
Session 01 Introduction and Reading Through the Letter

Session 02 Giving Thanks for the Gospel

01] Colossians 1:1-4:18 NET From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 1:2 to the saints, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, at Colossae. Grace and peace to you from God our Father!

1:3 We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 1:4 since we heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints. 1:5 Your faith and love have arisen from the hope laid up for you in heaven, which you have heard about in the message of truth, the gospel 1:6 that has come to you. Just as in the entire world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, so it has also been bearing fruit and growing among you from the first day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth. 1:7 You learned the gospel from Epaphras, our dear fellow slave—a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf— 1:8 who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

- 1] The first “chunk” of the letter goes from 1:3-23.
- 2] The Father of the Lord Jesus (1:3) is also our Father (1:12-13).
- 3] 1:5 “laid up” may also be translated “stored away.” Used in Luke 19:20 of a coin.
- 4] Hope is the source or foundation of Faith and Love. See Titus 1:1-2
- 5] The Message of Truth presents REALITY therefore it can be relied upon.
- 6] Here, it is interesting to note that the TRUTH finds us in the Gospel. We were not looking for God, but He was looking for us.
- 7] The background here is clearly Genesis where the Word of God also creates new life and issues in the commands to humanity to “be fruitful and multiply.” The Gospel is a blessing in that it empowers us to do that for which God has created us and set us apart.
- 8] The word “minister” in 1:7 is the word *diakonos* - servant [deacon].

Session 03 Paul's Prayer for the Church

09] 1:9 For this reason we also, from the day we heard about you, have not ceased praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 1:10 so that you may live worthily of the Lord and please him in all respects—bearing fruit in every good deed, growing in the knowledge of God, 1:11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness, joyfully 1:12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light.

1] The structure of Paul's prayer is important:

To **fill with the knowledge of God's will**

[in all spiritual wisdom and knowledge]

so that [*for the purpose*]

you may **live worthy** of the Lord and

please Him in all respects

by [gives the ways to do the preceding]

1) **Bearing fruit** in every good deed,

2) **Growing** in the knowledge of God,

3) **Being strengthened** with all power

for the display of all patience and steadfastness

4) **Joyfully giving thanks** to the Father...

2] In the background: See Daniel 2:2-23 on Knowledge, Wisdom and Power

3] "Strengthened with all power" points to the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. See Ephesians 1:19, 6:10

4] The Theme of Deliverance points to the Hebrew narratives of God's salvation of Israel. See Exodus 6:6-8, Psalm 107, Isaiah 42.

Session 04 The Christ Hymn

- 05] 1:13 He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves, 1:14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
- 06] 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, 1:16 for all things in heaven and on earth were created by him—all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him. 1:17 He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him. 1:18 He is the head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that he himself may become first in all things. 1:19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son 1:20 and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of his cross—through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

1] The Priene Inscription

“SINCE PROVIDENCE, WHICH HAS ORDERED THE WHOLE OF OUR LIFE, SHOWING CONCERN AND ZEAL, HAS SET IT IN MOST PERFECT ORDER BY GIVING [HIM] TO US, FILLING HIM WITH VIRTUE FOR DOING THE WORK OF A BENEFAC-
TOR AMONG MEN, SENDING HIM AS A SAVIOR BOTH FOR US AND FOR THOSE WHO COME AFTER US, THAT HE MIGHT END WAR AND ARRANGE ALL THINGS AND SINCE HE, BY HIS APPEARANCE, EXCELLING EVEN OUR OWN ANTICIPATION OF THE GOOD NEWS (EUANGELION) SURPASSING ALL PREVIOUS BENEFACTORS AND NOT EVEN LEAVING TO POSTERITY ANY HOPE OF SURPASSING WHAT HE HAS DONE, AND SINCE THE BIRTHDAY OF THE GOD, WAS THE BEGINNING FOR THE WORLD AND FOR THE GOOD NEWS (EUANGELION) TO MEN THAT CAME BY WAY OF HIM...”

