

LSB Colossians 2:8 - 15 Empty Philosophies

NASB77 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 9 For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; 11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

This is now our third week looking into the magnificent and timeless truths that Paul here lays out for a group of Christians he had never met.

We're just a few years, perhaps just less than 30 years after Jesus was resurrected from the dead. The church is brand new. Israel has been set on a shelf, by God. They are no longer the object of His continuing revelation to men via the prophets of Israel.

God is unfolding something new. God is extending blessing to the nations. Gentiles are flooding into this new work of God, the church that belongs to the Lord, Jesus Christ.

The new testament is in the process of being revealed and written under the inspiration of God by the apostles, and this epistle, by one who considers

himself the least of the apostles, an apostle untimely born, apart from the other apostles, Paul.

The Christians he's never met, and this church at Colossae is the beginning of a phenomenon. At least to Paul, it's a phenomenon. All of the other letters Paul had written at this point, were to churches he had founded, people he knew by face.

Colossae is a 2nd generation church. In Paul's lifetime. He knew that would happen. He knew the church was an organism that would continue until God's purposes for it were fulfilled. He had no idea that I would be writing these words, a redeemed part of that continuing church, almost 2000 years later. On a computer. Staring something called AI in the face.

Christ's true church reproduces itself. Over and over and over until Jesus calls us to Him in the air. The church reproduces itself.

But what happens if the church gets a cancer that also reproduces itself and grows until it chokes out the life of the true church?

You can drive down the highway of church history and it is littered with churches that got corrupted and died. Cancer kills. Jesus Himself finishes the job for dead churches. Listen to what He tells the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. If they won't repent of their sickness and remove the cancer, He removes them.

Ephesus; 4 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 'Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

Pergamum; 14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality. 15 'Thus you also have some who

in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 'Repent therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

Thyatira; 20 'But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 'And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 'Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

Sardis; 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 'Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.

Laodicea; 15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. 16 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. 19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent.

The church is a living organism, built to thrive, but subject to foreign attacks that can make it sick and ultimately cause death. We're enjoying

this building this morning because the denomination that owned it previously allowed a cancer that is ultimately killing it. Living churches can become empty stone quarry's.

Paul's method to protect this church that he has never been to, one of the first 2nd generation churches born apart from the apostles, proving Jesus plan for the church to pro-create and duplicate itself, everywhere, on earth, is to provide a foundation of pure truth, pure doctrine that can make this church strong. And secondly, Paul points to some possible beginning cancers that will need to be cut out.

This is a tightrope. Remember, Ephesus, above, was a church singularly blessed with apostolic leadership. Both Paul and John spent time there leading and teaching. Timothy spent time with them. They were impenetrable as far as orthodox correct doctrine.

But Satan has a different cancer for folks like me who are fortified with strong doctrine. Love dies. Ephesus didn't die from foreign cancers eating them up and killing their strength. They died from a lack of love.

It's like walking a tightrope. You need the strength to withhold all of the attacks from the outside. Cancers and sicknesses can't penetrate a strong, robust, healthy church. But in all of that strength and robustness, you can't allow love to die.

So, the purpose of this letter is to fortify their strength against outside attacks of debilitating diseases, spiritually and morally, by building up their foundations of truth.

But Paul gushes over them. He loves them like a grandfather who lives in a different state, but who longs to be with them, because he genuinely loves them. The church is a balance of strength in sound doctrine, and love.

If you read through verses 11 - 15 again and count how many references there are to our life connection with Jesus, depending on how you count, I

find 10 times in those 5 verses where our wealth, our strength, our adoption, our rescue and salvation are connected intimately with our relationship to Jesus.

In Him, with Him, with Him, through Him, we are circumcised, we are baptised into His body, we are made alive instead of dead, spiritually, we are justified, our debt of sin is forgiven, we are friends, we are adopted sons and fellow heirs. With Him, In Him, through Him. Everything is connected to a living connection with Jesus.

Last week we didn't quite finish our thoughts in verse 14 and 15. There is gold to mine out in verse 14, and verse 15 is totally unique and interesting. So let's take some brief time to consider those truths, and then we'll enjoy some thanksgiving feasting. I'll read them again in context.

*11 and **in Him** you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of **Christ**; 12 having been buried **with Him** in baptism, in which you were also raised up **with Him** through faith in the working of God, who raised **Him** from the dead. 13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **He made** you alive together **with Him**, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and **He has** taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When **He had** disarmed the rulers and authorities, **He made** a public display of them, having triumphed over them **through Him**.*

Again, verse 13;

*13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **He made** you alive together **with Him**, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us;*

When it comes to a spiritual connection to God, the creator, who designed and created us to be worshippers of Him, we were still born. Born dead.

Adam did that. We were born sinners. Born condemned.

That sounds very harsh to people. Born outside the commonwealth of creatures acceptable in the presence of God. Born sinful. Adams race all born with Adam's sinfulness.

In vs. 13 *dead in your transgressions* is the normal state of every person born in Adams race. Our family trait is sin. Born into a rebellion against God. But God through Christ quickens christians to new life. He restores christians to a life connection, a love connection to Him.

