

Who's going to come up here and quote the second half of chapter 2? Is that correct? Where are you? Okay, Shirley, you come first. Let's go. It looks like she's refusing. Well, I have to stand fairly near you. Yeah. Okay.

Audience:

You were spiritually dead because of your sins and your uncircumcision; that is, in fact, you were outside of the law. God has now made you to share in the very life of Christ. He has forgiven you all your sins: God has utterly wiped out the damaging evidence of broken laws and commandments, which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it over His own head on the cross. And then, having drawn the sting of all the powers ranged against us, he exposed them, shattered, empty, and defeated, in His final glorious, triumphant act. Don't let anyone worry you by criticizing what you eat or drink, or what holy days you ought to observe, or bothering you over new moons or Sabbath. All these things have at most only a symbolic value: the solid fact is Christ. Nor let any man cheat you of your joy in Christ by persuading you to make yourselves "humble" and fall down and worship angels. Such a man, inflated by unspiritual imagination, is pushing his ways into matters he knows nothing about, and in his cleverness is forgetting his head. It is from the head alone in which the body, by natural channels, is nourished and built up and grows according to God's laws of growth. So, if through your faith in Christ, you are dead to the principles of this world's life, why, as if you were still part and parcel of this worldwide system, do you take the slightest notice of these purely human prohibitions? Don't touch this, don't taste that, don't handle the other. This, that, and the other will all pass away after use. I know that these regulations seem wise in their self-inspired effort at worship and their policy of self-humbling and their studied neglect of the body. But in actual practice they do honor, not to God, but to man's own pride.

What really makes this wonderful is that it is such a difficult passage, and that is so clear. Phillips, we owe you something, and you a little bit. Thank you, brother, wasn't that beautiful? Did you follow that? That was lovely, and it's a passage that everybody needs so much. This is good, whether you memorized it or just tried to, some of these things are going to stick in your hearts.

Now, let me just tell you that chapter 2 of Colossians is extremely difficult to get through. And yet, it only has about three or four very simple points. The problem is not so much the book as this very poor writer named Paul. Now, someone out there in video land might really be offended by that. But I just have to tell you that Paul of Tarsus was not the clearest writer who ever lived. Here are the three or four points that are covered in this chapter; they're quite simple, really.

One of them is the dark shadow of influences that are always present over the church. They're always there, and there's always the temptation to fall into them. Paul then speaks of a couple of things, both about the Lord. One of them, he goes back several times to talk to you, about your redemption, which was Christ, and then he once more glorifies the Lord Jesus and talks to us about how wisdom is from Christ, knowledge is from Christ, all these things flow from the Lord.

So, you have basically a remembrance of your salvation and what Christ did for you, and the greatness of this cosmological Christ and His being the source of all riches, and then this danger that is always around us, knocking at our door: substitutes for Christ. Always there are around us substitutes for Christ. And brothers and sisters, this is more subtle than you might realize. We're not talking about somebody coming in here from Toronto, although that could very well happen. Someone coming in here from Hello, Toronto. We're so glad to see you tonight. Those of you who are watching this 50 years after we're all dead, there's a revival going on in Toronto, Canada, and people are coming there from all over the world. I was told that 1/4 of all the people who get off the plane at the airport in Toronto are Christians going to visit that church there.

When you get dry, things like that really look good. But even within the church, when we get dry, sometimes we start picking up little things, and they're not even dangerous unless you just keep on picking them up, and you just can't find the Lord Jesus Christ, or someone doesn't come to remind you of Him. One of the things I do, do you know the main thing I do in Chicago is remind you of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we all need that. And I want to remind you of something, it's good for you to remind other people, and it's also something else to remind you, and that is it's good for you to go somewhere else and remind other people. There's not a church on this earth, but what it needs to be reminded of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can spend the rest of your life just reminding brothers and sisters in the churches about the Lord. We all need this because there are these shadowy figures around us constantly wanting to come in, and we even unknowingly pick them up, and some of them you will never pick up because you tried them already. When you bite down on a stone, the chances of you ever picking up that stone and biting down on it again are pretty remote. It looked like a loaf of bread for sure, didn't it? It broke every tooth in your head. You bit down on it; it even smelled like a loaf of bread, but it turned out to be a stone. Still, it is possible for us to come back to some of these things when the water runs low.

I think of men who have been very much in church life and the riches of Christ. Today, they're assistant pastors and doing, you know, the kind of stuff that they wouldn't have wiped their feet on at one time in their life, and they got dry, and they forgot. Reminding one another is one of the biggest projects we have.

What makes chapter 2 difficult is that Paul will talk about the Lord in his exalted state, and he'll get off on saying something about that which you know, keep in mind, don't do. Then he'll come to your redemption, and then he'll come back to this problem, and then he'll talk about the Lord in a glorious way, and then he comes back to the problem, and it seems as though he's jumping all over the place. It's very hard to follow; I am not capable. You know what I'd like to do? I'd like to take all the exalted passages, put them together, all the redemptive passages, put them together, and all the negative passages, and put those together, and then I'd know what Colossians 2 is all about. Let's see if we can't kind of do that right now.

