

Colossians 2

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Tape #8181
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Let's turn in our Bibles to Colossians, chapter two.

Paul said, *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you*, Or the word, conflict, might read, concern. The Greek word, *agon*, which is a word from which we get our English word, agony. I wish you knew what great concern that I have for you. How that a concern that leads me to sort of agonizing over you.

I wish you knew the great concern that I have for you *and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh*; Now not only was Paul concerned with those churches that he had founded and established. As he writes to the Ephesians and to the others and he speaks of his love and his prayers and his concern. He is also concerned for even those churches that he did not found but were sort of off shoots of the churches that he had founded.

Colosse was probably the church that was probably a branch off of the church in Ephesus, that Paul had founded. But the heart of the apostle, the great heart of the apostle, his concern for the body of Christ, the whole body of Christ and those that have not seen, he said, my face in the flesh

And this is his concern and his desire, ²*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ*; First of all that their hearts would be comforted as they are knit together in love. What a glorious thing when the body of Christ is knit together in love! What a sad thing it is when in the body of Christ there are divisions, there are those with a party spirit kind of an attitude that they bite and devour one another, as James warned, that we be careful that we are not consumed—one of another. So your hearts be knit together in love. What a witness to the world, it is, when we are bound together in love. When we are tied together in love. And what a sad indictment in the eyes of the world when the church is at odds, when the church is destroying, really, each other.

So the desire that they may be knit together in love unto all of the riches of the full assurance of understanding. What a glorious, rich thing it is as you come to an understanding of this glorious mystery of God. And that is Christ in you, the hope of glory as Paul spoke in the previous chapter. What a wonderful things when you come to know the power of the indwelling presence power of Jesus Christ in your life! What riches when you come to this understanding and full assurance as you acknowledge this mystery, this glorious mystery of God!

³*In whom* (then referring to Jesus) *are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. As we said the theme of the Book of Colossians is the preeminence of Christ. Here again is one of those areas where Paul speaks of the glory of Jesus, in whom are hid all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In other words, a declaration of the omniscience of Jesus. All of the treasures of knowledge, anything that can be known, is ever to be known, He knows!

Now the glorious thing is that as we commit our lives to Jesus Christ, He will guide us in the right path, according to His wisdom and His knowledge. Now how many times have you faced a situation where you didn't know what was the right choice? You wanted to make the right choice and you were in a dilemma, because both options looked good, but you knew that one was better than the other. How wonderful it is when we get to those places in life where we are not sure because we don't know the future! How wonderful it is in those places, to be able to commit our ways unto the Lord, to direct our paths and to look to Jesus to guide us, because in Him are hid all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. But He is willing to impart to us, His wisdom, His knowledge.

⁴*And this I say*, (Paul said) *lest any man should beguile you with enticing words*. In contrast to all of the wisdom and the knowledge that is in Jesus, Paul is going to contrast that to the wisdom and the knowledge of the world and of the worldly philosophies. How that those of the world, seek to entice you and to beguile

you with words. And we see that all the time. Children going to universities with starry eyes. They listen to the professors and the professors begin to impress them with their wisdom, with their knowledge, which is earthly wisdom and knowledge. And as they begin to tear down the Bible, they begin to tear down the idea of God. They begin to exalt their own wisdom and knowledge. And how young people, not prepared for that, are oftentimes destroyed as they become beguiled with enticing words.

Paul said, ⁵*For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.* Paul had heard about the church. It was a very orderly church. And Paul liked that. He wished that he could be there, that he could see the order of the church. Now God, I believe, wants order in the church.

You go to some churches and there is a total lack of order. In fact, there is so much movement, so much confusion, that it is hard to really concentrate on the Word of God or upon the message that is being given. What a glorious thing, when there is just order in the church, like we have here. There is glorious order in this church in the services.

Paul longed to be there that he might just rejoice as he beheld their order and secondly, their steadfastness of their faith in Christ. They were not swerving. They were not being moved from that position of faith.

⁶*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:* And so, he liked to see the order, the steadfastness of your faith and walking in Jesus.

⁷*Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.* It's good just to see how Paul just sort of piles things on top of things. And so you are rooted and built up in him. Then you are established in the faith, even as you have been taught and abounding, that is in the faith with thanksgiving.