- 2] For parallels see 2 Corinthians 4:4. Christ is the *eikon* (icon) of the One True and Living God. To see Christ is to see God.
- 3] The First Born, see Psalm 89:27. Speaks to Jesus being firstborn in terms of

His inherited rights. The term is used of Israel in Exodus 4:22.

- 4] Firstborn from among the Dead - Jesus is the first person to be resurrected. See also Romans 1:3; His resurrection has set Him apart as the “Son-of-God-in-power.”
- 5] For background on reconciliation see Isaiah 52:6-10
- 6] Paul may be drawing on Proverbs 8:22-31 for the content of this hymn. Jesus is wisdom personified.

Session 05 The Hope of Christ’s Peace

- 07] 1:21 And you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds, 1:22 but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him— 1:23 if indeed you remain in the faith, established and firm, without shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard. This gospel has also been preached in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become its servant.
- 1] The issue of Peace, **Shalom**, draws on a rich foundation laid in the Hebrew Scriptures: Isaiah 52; 53:5; 66.

Session 06 The Joy of Christ’s Sufferings

- 02] 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I fill up in my physical body—for the sake of his body, the church—what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. 1:25 I became a servant of the church according to the stewardship from God—given to me for you—in order to complete the word of God, 1:26 that is, the mystery that has been kept hidden from ages and generations, but has now been revealed to his saints. 1:27 God wanted to make known to them the glorious riches of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 1:28 **We proclaim him by instructing and teaching all people with all wisdom so that we may present every person mature in Christ. 1:29 Toward this goal I also labor, struggling according to his power that powerfully works in me.**
- 03] 2:1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you, and for those in

Laodicea, and for those who have not met me face to face. 2:2 My goal is that their hearts, having been knit together in love, may be encouraged, and that they may have all the riches that assurance brings in their understanding of the knowledge of the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 2:3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 2:4 I say this so that no one will deceive you through arguments that sound reasonable. 2:5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

- 1] Jesus suffered for us in a *redemptive* way. Leaders in the Body of Christ are called to similar form of suffering, bearing the afflictions of others for the sake of others. See 2 Corinthians 1:4-6; 4:10-12, 16-18 and chapter 11.
- 2] Suffering from affliction is a key tool God uses to perfect His people. See Acts 14:22 and Hebrews 12. Even Jesus' own suffering "perfected" Him, qualified Him, made Him fit to be our perfect High Priest. See Hebrews 2:18 and 5:8.
- 3] "Christ in you" - see Romans 8:10, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 4:19, Ephesians 3:17.

Session 07 Identifying the False Teaching

- 04]** 2:6 Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 2:7 rooted and built up in him and firm in your faith just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.
- 05]** 2:8 Be careful not to allow anyone to captivate you through an empty, deceitful philosophy that is according to human traditions and the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 2:9 For in him all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form, 2:10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.
- 1] In 2:6, this is the only time that the verb "received" is used by Paul with a personal object. Usually the objects are impersonal, focusing on doctrine or teaching (1 Corinthians 11:23, Galatians 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 4:1).
Here we have received Christ Himself, not just teaching *about* Him!
 - 2] In 2:7 all the verbals are passive (rooted, built up, firm) which points to the reality that this is something that God the Father is doing to us and for us.

- 3] The elemental powers or spirits of the world - see parallels in Colossians 2:20, Galatians 4:3, 9.
- 07.1 The Characteristics of False Teaching:
 - 1] Empty, deceitful and hollow - it cannot deliver what it promises.
 - 2] It is based on human tradition.
 - 3] It is based on Demonic influence (the elemental forces of the world).
 - 4] It is not according to Christ.
 - 5] Misuses Scripture.
 - 6] Claims to have special, “inner circle” or “mystery” knowledge.
 - 7] Usually involves some harsh treatment of the body or unhealthy focus on the body.

