

## The Consequence of Ideas, Part 2

*The Consequences of Ideas*

By Ty Blackburn

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**Providence Church**  
2146 Buford Hwy  
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

**Website:** [www.providenceduluth.org](http://www.providenceduluth.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch](http://www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the second chapter of Colossians, Colossians 2, continuing a message we began last Sunday. The title of the message is "The Consequence of Ideas." The consequence of ideas. It's a title that I borrowed from a book by R. C. Sproul with that same title, "The Consequence of Ideas," and it's a summary of what Paul is really addressing in Colossians 2, really in Colossians in general but we've made verses 8 to 10 our focus and we're going to read chapter 2, verses 1 to 10 again to see the context. The idea the consequence of ideas, ideas have consequences. When we accept concepts and we receive ways of thinking from the world that are not consistent with God's word and we bring them into our thinking, those ideas have consequences in our lives, they make an impact, and so this is something that is of great urgency at all times for Christian people who live in a world that lies in the power of the evil one, as Jesus described it in John 14 to 16 three different times. He speaks of the ruler of this world and so Paul says the god of this age, world system. And so the world system is made up of ways of thinking and so what happens continually for Christians is we who have now been taken, made new, we are in the world but not of the world. We can't be taken out of the world, we have to stay in the world while we're here in this life but we're called to be not of the world but to be different and it has tremendous implications when we don't heed that instruction, when we allow ourselves to be worldly in our thinking, to imbibe worldly concepts and to blend them with the gospel, with the teachings of Scripture. It's not a small thing, it's a tremendously impactful reality and in some sense our lives have to be continually battling that because it's a continual process.

The passage that we've been talking about on Wednesday evenings and we're trying to apply this in some real practical ways on Wednesday evenings with the renewing your mind thinking biblically discussion that we're having and the idea that's taken from Romans 12:2 where it says, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Do not go on being conformed by the world." The world is continually exerting a pressure to conform you into its mold, to form you into its mold and we are to resist that, continuing ongoing pressure to conform us by being transformed. An inside-out transformation that has to be continually ongoing or we will be conformed, and this inside-out transformation happens through the word of God and the same concept we see really here in Colossians. Paul is basically addressing how the

Colossian church is being conformed to worldly thinking and he's trying to transform them by showing them the glory of Christ.

And so the consequence of ideas. That's our focus. We'll read chapter 2, verses 1 to 10 and we're focusing in particular on verses 8 to 10. So chapter 2, verse 1,

1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. 5 For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. 6 Therefore just as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so also walk you in Him, 7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for Your word, that You have not left us in this dark world without Your precious word to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. How grateful we are that it not only shows us how to live, it's not just merely practical wisdom though we thank You for that, and the book of Proverbs is such a treasure of that, but it shows us that real wisdom is seen in coming to Christ Himself and in possessing Him, we possess all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge when we possess Christ. Lord, help us see the riches that are ours in Jesus. Help us not to be captivated by philosophy and empty deception but help us to be free and to walk in freedom so that the glory of our Savior might be evident, the fragrance of Christ might be expressed and experienced by others around us. We pray this in Jesus' name and for His glory. Amen.*

So the consequence of ideas, part 2, is the title, and we talked about essentially last week we covered the first two major points and I'll just kind of quickly review those. The first point was a clear and present danger, and that is the idea that false teaching is a clear and present danger. It's astonishingly always a danger. I say astonishingly because it's surprisingly a reality that we don't really expect but that almost all the New Testament epistles are addressed specifically at specific false teachings that were already growing up in the new church in the first century. That's really something that's staggering. It was costly to be a Christian and yet there were people who were deluded into thinking they

were Christians who were teaching false things, and the churches had to be continually warned about false teaching.

