

Colossians Series

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From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES.

PART 1: SPIRITUAL ACQUISITION, 1:1-8.

#1. The apostle's congratulatory tone rests upon a string of spiritual qualities mined from the Word of God.

#2. These believers, living in "Colossae" amid its historical conditions and immediate circumstances, are presented to the reader as "saints" (v.2); people living holy lives in that particular setting.

#3. This chosen footing for daily existence is not logically linked to the local culture and its sociology. It is logically dependent upon revealed truth. "Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel", v.5.

#4. Something had happened in Colossae that had not occurred before. A transforming change of *total perception* had come about, fueled by "faith" (v.2, 4), "grace" (v.2), "peace" (v.2), "love" (v.4), "hope" (v.5) and a state of increasing spiritual growth (v.6).

#5. That string of spiritual acquisitions emerges as the *spiritual capital* which had enriched the "faithful" (v2) above the world. And with that spiritual capital they met the world, of which they were formerly a part. Worldly influences can be displaced.

#6. "just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bondservant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf", v.7. It is the church who *teaches* the world about this total transformation of perception. Selflessness is the vital spiritual acquisition, that marks the church in the Colossae and in the now contemporary world.

#7. "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world...", 2:20.

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PART 2: THE ADVENT OF THE BELIEVING MIND, 1:9-14.

#1. "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding", v.9.

#2. The believing mind is rooted in a profound devotion to revealed truth. It therefore grows increasingly dissatisfied with human wisdom and the monopolistic inclination of rationalism.

#3. The believing mind seeks "the knowledge of His will". Consequently, it grows antithetical to the self and even to material necessity.

#4. The believing mind becomes an alien presence in the world. Its motive is transparent; to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects...", v.10.

#5. Pleasing the Almighty becomes the dynamic that foments personal behavior.

#6. The believing mind willingly yields to and enters into a unity with the power of God, "strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might...", v.11. Such a mind displaces reliance upon human experience and material advantage in favor of comprehensive trust in the unseen reality.

#7. The believing mind becomes a stable place to stand and confront the temporal order; "attaining of all steadfastness and patience", and determined gratitude, "giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light", v.12.

#8. The believing mind as been "rescued ...from the domain of darkness, and transferred...to the kingdom of His beloved Son", v.13.

#9. The believing mind supremely responds to "redemption, the forgiveness of sins", v.14.

#10. The believing mind is our highest personal achievement. Its strength is the eternal. Its reach is beyond time and circumstance.

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PART 3: A VITAL UNDERSTANDING, 1:15-20.

#1. These verses stipulate a great many things about Christ. Every one of the propositions made regarding Him establishes a limitation on the material order in which we find ourselves. This is the relation of Christ to time.

#2. THE VITAL UNDERSTANDING: The material universe possesses no inherent power. "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him", v.16.

#3. Any observed power in the universe is strictly *derived* from Christ the Creator. That observed power is not inherent within the range of materiality.

#4. This fact is also underwritten by the Lord's continual power relation to the universe. "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together", v17.

#5. This segment of Scripture denies any explanatory importance, generally associated with naturalism, empiricism, evolution and rationalism.

#6. This language cannot apply to the universe as a whole and not apply to human situation, circumstance, events and states of being.

#7. More than that, every proposition put regarding the Son of God constitutes a grammatical law to be enforced upon human language use, reasoning and behavior.

#8. This is part of the salvation panoply. "He is also head of the body, the church, and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything", v.18.

#9. The human race swims in an ocean of eternal power, immeasurable causation. "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him", v.19. This "fullness" is in direct relation to believers and their circumstances. We live in a state of reconciliation and peace "through the blood of His cross...", v20.

Fullness overrules common sense impressions.

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PART 4: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCRUPULOUS ATTENTION TO THE WORD OF GOD, 1:21-23.

#1. Some if not many in the contemporary churches have maintained little regard for the Bible and its place in the human thought world.

#2. The ancient documents have been superseded by human rationalization. The Scriptures have become superfluous.

#3. The apostle, in these verses, calls for the generation of an irreplaceable and ever strengthening *unity between the Word of God and the believer's mind*.

#4. No casual, mediocre relation will do; because it cannot bear the weight of self-deliverance.

#5. "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, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister", v23.

#6. Dangers abound for holding belief in revelation, in the world. Ignorance, indifference, cultural and social deception, the controlling flesh, unexamined ways of reasoning and false assumptions.

#7. The world is at war with God. "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds", v.21. How tragic, at every level, when the believer's mind and in the aggregate, the church, is "alienated and hostile" to revelation. In particular, revelation often contains some propositions that defy "common sense" and human lived experience. Such states of mind can move one away from the hope of the gospel.

#8. The cultural climate induces the incline toward doubt, naturalism and relativism. Such alienation and hostility cost the Lord "His fleshly body", v.22.

#9. Rhetorical question: Since it is through the Word of God that we are presented "holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (v.22), then, how can that possibly be maintained apart from scrupulous attention to Scripture?

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PART 5: THE AGE OF PROCLAMATION and ITS SERVANTS, 1:24-29.

#1. One age ended and another age began: "that is the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints", v.26.

#2. The apostle announces the ground situation for all believers and churches. *This is the age of proclamation. Which necessarily means that the purpose of this age engulfs us all; all believers and all the churches.*

#3. The gospel truth was "manifested to His saints". Therefore, the believers are charged with the privileges and responsibilities of the age of proclamation.

#4. This age is now upon us and those who are its servants must rise to its demands, risks and dangers. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions", v.24.

#5. One generalization: *Continued suffering and affliction is necessary through time on behalf of His body, the church.* It falls to all and every generation of believers to accept that consequence.

#6. The age of proclamation is, more precisely, the age of "the preaching of the Word of God", v.25. Inherent in preaching the Word is intrusion into established beliefs and world pictures. It openly contradicts preferred behavior patterns. It attempts to displace "elementary principles".

#7. This is the purpose of the believer. The church is not merely a religious option available to the interested. Proclamation, preaching, generates controversy.

#8. Preaching is not by social and or cultural invitation. Proclamation is an eternal mandate. "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man complete in Christ", v.28.

