

**Soaring Oaks Presbyterian Church: Adult Bible Study Questions for 12/31/2006
Colossians 2:1-15**

Start by reading the whole passage.

1. Reread Colossians 2:1. Read Colossians 1:7, 1:9, 1:29, and 4:16; 1 Timothy 4:9-10. Paul speaks of his great struggle on behalf of many for the sake of the gospel. He is particularly concerned for those who have not met him personally.

(a) By what means (methods) or in what ways did Paul conduct this struggle?

- **Training others to serve through gospel ministry (Col 1:7)**
- **Prayer (Col 1:9)**
- **Letters (Col 4:16)**
- **Always through God's power at work within him (Col 1:29; 1 Tim 4:9-10)**

(b) Which of these might you be neglecting in your struggles for the kingdom of God? How would you relate Colossians 1:29 to previous neglect of but future engagement in this struggle?

Although I am weaker in all areas than I should be, correspondence seems weakest of all. Time withheld from attending to gospel ministry is time eviscerated. For example, I just finished watching a movie that was benign on the surface but took away from time that could have been spent for some real spiritual benefit. Writing seems to be hard work, but I do find that God will work through it in ways that endure and illuminate. I think I forget Colossians 1:29, imagining that I will be on my own as I attempt to write. For others, such forgetfulness may impede their path to prayer or discipling.

(c) Why do you think Paul was especially concerned about those who did not know him personally? Explain any connection you see between your answer and God's command to the church in Hebrews 10:25.

His detractors said many harsh and false things about Paul. Those who met him in person knew he was tender and kind and came to love him deeply. But, it is easy to take another's word concerning people we do not know ourselves. I think Paul was concerned that people who did not know him would be misled into false faith by his opponents.

In Hebrews 10:25, the church is told not to neglect a regular practice of meeting together. I think God considers it important that we know one another, in truth rather than by rumor. Believers in each local church could be better prepared to bear with one another in love, because we would be able to appreciate each one's strengths despite their weaknesses. Paul was concerned for the health of the body of Christ, the saints he loved.

Prelude to Question #2:

In Colossians 1:9-10, Paul told the Colossians of his prayers that they be filled with knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. In Colossians 1:27, Paul wrote of "Christ in you, the hope of glory." In the remainder of this lesson and the next three lessons (through Colossians 4:6), Paul gives specific teaching on the spiritual basis for knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and hope, along with applications to the daily lives of believers.

2. Reread Colossians 2:2-4 and 2:8-10.

(a) In Colossians 2:2, what does Paul say will help us reach understanding and knowledge of Christ.

- **encouraged in heart (to hold to the true gospel in steadfast faith)**
- **knit together in love (bound together in love, corporately expressing Christ)**

(b) "Mystery" religions opposed Christianity in Paul's day. These claim to have special access to hidden, secret knowledge, without which one could not gain entry into spiritual harmony. Similar teachings ("New Age" religions, etc.) are found today. How does Paul counter such teaching in Colossians 2:3-4 and 2:8-10?

In verse 4, Paul warns against false teachers who might delude the Colossians (and saints in other churches) through fine sounding arguments that seem "plausible." In particular, the mystery religions claimed to have hidden or secret knowledge of God apart from what God had revealed in Christ. Through Paul, God comprehensively rejects such ideas.

- **Colossians 2:3: In [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**
- **Colossians 2:8: Philosophies that depend on human tradition and the elemental spirits (or basic principles) of this world rather than on Christ are empty and deceitful**
- **Colossians 2:9: [In Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.**
- **[Emphasis of underlining was added. LCL]**

Those who desire to know God will pour all their effort into knowing Christ, for there is nothing of God – no truth, no wisdom, no aspect of God – that is beyond that which is known in Christ. No wonder Jesus told Philip (in the company of his disciples), "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

3. Reread Colossians 2:5-7.

(a) Let's have a little fun illustrating biblical lessons by proposing unbiblical ones.

