

## I. The Mission of the Church and the Philippian Christian

Let us turn to the book of Colossians, because that is where we will work this thing out this morning. If you remember last week, we focused on the mission of the church. We stayed with the theme that we developed in the book of Philippians. I told you how the book of Philippians is an incredible book because it really focuses on the kind of Christians that are truly the best Christians. Those are the ones that simply have a love to learn the Word of God and want to learn the Word of God in everything that they do.

If you remember that far back, three weeks ago, we talked about how that was Paul's favorite church and how when he wrote to them, there was an intimacy there with him that you do not find he has with the other churches. It is because of their attitude toward learning the Word of God and taking the Word of God and doing what is right with it. If you remember, I told you that is exactly the kind of Christians that you look for when you build a church. You look for men and women, young men and young ladies, that simply want to put God first and everything else in order after that. That is where the real blessings of the ministry are.

So much of the ministry, and we talked about this last week, remember we talked about 2 Kings 4 where we discussed the aspect of giving life to dead people. If you remember, we talked about how there are some really hard things to deal with in the ministry. The ministry, as the Bible says, the more you get wisdom, the more you get understanding, the more you begin to deal with people and their problems, the more you see the dark side of things and sin raises its ugly hand. There are so many things you have to deal with that are not only hard sometimes, but that are not very pleasurable to deal with.

The thing that makes the ministry worth it all, and I am just going to flat out tell you this after so many years of dealing with people, the thing that makes the ministry worth it all, besides the number one fact of what Christ has done for us, is Philadelphia and Christians. Men and women who just simply want to learn God and want to learn about the Word of God, and that is all there is to it.

## II. The Seven Churches of Paul and John

When we studied the book of Philippians, I told you that Paul, when he writes his New Testament books, he writes to seven churches. The Apostle John, when he wrote the book of Revelation, also addressed seven churches. I told you how those churches represent a number of things. First of all, they represent the different characteristics that churches do have. You are going to find that every church is a little bit different in its character, and a lot of that has to do with how they approach the Word of God.

You are going to find, as we already stated the obvious, that churches are made up of Christians. So you are going to find Christians come in different characteristics, just like you have the different characteristics of the church. When we come to the book of Revelation, we know that

those seven churches there represent for us in history seven periods of church history. All of you know that if you have been coming on Thursday night or to any kind of Bible study at all. You know that is a fact. But they also represent different kinds of churches and different kinds of Christians.

The great thing is, and I told you when we studied the book of Philippians, we were going to do this when we came to the book of Colossians, is matching up the churches that Paul writes to, the seven, and the seven churches that John writes to, because they match. One of the greatest studies you will ever take in the Word of God is to study the match-up between those churches.

For instance, when you go to Revelation 2, you are going to find the first church is the church at Ephesus. That church in church history, we know, lines up about the time of Christ to about the first 200 years, around 200 AD. That church lines up to the book that Paul writes, Ephesians.

Then in Revelation 2:8-11, you have the church, the next period of church history, which runs approximately about 200 up to 325 AD, and that would be the church of Smyrna. That church lines up to the church that he writes to, which we commonly call First and Second Thessalonians, or the church of Thessalonica.

Then in Revelation 2:12-17, you have John writing to the Pergamos church. That brings us to about 325 up to about 500 AD, at the start of the Dark Ages. The Pergamos church period will match up to the church that Paul writes to, the book of Galatians.

Then you have in Revelation 2:18-27, the church at Thyatira. In our little church history, this will bring us up to about 500 to about 1000 AD, and this will match up to the church that Paul writes to, the church at Corinth.

Then in Revelation 3:1-6, John writes to the church at Sardis. This will bring us up to about 1000 AD up to about 1500, right before the start of the Reformation. This church will line up to the church that Paul writes to, the book of Romans.

Then you have Revelation 3:7-13, the Philadelphian church. This church runs about 1500 to about 1900, and of course, this is the church, obviously, at this point, of Philippians, and the church that Paul writes to.

Then you have in Revelation 3:14-22, the church at Laodicea. That is the church that comes into effect 1900. That is the church age that you and I are in at this particular point in time. This is the last church before Jesus Christ comes back, and it is called the Laodicean church. It runs, as I said, about 1900 until the rapture of the church. This church matches up to the book of Colossians, which Paul writes.

### III. The Laodicean Church and Its Characteristics

Now in Revelation 3, I want to draw your attention to verse 14, and I want to read some things here, and then we will move right along.

*Revelation 3:14-22*

*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

*So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Now you want to mark Revelation 3:20. We are going to make references back and forth here in just a little bit.

Now Father, we thank you and praise you today for those of our church that have come today for this special day. Lord, this message you put on my heart today is where I am at with everything. The thing I like about days like this is that everybody goes home today understanding a little bit better where we are at and why we do the things that we do. Help us, Lord, quiet our hearts today. I pray, Father, that you will show us and give us the truth and the reality of what we need to grasp today. We pray, Father, that you will bless us and let us have a good day today. Lord, let us thank you in our hearts. Thank you, Father, in everything that we do for allowing us to have this little church that teaches the Word of God, that takes husbands and wives, that takes young men and young ladies, that takes moms and dads and really helps focus them in these last days where your focus needs to be. There is so much out there today, Father, to keep God's people from God's house. Lord, I pray that those that are here today that really make the backbone and the core of our church, I pray, Father, that you will take them and strengthen them today, that my preaching would edify them as I prepare them for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ. We will thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

#### IV. Philadelphia vs. Laodicea: The Church's Condition

The greatest study of these seven churches for me today, anyhow, would be these last two churches. Look at the church I told you about, Philadelphia. The Philadelphia church age, as I told you, runs about 1500 to 1900. Without a doubt, it is the greatest period of church history. It is the church where the Word of God literally goes around the world several times, and it is the

greatest missionary, greatest evangelism, greatest everything. If there is ever any point in church history where God was doing what He does best with God's people, it is in this church period. This church, as I already said, lines up to the book of Philippians. It takes Philippian Christians to bring about a Philadelphian church age. It takes men and women who just simply fall in love with the Word of God.