#9. The age of proclamation is borne by believers and churches who comprehend the world condition without Christ.

#10. The age of proclamation and its servants stand at the threshold of human salvation. Believer and church represent that supernatural threshold to the world and take what comes.

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PART 6: THE STRUGGLE TO ANCHOR FAITH, 2:1-5.

#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", v.1.

#2. The textual sense of these verses elucidates the purpose and character of the apostle's "great" "struggle". It was a personal struggle. It appears to have been protracted; the very term "struggle" indicates a somewhat taxing experience.

#3. *His was the great struggle to anchor the believer's faith in the Word of God.* Certainly that magnified effort was detailed by bringing revealed truth to bear upon the mind of the believer, and not the other way around.

#4. The goal of the great struggle was "your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ", v.5. Such outcomes are not derived by bringing human reason to bear upon the Word of God. Yet, that is quite the human preference to do so.

#5. The unstated assumption is that any comprehension of revelation not in agreement with human rational thought is disallowed.

#6. The great struggle is to bring the human mind subordinate to the Word of God. Revelation is the determinant factor; not the mind.

#7. Anchoring one's faith in the Word of God necessarily respects *the revealed arrangement that revelation is absolute and the human mind is the variable.*

#8. ..."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", v.2.

#9. This tells us something about the human mind. The Word of God has the function and authority to put the mind in its place, within the temporal setting. It, equally, generalizes to the consideration that the mind is changeable.

#10. This great struggle is our own. To anchor our faith in the Word of God. It secures the faith against the delusion of "persuasive argument", v.4.

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PART 7: THE STRUGGLE TO ANCHOR FAITH, 2:1-5.

#1. There is the dynamic of *the apostolic presence*. "For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit...", v.5.

#2. The believer's in Colossae, Laodicea and Paul all held a shared knowledge base supplied by revealed truth.

#3. Paul's presence in spirit was accomplished, regardless of distance, time and space. His presence in spirit was *an effect of "the true knowledge of God"*, v.2. Thus, the effect of revelation.

#4. The Word of God unifies: "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", v.2.

#5. The apostolic presence is the immediate link to the mind and will of God. Without those, religion, faith and practice are nothing more than human rationalizations. Worthless.

#6. The apostolic presence is the doorway to "all the ("hidden") treasures of wisdom and knowledge", v.3.

#7. All of this mounts up to *the personal transformation of mind*. We may say that the Word of God, as delivered by the chosen vessels the apostles, enables *redemptive reasoning*.

#8. This phenomenon is the expression of a mind whose understanding of what is important has been detached from human experience and then linked to the revealed "treasures of wisdom and knowledge".

#9. By redemptive reasoning, the believer is then prepared and enabled to dismantle the superficial validity, a delusion, of the edifice of "persuasive argument".

#10. No one can take faith from us; it must be relinquished. Persuasive argument, of whatever source, is the attempt to leverage one's thinking to the advantage of a delusion. We can surrender belief to delusion.

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PART 8: THE GULF OF INCONSISTENCE, 2:6, 7.

#1. "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him", v.6.

#2. The receiving of Christ is the act of personal faith. Walking in Christ has to do with the behavior consistent with that faith. By apostolic command there must be no gulf standing between faith and behavior; "... (as) you have received... (so) walk".

#3. While no breach between the two is permitted, the flesh is not willing to forsake it.

#4. There are at least three factors generating and maintaining that gulf between faith and behavior.

- (a) Human rationalization doubts the benefit of forcing faith into circumstance.
- (b) Personal ignorance of the Word of God does not acknowledge that the gulf is there.
- (c) The constraints of indifference to the gulf are more than marginal.

#5. True belief is a matter of closing that gulf. The gulf is always there to be crossed. It's a part of every situation, circumstance, event and state of being. We close the gulf in those moments or it remains open to separate faith and from behavior.

#6. The apostolic remedy:

- (a) Consider that Christ is the effective context for behavior, not the situation. So one is to "walk in Him".
- (b) Be "firmly rooted" in Him. Shallowness and superficiality do not possess the rigor to close the gulf, v.7.
- (c) Be "built up in Him". There is nothing static about biblical belief. Indifference to spiritual strength is desultory and useless.
- (d) Be "established in your faith". A strong, durable foundation of conviction is necessary to deal with the struggles of closing the gulf.
- (e) Be "overflowing with gratitude". Gratitude to Christ is in ratio to the benefits garnered. That is a powerful motivation to link belief to behavior, regardless of the difficulty.

#7. *The Lord of the Gulf* calls us to prove faith by behavior. That is our purpose in the world. Only individuals can do the work of closing the gulf between faith and behavior.

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PART 9: THE GREAT WATERSHED BETWEEN SPIRIT and TIME, 2:8-15.

#1. There is a great watershed of meaning presented in this segment of Scripture. On one side of this watershed are the "elementary principles of the world", v.8. From those principles is derived the full range of the human philosophic enterprise.

#2. "Philosophy" (v.8) is generated for the purpose of rationalizing a *totalistic explanation for the appearance of the universe and mankind in it*.

#3. But, of course, that is the attempt to functionally dismiss God and all spiritual reality.

#4. This range of human cognition and its effect upon language can be attractive. Believers are warned; "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy...", v.8. Because it is "empty deception, according to the traditions of men...". It denies any greater reality.

#5. On the other side of the watershed is the revealed truth "according to Christ", v.8. The apostle holds no illusions that the two sides can be co-mingled or reconciled. However, many have striven toward that end.

#6. There are two irreconcilable sources for each; one is man and his experience in the material order, while the other is Christ in whom "all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form", v.9.

#7. We will choose to live on one side of this watershed or the other; they are mutually exclusive. The worldly side is without any resources in dealing with the sinfulness of man. "Transgressions" and the eternal "decrees against us" (v.13, 14) remain permanently affixed to us.

#8. A man, circumscribed by his own thoughts and sense experience of materiality, has no satisfactory answers to his own personal situation.

#9. Our needs are considerably more demanding than the "elementary principles" can address: "and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority", v.10. On the other side of this watershed one finds not completeness but fragmentation of soul, thought, speech and behavior -- very dangerous place to be.