⁸*Beware (now, this is the wisdom and the knowledge of Christ. They are steadfast in the faith, but beware) lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* Beware of the worldly philosophies. Beware of the vain deceit of worldly philosophies.

Someone gave me some tapes to listen to this past week. While I was driving down to Murietta to minister at a Korean pastors' conference, I listened to the tapes. The fellow was a very clever speaker. He had a proposition that he was seeking to prove. And he followed an interesting method of argument, which sounds very convincing by setting up strawhorses and then tearing them down. In other words he sets up a premise that really, people don't really believe or follow. It's a false premise, but he sets it up as a premise. And then he tears it apart. You think, wow! You know, the guy is smart! No, there is nothing to the premise that he tore down. There was no real substance there at all.

Then he would use a lot of illustrations that seemingly proved his point and would dismiss the Scriptures that would be contrary to his point by just saying, they don't apply. Well, they did apply! When you would listen to him, you would think, wow, he really proved his point. But, if you listen carefully, he didn't prove anything. He actually sought to prove a false premise, but being a clever speaker and having a particular style of speech, he, I suppose, was able to convince a lot of people. He did convince the person who sent the tapes to me and wanted me to listen to them. They wanted the tapes back and they will get them back this week, with a few notations.

But perhaps some of you are old enough to remember a man by the name of Herbert W. Armstrong, who used to be on the radio all the time with the World Tomorrow. And Herbert W. Armstrong was much the same way, in that he was very convincing in his speaking. And he would say, Now why don't the churches tell you, this, friends? And he would go ahead and make his premises and all and like, I'm revealing something that they are trying to hide from you. He was very convincing in his speech. And actually developed many, many, followers in the World Wide church of God.

Fortunately since his death, there has been a radical change in the Worldwide Church of God, as the people who took over that ministry upon his death, came into an understanding of the grace of God and today have made a radical change. The plain truth has become the plain truth. I don't know of any cult that has really had such a radical change towards orthodoxy as has the Worldwide Church of God. It is really

exciting to see what the Lord has done there.

But Paul warns against those who would spoil you through their philosophy and vain deceit as they follow the traditions of men, which are after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. Now, this goes and Paul is aiming towards, the Judaizers, who have developed their traditions and who are insisting that the Gentile believers are also subject to the law of Moses, the ordinances of the law of Moses. They would seek to put on the Gentiles a yoke of bondage that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. You remember that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they were teaching for doctrine, the traditions of man. They had the laws of God, but they had developed tradition and traditional interpretations, by which they nullified the law of God. They made it of no effect because of their traditions. And Jesus was speaking out against that.

⁹*For in him (in Jesus) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Now, the preeminence of Christ in whom are hid all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Now he tells us that in Him, dwelleth all of the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He is God incarnate! He is God come in the flesh! In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God and the Word became flesh and He dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. No man has seen God as anytime, but the only Begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known. With Philip, He said, if you have seen Me, you have seen the Father. How sayest then show us the Father?

Great is the mystery of the Godhead, for God was manifested in the flesh. In Him, dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily. God in sundry times and diverse ways spake to our fathers by the prophets, but in the last days, has spoken to us by His own dear Son! Who is the express image of God, the fullness of the Godhead bodily, dwell in Christ.

But then that next verse is glorious for us ¹⁰*And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:* for you are complete in Him, which is the head of all principalities and powers. Principalities and powers are rankings of angelic beings—good and evil. They are just rankings of angels. And Jesus is the head over them. In showing the deity of Christ, in Hebrews chapter one, the author said, which of the angels, you know, were we commanded to worship? But God said unto the angels, worship Him!

You remember when the rich young ruler came to Jesus, fell at His feet and said, good Master, what good things must I do to inherit the kingdom of God? Jesus asked an interesting question. He said, why do you call Me good? There is only One that is good and that is God.

Now Jesus was either saying I am no good or I am God! I believe He was saying, I am God. Why do you call Me good? It's because you have recognized an interesting truth. If you would be perfect, go sell everything you have and come, He said, and follow Me. You need God! Why do you call Me good? Because you have seen the truth that I am God.