Session 08 The Circumcision of Christ

- 08]** 2:11 In him you also were circumcised—not, however, with a circumcision performed by human hands, but by the removal of the fleshly body, that is, through the circumcision done by Christ.
- 1] In this difficult section, Paul may have in mind here the “circumcision of the heart” that had been introduced in Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6. God must do an “internal” spiritual work of cutting away our “flesh” so that we are free from its enslaving power.

08.1 Death and Spiritual Circumcision

In Paul’s letters, the concepts of our dying and rising with Christ are central. As we saw in the last lesson, there are false gospels that seek to steal the power and the joy of the Gospel in our lives. One of the ways that they do this is to take away from the reality of Christ’s completed work for us.

In Colossians 2, Paul discusses an idea that is helpful for understanding how our new life in Christ has truly set us free from the power of sin. Read the following passage:

Colossians 2:11-12 11 In him (Christ) you also were circumcised not, however, with a circumcision performed by human hands, but by the removal of the

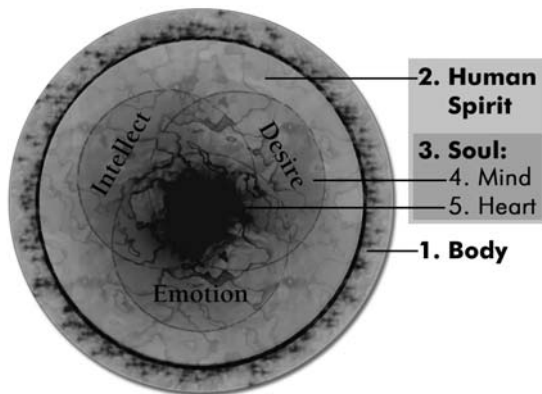
fleshly body, that is, through the circumcision done by Christ. 12 Having been buried with him in baptism, you also have been raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead.

The main thing that we want to focus on here is the idea of the “circumcision not performed by human hands” – the spiritual circumcision. Notice three basic things about what Paul says here:

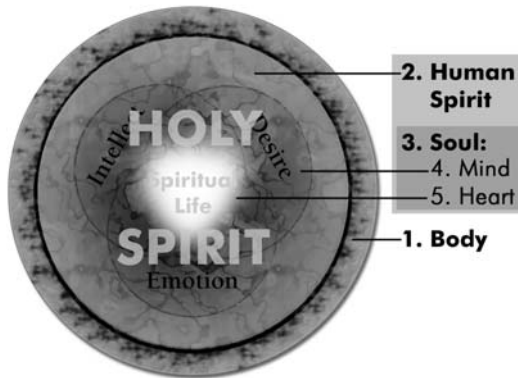
- 1] This spiritual circumcision is not something done by “human hands” – it is not physically cutting away a piece of physical flesh.
- 2] This spiritual circumcision is the “removal of the fleshly body.”
- 3] This spiritual circumcision is something that Christ performs on all of us – even women who are “in Christ”!!!

Notice that immediately after this, Paul once again alludes to our being buried with Christ in baptism and being raised in the power of God through faith. We believe that Paul is discussing a concept that fills out what he discussed in Romans 6:6 about our “body of sin” no longer dominating us. Let’s see if we can understand this by illustrating it with our circles.

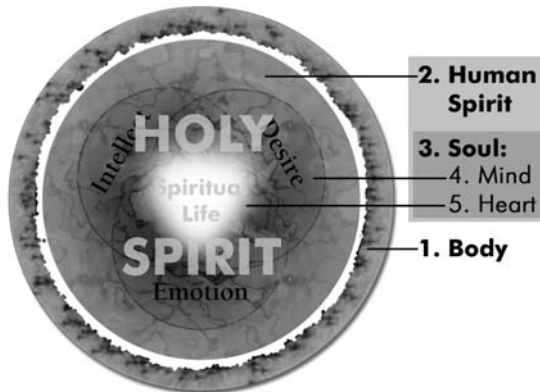
We were dead in sin in Adam:



Remember this circle? It represents that we were 1) born “dead in sin with 2) Our hearts and minds are darkened to the effect that 3) we loved darkness rather than light and were therefore 4) alienated from God our Creator – the Root and Source of all life and 5) were enslaved to sin being 6) held captive by the Devil. But then God intervened ...