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PART 10: THE WATERSHED BETWEEN SPIRIT and TIME, 2:8-15.

#1. There are 3 wide ranging *biblical fields of representations* that complement the revealed side of the watershed between spirit and time. These are indispensable for life in the spirit.

[FIRST]: "THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST, v.11, 13. The practice of circumcision under the Mosaic Law was intended to signal this very extensive realm of thought, speech and behavior. It was sorely misunderstood by the Jews: "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", v.11. By the invisible circumcision of Christ, the intuitive, the natural, the demanding influence of the physical body in time has been *cut away*. The mind is freed from the constraints of the body on its performance. Instead, our reasoning is to be unalterably linked to and dependent upon the Word of God. The flesh is no longer permitted to adulterate and limit the practice of faith in the believer by "the uncircumcision of your flesh", v.13. So much of thought, speech and behavior is uncircumcised.

[SECOND]: "BAPTISM", v.13. Baptism is a temporal representation of a spiritual understanding of the phenomenon of earthly life. We are dead to the worldly side of the watershed; "having been buried with Him in baptism". In the Lord's mind "you were also raised up with Him..." The believer's relation to the elementary principles has been decided by the Lord Himself. Baptism signals our acceptance of His terms.

[THIRD]: "FAITH IN THE WORKING OF GOD", v.12. The Israelites always preferred the worldly side of the watershed. The biblical testimony of them is that they rarely summoned *the escape strength* to leave behind the elementary principles of the world. The issue of the power of God in time is still in doubt in the churches. The power of God either forces outcomes in the world and therefore in situation, circumstances, events and states of being -- or it does not. One may think as one pleases, but, the Word of God is fixed. "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him", v.15.

Why not follow the power?

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PART 11: ARTIFICIAL, RATIONALISTIC DEMANDS and CONSTRAINTS, 2:16-19.

#1. One must learn how to evaluate ideas if one is to protect the revealed truth and faith in it. The problem: Ideas can grow into ideology. Ideology reaches its organized zenith when it supplies the overarching ideals for thought, speech and behavior. Ideology controls perception and reasoning. *It has its own language manifold.*

#2. "Therefore no one is to act as your judge...", v.16. In this passage those who judge have elevated "a mere shadow of what is to come", into "the substance" of importance, v17. That is an ideology.

#3. Ideologies can be pathways to the control of others. The greatest opponent of the ideological is the grammatical structure of revelation. Revelation from God is not ideology. In this world ideologies abound and always function to the detriment of the Word of God.

#4. The apostolic language is precise in the origin of ideas contrary to revealed truth. It is a kind of inflation: "inflated without cause by his fleshly mind", v.18.

#5. Any mind, any way of thinking insubordinate to the expressed Word of God is inherently "fleshly". Ideologies are created by men for their own purposes.

#6. Accordingly, they apply *artificial and rationalized demands and constraints upon revelation and upon belief*. One of the net effects of ideology is to defraud and deceive. "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen...", v.18.

#7. Whatever the ideology is, it will be presented as an *interpretive framework for understanding*. And especially for Scripture. The Christian churches, more often than not, have been controlled by the ideological, wherein the Bible teaches one thing, and the current ideological framework contradicts it.

#8. "and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God", v.19. The ideological among the churches make every attempt to dismantle "the joints and ligaments" holding the "head" and the "body" together. Progressivism appears to be something of a constellation of more than one ideology.

#9. But dissolution is the outcome. The Bible has been submerged in a soup of ideological interpretations. Something is lost: "a growth which is from God".

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PART 12: ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES ARE NOT STRONGER THAN TIME, 2:20-23.

#1. The most remarkable propositions are put into evidence, here in this text, for all generations to ponder and to follow.

#2. The "elementary principles of the world" (v.20) are destined to "perish", v.22. Those ideas will not survive the portage of time. *That manifold of ideas is not stronger than time.*

#3. The relation of the believer to the elementary principles is precisely articulated. We are supposed to "have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world...", v.20. The Lord's life on earth is witness to His determined separation from the elementary principles.

#4. The apostolic admonition is that there are forms of reason and forms of behavior that are not stronger than time. Those are to be marked and categorized.

#5. The elementary principles have "the appearance of wisdom" (v.23) but they are not stronger than time. "...the commandments and teachings of men" will perish because they are not stronger than time.

#6. The proof of this is demonstrated in the fact that the elementary principles are not stronger "fleshly indulgence", v.23. If worldly ideas cannot overrule the flesh then they are not stronger than time.

#7. As believers and the aggregate churches, we are faced with a strategic issue. The issue is this: *Do we believe that biblical ideas, revealed ideas, are stronger than time or not?*

#8. The force of the Book of Colossians insists that the Word of God *precedes* time; being in the mind of God before the beginning, 1:9. And certainly we are assured that the Word of God *supersedes* all things temporal, 1:10.

#9. The elementary principles bear no indebtedness to revelation. Such ways of thought, speech and behavior are rooted in the flesh.

#10. The elementary principles in the hands of forceful personalities are used to dismiss the Word of God and ensnare the minds of others, v.21.

#11. Every situation, circumstance, event and state of being we face presents the choice of referring to eternal ideas, which are stronger than time, or to those that are not.

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PART 13: ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES ARE NOT STRONGER THAN TIME, 2:20-23.

#1. Since "the elementary principles of the world" (v.20) "are of no value against fleshly indulgence" (v.23) that can only mean that such ideas and ways of reasoning are rooted in fleshly indulgence.

#2. Fleshly indulgence is the source of all it. As such, then, we have identified *the lowest common denominator* among men. These verses show the development of a perishing line of thought, speech and behavior: A continuum of "deception", 2:8.

#3. The personal drive of the flesh is the starting point. We speak of the desires, appetites, human will, pride, the drive for survival over love of revealed truth, money, success and other such things that promote a *body-first consideration*.

#4. Then human wisdom and human experience immediately provoke the generation of "the elementary principles of the world" in order to serve the flesh.

#5. Next comes the appearance of a rationalized "philosophy" (2:8) that seeks an equally rationalized credibility.