Then the next church is Laodicea. Laodicea is the church where the people are more concerned about their rights than they are God's rights. Of course, we know that this brings us up from about 1900 to the rapture. Just as Philadelphia, then you have Laodicea in John's writings. In Paul's writings, you have Philippians and then you have Colossians. The book of Colossians is a great study. The book of Colossians represents for us the Laodicean church. Where the Philippian church shows us the Philadelphia church age and shows us how the church should be, the book of Colossians, which represents Laodicea, shows us what the church has become, and then why it happened and how to better understand it all put together.

Five times in the book of Colossians, you have a reference to Laodicea.

- Colossians 2:1
- Colossians 4:13
- Colossians 4:15
- Colossians 4:16 (twice)

This book is obviously one of Paul's prison epistles. He writes this around 62-64 A.D. Years ago, I learned a lot of good things about the book of Colossians that have helped me in my life. I am going to share some of them with you today because we, as a church, I always want to take care of my Philadelphian Christians. I want you to know what I know. When you leave today, there are some things that I want you to leave with. I do not expect you to remember everything that I say today. I am not going to remember everything I say today. But I do want you to remember a couple of things, and I will emphasize those things as we go through.

Here is the first thing that I saw years ago, probably 18-20 years ago. I detailed the book of Colossians. I saw what it was. I understood how it fit into my life. I realized that it showed me. It was the only book in the Bible that I feel was written directly to me in the latter part of the 20th century because the book of Colossians focuses on the last half of the 20th century moving into the 21st century. It shows us exactly what has gone wrong today. You will see when we break it down.

The greatest thing I saw when I saw this, I remember I saw five times in the book of Colossians it talked about Laodicea. That puzzled me, and I began to investigate in history, a little topographical study, and I found out that Laodicea, the city itself, was about 11 to 15 miles south of Colossae. I remember putting that all together, and I was wondering how that all fit together, and then it hit me. It hit me like a ton of bricks, and it is something that I have never forgotten.

This city, Colossae, was 15 miles or so north of Laodicea. That would be a lot like Blue Springs from downtown Kansas City. The thing that I came away with that I want you to remember today is that you do not have to live in Laodicea to be affected by Laodicea. Here is a city that lived 15

miles away and still felt the impact. My point is this: we are in the Laodicean church period, but we are not a Laodicean church. We want to build a Philadelphian, Philippian church in this church period. In other words, we want to be separate from the Laodicean mindset, but you do not have to live in Laodicea to be affected by it. The Laodicean attitude will creep into any church that tries to do right if you do not understand that principle. That is why it is so important to understand what I am talking about today. We have a job to do.

If you noticed today, I did not really put an emphasis on having a lot of visitors today. You guys came, and I am so glad you are here. We love you to death, and I am glad you are here. But I did not put a big push on it. You know why? Because really what I have to say today, I want you to hear. We are doing a good job of reaching them. We are doing a good job of going out and getting people saved. We had a girl saved Thursday night who came to Bible study. One of our ladies afterwards talked to her and wanted to cry. That is what I am talking about. That is the way it is supposed to be. So I am not concerned about that.

What I want to talk to you about is when we get times like this, and I will be very frank and very honest with you, I look at those who, and I know that there are people out of town, people work, I know that. But I am telling you this, if somebody says to me, "What do you count as somebody that says, 'I am on board and I am with you?'" it is whether you are here or not this morning. I do not know what else to tell you, because today is when we are going to get more done today than we are going to get in five Sundays in a straight line of being able to preach to you. Why? Because God has given us a focus. God has given us an understanding, and there are some things that Paul put together here that we need to look at. This is why the book of Colossians is so fitting for Anniversary Sunday. This is why when I saw that, and it all pulled together, and I really needed one more Sunday to talk about the mission. This finishes out our three-game series of Philippians, the mission, and then the book of Colossians, really putting some things together.

The book of Colossians, and I said this already, is your and my inside look at the last half of the 20th century. It is a look into our lives today, into the body of Christ, of what is going on. The book shows you and me the end result, commonly called the cause and the effect, of the church and Christians losing its first love, which is the Word of God. Christianity is in a mess, and I am telling you something, it is easy for the spirit of Laodicea to move into any Bible-believing church, based on what I have only showed you, that Laodicea was just a short stone's throw from and it had affected the church at Colossae.

## V. The Failure to Learn from History

One of the things that I have talked about on Thursday night and we talked about on Sunday morning is the fact that Christians today fail to learn the lessons of history. We saw that when God began to deal with the nation of Israel. We saw that when God brought the nation of Israel into being, God did it not accidentally; God did it on purpose. He had a plan and He had a mission for the nation of Israel. That plan got canceled because of Israel's inconsistency and basically leaving God and the concepts of God.

We saw it again in Europe. Europe was given a second chance, a breath of fresh air, in 1580 from the dominance of the Roman Empire when Martin Luther broke and started the Reformation. Europe was shaken like Europe was never shaken, and Europe had a chance to fulfill their mission for God, not only in Germany but in France, in Scotland, and in England. Reformations broke out everywhere, but here again, Europe failed to accomplish that mission and went right back to sleep and right into apostasy.

Then we saw it again with a little island of England. A little island that is so small, and yet God ruled the world from her from 1600 to the early 1800s or the 1900s. We saw again the mission of God being handed to a nation, and that nation again, for the third time in man's history, rejecting that plan by rejecting God's Word and God, and off they went.