We saw last week in that clear and present danger how we see all throughout the Old Testament and throughout the New Testament this warning against false teachers. It's a clear and present danger. The second thing we saw was that we see Paul dealing with false teaching and how it comes in the church, there is a consistent and effective strategy. The second point was a consistent and effective strategy and the consistent and effective strategy is to bring things from the world and merge them and blend them with the gospel, that is, to bring worldly ideas that are, as we read in our passage, persuasive arguments, well-reasoned, apparently well-reasoned argumentation that's really not biblically well-reasoned because it comes from, verse 8, "philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." It's rooted in man-made philosophy, the elemental principles of this world, the basic things that ungodly people hold to be true, that we all as sinners coming into this world apart from Christ, that we all basically kind of believe to be true. And these elementary principles, there's a sense in which when someone says them, it strikes a chord in the soul of man. "Yes, that's right," we think and yet in reality these things are not according to Christ. They are the elementary principles of the world. I shared one last week, trust your heart. You know, that's one example and people just kind of assume that's true, be authentic to what you feel. Your feelings are a reliable guide. That's an elementary principle that is completely unbiblical but doesn't it sound right? It sounds right because we were all conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, and we've grown up in a world system that is built on these lies that are really all rooted in the original lie of Satan that you can be like God.

So Paul is dealing with false teaching in Colossae where this strategy, this clear and effective strategy is being worked out. Satan's strategy is to bring unbiblical ideas into the church, into the thinking of individual Christian believers and in doing that, he's able to take captive true believers. He takes captive, that is, he plunders the church. We mentioned that this verb "takes captive" does mean "to capture," but the emphasis of the word in the capturing is the plundering that goes along with it. One army fighting another army, they capture the other army and they plunder, they take the weapons, they take the valuables of the person they captured, maybe even the best garments. They strip away all that is valuable to the person that is captured and Paul is saying, "Listen, Christian, you are being captured, you are being plundered by false teaching in the church." And this is such an urgent deadly reality that he summons them back to the purity of the gospel.

That's the consistent effective strategy, blending ideas that seem to have a ring of truth but are ungodly and unbiblical into the gospel. This is Satan's strategy throughout time. It just changes flavors but it's the same strategy year after year after year. And it's effective. Those are the first two points and the third point we come to today and we're going to spend the rest of our time on this morning is a costly and tragic outcome. So point 3 really is our theme today: a costly and tragic outcome, and there are going to be three subpoints that will be the three points of this message, and the subpoints are going to be who, what and how.

A costly and tragic outcome. This is really focusing on the plundering itself. The outcome is that we are plundered, that the blessings, and it's interesting how Paul uses language that emphasizes what blessings we have in Colossians 2:2. He said, "their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth," do you see that, all the wealth, "that comes from the full assurance of understanding." That for a Christian there is all this wealth, this spiritual wealth that comes as you understand who Christ is and who you are in Christ. You have attained and you will attain as you understand more of the true undiluted gospel, you will attain more and more of the wealth that God has given you in Christ. And he goes on to say how is this wealth experienced, verse 3 or actually the end of verse 2 into verse 3, "the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself." That as you come to understand more of Jesus himself, as Jesus himself becomes more your union with him, your experience of him, your knowledge of him becomes deeper and more real, then you will experience this wealth because in him, "in whom," verse 3, "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Christ is everything and so that to have Christ is to have everything, and so Satan's strategy is to blend stuff in, blend unbiblical thinking, unbiblical ideas, unbiblical emphases into the church to plunder us, and the way he plunders us, in a word, is distraction. Distraction.

It's seen there in verse 8 when he says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Those are key words, rather than according to Christ. And look what he says next, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete." You see, Satan wants to distract you from Christ because in him all fullness exists, and when you have him, you have everything, and when Satan can distract you from that, suddenly you get preoccupied with everything else but Christ and you find that you have nothing. That is essentially the strategy. This is why Colossians contains some of the most glorious Christological passages in all of Scripture. They were being captivated, led away from the purity of a focus on Christ and who they were in union with Jesus, and they were being plundered. And so Paul sets before them the portraits of the great Savior of our souls and we see him in his majesty and his glory, and his message is, "Don't lose sight of Christ. Don't be distracted from who He is."