The angels are ordered to worship Jesus. He's the head over all principalities and powers. But the glorious part, here, is that you are complete in Him! Your salvation is complete in Jesus Christ! Your righteousness is complete in Jesus Christ! For you have the righteousness which is of Christ, through faith. And you can't improve upon it!

Though it seems like we are trying to establish rules, establish certain criteria of do's and don'ts, with the thought and the idea that somehow we can improve on that righteous standing before God. So that as we establish these ordinances and as we establish the rules, the thought and the idea is that if I don't do this and I don't that, that will make me more righteous. But you are complete in Him! Your righteousness is complete in Him! And it is through your faith in Jesus Christ that God accounts you as righteous, the righteousness of Christ, which is by faith. You are complete in Him!

What a wonderful transformation this Scripture had in my life, because I had grown up in sort of a legalistic kind of relationship with the Lord. I had grown up with a righteousness that was really more or less predicated on what I did and what I didn't do, as far as ordinances of man, that were established in the church that I was going to. And we were always being pressed with living a life of holiness, but it was a holiness that was predicated upon ourselves, rather than upon Jesus Christ and our faith and trust in Him, which gives us that transformed life.

The problem is that we are trying to transform our lives by our works. No, it is the transformed life that produces the right works, so that I don't look to my works as my basis of my righteousness, I look to Jesus Christ as the basis of my righteousness and my faith in Him, which is evidenced by the life that I live! And we got so often the thing reversed in our minds. And rather than the fruit of our lives, we are feeling that we have got to work to produce the fruit, but the fruit is the result of relationship, always. And you have that right relationship with Christ, it is going to bring forth fruit in your life.

So you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power ¹¹*In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*, In other words, the true circumcision and the idea of circumcision, was that you were to be a spiritual person rather than a fleshly person. The cutting off of the flesh—that was the idea, is that you were denying the flesh life.

It was to the Jew, very similar to our baptism, where our baptism signifies our, dead to the world, dead to the flesh, alive unto God, the things of the Spirit. So the circumcision had the same meaning for the Jew, not to live after the flesh, but to live after the Spirit.

So the true circumcision, the Scripture teaches in the New Testament, was not of the flesh. In fact it talks about that in the Old Testament, too. The circumcision of the heart, it's a heart that is not after the things of the flesh. A heart, that is after the things of the Spirit. That is what God is concerned about. You may have had the fleshly ritual, but a heart that is still after the things of the flesh. The fleshly ritual is totally meaningless!

If you have a heart that is after God and the things of the Spirit, then it isn't necessary to have the physical circumcision. And the same is true of baptism. It is something that has happened in your heart and in your life, where you have identified with Christ, crucified with Christ, buried with Christ and risen with Christ!

Now water baptism doesn't do that. It's a symbol of that which has been done. It's an acknowledgement. It's a public declaration that I am going to be a follower of Jesus. I'm renouncing the old life. I am burying the old life that was governed by my flesh, that I might now live a new life that is governed by the Spirit. But you can be baptized a thousand times in a thousand different ways and it will never save you. It is the faith in Jesus Christ that saves you and you are complete in Him.

So he brings up circumcision, the true circumcision that is not made, the circumcision, which is made without the hands of man *in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ*: Not living after the flesh any more. Jesus said, if you want to come after Me, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. Don't live after the flesh, live after the Spirit, if you want to follow Me. So then Paul goes from circumcision into baptism.

As you are ¹²*Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* ¹³*And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened (made alive) together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;* How many are all? All! He has forgiven you all your trespasses! May God help that to sink in, because Satan is so often bringing up our past, putting it in our face to bring us into condemnation, to drive a wedge between us and our Lord. But there is therefore now, no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus.

So He has made us alive together with Him as He has forgiven all our trespasses. As He has, that is Jesus, ¹⁴*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us,* He is talking about the ordinances of the law, those things that the Pharisees were doing in order to try to develop a righteous standing before God, the works of their flesh that they were seeking to present to God in order to be justified.

Now, actually what the Pharisees were doing in that day, is continued today by so many Jews who are seeking to offer to God their works for an atonement for their sins. The Day of Atonement, the Yom Kippur, today, for the Jew is a day of reflection. It's a day of thinking about the past year, the wrong things that they did and the good things that they did. And their hope is that the good will outweigh the evil.