Now we see it in America. God had a mission for America. I should say God has a mission for America, but that mission will never be accomplished because America has never learned the lessons of history. I always like Fourth of July. I like Fourth of July because I like fireworks. I do not put them off, but I like to watch everybody put them off, and I always enjoy the celebration and all that. I do appreciate the sacrifices that men have made down through history for our freedoms and all that. But every Fourth of July, I get a kick out of a song that we do not sing very often that begins to be sung all the time. They sing it at football games. They sing it at public events. We even sang it in church last Sunday, and I like the song, and it is that old song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

I do not know if you know the history of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" or not, and we are not going to get into it this morning, but it was written during the Civil War, and it was written by some Christians who were looking at the Civil War and all that was going on and tried to put it in some kind of perspective. But the greatest line in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" is the thing that is all built around, and that is, "His truth is marching on." Of course, that simply is not true. His truth is not marching anywhere today. You can take that tune, "His truth is marching on," and put it on the same shelf as the Marine Corps hymn that if ever you get to heaven, you will look and see the streets are guarded by U.S. Marines. It all means the same. The streets are not guarded by Marines, and His truth is not marching on. His truth has fallen flat on its face in America, as it did in England, as it did in Europe, as it did with the nation of Israel. It is comical to me to see how people get caught up with singing songs when they do not even understand the circumstances that they are in.

It is a lot like being on a Titanic and knowing you have 20 minutes left and everybody moving down to the ballroom for one more dance and a round of drinks for everybody instead of getting in the lifeboat. That is the way America is. The ship is sinking, and we are all headed down to the ballroom, and it is so hard to believe that God's people cannot see it. I am telling you, we are at the end of a lot of things, and His truth is not marching on.

The Old Testament has been so explicit. We have seen the end of the nation of Israel. We have seen the end of Europe. We have seen the end of England. All you have to do is look at the apostasy therein. Israel is such an apostate nation today, even though they are still God's people. They have no even resemblance of what they were in the Old Testament. Europe is so amoral, it

is unbelievable. If you go into a church, a Lutheran church, a Catholic church in Europe, the question is, when you say, "Well, I go to the Catholic church," or "I go to the Lutheran church," the next question they will ask you is, "Oh, is your pastor, does he believe there is a God or does he believe there is no God?" You have pastors in churches in Europe who see no conflict with the fact that they are pastors in a church but they do not believe God exists anymore. You know why? Because the damage was done in every one of those nations. Look at England. England is the exact same way, and America is right on the way. It is so easy, it is hard to believe that God's people cannot see it.

The writers of the Old Testament saw it. We see it throughout history.

*Amos 8:11*

*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:*

Hosea saw it when he saw Israel in her despicable condition.

*Hosea 4:1-2*

*Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.*

*By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.*

Now this was the nation that just 800 years before God had brought out of Egypt and done great miracles to, and now there is no truth, there is no mercy, and throughout Israel, there is no knowledge of God.

Isaiah saw it. He saw it in Isaiah 29:13 when he said Israel had a head knowledge of God but they had no heart for God.

*Isaiah 29:13*

*Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:*

He talks about them giving God lip service with their mouth, but their hearts are far from Him, and that is where American Christianity is.

Isaiah saw it again in Isaiah 5:20 when he said that in Israel at this time, evil was now called good and good was now called evil.

*Isaiah 5:20*

*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

If that is not a perfect picture of America. Now let me show you how backwards this thing is. If you want to find religious freedom in America, you know where you have to go? You cannot preach in a public building. You cannot have a copy of the Ten Commandments. Your kids cannot pray in school in organized prayer. You cannot have the Ten Commandments on the wall in your school. You cannot pray before organized events in school because that is a separation of church and state, you see. The state has to be separate from all religion, but that is your life and my life.

Go down to Guantanamo Bay where the terrorists are. They give them Korans. They give them prayer rugs. My God, they put "E's" on the wall so they know which way to face when it is time to pray. The religious freedom we once had has now been given to attack. It is okay, and with your tax dollars, the government is paying for the Koran, paying for the prayer rugs, paying for the time, giving them rooms and chaplains to do it, but you and your kids cannot do it in America. You know why? Because good is now called evil and evil is called good. Islam has more credibility in America than Bible Christianity, and that is where it is headed.

Isaiah said it again in Isaiah 10:1 when he says it is a time of unrighteous decrees.

*Isaiah 10:1*

*Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed;*

I read a story last week, probably some of you heard it, one of the most despicable things about that child pedophile molester that killed the three parents or the boyfriend or whoever, and had abducted the two kids and probably killed the little boy, and they got the little girl rescued from him. I never heard the DNA results coming back, but you know what they are up there, and you know what the American mindset said? Somebody got up in the midst of all this and stated the statement that that man killing those three, possibly four people, was just his way of crying out for help. That is America. I am willing to help him. I know the kind of help he needs, but he will go to prison for the rest of his life. It will cost you and me in tax dollars, 98 million dollars. He will get cable TV and three squares, three hots and a cot, and he will get everything he needs. By the way, the guys down in Gitmo, they eat better than your kid does going to school. I do not know what to tell you.

Micah saw it. He saw it in Micah 2 when he said that there were pastors that were preaching falsehoods, and they had a lying spirit, and the people were so deceived because they had nothing to compare it to that they were holding them up as great teachers and great leaders.

Truth is marching on? Not according to Isaiah 59:4.

*Isaiah 59:4*

*None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.*

He says truth has fallen in the street.

Hosea saw it in Hosea 8:12 when he said the great doctrines of God that were taught in the 17th, 18th, and 1900s are now strange things to God's people.

*Hosea 8:12*

*I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.*

We have God's people today that would come to a Thursday night Bible study, and they would listen to what we teach, or even on Sunday morning, and you know what happens? You have friends that have listened to tapes too, and they look at this thing and they say, "Oh, this is a cult. It is such a terrible thing. What wild things are they teaching?" You know what? I am teaching the same thing David Gregory taught in 1710. He was a math professor at Oxford, a Bible-believing Christian. I am teaching the exact same thing that Sir George Wilson taught in 1887. I am teaching the same thing C.I. Scofield taught in 1860. Clarence Larkin in 1900. Sir Robert Anderson, at the turn of the century, wrote a book called *The Coming Prince* about the Antichrist that is one of the most unbelievable books, and it is the same thing I will teach you. Sir Robert Dipp Wilson wrote the greatest treatises I have ever read on the Second Coming of Christ. He laid the whole thing out and put it in perspective with the seven literal days and lays the whole thing down.