Alright, I'm not going to read. I'm going to ask you to help me. So, let's all look at this. Colossians 2, page five, I want to tell you, can you find that? Okay. The chapter actually begins with another reference to this great mystery of suffering being free of space and time. Did you follow that? I hope you did. Suffering that is outside the confines of space and time. I talked to you about that last night; I just didn't put it that way.

Now he is talking to, by the way, in the next paragraph, you see where that parenthesis starts, and it doesn't end. It ends right after the word Laodicea. Okay? He is talking to you in the third paragraph there. You who are in the ekklesia, he is talking to you about your growth and the source of your growth, the wealth of it coming from Christ. Then we come to the next large paragraph.

In Christ are hidden the treasures. Again, he is reminding you of Christ. Then he switches over a little bit, and he says, I'm not present with you in body. Now, there's something that has entered Paul's heart here, and he just wanted them to know that he's really standing with them. He's there rejoicing with them in the fact that they have not forgotten Christ, that Christ is very much their center, and then in the last large paragraph, we come into one of these great exaltations of the Lord. But do you notice where it says... this is about halfway through the paragraph... that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom. Can you find that and follow me? In this, Christ hides all the treasures of knowledge. And here's that first concern about those things that are there to take the place of Christ. Do you see it? That's the very first one. Up until then, he has been talking about suffering and the fact that it is not confined to space and time. He then talks to them about how they are growing in the Lord and by what means that happens. He is talking about Christ, the mystery, and how he is the source of so much. He throws in one little sentence. That sentence is going to grow really big as you go on.

Alright, again in the next paragraph after that, he has encouraged them because Christ is so much their center, and in this last major paragraph, I just like to read it because it is so beautiful. You Colossians are rooted; you're being built up. Again, he is reminding them of their source, and he is reminding them of what happens when they deal with their source. Together, you're being established in the faith. Epaphras learned this in Ephesus, and he's telling you all about it. I am the second person to tell you these things. You're walking with Christ, you're being built up with Christ, and then you're overflowing in faith, you're overflowing with thanksgiving.

We go to the next page in case any of you are lost. And now as he considers suffering outside of space and time, not confined by it, as he tells them how they have been growing and the source of it, and they, as he has exalted the Lord and reminded them again and again to not forget from where all things richly flow, he remembers what substitute might come in and take the place of Christ and take the place of those riches that are in him and do something to damage the church. So, he gives us another one of those sentences, "see to it that no one through philosophy and empty deceit takes captive, but rather be captive according to Christ and not captive according to the traditions of men." And another sentence, "not captive to the elemental principles of the world."

And now he comes back again to a great anthem of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you kind of follow this? He's reminding you of Christ; he's reminding you of what your touch with the Lord does in your lives. And then he remembers every once in a while, those substitutes that are out there, those things that are waiting to come in, maybe in a dry spell, and he mentions them again.

I want to go back and read the other passage and see how remarkably similar they are. "Therefore, I tell you, let no one with a persuasive argument delude you. Now, see to it that no one through philosophy and empty deceit takes you captive, but rather be captive to Christ and not to the traditions of man nor to the elemental principles of this world." I'm going back and reading the other one again. "Therefore, I tell you not to let people with persuasive arguments delude you." It's the same thing. All right, are you with me? By the way, I'm doing something tonight I almost never do. You know what I'm doing? I'm teaching. I don't even believe in this. What are you laughing at, Margarita? What's she saying? That I'm jumping around. No, it's not me that's jumping around. It's Paul who's jumping around.

Okay, right after that word about philosophy, we have another incredible anthem of Christ. And I'm not going to read it right now, but look how beautiful it is. He's telling you one more time where the water is. It's the only place where there is water, and then he comes into Christ as the head of all rule. That's the beginning of the paragraph right after the anthem. Christ is the head of all authority, and Christ...and here he goes one more time. Oops, it was philosophy.

Now, where does philosophy come from? The Greeks. You got it. And now he comes to circumcision. Circumcision came from the Jews. Let me tell you two other things that come from the Greeks. Greeks are into hearing; the Jews are into seeing miracles. Jews are into cutting skin. The Greeks are into philosophy. The Greek people are into listening to great archery. The Jews want a sign and a wonder. And he knows that these dear Christians in Colossae are going to be faced, we all are, with the philosophers. Those who appeal to the ear, those who appeal to the eye, and those who appeal to pain. Obedience, obedience. In this case, the law, that all persuasive thing, the law is very easy to recognize. It carries a badge, a rifle, and some riding chaps.

Alright, so right in the middle of this exaltation of Christ, we get another one of these points. Now, I want you to follow me. You were, let's see, in Christ, you were circumcised. That does not mean you were circumcised in a way that had anything to do with the removal of skin, but this is interesting, because Paul plays on the word flesh here, but rather you have the circumcision of Christ, which is the removal of the flesh.

Now, there are two kinds of flesh; in fact, there are three kinds of flesh mentioned in scripture. One of them, you might say, is the eating of meat, the flesh of an animal. Oh, there's another, and all flesh upon the earth. That meant everybody who's in it, who inhabits. And then there is the flesh, as in the removal and circumcision of human flesh, and there is the greater reference to flesh. Do you know the definition of the more spiritual aspect of flesh? Actually, flesh is not spiritual, but we're dealing with spiritual things.