It's the costly and tragic outcome is that we are plundered and then Christ is misrepresented. The ultimate tragedy is that part. It's bad enough that we're plundered, that we live like paupers when we should live like sons of the King, but what's worse is the reputation of the King is damaged by the sons of the King living like paupers. Christ is blasphemed and dishonored in your and my discontentment. He is blasphemed and dishonored in our joylessness. He is blasphemed and dishonored in our lovelessness, in our fear and anxiety. Why are we afraid? Why are we anxious? Why are we not loving our enemies? Why are we not content in all circumstances? Why are we not experiencing joy unspeakable, full of glory, when Christ is our all in all? That's the force of what Paul is dealing with and that is a perennial struggle of the church in every age and in every place, to stay focused on Christ.

So the costly and tragic outcome is distraction that leads to emptiness and dishonor to our Savior. To avoid this distraction, Paul gives us a blueprint here in verses 9 and 10. He basically says, "Don't be distracted," our first subpoint today, first point in this message, the theme is a costly and tragic outcome, distraction, dishonor, the first point is: don't be distracted from who Christ is. Don't be distracted from who Christ is. Who he is, he is fully God. All the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form in Christ. "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete."

Bodily form. He is a man. He's fully man. But he's more than just man. He's fully man, he's fully God. Look at the emphasis of Paul, the fullness of deity. This word "fullness" is a rich word, it means "to be filled to the brim," it means to be filled all the way up so that there's no room for anything else to be added. The idea is superabundance, overflowing kind of fullness. If anything, it's overflowing. There's no gap left. That word is so rich and it's a word that he used in chapter 1, verse 19, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him." And here he comes back to that same word, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity." So the word "fullness" itself would have been impressive, "For in Him the fullness of Deity dwells," but Paul says, "all the fullness." And he said the same thing in verse 19, "all the fullness," of chapter 1, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him," chapter 1, verse 19. Chapter 2, verse 9, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." Paul is saying, "Have you got the message? He is fully God and fully man."

The sense of fullness, turn with me to John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, "He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me."'" Look at the next verse, "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." Of his fullness we have all received. The fullness of deity in bodily form. John is saying the same thing Paul's saying in Colossians 2, "For in Him we saw all the fullness," and he goes on to explain this because in verse 18 he says, well, we'll read verse 17 too, "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." No one has seen God in his invisible spiritual essence at any time but the man, the God-man in flesh that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, we have beheld him in bodily form, the fullness of deity. And when you behold the fullness and you come to know the one in whom is all the fullness, then you have fullness, fullness of grace. "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." Do you see that, the word "fullness, full to overflowing and grace upon grace." It's grace is just flowing out of Christ all over you if you belong to him.

It's interesting when you go back to Colossians 2 now, Colossians 2:9 is where we are, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." And I mentioned the parallel in chapter 1, verse 19, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him." That comes after, it's really a climax of a statement about who Jesus is, who Christ is, that we are not to be distracted from. Paul had been dealing with this in chapter

1, verses 15 to 19 when he said, "I want you to know who Jesus is. I want you to know who Christ is." Look what he says in chapter 1, verse 15. This is one of those Christological passages that is one of the high water marks of the New Testament. Let's just start with verse 13, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Now he says, "Let me tell you who He is, He, Jesus, is the image of the invisible God." He said he is the unveiling, this is the making visible of the invisible God. That's what he's saying. The invisible God has become visible, an image that you and I can see. We can see now that which was invisible before. That's why Jesus said, "Any man who has seen Me has seen the Father." To see him is to see God.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." This is a phrase that many cults have tripped over and stumbled over, the firstborn of all creation. Jehovah's Witnesses miss this truth. This is one of the passages that trips them up. They don't read it carefully in the context of all the rest that God is saying, in light of the context of all that Paul says in Colossians even. Even the next verse they don't read because they stumble over, this is the problem of language. You can't always communicate what you want to say in a word perfectly and words especially as they are translated, they get more and more difficult to connote the right meaning. Every word has semantic range, range of meaning, and so this word "firstborn" can mean the firstborn child. And so the idea would come that if you take this and run with it, you would be like the Arians, who Jehovah's Witnesses follow, Arius, a fourth century heretic who taught that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that there was a time when Christ did not exist.