Harry Rimmer, if you have an argument about evolution in the school, Harry Rimmer wrote a book back in the 1930s and 1920s. He was a great preacher that took on the science and the education and the evolution world. He put a book called *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*. He had a standing offer for 40 years of paying anybody in the 1920s \$50,000 that could show one thing that contradicted the Bible and evolution. \$50,000 in the 1920s was like \$2 million today. Nobody ever got the money. But it is different now than it was then.

When I first got saved and I started to read, I started to address and get all of my books together because I realized you had to build a library. Most of you, many of you, are building libraries with my books, so bring them back, okay? I am kind of kidding. Jan Hill, you still have six of mine I gave you when we started our church. When Anniversary Sunday, do you not have time? Can you read? Not a lot. Okay, you got them done.

A book I bought, I bought a book by Walter Martin. Walter Martin wrote a book in the 1940s, maybe the 1940s or 1950s. Walter Martin's book, *Kingdom of the Cults*, was the definitive book on cults in American Christianity. Every Bible college in the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s and even the 1970s used Walter Martin's book as a standard textbook of the cults. He went through every cult and laid out those cults and then at the end put a common theme to them all so anybody that wanted to understand false religions could understand it. One of the greatest books. You could not buy a copy of it today if your life depended on it. *Kingdom of the Cults*.

He said the basic thesis and the basic theme about all cults is they all have in common, no matter what they believe here or there, is that all cults reject the Word of God as the final authority. Today, 2005, if you believe the Word of God is the final authority, now you are the cult. See where we have come from?

Now I like the name of our church. The name of our church, as you know, is Old Path Baptist Church. I like that because right off the bat, when I meet somebody, when I tell them the name of our church, I can tell by the puzzled look on their face how well they know their Bible. I will never forget the first time I heard it. It was 20 years ago. I was preaching at a Bible conference, and a guy said, I asked him what he was, a pastor, and I said, "Where are you a pastor at?" He said, "Upstate New York." I said, "What is the name of your church?" He said, "Old Path Baptist Church." I said, "I like that." You know why? Because I immediately went to Jeremiah 6:16. I knew what it meant.

*Jeremiah 6:16*

*Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.*

Nobody knows what it means to follow the Old Path today. Jeremiah 6:16, they cannot even find Jeremiah. Because it makes a statement about where you are at in a world that is not anywhere, and I like that.

## VI. Colossians: The Problem and the Solution

This book of Colossians has four chapters, and these four chapters in the breakdown give the body of Christ, you and me, an inside look at what the problem is today. Because we are going to, if we are going to accomplish Revelation 3:20, which was basically, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," building a Philadelphian, Philippian church in a Laodicean church period, then we must understand something.

The book of Colossians, I am going to tell you right up front, I have told you this as we come through our study, the book of Colossians is one of those must-get-down books. You have to get this book down at some point in your life. Here is the breakdown:

- Chapter 1: He redefines again who Christ is.
- Chapter 2: He shows you and I the issues of the Laodicean church in the last half of the 20th century and going into the 21st century.
- Chapter 3 and 4: He shows me, as a New Testament child of God, my response to it, and then he shows me how to build a Philippian church in the midst of the Laodicean church period. It is as simple as that.

## VII. Colossians Chapter 1: Redefining Christ

Let us look at Colossians 1, and in Colossians 1, he begins to redefine who Christ is. I want to start this chapter by asking you a couple simple questions. Who is Christ? Do not answer, just listen. Who is Christ? Somebody would say, "Well, He is the Son of God." That is good. Can you define that in the Bible for me? Because the term "Son of God" means something specifically. We think that it means, in our Laodicean mindset, we think the Son of God means that He was God's Son through Mary's birth. That is not what it means. Can you define what it means for who

Christ is when the Bible says He is the Son of God? Did you ever understand that every time He said that, the scribes and Pharisees went ballistic because it meant something? For you and for me to stand here and pretend we are Christians and have a relationship with Christ when we do not know basic 101, "Who is Christ? What does the Son of God mean?"

I will give you another one. The Bible says He is the first begotten of the dead in Revelation 1:5.

*Revelation 1:5*

*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

What does that mean? What does it mean that Jesus Christ was the first begotten of the dead? Do you have a clue? Why would somebody enter into a thing called Christianity, get saved, and never learn the intimate 101 basic things about the One who died for them and saved them? I know, let me just say, if you have been saved or into this thing five years or less, I am not even talking to you this morning because young baby Christians have to learn. I am not even talking to you. In fact, many of you got plugged into our church when you started coming to our church, I know that, so I am not even talking to you. But I am talking to God's people, and you may be listening to this tape someplace, somebody may have given it to you. I am talking to somebody who has been saved 10, 15, 20 years, that has been around for a while, who seemingly wants to give the impression of having it all together and really being on fire and having a great relationship with God. How can you have a relationship with God when you do not even know what the Son of God is? How can you have a relationship with Christ when you do not know what it means when He is called the first begotten of the dead?

He is called the only begotten Son in John 3:16.

*John 3:16*

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

What does "begotten" mean? Certainly, one of the great keys to your salvation and my salvation is the concept that He was begotten. He is called the firstborn of every creature in Colossians 1:15.

*Colossians 1:15*

*Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*

What does that mean? What does it mean that Christ was the firstborn of every creature? There were people, there were creatures born before Him. What does that mean?

Acts 13:33 says, "My son, this day have I begotten thee?"

*Acts 13:33*

*God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

It says again in Psalms 2 and Hebrews 1, "My son, this day have I begotten thee?"

*Psalms 2:7*

*I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*

*Hebrews 1:5*

*For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?*

What day is He talking about? What day is that? Do you know? That is what we are talking about.

Let me ask you a question. What changed about you when you got saved? I will ask you another question. The Bible says you have a body, you have a soul, and you have a spirit. Are they the same? What changed about your body? Anything? What changed about your soul? Anything? What changed about your spirit? Anything?