Then let me give it to you. He is in the flesh. That makes sense, doesn't it? Have you ever been in the flesh? Carmen, I hate to tell you, but you were just in the flesh. No, I'm teasing you. I'll tell you something my wife doesn't remember. There was a day when we lived in Auburn, Maine, that we were really mad at one another, and we were so mad at one another. We were actually in total agreement on the subject that was being spoken about, but we were so angry that it sounded like we were having opposing opinions. Then you don't have to have an opposing opinion in the flesh. Just as long as you're just ticked off, it doesn't matter.

We move from being in our soul to being in our flesh. We are in our soul all the time. We are, in the eyes of God, always in our spirit. But in our experience, we are in the experiential knowledge of being in our flesh occasionally. But if we can move over to understand that we are in our spirits and our spirits are very much alive and functioning, it can be an incredibly transforming experience.

Then what does it mean to be in the flesh? Well, this is an inadequate explanation. When God made you, He made your soul, spirit, and body. Adam was primarily a soul. A Christian is primarily spirit. Adam had a spirit; he was a soul. Both were contained in his human body. Not in his fleshly body, in his beautiful, marvelous body. When man fell, sin entered into your body and corrupted your body. It stinkified your body. It corrupted, it stinkified your body, I like that. That's a strong word. It means the same thing as corrupted, it stinkified. Good Greek word I just made up.

Sin stinkified your body and your body ceased to be a body and became flesh, and sin indwelt your body and declared war on your soul. And the fallen man became body, soul, and almost not a spirit. So, he moved from soul, body, and spirit to flesh, soul, and almost no spirit.

When Jesus Christ resurrects your spirit, there for an instant, you have a living spirit like Adam, and that's wonderful, because before that, your spirit was dead to the Lord. Jesus Christ comes and resurrects your spirit, and just for a moment, that's the wonder, how short it is. I don't know the wonder of having your spirit back, but then He does something very glorious at the same time. He comes and brings His life into your spirit. He brings His spirit into your spirit and puts divine nature into your spirit. He puts divine life into your spirit. He puts the Father into your spirit. He puts the highest life there is in your spirit, and you literally take on another life form. Are you following all that? And so suddenly, thank God you are somewhat spirit, soul, and body, which is the order He was always after.

I want you to know something, brothers and sisters. That's going to get better. But because the highest life dwells in your spirit, we have to say that your spirit is first in the eyes of God. Your soul is second. When He resurrected your spirit from the dead, He saved your soul and cleansed it. And then what did He do with the flesh? He looked at it and said, "Hmm, forget it." And therefore, he destroyed it.

Now you are not aware that He destroyed your flesh, but He did. This too is one of those things that is not confined to space and time, but from the moment Jesus Christ died on the cross, your flesh has been done away with. Your flesh, for a definition, is your body plus sin, therefore, corrupted. And there is literally something living inside your body: it's sin, and he's in there. A form of something that can indwell you is in your body.

And Paul speaks that many, many times about how it is your body, your members that sin, get really sick sometimes. We're talking deathly ill and trying to sin. You just can't do it, you can't come up with, you can't get angry, you can't lust, you can't desire. Your body is so close to dying, you can't sin. You'd take a great effort, which you don't have to sin. And it's not emitting from your soul; it's emitting from your flesh.

Here's your flesh. Here's your spirit and here's your soul. This is you, the soul is really, truly you. What's the flesh doing? Well, it's not trying to fight with the spirit. It's fighting to take over the soul. Okay. All right. Now, you're right. But what's the spirit doing? Spirit is doing the same thing. The battleground is your soul.

Well, before you were Christian, there was no spirit worth talking about over there to do any fighting for your soul. So, who was winning? The flesh. Well, Gene, I wasn't a bad person. That really means the flesh had you. Did you follow that? All right, Gene, I was a terrible person. Well, the flesh had you, too. It doesn't matter what it is. The flesh was winning. Now, the spirit and the flesh fight over the soul. If you take a knife and cut off a piece of flesh, that's a different kind of flesh; that's the skin. I said there were four kinds. Does that in any way help you in your battle with the flesh? It is of no consequence whatsoever, and that's not all. It's not a real circumcision; it's a picture of circumcision. There is a real circumcision, and every person in this room has had a real circumcision. Jesus Christ has crucified your flesh. Not a fleshly piece of skin, but your flesh. And having circumcision that is nothing but a picture of real circumcision in no way edifies, no way helps you in the war, in the indulgence of the flesh. Did you follow all that? Okay.

So, we have been warned about the Greek. Now we have been warned about the Jew. But Paul will not give up this subject. He's going to go on, come back to Christ again for a moment, and then he's going to remember these things again. Alright, are you with me?