#6. Inherently there emerges an inevitable *critique of the Bible*. Any set of ideas (philosophy) that enables "fleshly indulgence" will be popular but it is not stronger than time.

#7. There is a kind of faith: reticent, uncertain, indecisive. It is essentially a living critique of Scripture. Confronted by exacting biblical constraint or admonition, it demurs.

#8. Generalization from Scripture to material existence has left critique behind and determined to bring revealed truth to bear upon human circumstance.

#9. There has been a demonstrated assumption among many young people to *critique the demands of Scripture* rather than trust them.

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PART 14: ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES ARE NOT STRONGER THAN TIME, 2:20-23. SUPPLEMENTAL.

#1. The Bible teaches that the Word of God and faith in it are both proven to be stronger than time. To select for biblical truth requires unbending faith, for human lived experience cannot tolerate it.

#2. David believed that the Almighty would grant an impossible victory. An idea, ridiculous, by experiential standards but stronger than time: 1 Samuel 17:31-37.

#3. Mary, the mother of Jesus, believed that the revealed promises of God overruled biology. She believed them to be stronger than time: Luke 1:26-38.

#4. Adam and Eve rejected the warnings of God as being stronger than time, in favor of the "elementary principles of the world": Genesis 3:1-7.

#5. Hebrews 11 memorializes the great men and women of Scripture, in whose hearts dwelt an idea, always laughed at by unbelievers. These souls carried the conviction that the words of God, spoken to men, were stronger than time.

#6. Since the Word of God is stronger than time, they reasoned, it must also be stronger than situation, circumstance, events and states of being. They behaved accordingly.

#7. Many contemporary believers and churches have lost this conviction, or never had it at all.

#8. And so, personal circumstances are met with a perishing mixture of human intuition, naturalism, empiricism, all presided over by an unquestioned human rationalism.

#9. Does the Lord expect too much of us to "have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him", Col. 2:6?

#10. Shall we act upon the imperishable idea that "without faith it is impossible to please Him", Hebrews 11:6? Shall we follow Abraham who "went out, not knowing where he was going", 11:8? Shall we fully trust the Lord "regarding things to come", 11:20? Shall we forfeit "the passing pleasures of sin, 11:25? Shall we go out "considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt...looking for the reward", 11:26?

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PART 15: THE MOST PROFOUND CONTRADICTION, 3:1-4.

#1. The textual admonition given here is this: Believers are required—*required*-- to live in one world on the principles of another.

#2. "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth", v.1, 2.

#3. This means that believers live with an *assertive contradiction* that exists between the two worlds. One is called to live on the "earth", but to do so upon the basis of eternal reality and revealed truth. One may not respond, then, to material existence on the unique foundation of earthly dynamics and common sense. Throughout Scripture, to do so, is called faithlessness.

#4. This profound contradiction immediately devolves upon situations, circumstances, events and states of being.

#5. However, some believers and some churches have generated a rationalized language manifold regarding this profound contradiction. Instead of dealing with the contradiction, as revealed, it is ignored.

#6. The rationalization holds that one must live on the earth according to human experience and reason: the *God gave you a brain* argument. Such thinkers also assert that the Bible is given to allow for "spiritual" or "religious" matters to be addressed, nothing more. The contradiction is overruled and erased.

#7. Yet, consulting any biblical example of faith exhibits this contradiction embedded within it.

#8. Rationalized language is, most often, employed to deny the foundational truth of this documented contradiction.

#9. Accordingly, most of the Bible is relegated to the superfluous. Empiricism is elevated above revelation.

#10. The human mind stands between two worlds: one a man can see and one he cannot.

#11. The contradiction reduces to the question of representations. Which shall we choose? Those revealed or those manufactured by the central nervous system?

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PART 16: THE MOST PROFOUND CONTRADICTION, 3:1-4.

#1. Believers and their aggregate, that is, the churches, are instructed to develop and maintain an *inflexible faith in that which is hidden*. The issue is *hiddenness*.

#2. "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory", v.3, 4.

#3. Hiddenness is a staple of both faith and spirituality. And it is also provisional. It will come to an end, v.4. True faith is a fixed preference for that which is hidden. Obedience to the Word of God is the measure of the trust in that which is hidden.

#4. *The profound contradiction* puts a considerable strain on the mind. The "things that are on earth" (v.2) are visible, tangible, measurable. Processes are observed and posited as sufficiently explanatory for life on earth. However, the hidden realities are of a different order.

#5. Biblical faith changes the starting point for reason. The believing mind will insist that the hidden realities are the starting point for thinking about the "things that are on earth"; not the other way around.

#6. One may have what one thinks of as "faith", but if that faith does not, cannot, or will not shift the axis from the seen to the hidden, then it is not true biblical faith.

#7. Hiddenness defies process. We either believe in process or in the power of God.

#8. The source of everything important to us is hidden. "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ", v.3. What a statement!

#9. Everything that keeps us alive, every blessing we need to survive and prosper, all strength derived from prayer, every advantage we are promised over situation, circumstance, events and process--are all "hidden with Christ in God".

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PART 17: THE MOST PROFOUND CONTRADICTION, 3:1-4. SUPPLEMENTAL.

#1. Regarding what we may call "hiddenness", v.3, 4: The Almighty has determined, by design and purpose to remain hidden from the human view. God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels and the power of God are all "hidden", v.3.

#2. This applies, as well, to *our future outcomes*; immediate and remote. Does Heaven await or not? Will we be consumed in the fiery furnace or redeemed, Daniel 3? The outcome remains hidden until a certain moment.

#3. We may at least think that *the hiddenness of the spiritual realities enable faith or complement belief*.

#4. "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God", v.3. Generalizing from these verses we are brought to a powerful recognition: *Hiddenness is the ordinant* (ordains, decrees, regulates, controls) *part of belief*.

#5. True faith clings to the axis of revealed truth, such faith personally embraces that truth and it becomes "what we believe". And there is something else. True faith must include *the ordinant part -- hiddenness*: The part that makes things happen.

#6. Believers come to understand that hiddenness is a condition of the fact. Eternal Reality is the fact, and hiddenness is the self-determined condition it maintains.