Example #1: The Bible says we are to “walk in [Christ],” so believers should not use any other mode of transportation than walking!

Example #2: Paul says we are to abound in thanksgiving, so all believers must eat turkey, mashed potatoes, and gravy as often as possible!

Make up some others if you feel like it, then back to seriously satisfying study.

(b) Try to put Colossians 2:6-7 in your own words, using at most four sentences. Prepare to share your work in class, if you are willing. The point here is not to improve on the Word of God, but to help each one of us take it to heart and apply it. Words, or course, mean things, and key words in this passage are: receive, walk, rooted, built up, established, taught, and abundant thanksgiving.

You have received Christ to live and rule within you, so obey his and only his direction. The receiving, the walking, the beginning, the growing, and the ending are all the fruit of faith, so give many thanks for the sound teaching in which you must always stand.

Gal 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (NIV)

4. Reread Colossians 2:11-13.

(a) Find the 7 to 9 places in Colossians 2:1-15 where Paul uses the words “in whom,” “in him,” or “with him.” List the things or ideas connected with these words in each case.

- **(3) “in whom” are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**
- **(6) walk (live, act, behave) “in him”**
- **(7) rooted, built up, established “in him”**
- **(9) “in him” (in his very body) all that is God dwells**
- **(11) “in him” we are circumcised as the body of the flesh (sinful nature) is put off**
- **(12) buried “with him” in baptism and raised “with him”**
- **(13) God makes believers alive “with him”**
- **(14-15) God triumphed over his opponents/enemies “in him” through the cross**

(b) Circumcision was the ceremonial act by which a Hebrew male was identified with the covenant that God made with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-14). Circumcision was considered a “sealing” of covenant relationship. Paul speaks of our identification with Christ in terms of a different type of circumcision. Read Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6, Romans 2:29 and 4:11, 1 Corinthians 7:19, Galatians 5:6 and 6:15, Ephesians 1:13-14 and 2:11-13.

- **What in a believer is circumcised? The heart – Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6 and**

Romans 2:29.

- **By whom is this circumcision done? God – Deuteronomy 30:6; the Holy Spirit – Romans 2:29; Christ – Colossians 2:11. The Bible teaches the Trinity.**
- **What undesirable thing is “put off” as a result? The body of the flesh (a.k.a., the sinful nature – Colossians 2:11.**
- **What desirable relationship is accomplished through this circumcision? The relationship of being alive to God, accepted by him, and established in gospel hope.**

5. Reread Colossians 2:13-15.

(a) From Colossians 2:13-14, what was nailed to the cross, and how does this benefit you?

Our condemnation was nailed to the cross.

It seems that the ineffective supervision of the law was also nailed to the cross, that we might belong to Christ under the effective supervision of the Holy Spirit.

Keep in mind here the way Paul uses the words “under the Law.” The Law reflects God’s righteous and holy character and establishes righteous and holy requirements. Therefore, the Law convicts men of their sin with the purpose of leading us to faith in Christ (Romans 7:13; Galatians 3:24-25). Those who are “under the Law” are to live up to this standard in the flesh, by their own resources apart from God. No wonder Paul says that the Law was unable to (not meant to) save (make us righteous) because it was weakened by the flesh (sinful nature).

(b) Although this topic is deep and potentially controversial, what do other scriptures say in relationship to guilt under the law and redemption under grace? We will not dwell on this larger question in class this Sunday, but we may make it a topic of discussion over lunch after the service.

(c) Colossians 2:15 says that powers and authorities were disarmed at the cross as God triumphed over them. Since “Satan” means “accuser,” how do you think Satan was defeated and disarmed at the cross?

Satan could have no greater advantage over a sinner than to prosecute said sinner before God on the basis of God’s own Law. However, all the condemnation the Law could ascribe to a believer was poured out on Christ on the Cross. The believer’s pardon is in Jesus’ hands sealed by his own blood before the words of accusation can pass by Satan’s lips.