Right above the middle of the page, you were circumcised in Christ. It had nothing to do with the cutting away of skin, but by the taking away of the real flesh. You have all been plunged into Christ. Christ is a watery grave here. He is a coffin, He is a grave, He's in the grave, and you were not put in the grave with Him, you were plunged into Him while He was dead. You were buried, immersed into Christ, and when you were buried in Christ, immersed into Him, you know what that means? That means that everything surrounding you was Christ when He was dead, and you were dead. Everything touching you was Christ. Now then, you have not only been buried with Him and immersed in Him when He's dead, you've also been buried in Him. Immersed in Him

when He rose. When He died, you died. You were immersed inside of Christ. When He came alive, did you stay dead?

Did you learn in physics that all things tend to come to the same temperature that surrounds them? You didn't learn that. You did. Does anybody remember this? It's the law of physics. And you put spinach on the table, and you put ice cream on the table, and one's smoking hot, and one is really cold. You come back 30 minutes later and they're the same temperature. They have yielded to their surroundings. Brothers and sisters, despite all your good efforts, you were dead in Jesus Christ. You were in the grave with Him; everything around you is Christ. And then God awoke His Son, and despite all you could do, He awakened you too. And you were immersed and surrounded by life, and just as you had been immersed and surrounded by death, now you're immersed and surrounded by life. And when He rose from the dead, so did you. And the flesh stayed in the grave.

That's who we are! That's who we are! Amen! That's who we are, that's who we are. We are those who are in Christ, risen from the dead. Now, this just blows the entire issue of circumcision higher than a kite. Now isn't this neat? Isn't this wonderful? We will continue here. Now, we move into the after the resurrection, and we move into aspects of your salvation. You also were raised with Christ. All of you were raised with Christ through faith by the working of God while you were still in your trespasses and dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh. It was at that time that Christ raised you up from the dead and made you alive together with Him. That would really be well translated and made you alive and one with Him. You are in Him, and He has raised you from the dead.

And together with Him, He did this by having forgiven you of all your trespasses, He did that on the cross. Do you think you have followed me up until now? I don't think you heard a word I've said. Why? Was that you, Robert? Did you say that? Robert, you get the big cigar.

Audience: Oh, I was going to say, are we talking about the church?

Alright, you've been thinking individually, haven't you? Haven't you? You have been thinking individually. Isn't it so easy to see these things individually? And yet, this is plural you all the way through. Those riches that you need so much are for the church. This is important; there are always some of us in the church who are poor. There are always some who are rich. Generally speaking, individuals get poorer. Generally speaking, the church is always rich. Generally speaking, the church is centered on the Lord. We find our riches as a body of people, not as an individual.

Our trespasses have been forgiven to us just as corporately as they have been individually, and this body of believers has had, follow me carefully, this body of believers has had her flesh crucified. The flesh of this person has been crucified. It is so important for you to understand that there is one human being in this room and that person went to the cross and died with Christ and that person rose from the dead and that person's flesh has been put away.

As long as I look at this passage of scripture as an individual, and that's the way it's always presented to me, I really can't believe my flesh has been put away. But saints, when you realize that this is a human being in this room, suddenly everything changes, and you realize, yes, the flesh has been put away. Is that not true? Can you not grab that far better than you can? You, as an individual, are a limb. Her flesh has been crucified. Like it or not, this lady is glorious. And you're simply part of her.

The riches that we're going to read all this over again in a minute are for the church. That salvation is as much the church as it is for you. Am I on scriptural grounds here? Let me tell you how much scriptural grounds I am on right now. Jesus Christ never died for you. Jesus Christ never loved you, and Jesus Christ never saved you. He loved her and gave Himself for her. Praise the Lord. Amen. That's in the Bible. He loved her and gave Himself for her. He died for that lady, and she had her flesh crucified; she went into the grave. The flesh did not come out of the grave. The resurrected Lord with her inside, she, together with Him, rose from the dead. And you're a limb. And what happened to her happened to him. I'm sorry. What happened to her? What happened to Him happened to her, and what happened to her happened to you because you're a limb. Your brother's getting that limb there on that video, that's you. She rose from the grave, and you just accidentally got caught up in that because you were part of her; you're a limb. Ain't that wonderful? Ain't that a better gospel? Isn't that more liberating?

Brothers and sisters, when things get bad, get inside that girl because that girl's inside of Christ. And we often try to put ourselves as individuals in Christ, but it doesn't quite work. You get inside that girl and say, "I'm a limb." And you can see that girl, glorious. And I want you to know something else. You can step back from this church, and you can see the flesh has been crucified. She's not fleshly; every once in a while, one of her limbs thinks it is. You have never looked upon this body of believers as fleshly. You have yourself, but not her.

I'm not even saying a church can't do that; it is possible. But brothers and sisters, the repercussions are far more horrible than when you get in the flesh. Thank God, all the alarm bells ring. You know, when the church has stepped away from her place in Christ, she also is in spirit, even when you are not.

Let me show you a part of a body that is not in spirit. Would you like to actually physically see that? Thank you. Would you hold that up? Just hold it up. Now, there is a member who is not in spirit. Do it again, please, sister? Oh, well, there it is right there. Now, that's in the flesh. There is a member in the flesh. Thank you, Carmen. Carmen caught on to that immediately. Had y'all caught on? Can you see that and look at it and say there's a piece of her body that's out of sync right now? But not the body.