And there's only one way that can happen. Sin has to be paid for. Sin has to be forgiven and removed. God is ultimately intolerant of any rebellion against Himself, and sin is rebellion. So sin must be **propitiated** before any friendship, any fellowship, any adoption into His presence and family can be possible.

Propitiated. 5 cylinder word. It means paid for in such a way that the debt is fully satisfied. In business, a debt that can't be repaid, because of bankruptcy on the part of the one who owes, is often written off the books. It's a loss that the business owner can get a few dollars removed from his tax debt.

That is not propitiation. Propitiation is full satisfaction of the debt. Jesus death on the cross is full propitiation for our debt of sin. He dies in my place. He was sinless and as such holds a perfect righteousness that He can forfeit and give freely to another.

He gave me his righteousness. He took my sin and paid the debt, in full, He took the full wrath of God, in my place, and gave to me instead of my former sin, His righteousness. In Him, my sins are forgiven. In Him I possess His righteousness. That propitiation, the full payment and satisfaction of my debt is what we call **substitutionary atonement**.

My debt of sin was atoned for by a substitute. Jesus stood in my place and

received the wrath I deserved. He gives me a substitute righteousness. God opens the book to the Jim page and He see's, sin, paid for and removed. Account paid in full by a substitute. Therefore, Jim is declared Righteous. Jim possesses the righteousness, not his own, but the righteousness accounted to him by Christ.

That's the language in verse 13b, and 14.

He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

I had hostile decrees against me of a debt that I was bankrupt to pay. Hostile decrees against me. It wasn't a nuisance lawsuit, those decrees against me were real. I was in real trouble. I had sinned against a holy God and His righteous wrath was what I deserved. The charges were real and the predetermined judgement was terrifying.

God has taken those hostile decrees against me, out of the way. He nailed them to the cross with Jesus. That opened up a pathway, a connection, a fellowship, actually much more than a fellowship, an intimate love relationship with God of very God. Like Abraham of old, in Christ, I am a friend of God.

Beloved, that is a huge victory in the war of the ages between Satan and God. Let me show you a picture of this, a rather obscure text that is a picture of every one of us who has been rescued out of the hostile decrees against us.

Turn if you like, to Zechariah 3. A little bit hard to find. Going backwards, Matthew, Malachi, Zechariah. Chapter 3;

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

This is the problem stated simply. Satan isn't making false accusations folks. This is a courtroom scene. I can just picture Satan. Jim!! Jim Galli!!! You've got to be kidding Lord!! Have you got any idea how vile this guy is?? Sin out the kazoo.

What does the Lord say to my accuser, who, OBTW is leveling true accusations.

2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan!"

In our modern updated vernacular; Go pound sand Satan.

Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

Let me personalize that to make it all the more amazing. I'll put my name in there, but I hope you can substitute your name as well. *2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jim rebuke you! Is Jim Galli not a brand plucked from the fire?"*

Again, this keeps popping up wherever we turn in the Bible. Who chooses who? The Lord chose Jerusalem. The Lord snatched the firebrands out of the fires of judgement. And we'll see in the next verse, the Lord clothes who He chooses with righteous garments.

3 Now Joshua (or you, or me) was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. 4 And he spoke and said to those who were standing before him saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes." 5 Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by.

That's a picture of my salvation. The devil is bringing a case against me.

Sin on top of sin. *A certificate of debt consisting of decrees against me and which was hostile to me.* And the accusations are serious and they're real, and they're true. And the Lord who has chosen me, snatched me out of the fires of judgement, rebukes my accuser and shows him the door.

I am clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Wedding garments, of dazzling white. Satan's accusations were true. But the full propitiation of Christ's blood poured out for my sins, is more true. All of the decrees against me are paid for in full.

The 1875 song says; *Full atonement, can it be? Hallelujah! What a Saviour!*

Now we come to verse 15 which is Paul, just exploding with exultation. It's as if he gets so excited talking about the magnificence of what Christ did for us, at the cross, he just spills over here.

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

This can seem a little bit obscure, but my hope is that you will be able to join me and take a panoramic view of the big picture here.

First we need to sort out some pronouns and antecedents. *15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.*

Who does He refer to and who is Him at the end. He refers back to God who is at work in Christ in vs 12. Him refers to Christ who is God's agent in this victory.

And the victory of which God puts the spoils on display is not less than the complete squelching of the rebellion of Satan and all of his hosts and armies, 1/3 of the angels who followed Satan in his rebellion.

Satan captured this world. This planet earth was stolen in a coup against God who is it's rightful owner, having created it. Satan is an occupier. And he did that through capturing mankind because of sin.

So, Satan, all of the demons, and all of the captured slaves because of sin, which is every human born in Adam's race by Adam's sinful seed; that combined force is in rebellion against God, the rightful owner of this world.

Satan, every demon, all of the fallen angels in all of their rankings from high to low, and every sinner born to Adam are co belligerents in a rebellion against God. This planet is where the war is staged.