But he's the firstborn of creation. You see, the idea is that God the Father created him first, and this might, the language of that passage, the word there could mean – and listen to what I'm saying – it could mean that in the semantic range of the word "firstborn," it could be that but how do you decide when you're having a conversation with somebody what they mean by a certain word? You know, we say things all the time that could be interpreted many different ways. I wish I had thought about this as a better illustration but anyway, so the word "love." You know, "I love Coke." Actually, I don't anymore but I used to love Coke. And, "I love my dog. I love my wife. I love God." Do you see how I used that word "love" and it meant four different things, four very different things, did it not? It did. It meant four very very different things. One word. And so there are ranges of meaning within a word and every word has ranges of meaning and certainly this is true of this word as well. It could mean firstborn as that but it can also mean that through which everything is born.

How do you decide? When you hear someone use a word that's even more complicated than the example I gave you, how do you decide? Context, right? That's how you know what somebody means when they say something. Context. How did they use that word? What was around it? Paul explains exactly what he means in the next verse when he says this, "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." He's saying Christ is the one through whom the world has been created. The

second person of the infinite Triune God is the one through whom all things were created therefore he's the firstborn in that sense. All creation was birthed through him.

When you go back to Genesis 1, well, actually John 1. Let's go back there for a minute. Remember we just read "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." You read the first three verses of chapter 1 of John's gospel, he says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." This is before creation, in the beginning before there was anything, there was God and there was the Word. And then creation happens, he says this in verse 3, "Through Him all things were created and apart from Him nothing was created that has been created." Through the Word. Then he says in verse 14, "and the Word became flesh."

You go back to Genesis 1 and you find God creating the world. How does God create? "Then God said let there be light and there was light. Then God said. Then God said and it was so. Then God said and it was so." The Word, the Son, the second person of the Trinity is the agent of creation.

So Paul is saying to the Colossians, "Listen, you are being tempted to be distracted from the fact that you are in union, you have in you, you have become united to Jesus in such a way that you are in Him." The New Testament is one of the favorite actually the most common description of Christians in the New Testament is not with the word Christian, that only happens I think once in the whole Bible, disciple is a common way to describe believers, believers is a common way to describe believers. But you know, the most common way to describe believers, disciples and Christians in the New Testament is people who are in Christ. That phrase, if you are "in Christ" you belong to God. When you place your faith in Jesus, you become a person who is now in Christ, that is, you're united to Jesus. The Bible also says he's in you, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." He's in you and you're in him and Paul is saying, "Listen, do you realize who's in you and who you are in, that He is the Creator of all things?" And he goes on to say, we read verse 17, and "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." That is, he's upholding and holding all things together. The one you've been united to has created all things and he is sustaining all things. Everything is holding together because he is willing to hold it together.

So you have in you the Creator and sustainer of all things. You are united to him. You are in union with him. That's who he is but he turns from who he is to what he's done. That's the second point. Don't be distracted from who he is. Don't be distracted from what he has done. Remember I said who, what and how. The second point: what. Don't be distracted from what he has done for you. That's the emphasis of Colossians 2 actually. He's done it for you because he says, "and in Him you have been made complete," verse 10. After he says who he is, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form," he then tells us what he did, "and in Him you have been made complete." What he has done for you. Do not be distracted by what he has done for you.

Interesting word here. You may have a different translation but in this particular case I like the NIV and the ESV better because they read differently than the New American

Standard. The NIV says, "and in Him," actually it says, "in Christ," that's why I don't like that. They add a "Christ" in that's not there. It says, "in Him." They say, "in Christ you have been brought to fullness." The ESV says, "and you have been filled in him." That the work that he's done, it is true, it is made complete, in one sense, but really the word here is the same word, the same root word as the word in verse 9, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form," he says essentially, "and in Him you have been filled up all the way so that you're completely full." He took that word "fullness" and reused it here in this next verse.