There existed a certificate of debt made up of all sorts of things, and every one of them was bad for you. Christ canceled out the certificate of debt, which was opposed to you and the church, and He has taken away the certificate of debt with every condemnation in it, and He nailed the certificate of debt along with all of the decrees in it to the cross. The certificate of debt has been

taken away. The rules and the authorities were disarmed by Christ, and then He made a public display of them, and He triumphed over all rule and authority by means of the cross.

Now then, having said all of that, Paul suddenly remembers one more thing. First of all, he just gave circumcision down the country. Y'all don't know that term, do you? He gave circumcision a very hard time. That ends right here. And then he switches back to remember the law and legalistic religious people, and it starts here. Another one of those passages that is there to enlighten you.

We're about to look at something here that I think every one of us, till the day we die, is vulnerable to. No matter how much I stand up here and speak to you about Christ and I speak to you about grace, there's a part of us, that religious nature, that has not yet been taken away from us in this bodily flesh of ours. By the way, all the religion in you is located in your flesh.

I'm going to get off the subject for just a minute, but we went through this once before, and I'll remind you of this, too. The tree of the knowledge of what? Good and evil. That's both our sin nature and our religious nature. Do you remember that? And the man who, you know, the guys in the mafia, they go around killing people and then selling drugs, and they give a couple of million dollars to their church. That's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And I don't know why they do that, but then I don't know why you do some of the things you do either. And sometimes I wonder about myself, too.

Well, I tell you, this man was in love with the Lord, and this man was centered on the Lord. He might not have been able to write well, but boy, he could sure center on the Lord. Actually, he wrote very well; he just wrote chaotically. I wish you'd have gone back over and done a second draft here; I'm just going to read it to you. I changed the order of this. Christ is the real, the reality as over against food and drink. Do you know what he's saying to you here? Well, let's say what he was saying to the Colossians. They will hear there are certain foods they should not eat, and they will tell you there are certain things they should not drink.

How many of you have ever been told it's a sin to drink alcohol? Will you raise your hands, please? How many of you have never been told it was a sin to drink alcohol? Will you raise your hand? Where on earth have you been? Hiding in a cave. Now then, just for kicks, how many of you in the last 12 months have drunk something that had alcohol in it? Will you raise your hand? No true confessions going on, put your hands down. Should I stop for a moment? No. The world is full of people who will tell you what you should not eat. Do not eat pork; do not drink something. I'll tell you all something; I'll put you in the law right now. Almost every person in this room eats too much cheese. I'm not telling you that you shouldn't eat cheese, but man, I have watched some of y'all put away cheese to the point that, have you ever heard of a coronary? Okay, maybe Puerto Ricans don't have coronaries, but man, some of you eat a lot of cheese.

And festivals, these are actually periods of times to be observed. This is all Jewish, and new moons and the Sabbath. Brothers and sisters, I don't know what the Seventh Day Adventists

do with this, but long before the Jews came along, there was something real, and it was also not only real, but it was to come and be real. Before there was anything created in this universe, Jesus Christ was drink. Jesus Christ was food. He was the only food that existed. Jesus Christ was the only rest there was, and Jesus Christ was the only moon there was. And then one day, He who is the reality came in bodily form. And He announced, "I am the food. I am the drink. I am the Sabbath." And here Paul reveals to us: He's also the moon.

And I stood right over here. I remember very vividly, and I asked somebody, "What is that thing up in the sky that lights up the dark?" Which one of you was it? Do you remember? I think it was the first time in my life that anyone gave me the right answer the first time. I was expecting them to say that's the moon, which is not true. But the answer was, you people are just smarter than other folks. The answer was that it is a picture of a shadow of the real moon. Do any of you remember that? You remember that? That Christ is the moon and the moon is Christ. What's going on here?

Okay, Margarita, when is the last time you had some alcohol? Okay, we've had a complete breakdown here, folks. Let's come back, I want you to see again Paul calling a church, not you, the individual, but a church. Church. There's no way in this world that these things could have been observed, the festival could have been observed, unless it had been corporate.

Now, the food and drink could have been individual, but not the festival, and that's not all. It would be almost impossible for some of the brothers and sisters to be observing the Sabbath, and some not. And Paul of Tarsus, you have no idea what a destructive pen he has here. Do you understand that he is destroying all Jewish festivals? He is destroying all laws and rules about anything you shouldn't drink. He is doing away with everything that you cannot eat. And he is doing away with the Sabbath?

There are two great things in the Jewish religion. One is circumcision, and the other is the Sabbath. He just did away with circumcision, the picture of the flesh being done away with. And he has inaugurated the circumcision of Christ, which puts away the flesh of the church. Here he is doing away with the drink of the church, the food that the church should not eat, and festivals that the church may feel obligated to observe, and he has done away with the Sabbath, which a church might begin observing every Saturday. He has put it all away, and he has liberated the church.