Matthew 22:37-38 says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

*Matthew 22:37-38*

*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

*This is the first and great commandment.*

Do those three match up with body, soul, and spirit? How do we have a relationship? My point is this: we say we know Christ, we pretend we know Christ, but when push comes to shove, and I am not asking great theological questions. This is "Knowing Christ Class 101." These are things a child of God had to learn the first two years they are saved. Are they the same? Are they different? We hear a lot of terms. You read somebody's book, and the book says you need to love God with your heart. Do you mean the one that is pumping blood in here? We say, "Well, I am going to go to church and worship God with my spirit." Really? Is that how you worship God? What is worship anyhow? Can you give me a verse on that? Or is worship just that nice warm feeling you get?

We have come to the place where the church that we are part of today, we do not even know who Christ is by the Bible standard. Let me ask you a question. Can you still sin after you are saved? If the answer is yes, then how can you go to heaven? If the answer is no, why do we have so many problems with our flesh and sin in our life? The hallmark of the Laodicean Church, Colossians 1, is a body of Christ, a group of men and women who are saved and going to heaven, who do not know who Christ is. That is the hallmark of the Laodicean Church.

Did you ever see the prayer Paul prays for them in Colossians 1:9?

*Colossians 1:9-10*

*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*

*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

Increasing, not decreasing. Filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. So when you come down through Colossians 1, you are going to find all through here.

- Colossians 1:13: It talks about "who," and then it defines Him.
- Colossians 1:14: It talks about "in whom," then it defines His blood atonement.
- Colossians 1:16: "By whom," then it defines creation.
- Colossians 1:17: It says, "He is before all things," then He begins to define eternity, Christ and relationship to all these things.
- Colossians 1:18: He says, "He is the head of the church," then He defines that.
- Colossians 1:19-20: He talks about, "For by him is the fullness of God," and He shows you how in God you have all the fullness.

The mark of the Laodicean church is the fact that we are going to have a hundred thousand churches in this city, and we do not even know the basic concepts of who Christ is and the basic foundations about Him being begotten, first begotten of the dead, firstborn among every creature. We do not even have a clue what those basic things are. How can that happen in a Bible-believing life like you who claim to know the Bible? Let me tell you why. Because Laodicea is just 15 miles south. That is how.

Colossians 1, we see He has to go back and redefine who Christ is because this church has lost the concept. They talk about Christ. They use all the terminology. They just do not know what it means. Of course, that is the problem today. We use the talk. We do not know what it means. Then we kid ourselves into thinking that we really can have a relationship with Christ when we do not even understand who He is. My, my, my. The great awakening for this church will be the judgment seat of Christ. I am sorry, but it will. I am not talking about just apostate Christians. It will be God's people who had the Bible, who thought they knew it, and just never took the time because it was always something more pressing than just learning who He is.

## VIII. Colossians Chapter 2: The Issues of Our Day

Now Colossians 2, the issues of our day. Here comes the problem. Let us talk about a little history first. I already laid out for you in Revelation 2 and Revelation 3 that there are seven churches. We know now that those seven churches represent 33 AD to 2000 AD, where we are at, and beyond that up to the rapture of the church, we will say. Yet, if you would go back in history and you would study each of these church periods, you would find that every period in church history had a doctrinal issue they had to deal with. There was a predominant doctrinal issue in

every one of these church periods that had to be thrashed out, nailed down, laid out, that came up as a controversy that true Bible-believing Christians had to sit down and with somebody that was trying to take them to another doctrine and had to thrash it out.

The church at Ephesus, 33 AD to 200 AD, their issue was the issue of the resurrection. Did Christ really come out of that tomb? Because it was not shortly thereafter that they were saying that He really did not die. You know that Abraham Lincoln, he was assassinated in 1865 by John Wilkes Booth. Abraham Lincoln was dug up three times after that because it was not 10 years later that people were saying he was not dead. They dug him up three times. The last time they dug him up was in 1920 to see if he was still there. They dug him up 10 years after he was shot because the word was around that he really did not die. He met Elvis at the airport with Jack Kennedy and Amelia Earhart flew him. 10 years after Lincoln was shot in Ford's Theater in front of how many people? A lot, by John Wilkes Booth, who shot him in the back of the head. 10 years later, the government is so unable to deal with the pressure that he really was not dead that he still had some living relatives, and they dug him up and said, "There he is." It was not 40 years later they had to dig him up again. You tell me why? Because it came around again that he was not dead. So they dug him up again. Then the last time, in 1920, whenever it was, they dug him up the third time, and he was preserved pretty good. A little moldy, but he was there. You could tell it was Abraham Lincoln. They buried him in concrete, and they said, "You know what? We are not ever digging him up again. He is dead." It does not matter if he was not, he is dead if he was not dead because it has been too long. He is dead. But Jack Kennedy was not killed 24 hours, and people were saying he was not dead. The conspiracies were flying around all over the place that he was not dead. Elvis, they still think he is not dead.

All those things go. Let me tell you something, it was not 20 minutes after He came out of that tomb that the devil did not miss the trick that he spread a rumor that He really did not die. I will tell you what, it crept into the church, and this early church that was trying to hold the line had to stand up there and say, "You know what? We have an issue, and that issue is the resurrection, and we believe that He died according to the scripture, with better core scriptures, and rose again the third day according to scriptures," and it split at that point.

Next church period, Smyrna, 200 to 325 AD. Their issue was the deity of Christ. This is where you had a great controversy between Arius and Athanasius. Arius said that Christ really was not God. Athanasius said He was. They thrashed it out back and forth, finally to call the Council of Nicaea to supposedly deal with the issue, but they never really did, and that was their issue, the deity of Christ.

The next one was Pergamos, the issue of baptism for salvation, baptizing infants. Thyatira, the issue was amillennial versus postmillennial. The church took the place of the nation of Israel. In the Sardis church period, it was an issue of eternal security. In the Philadelphia church period, it was predestination. Calvin had come along at the end of the Reformation. He brought about Calvinism and started the Presbyterian church. He brought with him the teaching of Calvinism, and it started to spread. The church had to deal with it.