You have been filled with all the fullness of God. If you have repented of your sins and placed your faith in Jesus Christ, this is true of you. You have been made complete. It means you have been filled with all the fullness of God because you have been filled with Christ and in him all the fullness of deity dwells. You have been fully restored to fellowship with God, so much so that all of the fullness of God dwells in you through faith in Christ by the presence of his Holy Spirit, union with Jesus. You now have complete fellowship with the eternal holy God. This parallel of Paul reminding us who he is and what he has done is also evident in the previous chapter. You see in chapter 2, verse 9, we saw, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form," who he is, "and in Him you have been made full," verse 10. That is, who he is and what he's done for you.

Look at chapter 1, verse 19. The same thing happens, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him." All the fullness of God dwells in him and look what he says next, what he's done for you, "and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself," this is chapter 1, verse 20, "and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." God has taken you and me, if you love Jesus, you were formerly alienated from God and you were hostile in mind to God and you were engaged in evil deeds, you were without God, without hope in the world, and he has reconciled you. Out of his fullness and what he accomplished in his redeeming work as the God-man, he has fully reconciled you in his fleshly body through death and he has now made you holy and blameless and beyond reproach. That's who you are in Christ. Holy, blameless, beyond reproach, that's a threefold description of basically the same reality. Holy, separated from sin. Blameless, nothing can be charged to your account. Beyond reproach, there's not even a stain that can be attributed to you. Unstained, unblemished, separated from sinners, that's who you are in Christ, Paul says.

Now it's interesting, he says in the next verse, "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard." You see, what's happening is Satan is trying to move people away from the hope of the gospel. We are supposed to be steadfast and firm and established in the gospel and Satan brings this stuff in from the outside, puts it in the church and he tries to move us away from this steadfastness of hope. And what he's warning is that some who profess to



be believers will continue to be moved away until they are all the way apart from Christ and Paul's exhorting, "Don't let this happen. What he has done for you, don't be distracted from what He has done for you."

He does the same thing in chapter 2 when we go back to our passage. We didn't read this part for the sake of time, but when he says, "and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority," then in verses 11 to 15, he talks about how Jesus did what he did for you. Don't be distracted by what he has done for you and then he says, look, this is how he did it. How did he reconcile you and I who were alienated from God, hostile, engaged in evil deeds, how did he take us who were so filthy, how did he take us who were completely devoid of anything good? Think about that, we were complete emptiness, that is, in our flesh dwelleth no good thing. Our record was completely empty of anything truly good. Isaiah says even our righteousness is filthy rags in God's sight. As sinners, we are completely barren spiritually. This is what's true of all of us but he's filled you up to all the fullness of God. He's made you holy and blameless and beyond reproach. How? How could he do that? Well, he's fully God. Look at who he is. Look at what he's done. Look at how he did it.

"And in Him," verse 11, "you were also circumcised," key phrase "in Him," do you see that? And in him you were made complete. Verse 11, "and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." That is, in his death God was actually cutting away the power of the flesh in your life. It doesn't mean that the presence of the flesh is not there but the reign and rule of sin is broken in the death of Christ, that is, its ability to reign and rule. It still tries to reign, though, but a believer, a true believer has to let it reign. Read Romans 6:11-14 and you'll see that. And read Romans 6:1-10 and you get the whole context of that. So 6:1-14 of Romans.

He's saying the same thing here. You have been circumcised in him, in Christ. When he died, you died, and that is, you died to the reign and rule of sin. Verse 12 now. He changes from "in Him" to "with Him." It's all about union with Christ, in him and with him. That's everything in the gospel. Look at verse 12, "having been buried with Him in baptism." This is not talking about water baptism, this is talking about spiritual baptism. You were buried with him when you were baptized into Christ spiritually, "in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." Water baptism is a picture of this spiritual baptism that's being described here. It's a picture after the fact of the reality that's already happened. But you see, Jesus in all of his fullness and what he did in dying and living a perfect life and then dying as an atoning sacrifice, bearing the wrath of God for all the sins of everyone who would ever believe, all of God's wrath poured out on him, he in dying delivers those who believe in him from the power of sin and the rule of sin and the reign of sin, and the result of sin. And he does it by uniting us in his death, burial and resurrection. You were buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised up with him through the faith and the working of God who raised him from the dead. You participate in his death, his burial, his resurrection. They become yours. The riches of all that he has accomplished become yours.