Now, brothers and sisters, for that reason, I would admonish you as a body of believers to not get too tied up with rules and regulations. You think y'all pull free of this? Do you? Well, let me ask you. What do you usually do on Sunday morning? You have a brother's meeting on Sunday night. Sunday afternoon is football, and have you ever had a brother's meeting when some brother started tapping on his wrist and saying, "We've got to go." Okay. So, you don't have church on Sunday? Don't you realize that Jesus Christ died and the Jewish people had the Saturday, but because the Lord rose on the Sunday, we're supposed to observe Sunday? You don't know that? Did you know that's in the Bible? You didn't know that was in the Bible? Sister, it's not in the

Bible. That is the gymnastics of men. We observe the same every day. Every day belongs to the Lord. Now, it takes a church to do that. I realize it's individuals, but churches do these things.

Alright, let's go on. These are the shadows of the one to come, even Christ. And now he's still whittling away at this. He continues the admonition to stay away from religious things. Do not let any man act as your judge. I want you to take your pen if you've got one, and take that word "your" there and put PL. You know what that PL stands for? Plural. Therefore, do not let any man act as the judge of the church in regard to these shadows. Let him not keep on defrauding the church of the church's prize by delighting in self-abasement in the worship of angels, taking his stand on things like visions that he's seen, inflated in his own fleshly mind, and inflated for no good reason. Such a man is not holding to the head, and that head is Christ.

May the Lord Jesus Christ let me live and die and never put a church under law. Let me live and die cutting chains off of that girl. Let me never take away her prize. Let me never take away her freedom. And boy, do we need men who minister Christ and minister the gospel who never put that woman in bondage.

Now, I'm going to get on thin ice here. Has the church in Chicago here ever been in bondage? You say, you think? Was it an individual bondage, or was it a church bondage? It was first a church. Is that not true? Generally speaking, we are usually put in bondage as a body of believers, and just like it reads right here, "Let no man." Now, this will happen to you individually, but brothers and sisters, it will happen to you as a church. Now then, let me ask you this, and this may never have happened to you. Have you ever had anybody come here and tell you, as a church, that you were to this or to that? That has not happened to you. And an outsider, you have never had that happen. Well, let me guarantee you it will. Well, you may not have even heard it because he couldn't get in a position to be heard of leadership, but I don't doubt someone said these people shouldn't be something or other. Saints, trust me, the churches I work with have been blasted as churches for all sorts of things. And interestingly enough, I don't know why people always think that we're just standing, absolutely teetering on the edge of gross churchwide immorality. Because we're free? Who is more apt to sin? He who is free, or he who is in bondage? That's the way I read my New Testament. The man in bondage is more apt to sin than the man who is free.

All right, beware of Greeks bearing chains. Beware of men bearing the law. What time is it? Are we in pretty good shape here? We're in really good shape. All right, Hey, do you remember that you were sitting here thinking individually? Well, don't do that. This is the New Testament; it was written to all of you.

For Christ the head, from Christ the head, and now He comes back to one of those wonderful enjoinings of you, admonitions of you, as a people, to remember the only source you have of life. He's done it by talking about your salvation; he's done it by talking to you about the glory of Christ. Now he's going to talk to you about it by showing you the process by which Christ brings life to the body.

Lucy, are you awake? How many fingers am I holding up, Lucy? He's constantly admonishing the church in Colossae to remember the head. Now he is going to explain to us the process. From Christ, the head, the entire body... Now what is the body? The body is also Christ. From Christ, the head, to Christ, the body. From Christ, the head, the entire body, which is being supplied and held together by joints and ligaments, grows up with growth which comes from God.

God has given to His Son His life and His Spirit. The Son has given to the bride, the woman, this new creature; He has given that same life and that same spirit. There then flows down from Christ the head supply and nutrients for all the rest of that which is Christ, the body. Therefore, the body that is Christ is dependent upon the head that is Christ because all the food and all the drink and all the nutrition and all the nurture come from Christ, the head. And that's all you need to know, except to know that these ligaments and veins, and Paul didn't know a whole lot about anatomy and bands. All these things flow from the head and nurture the entire body.

Now, brother, I want to ask you a question. The next time the church is low, what does the church need to do? Find a new way to explore Jesus Christ. I'm not telling you to dance around the room and holler louder. I'm not telling you too fast. I'm saying to you, He is infinite in His variety, find Christ.

Now, brothers, it actually is your responsibility to do this. Did you know that? It's your responsibility to make sure that when the church is low, to find a new way to discover your Christ, your Lord, without the law. That is no small task. If you're really, really in bad shape, call on me. But Gene, you're going to be dead here pretty soon. I'll leave some brothers; call on some brothers. If they come in here and start giving you something old, throw them out. Tell them to come back in two years when they've grown up. I'm serious, I think if you throw them out, it might make them wake up. I actually, long-term, have a great deal of confidence in these brothers. Short term, I ain't got no confidence in them whatsoever. They're going to have to go out and make the same mistakes all the rest of us did.

You can simply switch what you're doing and find another avenue to know the Lord, and sometimes they're very, very simple. It can be to just take a period of time off, and write new songs or learn new songs. Now, I'm going to get into something that's not here, but I have spoken on it, and then we're going to come to the end of chapter 2.

