is the predetermined plan of God.

This, this is the one slain before the foundation of the world. This is the one, the innocent one that came to die, not for his own sin, but the sin of the world. And so the name Jesus has that kind of connotation in it and by the will of God.

And I want to remind you again, the, um, the unusual and sovereign call of God on the apostle Paul's life. I mean, it was so traumatic to Paul that he records it three times in the book of Acts. This conversion is recorded.

Something radically, radically happened to Paul. You know, um, I'm interested in the surveys that we do. When I was in Lubbock and close to Texas Tech, when people joined my church, they had to give their testimony, personal testimony, uh, with me and a rotating group of deacons, uh, because I didn't want anyone to join the church who hadn't really trusted Jesus Christ.

And I was amazed how many of these young people who grew up in the church told me, well, we prayed to receive Christ here, 5, 6, 7, 8. But we didn't really get serious, uh, till, uh, first trauma, first sickness, uh, marriage problems, first child. Uh, you know, there was a gap between those who grew up in the church hearing Jesus loves you from the cradle roll, uh, when it suddenly became real to them. And this time in between, whatever time that is from when they get out of the house until this crisis comes, almost 85% of our kids in church do not attend church.

Yuck. But I will tell you this, when people are older and they had this conversion experience from obvious sin and obvious rebellion and obvious, uh, um, life of misery, man, there is a life change instantaneously revealed. And that's the model of Paul's conversion.

Um, he had such an encounter with God. I don't think we have to compare our encounter with God with Paul's, but I think it is smart to say, is there a time in my life where I have met Jesus Christ by faith? Now I've had one or two people in my life say, I've never, I've never felt convicted of sin. And I must admit to you, I looked at them funny, but I can't, that's what they told me.

Looks to me like you gotta be lost before you need to be found. Looks like to me, you gotta know that there's a problem before you need a savior, but whatever. But I would say for the vast majority of us, it's a fair question to say, can you share with me how you came to know Jesus? Now, friends, I'm afraid in Baptist life, sometimes we join the church because of us.

Sonia school teacher makes everybody join the church in their class or a sister comes or a brother comes or revival manipulation occurs. And I worry some, it bothers me that Baptist young people are baptized over and over and over after a youth camps. I mean, something's wrong in the way we do this.

So I want to ask you, if I ask you, could you share with me when, where you trusted Jesus Christ? Could you do that? The vast majority of you could. I quickly want to save you here because I'm not going to get the three through eight. So I'm going to be one in two and get over it.

So just the chicken will be all right. Um, I, I, I don't know what happened to me, but I, I have forgotten, trusted Christ. When people start asking me, Bob, when did you trust Christ? What did you say? How'd you feel? I could not answer it because it's gone in my memory.

Um, it's somewhere back when I was 12. It's somewhere back in my home church, first Baptist Bel Air. Um, I don't remember it.

I don't remember anything about it. I don't remember feeling guilty. I don't remember talking to the preacher.

I don't remember talking to someone, getting ready for it. I just don't remember it. And I, it has caused me the miseries through the year.

And I think Satan has used that. And he said, how do you know you felt the right way? How do you know? How do you know you said the right thing? How do you know? You know, I don't know. I can remember sitting in the balcony of Southwestern Seminary crying as a pastor because I wasn't sure I was a Christian.

And finally, for me, I told God, I, I love you today. I want to serve you. I believe in you.

I don't know what happened at 12. You know what happened at 12. I do not.

But Jesus, I love you today. And that's going to have to be enough. Now, do you see what I did? I transferred my assurance from an initial decision to a contemporary experience.

Now, I want to come back again. If there's not a time in your memory where you've trusted Jesus Christ, do you talk to him? Do you long to know him? Now, that's a fair question. If you never talk to him and never long to know him and never seek his will about decisions you're making and never enjoy coming to be with his people and never read his book, why would you think you're Christian? Paul, by the will of God, had a wonderful encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.

Have you had an encounter with him? Now, he mentions Timothy, our brother. Timothy, what a wonderful guy. He was, you know, his mother was a Hebrew and his father was a Greek.

Converted on the first missionary journey and apparently Paul picked him up on the second missionary journey to take John Mark's place when John Mark went home. Apparently, Timothy was the one that taught the new believers about the faith. We would call it catechism.