#7. The unbelieving world finds hiddenness proof of God's absence: synonymous with non-existence. However, true faith comprehends hiddenness as a mere condition of the Almighty and His ordinant relation to time, events, states of being, situation and circumstance. So, there is the fact and the condition of fact.

#8. Accordingly, hiddenness does not rattle the believer. Hiddenness does not translate into uncertainty. One must have a kind of faith that capacitates (makes room for) hiddenness. A belief that does not, cannot or will not capacitate hiddenness is a small, weak faith: Matthew 14:22-33. A strong, enlarging faith firmly holds to ordinant hiddenness, Matthew 8:5-13.

#9. A faith tinged with rationalism holds no room for hiddenness; adverse to offered prayer, adverse to regenerate thinking, language and behavior.

#10. Remember. Our trials are all too visible and or pressing. But, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory", v.4.

What do you say? Can we take it?

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES.
PART 18: THE IDOL OF INCONSISTENCE, 3:5-11.

#1. There is never any inconsistency between what one believes and how one behaves. *Behavior is the proof of what one really believes*. Any inconsistency is to be found between *what one says one believes and his/her behavior*.

#2. True belief in the Lord and the Word of God is the absolute end of personal idolatry. "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry", v.5.

#3. This injunction (warning, order) is aimed at the *complete dissolution and abolition of the idolatry of the body*. Primary to true biblical belief is the elevation of Eternal Reality above the interests of the physical body-- all controlling interests.

#4. Under the practice of idolatry of the physical body, one's state of being is altered by the Almighty Himself. "...the wrath of God" (v.6) which displaces the possibility of personal redemption. The open door to the body, closes the door of access to God.

#5. "and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them", v.7. This is lived behavior. It is a conscious way of thought, speech and behavior. The apostle refers to a *rationalized resistance* to higher order spiritual considerations. This is more than just human weakness.

#6. The idolatry of the self with its tolerances and intolerances has to be subverted. "...put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech from your mouth", v.8.

#7. The aforementioned behaviors are open expressions of contempt for the demands of superintending spiritual truth.

#8. As far as the believer is concerned, the starting point for thought, speech and behavior is the phenomenon of "the new self" (v.10), with its continuous spiritual development. This emergence drives it further and further away from "the old self with its evil practices", v.9. "...being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him--", v.10.

#9. There are forms of behavior inconsistent with the creation and status of the new self. Such inconsistency is symptomatic of an idolatry that is dangerous at all possible levels.

#10. The marvel of *continual renewal* (v.11) is that it overcomes the human foible of inconsistency between what one claims to believe, and one's behavior. Such a dynamic thing eliminates inconsistency at every level: No inconsistency between "Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all", v.11.

#11. The abolition of inconsistency creates a state of unity between all parties. A supernatural oneness of mind; nationality, race, gender notwithstanding. One may presume a corresponding unity in marriage.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES.

PART 19: THE GOD OF EXPERIENCE vs. THE gods OF EXPERIENCE, 3:5-11.

#1. This segment of Scripture has to do with some of the earthly forces that generate human *experience*. The human "body" (v.5) is the factor through which personal experience is lived.

#2. Everyone born into this world is immediately and energetically concerned with the nature of his/her human lived experience.

#3. The Almighty has always established Himself as the God of experience, Genesis 1-3. He blesses, He forbids, He promotes, He judges, He redeems, He rewards, He supplies, He protects, He teaches: "For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience", v.6. He is the Lord of human experience. The Bible repeatedly warns us about this truth.

#4. However, the Lord faces a rival in the generation of human personal experience--that is man. Faith in God and the Word of God takes the generation of personal experience out of our hands.

#5. We are loathe, reticent and highly resistant to the surrender of the *development of experience* to God. This is biblically and immediately explainable; we do not trust the Lord with our personal experience. It might turn out to be something we don't like. By so doing, we pronounce ourselves to be *the gods of our own experience*.

#6. "Immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry" (v.5), are some of the forbidden engines of the generation of human experience.

#7. Very often, human generated experience turns out to be faithless, untenable, dangerous, greatly disappointing and corrupt: "...anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech..." (v.8) do not enhance personal experience. These we "put...aside", v.8. "the new self" has ceded the generation of personal experience over to the Highest Spiritual authority. This is one of the strengths that creates unity between disparate peoples, v.10, 11.

#8. As is always the case, the true idol of man is his/her experience. One can observe certain specified doctrines and still not have surrendered their experience to God.

#9. Ancient Israel had seen the wonders of God exerted over Egypt and in the desert wandering. Yet, they refused to trust God with their personal experience, Numbers 13, 14.

#10. Rationalistic readings of the Bible underwrite the fantasy that human, personal, lived experience is the fundamental property of man. The idol remains undisturbed.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES.
PART 20: THE INDIVIDUAL RECONSTITUTED, 3:12-17.

#1. These verses make known that the line of causation is anchored in the individual and then runs to the aggregate. The relation of the individual to the whole church is cause to effect.

#2. Causation to effect does not run from the aggregate to the individual--which is a consumer arrangement. Everything depends upon the *reconstituted individual*.

#3. Reconstitution of the inner man on the foundation of the Word of God, changes all the rules. Individual reconstitution is *the carrier of holiness*, v.12.

#4. No congregation can or will rise above the spiritual strength of the individual members. "...put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience", v.12. These are the markers of personal reconstitution. By their very nature such attributes produce direct effects in the collective. These are qualities bestowed upon the whole by the parts.

#5. Such revealed wisdom rises above the level of "group dynamics". ". . .bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you", v.13. The reconstitution of the individual provides the demonstrable eternal perspective of Christ to the congregation.

#6. Necessarily, then, each member of the aggregate should desire to be on that *line of causation*.

#7. The "perfect bond of unity" (v.14) is caused; it is not inherent in the church. "Love" is added by the reconstituted believer.

#8. The body of Christ is not built by the force of collectivism, but by the spiritual power of personal reconstitution. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...", v.15. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you", v.16. The Lord builds the aggregate from the individual out.

#9. There is no other way. Worship through "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (v.16) and with "thankfulness" is not just a group expression, rather it is one effect of personal reconstitution: a unison of hearts. Individual hearts have to be placed on that line of causation.