There is the constant burden I have in the church for the fact that she is beautiful, and sometimes she is really gorgeous, and this attracts brothers and sisters who don't know zip, and they are like a moth attracted to light; they just come. When the light bulb goes off, that moth doesn't know what to do. And the Christians who come among us haven't read a book, probably never will. Haven't listened to any tapes, probably never will, and have had absolutely no revelation from the Lord. Some of these people hang around for a few years finally get some insights. But boy, when you go through a dry spell, more signs go up in front of lawns for sale. More rider trucks and U-Haul trucks appear, and people start leaving. That's all right. I'm not criticizing them. But I want you to know something. Jesus Christ is the author of dry spells, and

I'll even give you a definition of a dry spell. Christ is a dry spell; Christ is a wet spell, is He not? Have you not glorified in His presence and taken a bath in His Holy Spirit and gloried in the fact that He was with you? But have you ever gloried in a dry spell? Dry spells come from His hand, the sovereign hand of God. And you know what you learn in a dry spell? You learn whether or not you're worshipping Jesus Christ or Santa Claus.

You find out where your heart is. Now, that's not true just of you, the individual; that's true of a church. Brothers and sisters, a church should be able to batten down the hatches and go through a dry spell. Sometimes they simply come; if you'll hang tough long enough, the Lord Jesus Christ will come back. He never left. He is a test on you. Well, what about pain and suffering? I think maybe pain and suffering are also Christ, and they are again, I don't like to use the word test, I really don't, but I can tell you one thing, those dry spells are a weeding out process, they are a weeder-outer processor. I don't have any more to say to that except I want you to try to remember that if you will, that we're not here just for the good times, and I will confess to you that Jesus Christ won you. He's not fair. He won you during a wet spell when the torrents of rain were falling on you. Wasn't that mean of Him? You understand? I don't mean that, but wasn't that sneaky? Win your heart over when everything is glorious, and He didn't even tell you there was a dry spell coming.

Brothers and sisters, they come to the church. They come to individuals, but they come to the church. They're probably cures for most of them. I tell you quite frankly, I don't know a cure for the church in Atlanta right now. I mean by that, there's a cure. But when you get down to nine people, you've been hit as hard as they have. You just go straight through it, and you don't try to go to Toronto to get revived or start dancing in the middle of the room. You just go straight through it, and you come out on the other side. By the way, there was some real healing for the sisters from Atlanta by means of the other churches. I watched churches heal, heal a church. They have gone back home with real hope in their hearts. Thank God for that. Isn't that the riches of Jesus Christ? Okay, we'll come here now to the end.

We know where we get our nutrition from Christ, the head. Are you living in the world? And he's back to the laws again. He had one little reprieve here for us, did he not? When he told us how the church is nurtured, and now he's saying that the following is not nutrition. Do you submit yourselves to decrees such as do not handle, do not taste, and do not touch? Man, this guy is so brave. This guy has got so much audacity. Do you know that Gentiles in those days were people without moral restraint? They had no Old Testament; they had no Ten Commandments. Those people were immoral; they were sinners. Here, they've only been saved for two or three years, and the guy who led them to the Lord is just a young kid named Ephapras, and he bets on Jesus.

I wish you were a room full of preachers. I'd say to you, brothers, why in the world don't you bet on Jesus? Why do you preach to your people, don't do this and don't do that? Why don't you tell them they're free to do it and then bet on Jesus Christ?

I have never seen a church increase in its sinfulness because it was told it was free from all law. For those of you who are on tape, I want you to know that I have preached an audacious gospel. I want you to know that I have never seen a body of believers increase their sinful acts when they were told they could do anything. In fact, I have seen it drop as a church. There are always one or two people who take their license to sin. I'm so glad we find those people in such moments.

Brothers and sisters, there is nothing you cannot handle, nothing you cannot taste, and nothing you cannot touch, period. And don't listen to men who tell you can't. But Gene, what about I've already been through this with you. Go ahead and commit adultery. Your wife's going to leave you, maybe shoot you. Go ahead and get drunk; they're going to throw you in the clink. Go ahead and steal, and we will come visit you on Saturday afternoons. They have their own built-in punishments; they have their own built-in punishments, and besides that, you're a Christian. Jesus Christ lives in you. You go do what you want to and pay the penalty, brother, but you're free to do it.

I don't know how I can get any further out in left field than that. But most of all, do you know what you're free from? You're free from the law. And you're free from men who tell you, you can't do this, you're a Christian. You can't do that, you're a Christian. And you can say to him, I can do anything, I'm a Christian. I hope you have some resuscitation equipment with you when you tell him that, because he's going to faint dead away.

I stand for grace, I believe in Jesus Christ, and I trust you. The very instincts of your Christian nature, and because you have an indwelling Lord and indwelling Holy Spirit that you understand and know. The issue here is not; do not touch and do not taste the issue here is a man. The issue here is the person who tells you these things. Brothers and sisters, don't listen to men who tell you that you can't do this, this, and this. You tell them yes, you can, you're not going to maybe, but you can. But the main issue is just don't get in bondage to men.

You think I ought to release this tape? Have you died with Christ to the elemental principles? Principles that are destined to perish when you eat them and drink them? Do not touch, do not taste, and yet when you eat it, it perishes. These are not principles at all, saints. Are you submitting to the commandments and teachings of men? Here again, the issue is men who tell you that you must do these things or not do these things. And now I will simply close by saying to you, brothers and sisters, it's true within our own nature that all of these things sound reasonable. And that's why I said we have to be on guard the rest of our life. It always sounds reasonable.