Verse 13, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions." He's made you alive spiritually. He's forgiven you all of your transgressions. There is not one you are not forgiven of. And we are supposed to confess our sins and he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. I love what he says next, "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You can't confess every sin you commit. I can't do that. We don't get that probably, you probably can't do that over a three hour period. I don't know, I don't even want to speculate about that. It's unprofitable. But we don't even know how many times we sin because we're always failing to do, keep the law of God perfectly. We're always doing things we ought not do, thinking things we ought not think, and we're always failing to do things we ought to do and ought to think so that we need a Savior every moment but the good news is we have a Savior who's able to take all of those sins and remove them from us as far as the east is from the west.

That's what he goes on to say. How did he give us this forgiveness of all our transgressions? Verse 14, "having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." A certificate of debt for every sin of thought, word or deed that you will ever commit, every single one has been taken out of the way, nailed to the cross, gone forever. Think about that. So many egregious things we do and have done and Jesus taking it all away.

That's the gospel, and not only that, he's delivered us from the power of the enemy. That's what he says next, verse 15, "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." He made a public spectacle of Satan and all of his kingdom, and the moment that appeared to be the defeat of the Son of God, the death on the cross, Jesus turned what looked like defeat was the greatest victory imaginable, all in the perfect wisdom of God. If the rulers of this world had understood, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, Paul says 1 Corinthians 2:9. If they understood the deep wisdom of God, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory because when they crucified the Lord of glory, they lost everything. But you see, Satan doesn't understand the wisdom of God. He's smarter than you and me but if you have the Word, you are smarter than him. You have Christ. You have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. You have nothing to fear. "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."

So when you understand and you're not distracted from who he is and from what he has done, then you don't need to be distracted from this third point, how this ought to be manifest in your life. It's not enough just to know who Jesus is and what he's done, this needs to have impact on the way we live. This is what I'm talking about. So many things get blended into Christianity and sometimes they're legitimate concerns that have their place in our lives and we need to be concerned about, we need to be dealing with, but when there's an inordinate focus on them, this inevitably happens, there's distraction from Christ, who he is and what he has done, and this is the tendency throughout history and it's certainly prevalent now in all the issues that we face. This is why we're doing the

study on Wednesday evenings to help us filter out what really is the balance, what really is truth, what really is error. We want to deal with what we need to deal with but, listen, if your focus on anything else takes your eyes off of who he is and what he has done, you are sinning and worse than that, you are being plundered, worse than that, you are dishonoring so great a Savior because what happens? You don't look like a person who has come to know so great a Savior. Your advertisement is a shambles of what it ought to be.

That's what happens to me and you when we have an inordinate focus on politics, an inordinate focus on the things that are related to this world. You see, "inordinate" means "out of balance." It also happens when we buy lies that are just downright lies. But the key is staying focused on Christ. If we keep him, if in everything he has the preeminence, then we have what we need, we have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We can tackle anything we need to do in its place. I mean, we can't fix this world. That's part of the thing that you learn in the gospel. The quest for cosmic justice is something that's only going to happen when Jesus comes back as King of kings and Lord of lords forever, and to not remember that is to show that you've been distracted from who he is, what he's done. In its place, it's appropriate and this is true across the political spectrum. No matter whether you're on the left or you're on the right, if you're too interested in politics, you are being distracted from Christ. And when that's being brought into the church, we're going to call it out. And when you see it in me, I want you to call it out because Jesus is worthy of so much more.

I asked earlier does your life show who Jesus is and what he's done? Your attitudes, your emotional state? We know there are ups and downs every day, right? We're sinners. We have to continually be meditating on Scripture but as a pattern in your life, is there love, is it increasing? Is your joy on an upward trajectory? Is your peace becoming more and more evident? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These are the things that are part of the treasure that come from knowing Christ and these things are unassailable. The world can go to hell in a hand basket and the Christian, it doesn't change who Jesus is or what he's done and how that should manifest itself in your life. Isn't that good to know?