And Timothy became such a lieutenant to Paul. He's mentioned with Paul in so many books. I wonder if Timothy was the scribe for many of Paul's books.

Now, we know there are a couple of other scribes, Silas and Tersus, some others, but I think Timothy may have been the scribe. It's not that Timothy co-wrote this, but Timothy really wasn't a pastor. He was really

an apostolic legate.

And he is with Paul in this letter. And to the saints. Now, I'm working through one and two, hang with me.

Did you know the word saint never appears in the singular anywhere in the Bible except Philippians 4.13 where it says, greet every saint, which is still plural. I want to remind you again that being a Christian, I just ask you if there's a time in your life where you know you've done that. The minute we do that individually, and here's the weakness of the American church, the minute we do that individually, we become part of a family, part of a field, part of a building, part of a body.

And then every effort in our life becomes the health and growth of that body. The word saint is a corporate metaphor. It's a metaphor of our togetherness.

It really means holy ones. It comes from the Hebrew, remember these are Hebrew thinkers writing in street Greek. It comes from the idea of being set apart by God for service.

May I say to you, I believe we're saved to serve, not saved to get. What a different orientation that is from Western Christianity. We are holy because the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ has been given into our bank account.

This is a banking term. His righteousness imputed to us. Now we can go back to Genesis 15, 6. We can go back to Romans 4. That's where these metaphors, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

Now that's what Paul picks up on in Romans 4 about justification by faith. But because we are positionally holy, because we are holy because we're in him. Now here's the Jewish emphasis.

This is what Paul brought to the Greek people that they needed to hear from the Jewish emphasis. Because we're holy in him, the goal is that we be holy before others so that others will see who God is by how we treat one another, how we treat them, and they'll want to know our God by the way we live. So positional sanctification becomes progressive sanctification.

God wants a righteous people to help the nations come to know him. Now this is where the cliches, painful cliches, come into being. If you were put on trial for being a Christian, is there enough evidence to convict? Good question.

Good question. Because the goal of salvation is not that you get to go to heaven when you die. The goal of salvation is that God takes you and penetrates your sphere of influence for him.

Now how you do that, what sphere you penetrate, that has to do with your giftedness and availability. And all of us would be differed in that. But the uniform purpose, and I want to say this strongly as I know how, the one unalterable purpose and plan of God for every Christian is Christ's likeness now.

Saints, pardon me. And then he calls them faithful brethren. Faithful brethren.

Now the word faith, I've done this word show to you many times, an Old Testament word. It means someone in a stable stance. It came to be used metaphorically for dependable, loyal, trustworthy.

The thrust of the Old Testament word is faithfulness, the faithfulness of God who calls, the faithfulness of God's word. Now these brothers who have exercised faith in the gospel now are called on to exercise

faithfulness. Now friends, that is the normal flow of the gospel.

Faith and faithfulness. That's the normal flow. Anything other than that, we're not saved because we're faithful.

But if we're saved, we ought to be faithful. Get the thrust? Now these brothers are in the midst of false teachers. These churches are being torn up by false information.

And yet Paul calls them faithful brethren in Christ. Now this in Christ probably is Paul's favorite designation for believers. They weren't called Christians except in Acts in a derogatory way.

The early church, the name for the church was the Way, emphasizing faithful living in the Lord. Paul's favorite metaphor is this in Christ. It's a locative.

It means that we live and move and have our being in him. Could we characterize our life today as living in Christ? Is he the air that we breathe? Is he the life that we live? I'm afraid in modern America, we are so able mentally to compartmentalize our life that we have turned life into secular and sacred. Certain days on the calendar, certain places on the block, certain times of the day and year.

Friends, all of life belongs to God. Faithful living is the characteristic of someone who's met him. It's the characteristic of 24-7.

It's the characteristic of the reliability of the reliable God reliably seen in their life and nothing less. And he mentions grace and peace. Now this is a typical Pauline greeting.

I want to remind you that grace is the Hebrew word charis. The normal Greek letters would enter, like we say dear so-and-so and sincerely, kind of a characteristic pattern of, not absolute, but a characteristic pattern of modern letters. The ancient Greek letters would start out with the word charin, greetings.