#10. The full range of personal effort is reconstituted as a form of gratitude to God the Father. And all through the "Lord Jesus", v.17. Personal reconstitution is conjoined with the line of causation.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES.

PART 21: BIBLICAL INDIVIDUALISM, 3:12-17.

#1. This apostolic missive makes the case for *biblical individualism*. Only individuals believe in God and His revelation and then act accordingly. Groups do not do that.

#2. Throughout the Bible, individual men, women, boys and girls have made a stand on their trust in God and against a contrarian culture. These are they who "have died" (3:3) to some things, and "consider"... their "earthly body" of no consequence (3:5) and "put aside" (3:8) personal will and its desires.

#3. Without controversion, *biblical individualism* is strictly rejected by contemporary world ideologies, systems and societies.

#4. Churches do not rear children; parents do that. It must fall to the family to raise up their children in the interest of biblical individualism. We all have to stand up and stand alone. This is an inevitable effect of "...the word of Christ richly dwell(ing) within you...", v.16.

#5. The emergence of biblical individualism inherently induces strife between the universe of faith and the range of human thought, speech and behavior. "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", 2:8.

#6. Biblical individualism is a response to the revealed manifold of truth and its judgment upon human wisdom. Without that, there is no discernible danger from the elementary principles of the world. So those ideas are enfolded into the churches.

#7. To the great detriment of the churches and certainly to the injury of eternal purpose, confidence in the Bible has sharply waned in the contemporary.

#8. It appears that many in the churches have simply walked away from the axial role of Scripture.

#9. Whatever historical, temporal influences, be it Enlightenment ideology, mechanical determinism, evolution, or postmodernism, is irrelevant.

#10. Generalization from the Bible to temporal existence is revelatory about the full range of human experience.

#11. Assimilation of the elementary principles of the world is a knife in the heart of God. Biblical individualism stands aloof from, and is antagonistic to, such assimilation. Biblical individualism is glaringly absent in the churches.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES.

PART 22: THE DETERMINANT PRINCIPLE, 3:18-25.

#1. These verses are not really about relations with others. The central theme of this segment is *the will of God*, as applied to personal relationships.

#2. The will of God is the determinant principle for human existence on the earth. Nothing can displace it nor render it powerless. Human beings just think that they can. Or they believe that somehow "history" does.

#3. The apostle affirms that *our relations do not belong to us; they belong to the Lord*.

#4. *The will of God and personal obedience to it are both non-linear*. "Wives, be subject to your husbands...", v.18. "Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered...", v.19. "Children, be obedient to your parents...", v.20. "Fathers, do not exasperate your children...", v.21. "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters...", v.22.

#5. All of those conditions are imposed upon relations by the Almighty. There is nothing linear about them. One's obedience to those divine instructions are non-linear as well.

#6. Paul's insistence is that the will of God is non-linear and covers all of human activity. Human relationships simply benefit from those ideas.

#7. A revealed startling truth: A believer obeys the non-linear will of God because he/she perceives that they hold non-linear results, outcomes and rewards.

#8. One's children grow up in the culture and indulge in "typical" adolescent behavior from good to bad. Their behavior is considered to be natural, unavoidable, routine, normative. It is also linear.

#9. Human rationalization is linear in structure. The will of God revealed and then personally applied breaks up such linear reasoning and behavior. We are in the world but not of the world.

#10. Believers are called to separate from the elementary principles of the world. Linearity has its place, however, non-linear revelation is more important.

#11. There is a proclivity in the churches to prefer linearity in thought over the Word of God. This is a mistake. The Lord has called us to non-linear thought and behavior founded upon revelation.

#12. Generalization from the Bible to material temporal existence is non-linear: Is not and never will be popular.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES.

PART 23: THE NON-LINEAR, 3:18-25. SUPPLEMENTAL.

#1. The Word of God is *non-linear*. It comes to us from beyond time and materiality. It is not the product of human consciousness.

#2. Two important things:

- First: One of the functions of the Bible is to move the believer beyond personal experience. Human lived experience is an insufficient foundation for human existence. It is pure linearity.

- Second: Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, unfailingly insists that redemption is never inherent in the human situation. Redemption from material circumstances comes upon us from outside the temporal system. Outcomes are imposed upon circumstance by the will and power of God. This truth is routinely dismissed among contemporary believers.

#3. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil", Genesis 2:15-17. Yet "the serpent" (Genesis 3:1-7) suggested a linear form of reasoning. The forbidden fruit resembled all other fruit in the garden. The linear experience of the forefathers proved that that fruit was good and therefore the command of God could be displaced, ignored, disobeyed.

#4. However, every command of God, all the laws revealed by Him and all the decrees of the Lord, are non-linear. They stand in contradiction to human wisdom and what we call common sense.

#5. The ordinances of the Almighty defy linear human experience. David was commanded to confront Goliath (1 Samuel 17). The only hope for victory depended upon a non-linear action of God on Israel's behalf.

#6. From the wilderness encampment (Numbers 13, 14) the people of God demurred regarding the command to engage the Canaanites. The non-linear promise of God had no credibility with the people on that occasion. So, the people did not trust the Almighty. The Israelites were faithless in their confidence in linear behavior. The Canaanites were too strong and that would determine the outcome.

#7. Many contemporary readers of the Bible begin their reading with firmly entrenched linear assumptions. That devotion to and preference for linearity degrades the potency of prayer and corrupts the biblical understanding of faith.

#8. The disciples of Jesus fully expected the body of the Lord to be found in the tomb, on the third day, Luke 24: Linearity.

#9. Today, for all appearances, the "modern church" has decided that most of Scripture is of little use; precisely because it directly, repeatedly summons us to transcend our linear experience. How then shall we face the exigencies of temporal life?

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD.
PART 24: THE LOGIC OF PRAYER, 4:1-4.

#1. "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving", v.2.

#2. Prayer to the Almighty is an appeal to the determinant reality. Prayer influences God and the Lord can intervene in any and all temporal circumstances.

#3. The logic of prayer from this text is this: *Prayer is to seek absolute solution outside of and beyond the social, physiological, physical, material, temporal circumstance.*

#4. This prayer logic appears everywhere in Scripture. Among other things, biblical instruction regarding prayer tells us that to some degree the will of God is an open reality to believers.