It doesn't matter. I mean, I'm not saying it doesn't matter at all. Please understand God is concerned about all of these things in its place. Hear me clearly on that, but he's much more, this world is passing away. It's all going to be burned up. He's much more concerned about the souls of men. There are only two things that are going to last beyond this world. Two things that you and I have access to: the souls of men and the word of God. Everything else burned up. Not unimportant. It matters to God, yes, but it doesn't matter to God to the level that we tend to think it matters. When we take our eyes off of Christ and what he's done, we get inordinately focused and you can tell you're inordinately focused because you're not as loving as you ought to be, you're not as joyful as you ought to be, you're not as peaceful as you ought to be. In fact, there's a downward trajectory in those areas in your life. That shows that you're being led captive.

I want to look at a few passages real quickly. It will be something that we can look at this week maybe and try to apply it. Look at 1 Peter 1:13. Actually it's before verse 13, verses 6 to 8. 1 Peter 1:6-8. Peter has just talked about our salvation that we have and he says in verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials," these have come, "so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." He's saying, "Listen, you have this wonderful salvation but you're experiencing various trials, you're experiencing painful suffering, you're experiencing hardship, you're experiencing people mistreating you." He's talking to believers who were being persecuted. He is talking to believers who were being mistreated. He's talking to believers who are being dishonored.

Look what he says, verse 8, "and though you have not seen Him," that is Christ, "you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice," you don't just rejoice, you greatly rejoice, "with joy inexpressible and full of glory." That's the inheritance of Christians. When you are mistreated, when you are dishonored, you can walk in joy inexpressible, full of glory, if your eyes are on Christ, if you're loving Jesus at that moment. Anything less, you're being plundered. Now it takes grace to walk in the truth and you don't feel that all the time but if you keep abiding in the truth, meditating on the reasons for your joy, that Jesus is everything to me, and this circumstance, this mistreatment that I'm experiencing from my spouse, from my friend, from a brother or sister in Christ, this mistreatment is an opportunity for me to treasure Jesus more. When you start thinking like that, you're getting close to joy inexpressible, full of glory and that is your inheritance. God wants that for you and me.

So joy, that's why it's a part of our lives. It's supposed to be a part of our lives no matter what's going on. Turn to Philippians 4:6 and 7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Be anxious for nothing. You're in circumstances which make you anxious, Paul says, listen, he's writing to people who are experiencing persecution and suffering, uncertainty, their life is filled with uncertainty. It was tough to be a believer in the first century. He says be anxious for nothing but instead pray and pray with an attitude of thankfulness. Pray thanking God for even the circumstances that make me anxious, that I'm having to pray so I'm not anxious. "Lord, thank You for reminding me how much I need You, that You have allowed this circumstance to be so chaotic, out-of-control, or whatever it is that I'm feeling anxious and afraid and I'm running to You. Thank You for reminding me how much I need You. And now, Lord, let me just talk about the circumstance that we're dealing with. I need Your help." And he says when you do that and you're letting your requests be made known to God, "And the peace of God," I love this, "which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." You see, it's not your circumstances that make the Christian peaceful. In one sense, let me modify that. In one sense, your circumstances are like a catapult to take you to another level of peace. Do you follow what I'm saying? You don't get peace without understanding without being in circumstances that make you anxious, and the very circumstances that

make you anxious give you an opportunity to see a deeper level of peace than you've ever known before. You get to see how much deeper Jesus is than the circumstances you're in.

He goes on in this chapter to talk about being content in all circumstances. Philippians 4:13, one of the most misquoted, misunderstood verses in all of Christendom, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Misapplied maybe is a better way to say it. People put this verse on top of anything they want to do, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I'm going to play golf and I'm going to shoot a score, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I'm going to have a good golf swing right now because, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Boy, I sure am a bad representation of Christ when I play golf, if that's my mindset. No, you need to practice more, that's what makes you a better golfer. Sometimes you just need to throw the clubs away. That's what I probably need to do. Anyway, I digress.