Paul took that normal thing and made it Christian, charis. Not greetings, grace. Grace always comes before peace.

Some want to say that grace is the way we talk to Greek speakers and that peace is really reflecting shalom, the Hebrew greeting. I think that's a bit much. I think we're reading far too much, but I want to say this.

Grace always comes before peace. If there's no grace, there's no peace. Amen? And if there is grace, there's got to be peace.

Not only peace with God, but peace with one another. Deliver me from someone who says they love God and hate me. You can't have peace with God and not be affected in the way you treat each other.

Grace and peace is a theological as well as a typical greeting pattern. Grace and peace. Now, my new American standard has to God our Father.

Some add the Lord Jesus Christ, which does come from a later phrase. Typical of these scribes to add something here. I think it's just God the Father.

Now, just a note about God the Father. Father has nothing to do with sexual generation. The virgin birth was not a sexual experience for God or Mary.

Amen? There's not little boy God, little girl God. No. Father also doesn't mean first came the Father and later came the Son.

This is not chronologically sequential. Father is the intimacy of a Jewish family where the Father acts as the religious leader. It is a fellowship word, not a come first word.

And we got to be careful on that because it affects our understanding of the concept of Trinity. Now, I didn't get to the second paragraph. I wanted to do these things.

I want to go through this book like this, which means I'm trying to say to you, there's so much more here than you get from a cursory rapid surface reading. I pray you get you a really good study Bible and you'll know the paragraph I'm going to do next. Do some study, do some reading, do some prayer before you come.

Now, I'm afraid in Baptist life they say, well, we just want three poems and a really meaningful deathbed story and tell us how good we are. Well, go somewhere else. I think that biblical knowledge will bring biblical living.

And I believe that biblical knowledge must be done in literary and historical context. And the more we understand the will of God, I'm convinced the people of God will do it. Amen.

I believe we've got a crisis of biblical literacy in the pew in the evangelical church in America. And I'm going to try to fix it. So I don't want you to tell me, oh, where did you get all that? I read a book.

And if you're hungry, people say to me, oh, I wish I knew the Bible like you. Well, you can. There's a price to be paid, but you can.

And when you do, you're responsible to act on it. What we want is knowledge to impress people and sit in a pew briefly. Biblical knowledge will drive us into the community, drive us into the world, drive us into the prayer closet, drive us into giving, drive us into going, drive us into the needs of humanity.

I pray as we move to this wonderful Christological book of Colossians that you will hear the Holy Spirit speaking to you in areas of your life, drawing you to deeper self-feeding on his word, drawing you into 24-7 commitment, the exercise of your gift, whatever that gift and wherever that gift needs to be used, and that we can stand before him unashamed, unashamed at his coming any moment. Say, Lord, dear Paul, I've run the race. I've fought the fight.

Now there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness that the righteous judge will give in that day. Let's fight the fight. Let's walk the walk.

Let's talk the talk. Let's be the people of God. Let's show them where the beef is.

And we pray. Well, thank you, Lord, for helping me control my cough this morning. I just don't feel well, but Paul sure makes me feel better.

I thank you. I thank you that every one of your children are gifted, that we're important for the kingdom. Every one of us are important and significant, and that we cannot get it done without each other, that we desperately need each other, that grace and peace has affected our life.

It's affected our eternity, but it's also affected our present. We thank you for this wonderful, wonderful gospel truth that found us in our need and has given us such peace and hope. Lord, thank you.

How do we say thank you? The world is searching and searching for meaning, truth, and Lord, it's you. And we don't know why that your spirit has been able to draw us, but we rejoice in that. We ask you now, Lord, as we gather together corporately to prepare our lives and heart for a week in the world, that you will make us different than the world, that our priorities and our energies, that our concern and compassion and care and everything about us will be different because we know you.

I thank you for this church and her ministries. I thank you for her love for you. I pray it would shine like a light that cannot be put out.

And as you open the door for the gospel in Ephesus, oh Lord, Dallas is your people and the people of the world to open a door in Dallas, Lord, that no one can close with this wonderful truth of who you are and what you want to do with the sinful children of Adam. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22521.mp3>

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