You know what our church period is today? Laodicea. You know what our issue is? It is simple. This thing is complicated. We like to make it complicated because we do not want to really deal with the issue because we think by sticking our head in the sand, the judgment seat of Christ will go away. The issue is really simple. Your issue and my issue is not about the resurrection. It is not about the deity of Christ. It is not about baptism for salvation. It is not about amillennial, postmillennial. It is not about eternal security. It is not about predestination. It is simply this: Do you have a Bible or do you not? Our issue is authority. The issue is simple: Did God write an absolute perfect book, and if He did, where can I get a copy? That is all. The issue is simple: What good is a God who has the power to inspire a book but does not have enough power to preserve it? That is the issue.

One time years ago, I got in trouble. I got in trouble a lot. I was just a young guy hearing a lot of big-time preachers, and I was struggling myself trying to figure all this thing out. I had a preacher one time, and he was preaching, and he was a famous preacher. Everybody in this room knows who he was. He is up there preaching, and he is laying it down. He is a great preacher, and he is up there in front of 5,000 people, and he is waving his Bible, and here is what he says, "We believe," and he had a King James Bible, "We believe the Bible is the absolute final authority in all things." The whole place just went ballistic. Well, I was a happy camper because I had been told all my life up to this point by half the world that there was no absolute power. So after the service, I went up. I had me a buddy. I went to buy him a donut, and I remember I went up and I said, "Brother so-and-so," I said, "I really enjoyed your message." He said, "Well, thank you, young man." I said, "I want you to know it was so refreshing today to hear that you believe that the King James Bible is the absolute Word of God." He said, "Son, I do not believe that." I said, "Well, your Bible is a King James Bible." He said, "That is correct." And I said, "And you were waving it up there saying, 'We believe the Bible is the absolute...'" He said, "Well, I was talking about the original manuscripts. There is nobody that believes that the Bible is perfect where you have it. We believe the Bible is the absolute infallible Word of God in the original manuscripts." I said, "Then what were you waving this one for?" At this point, it was getting a little tense for the dear doctor. I said, and now some people are getting around me. We are right down in front of a church, 5,000 people, and everybody wants to shake hands. I was dumb as a stump. I still had not shot my white horse yet, and I was dumb as a stump. I thought I had me a Bible buddy, and I said, and I am just, I am more dazed than I am trying. At this time of my life, I would be getting all over you, and I would be coming after you in ways that you would not know how to defend it. But then I was dumb, stupid. I still learned it, and I said, "Well," I said, "Does not the Bible mean 'book'?" He said, "Yes, it does." I said, "Was there ever a time when all the original manuscripts were in one book?" Because I wanted the Bible. He said, "No, of course not." I said, "When Timothy was told that he had the Holy Scriptures, that he had the original copy?" He said, "Of course not." And I am saying, "Okay, if the Bible is only the absolute perfect Word of God in original manuscripts, and nobody has them today, and they have never been in a book, how in the world do I get them? And when you are telling me that the Bible is the Word of God, you are talking about a book that has never existed in the history of mankind because there was never a time when all the original manuscripts were in one book." Well, at that point, conversation was over, and I had lost a friend, an ally in the great fight of the authority of the Word of God. But to me, from that point on, it was simple, and I am practical about it. I am as

open-minded a man as you will ever find. You sit down and talk to me, you will find my mind is so open that you may fall into it. It is absolutely open, but it is simply this: Either God is gone, and what good is a God who has gone enough to inspire the original manuscript but He loses it in the process? If He can lose His book after He inspired it, how do you know He cannot lose your soul after He saved it? That is where my weird mind goes. I am working on some things right now. It is scarier. I saw War of the Worlds the other day, and I will tell you what, my whole philosophy changed about where the Bible is at. I have an idea now. I am cooking. Just kidding. Kind of kidding.

Colossians 2:3 says, "In whom Christ, in whom Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

*Colossians 2:3*

*In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

It is all in Him. Now I am going to give you Colossians 2:8 here, and I want you to see this in Colossians 2 because here are the four things that destroyed our church, and Laodicea is only 12 miles to the north here. Watch it very carefully.

*Colossians 2:8-10*

*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

*And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*

Four things, and these four things are what destroyed Israel. They are what destroyed Europe. They are what destroyed England, and they are what destroyed us.

1. Philosophy: Philosophy came into America around the 1800s to the 1900s. It starts in Europe with men like Nietzsche, Kant. It starts in Europe with men like Thomas Hobbes. It starts with men like Berkeley. It talks with men like Spinoza, and they foster the idea, and they are all a little different, but it is Nietzsche that comes up with the concept that God is now dead. That philosophy destroys Europe, and by 1800 to 1900, it comes to America. European thinking, the great humanistic mind, the great Christian apostasy, the great Christian, it creeps into Christianity, and the philosophy, and we see humanism, we see secularism beginning to move into the Christian world. In 1933 in America, comes forth the first official document called The Humanist Manifesto, which is nothing more than European philosophy now brought over to America, which in time brings its way into Christianity. So philosophy first hit America around 1800, worked into 1900.
2. Vain Deceit: This would be 1900 and 1930. This would be the meltdown of the Southern Baptist Convention. Back in the early end of the 1800s and early 1900s, even up to the 1950s, you have to get this perspective: there were no independent Baptist churches. You had three main groups: the Southern Baptist group was the largest group. Then you had a group called the American Baptist. Then you had a group called the GRB. Those were the three

Bible-believing Baptist groups in America in the 1800s. But by the time philosophy got in, you will find that the Southern Baptist Convention by the 1920s and the 1930s had totally melted down. Philosophy had replaced the Bible, and you see during this time that the Southern Baptist Convention, which about this time had about 35 seminaries in America, in those seminaries, they were teaching evolution. Those seminaries were teaching that the Bible was not the final authority. They were teaching that the story of Genesis was a myth. They were teaching that Noah's flood was not a real flood, and they were teaching every damnable philosophy that could ever creep in in the seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention. Now this is why the Southern Baptist Convention is split today, and they have a moderate side and then they have a liberal side. Of course, it came to the point where it got so bad in the 1920s and 1930s, and this is why the Southern Baptist churches have never recovered today, and they turned out about four generations of preachers that did not even believe that God was God, and it affects everything that they do today.