#5. Much more than a resource, prayer is the prescribed means of dealing with the material reality that surrounds and the forces that constantly impinge upon us.

#6. Perhaps because of rationalistic tendencies it has become accepted to believe that the maintenance of proper doctrine is the true measure of faith.

#7. However, throughout the Bible true faith has a single profile. In all the biblical cases, *faith is to trust God and the Word of God against human experience of nature and its forces.*

#8. This revealed structure of belief puts irreversible stresses upon our thought, speech and behavior. Believers are not permitted to set the parameters of belief. This is also the logic of faith.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD.
PART 25: THE LOGIC OF PRAYER, 4:1-4.

#1. The logic of prayer contains an *inherent definition of theism*. And that also qualifies for what today is called a "worldview": "praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned", v.3.

#2. The outline of theism as prayer:

- (1) God exists. He is the precedent for all of time and everything within it. Spiritual reality is causal.
- (2) God is supremely powerful. His power is purpose-specific, persons-specific, situation-specific and outcome-specific..."God will open up to us a door for the word".
- (3) Prayer is attempted inflection. To inflect is to pursue change and amendment of circumstance. Prayer is associated with inflection. It can indirectly inflect the "elementary principles of the world". The Lord makes available to us a way to inflect human personal circumstance. Believers should pursue universal inflection.
- (4) The great truth is that *spiritual reality exerts causation over materiality*. This revealed fact affects how one contradicts world magnitudes.
- (5) God is in direct relation to time, life, matter, physics and physiology. It is possible, through prayer, to enlarge and strengthen the efforts of others.

(6) God is a person. One can speak to the Lord, even from the shoals of despair and discouragement. One may reason with the Almighty.

#3. Prayer by biblical standard is *a theistic response to human situations*. Containing a general picture of total reality, the spiritual and the temporal, prayer changes things.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD.
PART 26: THE LOGIC OF PRAYER, 4:1-4.

#1. Prayer constitutes a language threshold. Prayer is a special language use, calculated to elicit the response of the Almighty.

#2. Such a special case language form contains a proposed resolution of circumstance, a beneficial change, a request for a power inflection and a believed cause to effect movement.

#3. *Under the conditions of prayer, any situation, circumstance, event or state of being can be so inflected.*

#4. This *prayer language is all external to the circumstance*. A foundational factor in the practice of prayer is the firm belief that there is a resolution of circumstance that is outside of and beyond circumstance. Prayer is not a psychological therapeutic exercise.

#5. Necessarily, then, a believer respects the threshold between general language use and special case language use.

#6. Every believer must settle the issue for himself/herself of whether or not there is a solution to historical conditions from beyond those conditions.

#7. Prayer language is formed apart from historical conditions and is a language manifold fully relative to the Word of God. This formulation of prayer language is often found absent in the practice of prayer.

#8. Language use in general, and especially in the practice of prayer, is triggered by one's belief structure. Such language can be co-opted by human experience and ideological assumptions. Our language must be inflected by the Word of God; part of the logic of prayer.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD.
PART 27: THE LOGIC OF PRAYER, 4:1-4.

#1. The apostle seeks the benefits of the prayers offered to the Lord by other committed believers, v.2.

#2. This constitutes a force not controlled by anything except the language of the believer who prays.

#3. Paul believes that the logic of prayer is an elevated reality above historical conditions and personal weakness, v3, 4.

#4. The logic of prayer requires *the biblical inflection of language*. Our thought, speech and behavior are, in fact, to be directly and immediately inflected by revelation.

#5. Although the Israelites in the desert had witnessed the power of God, from their escape from Egypt to the experience of full provision in Sinai, they refused to amend their powers of reason and their use of language, Numbers 13, 14.

#6. Neither their language nor their behavior evidenced faith in the Word of God. This is, in many cases, the faith condition of the contemporary church.

#7. By generalization from this passage, the apostolic expectation is that those who pray have been mentally, spiritually, and morally inflected by the commands of God.

#8. Preaching and teaching are not geared for entertainment, but for the powers of revealed inflection. The Almighty is not human and He is very exacting.

#9. We face every sort of adversity in this world from catastrophic illness to persecution and everything in between. As we approach the Lord in prayer, we might remember its enormous potential. Prayer itself does not directly affect time nor materiality; but it does influence God directly and He can shake the foundations of the earth!

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD.
PART 28: THE HIERARCHY OF KNOWLEDGE, v.5, 6.

#1. There exists a hierarchy of knowing. Roughly, the hierarchy begins at the bottom with the range of immediate sensation of personal surroundings. The work of the central nervous system. One sees "the giant".

#2. This is, thereafter, fitted into the larger human experience of the world. "The giant" is very formidable.

#3. Human reason, then, comes to bear upon the meaning of this experience; trying to make sense of it all. Defeat at the hands of "the giant" is inevitable. For the world, that is sufficient knowledge and completes the hierarchy of knowing.

#4. The believer, however, has come to recognize that there is a higher range of knowing formulated as revealed truth.

#5. "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity", v.5.

#6. Judging from the entirety of Colossians, the apostle cannot be referring to human wisdom. The reference here to "wisdom" is the product of revelation. Paul is establishing the source of spiritual wisdom, at the pinnacle of the hierarchy; the Scriptures.

#7. In other words, this complete hierarchy of knowing is to be connected to "the opportunity". The meaning of this is profound and fundamental. *In every situation, circumstance, event and state of being, one must climb up this hierarchy of knowledge.*

#8. There must be no *short-staging* of understanding. "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person" (v.6) and circumstance.

#9. True wisdom and understanding is grasped, finally, at the crest of this hierarchy of knowing. It is most common that when crisis overtakes us, we short-stage comprehension of events. We tend to stop at the layer of human reason. Ancient Israelites were periodic examples of this.

#10. From the world's perspective, the great heresy of this knowledge hierarchy is this: as one climbs up this *structure of knowing* one becomes less and less concrete in thinking and increasingly abstract!