And by their works, they are seeking to be accepted by God. But their works are involved with the way that they keep their Sabbath, lighting their candles in just the right fashion, breaking the bread, and salting it

and passing it in the right ritualistic way. These things they are looking to in order to have a righteous standing before God.

But when you are trusting in your works for a righteous standing before God, what you have developed is self-righteousness. And God will not accept self-righteousness. The only righteousness that God will accept is the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is interesting that Jesus said, when the Holy Spirit comes, He is going to testify of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, He said, because they don't believe on Me. That's the only sin that a man will ever have to answer for. The failure to believe on Jesus Christ.

But then He said, of righteousness, because I ascend to My Father. What does His ascension to the Father have to do with righteousness? His ascension to the Father is God's witness to the world that this righteousness is accepted in heaven! It's God's witness.

But anything less is unacceptable. So any hope that I might have of trying to be accepted by God because of my good deeds or my righteousness or what I have done or the sacrifices that I have made are destined for disappointment because God won't accept them! The only righteousness that God will receive is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to us by faith. And so Jesus blotted out these handwritings of ordinances, which were against us and contrary to us. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for those who believe. And now our righteousness is through our faith in Him. Blotted out.

and (He) took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; Oh how glorious that is! There on the cross of Jesus, all of these handwritings and ordinances, which were against us, which kept us in bondage were nailed to the cross!

Even as the church gathered to determine the relationship that the Gentile believers should have to the law, Peter said why should we put on them a yoke of bondage that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? It doesn't make sense. And so recognizing that Jesus is our righteousness! Our righteousness is in Him, not in the ordinances of the law!

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, That is the powers of darkness. We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of evil in this dark world.

But He spoiled them because in the cross *he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* He triumphed over them. The victory of Jesus over the powers of darkness, that hold a man in bondage. Jesus sets us free, having triumphed over them through the cross. And through the cross, it was an open manifestation or an open display of His victory.

It's wrong to think that the cross was a symbol of defeat! It's wrong to think that Satan put Jesus on the cross! Satan did his best to keep Jesus off the cross! In the garden of Gethsemane, the final battle was fought.

It looked for a moment like things were sort of wavering, because Jesus said, Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. He was in agony. Great drops of blood were falling to the ground as His sweat turned into the great drops of blood—agony! But then the triumph in the submission to the will of the Father, nevertheless, not what I will, but Thy will be done. It wasn't defeat! It was victory! It was victory for you and for me! It was victory over the powers of darkness, over the principalities and powers that are opposed to you!

So as Paul writes so confidently to the Romans, that I'm persuaded that neither principalities nor powers nor heights nor depths, nor any other created thing is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus because He triumphed over them! A glorious victory and we have that victory in Christ! We need not to be defeated by the enemy. We can live a life of victory through Jesus!

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: And so let no man judge you, Paul said, concerning eating meat or in drink or in respect to the holy days, or of new moons, or the sabbath days.

Now there are groups today that are, for instance, what we mentioned earlier, the Worldwide Church of God. They were hung up on the Sabbath days. That was one of the issues that Herbert W. Armstrong used to bring up, not too much publicly but boy, once he got his talons into them, then they worshipped on the Sabbath day. Now that's still a hang-up that they have. That's one thing they still do, is to worship on the

Sabbath Day.

I talked to the leadership about that. We had lunch with them and discussed many issues. But I brought up the Sabbath Day because I knew that that was one of their things. The leadership said, well, we made so many radical changes already, that we're trying to go slow on this one. But they recognize that it isn't the legalism anymore.

And so here Paul, it's interesting on the "To Every Man an Answer" program, it's interesting how many calls we do get concerning Sabbath Day worship. In fact, so many that we are going to write a little pamphlet so that when people call, we can send out a pamphlet that deals with Sabbath Day worship. There are so many calls because those that are under that sort of legalistic constraint, feeling that they have to worship on the Sabbath Day, really have no understanding of our freedom of worshipping God every day. Paul said, one man esteems one day above another. Another man esteems every day alike. Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind. I'm this latter. I esteem every day alike! Everyday is the Lord's day! Everyday is a day of worship for me!

And but don't let anyone judge you, he said as far as the eating of meat. I believe that Paul probably ate ham. I think he had that kind of freedom.