We were made alive in Christ:

God gave us life – spiritual life through our relationship with Him by 1) “enlightening” our hearts and minds through the work of His spirit so that we can see and receive truth in order to 2) love God and 3) be reconciled to God and called His Children. This alone would be enough, but God want’s us to be truly free.

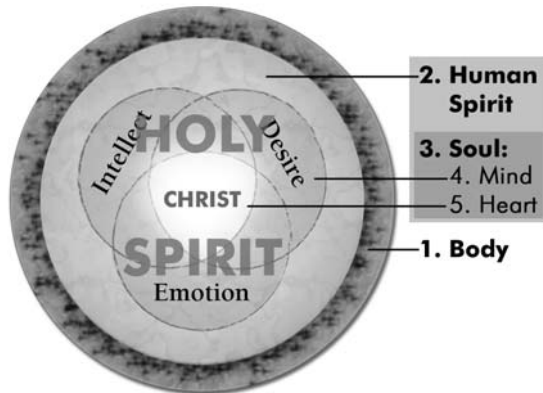
We were spiritually circumcised:

Although we are spiritually a new creation in Christ, our physical bodies are still unredeemed and indwelt by sin. (We will see this in our next several lessons). Christ “cuts” the spiritual link between our corrupt and dying bodies and our “spiritual selves” so that we are no longer enslaved to the “desires of the flesh.” Before this happened we were ruled by our lusts and desires shaped by our bodily affections. Remember how Paul addressed this in his letters:

Ephesians 2:1-3 ... you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you formerly lived according to this world’s present path, according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom all of us also formerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest ...

Ephesians 4:22 You were taught with reference to your former way of life to lay aside the old man who is being corrupted in accordance with deceitful desires,...

Now in Christ, we have been set free from this tyranny because our “old body of sin” has been cut away. We are now free to live according to the Spirit.



We are going to trace out all of these ideas in future lessons. For now we want you to see that although our bodies are “dead because of sin” we are spiritually alive and able to live righteously by the power of God’s Spirit. This does not mean that we are perfect – the sin that dwells in our flesh (fallen physical bodies) can take over when we do not live by faith. We will be finally perfected when sin is eradicated from our physical bodies at the resurrection.

Our spiritual death and resurrection with Christ mean that we now have access to a whole new way of life. This new way of life is one that is patterned on Jesus’ own righteousness and goodness. It is a life shaped by truth, goodness and glory. As we think on all that God has done for us in Christ, we must also realize that He has given us all that we need to become the people that He desires for us to be. Only as we give ourselves over to these ideas will we find the security, satisfaction and significance that we all desire.

Session 09 Putting on Jesus’ True Way of Life

04] 2:12 Having been buried with him in baptism, you also have been raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead. 2:13 And even though you were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he nevertheless made you alive with him, having forgiven all your transgressions. 2:14 He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness expressed in decrees opposed to us. He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. 2:15 Disarming the rulers and authorities, he has made a public

disgrace of them, triumphing over them by the cross. 2:16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you with respect to food or drink, or in the matter of a feast, new moon, or Sabbath days— 2:17 these are only the shadow of the things to come, but the reality is Christ! 2:18 Let no one who delights in humility and the worship of angels pass judgment on you. That person goes on at great lengths about what he has supposedly seen, but he is puffed up with empty notions by his fleshly mind. 2:19 He has not held fast to the head from whom the whole body, supported and knit together through its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.

05] 2:20 If you have died with Christ to the elemental spirits of the world, why do you submit to them as though you lived in the world? 2:21 “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” 2:22 These are all destined to perish with use, founded as they are on human commands and teachings. 2:23 Even though they have the appearance of wisdom with their self-imposed worship and false humility achieved by an unsparing treatment of the body—a wisdom with no true value—they in reality result in fleshly indulgence.