Philippians 4:13. Being content in all circumstances and that's what he's talking about right before this, "I have learned the secret of being content. I have learned the secret of being filled," verse 12, "and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I can have too little, I can have too much. I don't care. I have Christ." That is the biblical reality that we have in Jesus. That should be the underlying experience of all who belong to Christ and if you're not getting that, you're being plundered. Now we have to help each other. It's not an easy thing. We have to remind each other of these things and we have to be in circumstances where, like Paul, he learned the secret by being in these different circumstances.

I'm going to mention this last one, you can look at it. We'll turn over for just a second that leads us into the Lord's Table in a good way. Ephesians 2 and 3. I'm going to summarize it for you but essentially Paul says in chapter 2, verses 11 and following, that Gentiles and Jews have been made one in Christ by the blood of Christ. This is much harder than any racial reconciliation that happens at any other time in history, to reconcile the Jew and Gentile was the monumental challenge. It doesn't mean that it's not hard, it's always hard. You go anyplace in the world and anyplace in the world at any time and you find racial strife, ethnic division is a reality in this world and it's something that God does hate and that we should be about addressing, but the barrier between Gentile and Jew was an even greater barrier and Paul's basically saying in Christ, he himself, verse 14, is our peace. Jesus is the one who makes us one. He makes, as you read this passage and we don't have time to go through it but he makes two into one.

And in chapter 3, he speaks about the mystery of Christ in verse 4 of chapter 3, "By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." What is that mystery? Verse 6, "to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." This is the mystery, this is the thing that was hid from all-time and is revealed now, Gentile and Jew are one in Jesus. This is a monumental accomplishment.

He goes on to describe in verses 8, 9 and 10 that as Gentile and Jew, I love verse 10, as Gentile and Jew are one in Christ, as we learn to be one loving Jesus, knowing who he is

and what he's done and we focus on that, what happens is all of the other distinctions fall away over time. Any he says when this happens, look at verse 10, "so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places." What he's saying is this, you read it and you can check it out, he's saying that when you and I love Christ so much that we make him everything and we encourage each other to keep making him everything, what happens is the distinctions and barriers between us fall away. It doesn't mean that we change everything about us. No, we can't do that. We're still individuals. We're still unique experiences, unique backgrounds, of course, but there's a unity that is deeper and brings us together in such a way and he's saying that the rulers and principalities in the heavenly places, the demonic kingdoms of Satan, when they see this, they tremble. They know they've lost, that when we are one in Christ, we are assaulting the kingdom of heaven in the most powerful way. That's what he's saying right here.

He goes on later in this chapter to say, "and I pray that the eyes of your heart," let's see, "I bow my knees before the Father," verse 16, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints," listen to this, "what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." He says, "Listen, when you keep your focus on Jesus, the barriers will fall away." It's kind of like you have to have, you've got to work together. It's a hard thing to live the Christian life. He's going to deal with that in the next three chapters after this. It doesn't make it easy but this one thing you must get right. If you don't get it right, all your efforts are hogwash. They're nothing if you lose sight of Christ. But if you keep your eyes on Christ, even as you work through the difficulties of daily life and living in a confusing world, you will become more and more united with everyone else who has their eyes on Jesus, and as this happens, hell is shaking at its foundations and Christ is being exalted.

That's the glory of the gospel and Paul says don't be distracted from that. Why would you let anything distract you from this? If you keep your eyes on this, then you will be good and a blessing in dealing with all the other things in their place and there will be a sense of peace and calm and comfort and love and joy that fill your hearts as you go about it. That's what you and I have been called to. Isn't that good news?

Let's pray.

*Father, we rejoice in Your gracious abundant provision for all that we need in Jesus Christ. We thank You that He is everything, that in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form and He has made us complete. He has filled us up to all the fullness of God. We pray that You would help us be so strengthened and comforted in Him that we would manifest His preciousness in our lives. Help us help each other. Help us walk beside one another, loving one another as Jesus loves us, working out our problems, dealing with the issues that face us, but always with our eyes fixed on Christ and our hearts rooted in*

*Him. We pray that You would use this time now around the Lord's Table to root us in the finished work of our Savior. We pray in His name. Amen.*