Some of the brothers and sisters in one of the churches went somewhere and heard a man talk on becoming intercessors. I know the sermon; it's been around for nearly 200 years. Hannah was an intercessor, and she got Samuel, who did this, that, and the other, and we need to be intercessors. I didn't respond to that, Hannah was an intercessor, Hannah was an intercessor. Nowhere does it say I have to be an intercessor. Hannah was an intercessor. The church has

intercessors. Beta Sheirich was an intercessor; I am the fruit of Beta Sheirich's intercession, but I am not an intercessor. I am a troublemaker.

Why should I make you be an intercessor when I know good and well that most of you sometimes in your life are going to drop it? And is that not true? Is that not true? If there is someone in this room who feels called by God to be an intercessor, then I would say to you, I cannot think of a greater calling on this earth. Pray for us and pray for me. Pray for me two things: that doors might open for the mystery, and pray for me that I might have the wisdom of Christ to know how to go through that door and to preach that mystery. I got that out of the book of Colossians.

And church, from time to time, will you pray for me? And pray for me that doors will open. Pray for me that I will have strength, and pray that I will have wisdom. And pray that I will be able to present that mystery so that men and women will respond to the gospel, who is Christ. But to tell an entire church she should be an intercessor sounds wonderful. But when it's stripped of its character, it comes stripped of its outer nature. It comes down to religion. Why don't we all become evangelists? Why don't we all become church planters? None of us can do all of these things. It is within the body that some of these things are produced, and some of them we never get.

Till this hour, I have never had the privilege of having a sister who is a full-time Christian worker. I hope to see that before I die, but so far, I have not. But there are other things I have seen that nobody else has seen, and that is in the sovereign hand of God. Anything that a man proclaims to this body of believers about do not touch, do not this, do not anything else, really looks good, but a lot of it is religion.

Now I have a word for the church. Church, you have got good sense. You have acquired spiritual wisdom. You might not have always had it, but boy, you bit on a piece of stone, lost all your teeth, and you figured out that a stone is not bread. And in these years that we've been together, and before that, both, you have touched your Lord, and you have learned some things.

I speak to you as a body; you know the difference between religion and Christ. You know the difference between high-sounding things that sound wonderful, that end up not being the Lord. I address you in the wisdom of the church. I am not asking you to not do these things. I am telling you, rest in the fact that you have this wisdom of the Lord.

Now, if I have any admonishment for you, it is that you will not depend just on singing to touch the Lord. That you will not just do plays to touch the Lord, and not just Bible study, and not just prayer, or not just anything, but that you personally, nonetheless, as an individual, touch the Lord. And do you know what I gave you the other day? I mean, this morning I said to start off with one, then I said get with two, and then go to four, and then go to eight. Do you know what I called on you to do? I called on you as a church to touch the Lord, not in a meeting, and to come together and stand in Christ. And there's nothing I'd rather hear than hearing a sister speak words that have no reference to herself. To hear a sister pray as the bride, to hear a brother speak words as though they were from the Lord.

That's not my point. My point is, sisters and brothers, all the knowledge and wisdom you need are in Christ, all the riches are in Christ. The nutrition the church always has, flowing down, flows down from Christ, and I'm just telling you what Paul Tarsus told you. And I am free now to leave by having said to you as a church, these are your riches. And I admonish you to begin becoming more conscious that you're a limb and the church is fantastic and in wondrous shape, and don't be looking at yourself so much, just say, Lord, that was just a limb, but the church is doing great.

I'd love to be with you when these things blossom more fully in your life. Write me a letter sometimes. And Carmen, call me. Shandra, write to me. And who is the other? Now, I want you to do something. I want you to come down here with me, and we're going to sing a song or two, and I would like to hear you open your mouth to the Lord and saints. I don't want to hear any begging; I don't want to hear any asking. I would like to hear some very simple statements. You can call them declarations if you want, but if that's too big to put on, just statements. You want to hear one? Come on down, and you'll know what to pray for.

Would half of you get on this side of me? Half of you get on this side of me. The rest of you get on this side of me. Now, sister, will you get close to me? Alright, are you getting closer here? Come on in a little closer. Now, what are we going to start off with as a song? You have to tell me, what's the first song we're going to sing?

Audience: We place You.

We place You, what's the second one? Thy name, O Lord, and what's the third one? Can you sing that? Is that too long? Sing the first stanza of it. All right, is that possible? Sing the first stanza of Ekklesia. Do you have the three songs? And then you're going to talk, you're going to open your mouth, and you're going to fight your religious nature. You're going to fight the prayer that says, "Lord, help us." Or "Lord, make us more conscious of declaring those things you heard." Lord, she's wise, and I'm part of her. Find something, it's in there. You have a prayer. Are you ready to do all these things? Now I want you to watch something very important. This is extremely important. This is something for you to learn. Are you watching? Are you listening? All right, watch very carefully. Good night, saints. That's important, this is your prayer meeting, not mine.