- 1] In 2:12 our faith is placed in “the power of God...” This is a one time usage and therefore should be noted.
- 2] The “Certificate of indebtedness” is not the Law but the “IOU” that we owe God due to our rebellious sinfulness. Jesus has nailed this to the Tree and left it there.
- 3] In 2:15 Jesus “strips” (used also in 2:11 and 3:9) the “ruler and authorities” which must be a reference to demonic rulers and authorities, see 2 Corinthians 2:14. Jesus defeats the “powers” not by opposing them force for force, but by allowing them to *exhaust* their wisdom and power against the power of His indestructible life (Hebrews 2:14-15 and 7:16). The powers shatter themselves against the rock of Christ’s self-sacrificial love exercised in fulfillment of the will and desire of the Father. *There is no greater “power” than that of self-sacrificial love.*

Session 10 Setting Our Imaginations on Christ

04] 3:1 Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 3:2 Keep thinking about things above, not things on the earth, 3:3 for you have died and your life is hidden with

Christ in God. 3:4 When Christ (who is your life) appears, then you too will be revealed in glory with him. 3:5 So put to death whatever in your nature belongs to the earth: sexual immorality, impurity, shameful passion, evil desire, and greed which is idolatry. 3:6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. 3:7 You also lived your lives in this way at one time, when you used to live among them. 3:8 But now, put off all such things as anger, rage, malice, slander, abusive language from your mouth. 3:9 Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with its practices 3:10 and have been clothed with the new man that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created it. 3:11 Here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.

- 1] “keep seeking” - parallels in Matthew 6:33, John 5:44 and Romans 2:7.
- 2] Our life is “hidden” - probably speaks about it’s security, see Psalm 27:5
- 3] Seeing Christ will complete our sanctification process: 1 John 3:2-3
- 4] **Character** is formed by the **choices** we make in the **story** in which we find ourselves. Since the Gospel, the Word of Truth, has revealed the True Story of Reality to us, we can now make the true, good and glorious choices that display God’s image in us. We are now a new humanity in Christ, *icons* of the one who created us.
- 5] The Story of Christ is also our Story:
He died, He was buried, He was Raised, He will be Revealed.
We died, We were buried, We are Raised, We will be Revealed.

Session 11 Letting the Life of Christ Captivate Us

- 06] 3:12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 3:13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others. 3:14 And to all these virtues add love, which is the perfect bond. 3:15 Let the peace of Christ be in control in your heart (for you were in fact called as one body to this peace), and be thankful. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God. 3:17 And what-

ever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- 07]** 3:18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord. 3:21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they will not become disheartened. 3:22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in every respect, not only when they are watching—like those who are strictly people-pleasers—but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord. 3:23 Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people, 3:24 because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as the reward. Serve the Lord Christ. 3:25 For the one who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there are no exceptions.
- 08]** 4:1 Masters, treat your slaves with justice and fairness, because you know that you also have a master in heaven.
- 09]** 4:2 Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. 4:3 At the same time pray for us too, that God may open a door for the message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4:4 Pray that I may make it known as I should. 4:5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunities. 4:6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer everyone.
- 10]** 4:7 Tychicus, a dear brother, faithful minister, and fellow slave in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 4:8 I sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are doing and that he may encourage your hearts. 4:9 I sent him with Onesimus, the faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.
- 11]** 4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him). 4:11 And Jesus who is called Justus also sends greetings. In terms of Jewish converts, these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a slave of Christ, greets you. He is always struggling in prayer on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. 4:13 For I can testify that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis. 4:14 Our dear friend Luke the physician and Demas greet you. 4:15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters who are in Laodicea and to Nympha and

the church that meets in her house. 4:16 And after you have read this letter, have it read to the church of Laodicea. In turn, read the letter from Laodicea as well.

4:17 And tell Archippus, "See to it that you complete the ministry you received in the Lord."

- 12]** 4:18 I, Paul, write this greeting by my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.