3. During this time, there was a man that we call J. Frank Norris. J. Frank Norris is called the Texas Tornado. He was a Southern Baptist preacher who believed the Bible was the Word of God. J. Frank Norris took on the whole Southern Baptist Convention in the 1920s and 1930s. He took on the whole bunch of them single-handedly. This man had been tried to be lynched several times, shot at. They threatened him with an inch of his life more times than the people in this room. J. Frank Norris held the line. He broke with the Southern Baptist Convention and started the World Convention, started a Bible college, and that Bible college he had was three blocks long everywhere, and across that thing, he said they put a big sign with 20-foot letters that said, "The only Bible college in the world still teaching the AV 1611 English Bible." He broke over authority. That is where every fundamental church has come from today. I do not care what fellowship you are from. You can be down in Springfield with the BBF. You might be over at a, down in, with the Robinson down there, and wherever you go, it does not matter. If you are a fundamental church today, you come from J. Frank Norris's break off with the Southern Baptist Convention. That is why. Because they entered into vain deceit, and it got into philosophy, and they denied the Bible, and the whole system fell apart, and one man led them out, and you are here today. My preacher in Canton, Ohio, was one of Norris's boys, and every preacher today that is probably in his 60s or 70s or 80s that is a fellow fundamental preacher is one of Norris's boys. Every one of them. They are all dying off today, but they are because they come out of that mindset, and they formed that concept, and they knew that they were standing on the Word of God.
4. Tradition of Men: This will be 1940 up to 1970. This is where, because of the philosophy, because of the meltdown and the vain deceit of adding all the garbage and the philosophy in there, we now find the tradition of men. As you leave the Bible, you now make up your own rules, and now we see a rise of a system called legalism. We are going to set up rules to make you spiritual. It has nothing to do with the Bible, but we are going to set up a set of rules. We are going to take the whole concept of living for Christ based on your attitude of heart. Now we are going to give you a set of rules that if you follow, you will be spiritual.
5. Rudiments of the World: It went from that to the 1970s to 2005, to the rudiments of the world. You know what it is today in churches? Anything goes when the whistle blows. Whatever you have to do to get a crowd to preach to them, you do it. Bring dancing girls in, bring them

all in. I saw this thing coming a while back, about 25 years ago. I was preaching in a Bible college, and we were having lunch, and one of the pastor's wives was sitting there. She was reading a book, and I asked her what she was reading, and she said, "Oh," and she rattled off what the title was, but she said it was a book on Christian fiction. What it was, you remember the old Nancy Drew stories that we used to read growing up? You know, the Hardy Boys and all that. They were good things. At this particular point, 20 years ago, they were doing the same thing with Christian stuff, and she was reading books about great spiritual revivals, great spiritual things that were happening, great absolute biblical things that were taking place, reading stories of revivals that a thousand people were getting saved, a man going to a country as a missionary and just, and all the perils and everything. The only thing was, it was all fiction. I remember thinking back then, "Why do we have to write Christian books about fiction about serving God and the great exploits of serving God? Because it is not happening today, and we have to resort to fiction for our entertainment because the rudiments of the world, the traditions of man, the vain deceit, and the philosophy have destroyed the church."

I had somebody ask me last night, a lady asked me last night, she says, "Have you read the book *The Purpose Driven Life*?" And I said, "I sure have." She says, "What did you think of it?" I said, "It was the greatest book I have ever read in my life." She says, "Oh, I am in the middle of it too because I am trying to get my boyfriend to read it, but he will not read it." She said, "I think it is the greatest book." She says, "When did you read yours?" I said, "I read mine in 1972." She looked puzzled. She said, "But it was only written about three or four years ago." I looked at her and I said, "I love setting them up like this." This is like a Chiefs game when you are down by two and you only have 10 minutes left, and you have the sucker play, and you run out there in the field, and they think they are going to stop you. You have a play up your sleeve that you know is going to fool them, razzle-dazzle them, blind them, and you are going to stick it to them. I said, "Obviously, we are not talking about the same book on the purpose-driven life." She says, "Now, no offense," she was blonde, she had a tough time getting some things. This girl, honest or not, 20 minutes before, we were looking through a telescope. She was looking at the stars and everything. Then we got, she found out I was a pastor, so we got to. But she is the one, 20 minutes before that, she asked me if I ever thought there would ever be a planned flight to the sun. I explained to her that it would be awful hot to land on the sun, to which she responded, she thought we would go at night. So her boyfriend was trying to explain to her about the distances between the galaxies, and he said, "You know," she says, she was talking to, and he talked about the fact that it was millions of light-years. So she said, "What is a light-year?" Which I stepped in, now knowing that she was legally blonde, and I said, "It is only a third of a year and less filling." I came away with that thinking, "You know what?" This year is a notable year. Maybe it was last year, but up to last year, this year, there were more books written, more Bibles sold than any other book that year. That did not happen. There were more books on *The Purpose Driven Life* bought and sold than there were Bibles. Now what does that say? That we have come to the place where a book by man supersedes a book by God, that we think that there is a better book than this to give you the purpose-driven life. I am telling you, but that is where we are at today. That is exactly where we are at. We have lost the concept of all of this thing and how it breaks down.

## IX. Colossians Chapters 3 & 4: Our Response and Building a Philippian Church

Now Colossians 3 and Colossians 4, my response to it. We are going to be done here. My response to it and how to build a Philippian church in a Laodicean church period. Three concepts I want to leave you with.

First of all, Colossians 3:1-3.