It gives a whole new meaning to Psalm 2;

*1 Why do the nations rage
And the peoples meditate on a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against Yahweh and against His Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!"*

*4 He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord mocks them.
5 Then He speaks to them in His anger
And terrifies them in His fury, saying,
6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain."*

Big picture. Satan's war with God. He enslaves the nations and brings them into the battle. War against God.

God laughs at the miniscule challenge. The threat is so out of balance against the powers of God that it makes God laugh. The threat of this world controlled by Satan and all of his hosts of demons, and the entire

sinful human race combined against the forces of God who spoke this world into existence from nothing; is laughable. Ridiculous. God mocks those who threaten to somehow hold this captured and occupied world.

Then He terrifies with His fury against the rebellion. Verse 6 here, like verse 15 in Colossians 2 is prophetic. Spoken as if already done.

6 “But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

There is cataclysmic war on earth before that installation upon Mount Zion actually happens. The book of Revelation pictures those events immediately prior to Jesus return to this world in fury and judgement.

Let's try to unpack verse 15 of Colossians 2 this morning, because it's pretty important for us to understand all of what we are, IN Christ.

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities

The rulers and authorities here refer to Satan and his hosts whose power to hold and rule this occupied planet is solely based in the sins of it's occupants. Satan's power is derived by our sin. He is called the accuser because that's his power base.

We are slaves of an evil king because we are trapped here, because of sin. Sin gives Satan the power to hold us. And ultimately he uses that power to occupy this planet. Jesus called him the "ruler of this world". In fact, lets look at that.

John 14:30 Jesus makes this statement in the upper room at the time of the last supper, the night before His early morning crucifixion.

I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming,

and he has nothing in Me;

It was neither the Romans or the Jews who came to kill Jesus. It was Satan. The ruler of the world here refers to Satan. But Jesus teaches us one final thing. Satan has no power to hold Jesus.

Sin is what gives Satan his power to capture and hold and kill mankind. The power is in the sin. He had no power to hold Jesus because Jesus had no sin. That's why Jesus can say, he's coming for me, but he has nothing in me. Jesus was sinless. Satan can't hold onto him because of sins.

That gives real teeth to Paul's word in vs 15. *15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities*

Satan's power to capture and hold and rule is sin. In Christ, my sin is removed. Gone! And Satan's power to hold onto me, to accuse me of sin and hold me in captivity is . . . disarmed. His power over me, IN Christ, is disarmed.

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

This is one of those verses that has telescopic layers. Spiritually, it's true now. Already happened. When Jesus burst out of the grave, that was a public display that Satan is disarmed. And not only can he not hold Jesus in captivity, he can no longer hold anyone whom Jesus has removed their sins to the cross in captivity either. In Christ we are free of the bonds of Satan because of sin.

But I think there's yet a future physical real display that we will take part in, with Him. A display at a real place in time, in the future. And we will be part of that victory celebration and display.

Vs. 15 is patterned after a first century victor, a victorious king, who rides through town with all of his captured opponents, chained together,

displayed before everyone in their captivity. He's showing off his spoils of war.

In Romans chapter 8, Paul speaks of a time when the sons of God, will be revealed. I think that reveal is part of this display. We'll be with the King victorious while he parades His spoils. We'll be part of the victory party behind the king in that procession and display.

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

There is a revealing of the sons of God. We've all been to weddings where a couple, freshly wed are revealed as they come out the church doors to fanfare and rice. The preacher says Join with me in welcoming for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. _____ fill in the name.

This reveal is similar, but, fasten your seatbelts, it's not very politically correct to the sensibilities of this rebellious world.

It's in Revelation chapter 19, and in a sense, Christ is carrying His bride across the threshold of her new home . . . which is this world . . . which is in such cataclysmic rebellion and war that Jesus, in Matthew 24 says, if He hadn't come to intervene, all flesh would have died.

21 For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22 And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

OK, here comes the event. The revealing of the sons of God, the rounding up of principalities and authorities, the retaking of this world, from it's occupier of terror, Satan, for the reign and rule of Christ.

Revelation 19 begins with the wedding ceremony of the Christ to His bride, the church, and then we charge out of heaven, with Christ, witnesses as He Himself fulfils vs 15 of Colossians 2. Lets look at it quickly and then we'll go stuff ourselves with turkey.

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; having a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself, 13 and being clothed with a garment dipped in blood, His name is also called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the wrath of the rage of God, the Almighty. 16 And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of strong men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." 19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army.

20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who did the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sits on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

With that picture fresh in your minds, read again vs. 15 of Colossians chapter 2.

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

I take every bit of this literally. This is not some kind of allegorical hyperbole. These things are about to happen. Many of us think the time is at hand. Literally.

One final note to consider. If you are at war with God, prepare to die, but that isn't enough, the birds will devour your flesh, and your end, those who are at war with God, is that you will become bird dung. Mess with God and He'll turn you into fertilizer.

OK, let's go eat some bird before the rest of the birds get ready to feast on us.