In respect to the new moons or the sabbath days, the holydays, he said these things, ¹⁷*Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.* The real substance is Jesus.

Now the holydays, they were a shadow of things to come. The holyday of Passover, was a shadow of things to come. Yes, it was a memorial of how God delivered their fathers from Egypt, that they were not killed when the Lord passed through the land that night because they had put the blood of the lamb on their lintel and doorposts of their house. And the Lord said, when I see the blood, I will pass over that house. Yes, it was a memorial that looked back, but it was also a feast, a festival, that had its prophetic aspect to it. It was looking forward to the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world.

It is not by coincidence, it wasn't an accident that Jesus was crucified on the day of Passover. That was a divine plan of God. The substitute of Christ. This was the shadow of things to come. It was fulfilled in the death of Jesus on the day of Passover.

It was not by accident that the Holy Spirit came upon the church on the feast day of Pentecost. They had had this feast day, a day of thanksgiving. A day of offering to God the firstfruits of the harvest as they would cut the corner of the harvest. They would bind the sheaves. They would bring them in. They would offer them to God in a wave offering to the Lord, saying the firstfruits belong to You! Recognizing that we have a big field out here, to harvest, but the first belongs to God.

And so the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the church and the church was born, three thousand accepted Jesus! That was the firstfruit of the thousands that would accept Jesus throughout the many generations, even up to today, those that are accepting Jesus Christ as Lord in their lives. That was the first fruits of the great harvest that has subsequently come in. So these were all a shadow.

The Sabbath Day, what was it? It was a day of rest where you cease from your labor and you rest. Jesus is our sabbath, where we cease from our works in trying to be righteous and we rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. So He is our sabbath. So don't let anybody judge you in respect to meat, drink, holydays, sabbath days. These were all a shadow of that which was to come. The real substance is Jesus.

¹⁸*Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels* (or Mary or saints), That's the whole idea. You are not really worthy to come directly to God. And really, not worthy to come directly to Jesus.

If there is a great king and you feel unworthy to approach him, if you can somehow get close to his mother, and tell his mother to go talk to your son for me, you know. That's the idea of Mary as a mediatrix.

Of course they are trying to make that now the church dogma, that all prayers offered to Jesus must go through Mary. That's the dogma that they are now seeking that the Pope will make official, by using his infallible declarations to make that scripture. This voluntary humility to say well, really you aren't worthy to come to God. You are complete in Jesus! He opened up the door for us. At His death the veil of the temple was rent into the holy of holies signifying that we now have access directly to God through Jesus Christ. We can come boldly to the throne of grace to receive mercy, or mercy to receive grace in our time of need.

And it's interesting that Jesus when writing to the church of Ephesus said, at least you have this, you hate the dogma of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

When He wrote to the church in Pergamos, He rebuked them because they held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Jesus said, I hate!

The Greek words, *nikol*, and *laiti*, refer to a priesthood over the laity or the setting of someone between. Now Jesus died that the access might be given to each of us to come to God. To say that you have to go through someone else to get there, that's defeating the very thing that Jesus came to do! He came to give you access to the Father! And no wonder He said, I hate it, because He died in order to give you direct access to God. And so how glorious it is that we can come.

Don't let any man beguile you, saying, well you know, brother, God is so great and all, I just don't feel worthy to come to God, so I pray to the saints and I ask St. Charles to go in and intercede for me. You can't do it.

You can go directly and the Lord will hear your prayers just as quickly as He'll hear my prayers. That's the glorious thing! You're His child! None of us are any closer to God than any other person. We are all close to God. We can all come to God. Through Jesus Christ, we all have access. It's the same Lord! And we all have access unto the Father.

intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, It's sort of comes off as a thing of humility. Well, I just don't feel worthy to go to God. You know, it comes off as sort of a humility, but it's a false humility because in their minds they are puffed up.

¹⁹*And not holding the Head*, (They are not holding the Head, of course who is Jesus.) *from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*. The place of Jesus, the Head, the whole body, knit together by Him! And receiving nourishment from Him and increasing together in Him, with the increase of God.