#11. The uppermost level of "wisdom" is fully independent of the granular, material, physical situation. "Giants" can be overwhelmed. Short-staging understanding is a mistake, unnecessary and defeatist; lacking "wisdom".

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD.
PART 29: A GREAT REVERSAL, 4:5, 6.

#1. "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person", v.5, 6.

#2. One may say that every single verse of Scripture is important and that some great and overwhelming truth for life can be found in it. The Ultimate Mind is *the source* of all of this.

#3. "Wisdom" is *a manifold of representations* that have their source in God. The 5 senses and human language are forms of representing things and circumstances that are beyond them.

#4. There is no doubt that such representations can convey meaning. But before they transport meaning such representations signal to us their source. In the great scheme of the Word of God, source outranks meaning. This is necessarily so because the source precedes the meaning.

#5. Colossians stipulates that there are two distinct and disparate sources. *The elementary principles of the world* (2:8) represent ideas that originate in men. But "wisdom" (4:5) signals its source in the Almighty Himself.

#6. The apostolic ordinance is that "outsiders", are to be approached with revealed wisdom; and with the purpose of drawing world attention to the eternal source of all things.

#7. Our speech is to be seasoned by the true spiritual source of this manifest wisdom; the "salt". The believer and the collective of believers, the church, makes every attempt to use language in just such a way as to make reference, directly or indirectly, to God the Source.

#8. Revealed meaning is indispensable, however, it will be largely misunderstood if *the Source* is not respected and acknowledged.

#9. In the church and in the world we are dealing, largely, with *a source problem*.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD.
PART 30: SOURCE, 4:5, 6. SUPPLEMENTAL.

#1. In Genesis 3 the serpent approached Adam and Eve with propositions calculated to put into question the source of the revealed prohibitions, Genesis 3:1.

#2. The serpent's argument was that God, the Source, could not be trusted; He could not be believed, Genesis 3:4, 5. He is not the true source of anything.

#3. The intelligence of his approach to our progenitors was aimed at the exchange of sources, Genesis 3:6, 7. Man, the serpent suggested, should be understood as the unique source of credible ideas and propositions.

#4. Romans 1:18-22 explains the human problem of sources. Fleshly appetites and human experience were to displace the eternal God as the source of authority and perception.

#5. Charles Darwin had a driving impulse. That man's principle motive was to attempt to prove that a supernatural source is not necessary to explain the universe and the existence of man. The only necessary source is nature itself.

#6. The Enlightenment took form around the issue of sources. The academic field of biblical criticism is largely pointed at temporal sources of Scripture in contradiction to the eternal source.

#7. Much of Bible interpretation is oriented toward sources. When human wisdom comes to bear upon the Word of God instead of the other way around, then, man becomes the effective source of meaning. It is no longer the Scripture.

#8. The Israelites (Numbers 13, 14) never accepted that God was the source of their well-being, their protection, their greatness.

#9. In many cases, the contemporary church is itself uncommitted to God the source of all things relative to man. Today, God is not the true and actual source of solution. This is the source problem. The Bible treats this as *the synoptic problem affecting faith*.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD.
PART 31: THE MEANING OF STRONG FAITH, 4:7-18.

#1. "Tychicus", "Onesimus", "Aristarchus", "Mark", Justus". "Epaphras", "Luke", "Demas", Nympha", "Archippus", should have had at least one thing in common.

#2. Ideally, they should all have had or should have all been pursuing *a faith in God and in the Word of God that was stronger than any contradiction to it*.

#3. Tychicus is called "beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord", v.7. Here is a man, an example of one living up against temporal reality and yet doing what was necessary to make sure that his trust in the Lord was stronger than any contradiction to it.

#4. The apostle was concerned about how the Christians in Colossae, for example, were thinking about all the challenges to faith that Paul confronted. "For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts", v.8.

#5. No doubt Tychicus reported to the believers in that place that Paul possessed and exercised a faith that was stronger than any contradiction to it. That was the only way to encourage their hearts.

#6. Aristarchus is reported as "my fellow prisoner", v.10. The rigors of imprisonment for those two men were not considered stronger than their confidence in the power of God.

#7. "Epaphras...a bondservant of Jesus Christ...that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God", v.12. This man's personal admonition to the believers was to hold steady to a faith in God greater than any and all contradictions to it.

#8. The Book of Colossians is calling us, those of the 21st century, to a particular state of faith unassailable by historical conditions.

#9. Archippus was reminded about the relation of biblical faith to personal responsibility. "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it", v.17. To fulfill our purpose, faith in the Almighty and His word must be stronger than all contradictions to it.

From Colossians. SEPARATION FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD.
PART 32: SUMMATION.

#1. We are instructed to rise above immediate circumstances, 1:2-6.

#2. The Word of God displaces human reason, 1:9, 10.

#3. Christ is the image of the invisible God, 1:15-20.

#4. There are 3 parts to "reality:" matter, spirit and the relation between them, 1:15-20

#5. The believing mind subordinates the body, 1:21-23.

#6. We live in the Age of the Proclamation of the gospel, 2:25, 26.

#7. We must struggle to anchor faith in Christ and in revelation, 2:1-5.

#8. Human rationalization puts a gulf between faith and behavior, 2:6, 7.

#9. True circumcision is spiritual, 2:8-15.

#10. The elementary principles of the world are not stronger than time, 2:20-23.

#11. Everything depends upon the unseen world, 3:1-4.

#12. The hiddenness of God does not conduce to uncertainty, 3:1-4.

#13. A new and revealed map of meaning comes to bear on human conduct, 3:5-11.

#14. There should be no contradiction between the Word of God and personal behavior, 3:5-11.

#15. The spiritually reconstituted self is the building block of the aggregate, 3:12-17.

#16. All our relations with others are non-linear; being founded upon the will of God, 3:18-25.

#17. The logic of prayer is intended to inflect the human experience as it influences the Lord to put resolutions that are outside of time and circumstance, 4:1-4.

#18. Our personal conduct in temporal circumstances becomes symbolic of the eternal source of true "wisdom", 4:5, 6.

#19. The Almighty is seeking a kind of faith in His people that is stronger than any contradiction to it, 4:7-18. #20.

Our reward? "Grace be with you", 4:18.