²⁰*Wherefore* (now we are coming to a conclusion) *if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world*, I've been crucified with Christ. I'm dead to the rudiments of the world. A dead man can do nothing to help himself. You can do nothing to help yourself, but through Christ, all that is necessary is available.

Wherefore being with Christ from the rudiment of this world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, It doesn't make sense. I am dead.

If, say, you are involved in one of these chases that seems to be so popular lately, and the police are pursuing you. And you are not yielding to the flashing red lights and all, but are racing down the street. And your speed is up above a hundred miles an hour. You've pulled off the freeway and now you are going through side streets at breakneck speed. You lose control and you smash into a tree and you are instantly killed. As the police then come up and they see your dead body slumped over the steering wheel, they don't get out their pad and start writing out a ticket. You're dead! The law has no power over you! You are dead. And so if you are dead with Christ, then why are subject to these ordinances?

Of ²¹*Touch not; taste not; handle not;* (These things, he said, are) ²²*Which all are to perish with the using;* Jesus said it isn't what goes into a man's mouth that defiles a man, it's what comes out of his mouth that defiles him.

So these things are all that perish with the using *after the commandments and doctrines of men?* ²³*Which things* (now, they) *have indeed a shew* (in other words, they look good. They have a show) *of wisdom in will worship*, (In other words, it shows that you have a strong will and they have a show of wisdom in this will worship) *and humility, and neglecting of the body;* Your ability to fast and you know, you're not really comfortable coming to God. You feel that, you know, He's too great and you're too nothing, you know. So they have this show of wisdom in the will worship, humility and the neglecting of the body. Asceticism.

But *not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh*. What he is saying that actually the net result that you just get self-righteous over it. And that's the by-product always of righteousness that is from rules and regulations. It becomes a self-righteousness.

But we need to remember that God said (Isaiah 64:6) that our righteousness is as filthy rags in His sight. So you can choose to stand before God, clothed in filthy rags or you can stand before God clothed with the

righteousness, which is of Jesus Christ, through faith. I know how I want to stand before Him! And how I thank God that I'm complete in Him, in whom the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells, and the completeness that I have in my standing before God. I'm not afraid of standing before God because of that complete righteousness that I have in Jesus.

As I mentioned the other day, I think it was Thursday night, a fellow is coming to see me tomorrow who has been to a holy island in Ethiopia, where the people there declare that they have the Ark of the Covenant. And they are ready this year to reveal it to the world. They have had it from the time, they say, of Manasseh. They have built a temple for it there on the sacred island. No one is allowed on the sacred island, except by invitation. He was there. He is coming to see me tomorrow. They have asked him to bring back some religious leaders to look at it and to verify that it is the Ark of the Covenant.

So someone was asking me yesterday, how I would know if it was really the Ark of the Covenant? I said, well, I'll touch it! But I would not be afraid to touch it because that belongs to the old covenant. And I have a new and a better covenant, the living covenant through Jesus Christ.

I'm complete in Him and the righteousness of Christ, which is by faith, has been imputed to me. It's glorious that we can come boldly unto God.

So Paul lays out this glorious freedom that we have in Christ! But it isn't a freedom to do, but a freedom not to do! You see, I don't have to do these things to be righteous or to feel righteous.

Thank God, there's just a lot of junk in the world that I don't have to partake of because of the strength and the victory that I have in Christ. Because His love is so important to me that I would not want to do anything that would hurt or offend Him.

Thus, I am bound by cords that are much stronger than the cords of the law. I'm bound by the cords of love. It's an interesting thing when you are bound by the cords of the law, you're always trying to sort of see how much you can get by with, without getting caught. But bound by the cords of love, you don't want to do anything that would hurt, violate or hinder that relationship that comes through love. A stronger bond, the bond of His love.

Father, we thank You that we tonight are bonded together with Jesus Christ in cords of love. You have drawn us by Your love into this relationship. We thank You, Lord, that we have this completeness in Jesus and He is our sabbath, and that we rest in Him. And we rest in His finished work. How grateful we are Lord, that You have triumphed over the principalities and powers, that You defeated them on the cross. You made an open display of Your victory. And tonight we are victorious through Jesus. Now, Lord, help us that we might walk in the strength and the power of Your Spirit. That we might walk in a way that is pleasing to You. May that be the goal of our lives, to please You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.