*Colossians 3:1-3*

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

Somebody says, "Now, Bob, very simply, very basically, how do I combat being 15 miles from Laodicea? How do I deal with that?" The answer is, if you are saved, then seek those things which are above. If you are saved, set your affections. It cannot get any easier. You are dead to this world. This world means nothing to you. You understand where you are at, and you seek and you set your affections on the things of God, the mission of God, and where your affections are at. I do not know why it does not get any easier than that.

I am telling you, here is my worst fear. I am just going to be honest with you today. I look across our church, and even in its youngest, the way it is, I get a little scared sometimes because down the line someplace, I am going to tell you right now, Mom and Dad, if you do not change some things in the way you are training up your children, you are going to have some real problems. I am just telling you. I am not a prophet, nor am I a son of a prophet. I know what it takes, and I am telling you, there are some things that you have got to work on now. That is not totally always your fault because of where you are at. Hear me out.

Bottom line is this: What am I going to do? Here is what I could do, and I think these things through. Here is what I could do: I could put together a child training program, have everybody over my house that has got kids, and then teach you how to raise your kid. But that will not work. You know why that will not work? Because there are husbands and wives in here that you have got problems in your marriage, and trying to fix the problem with your kids until you get your marriage online is the wrong way to go. So, I could put together 10 great lessons on how to have a successful marriage. That will not work either. You know why? Because the successful marriage has to be based on your personal one-on-one relationship with God, and that is where it has got to start.

Now, you know what the issue is? How long are you going to take? Because you cannot get to the third part. You cannot get to the second part, and your kids are going to pay the price while we dilly-dally around trying to figure out what we are going to do, if we are going to take this thing seriously or are we not going to really put our lives together individually? Are we really

going to plug into God? Let me tell you something, a wife will never be the wife she needs to be until she first understands what she needs to be to God. A husband will never be to his wife until he first understands what they need to be to God. When you have that two working, then you can work on the marriage, and then it automatically goes to the kid. Trying to do this before you get the discipline of your life between the two of you is a waste of time. I have got all the information. I could take you and bury you in how to train your kids and make you the best kids in this world. I could take and make your marriage better than Solomon's and the Queen of Sheba's, but it has to start with your own personal in that book because it is a fallacy to think you can get to the third part without accomplishing the first, and that is what churches do. That is why they are always in a hurry. I am not in a hurry. We are going to do it right or we are not going to do it at all. It will not do me any good to start telling you how to do your kids and train your kids or put your marriage right until you first make up your mind, you individually, not your husband, not your wife, not his problem, her problem, my problem, she problem, he says, he says this, duking out in the backyard, until the individual starts doing what is right with the Word of God in spite of what the other one does or does not do. You have to set your affections, and right now your children need to see where Mom and Dad's affection is. If they do not see the affection, they are going to get the infection of the Laodicean church. It is as simple as that.

I am telling you, you raise your child and you put sports as that child's main goal, and you make him, you let him, and you put the priority there. In time, when it comes to a ball game on Sunday or being in church, he is going to play ball. You know why? That is where you set your affections. After a while, I know why you do it. "I am losing my daughter. I am losing my child. Sports is the way to reach them." You made it. That is not the place to go. You are too late by then. Adding to their, abetting their sin, is not going to solve the problem at that point. There are some radical things you have got to do, but the bottom line comes down is you let them get too close to Laodicea. They saw in your life what your affection was, and very simply, they made it their affection, and your affection became their infection, and that is why they would rather be anywhere but in God's house. They would rather be wherever they have to be instead of hearing it. I am telling you right now, Moms and Dads, you better understand that your kids right now, with a little, they are going to come to a point when they are nine and ten years old that you are not going to be able to grasp them like you can now. You better make up your mind right now first because this church will only be as strong as the families. The families will only be as strong as the husband and wives. We can have the King James Bible out our ears and fail miserably if we do not set our affection. I am telling you, Laodicea is right up the road. I am even pointing in the right direction. It is right up the road.

How do you do it?

- Colossians 3:5: You mortify your flesh.
- Colossians 3:8: You put off the old nature.
- Colossians 3:10: You put on the new nature.

Here is how you do it:

*Colossians 3:16-17*

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

Do not kid me. If you do not even know what I talked about in the questions I asked you in Colossians 1, if you have not got them figured out, please do not insult my intelligence to tell me you know how to let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly when you cannot answer the 101 questions yourself. I am telling you that with everything in mind, young Christians, five years or less, free pass, free pass. But you have to decide what you are going to do too because you are on that road. Your kids are on that road. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. If you do not have it, it is hard to do, is it not? You have it. The world wants to take it from you through philosophy, tradition of men, and all the rudiments of the world, and God's people want to give it up easily so they do not have to hold themselves accountable to it. I am telling you what, you wait till the Laodicean church runs smack dab into the judgment seat of Christ. You talk about priorities. You talk about finding out what is real important in your life. You talk about finding out the reality of seeing this thing. My response to this thing is I have got to, we have got to build a Philadelphian church in a Laodicean church, and the thing we will constantly battle is Laodicea, just 15 miles down the road, and it wants to move into our neighborhood.

Colossians 4, and I am done.

*Colossians 4:3-6*

*Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:*

*That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.*

*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

Remember I told you Revelation 3:20 to mark that verse, which said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Colossians 4, this is that door. This is the door that God gives us as a Philippian church in the middle of the Laodicean church period. You want to have a relationship with God today? Do not blame it on the world. You can. You want to train up your children right? Do not blame it on somebody else. You can. You want to do what is right and have everything that God wants you to have? You can. God says if you will knock on the door, I will open that door and fellowship with you. He says in Colossians 4, God gave us a door of utterance. Doors in the Bible always represent opportunities. I believe that the greatest opportunity that we have in this world lies before us right before the Lord Jesus Christ comes back. I believe there are still men and women who want to do what is right, who want to believe God and believe God's Word. I believe there are still men and women who want to raise their

children right, who want to build the right kind of marriages, who want to build the right kind of relationships, and who want to identify with the right kind of church, taking those things that need to be done and putting them into their life. I believe that, and I believe the greatest opportunity we have is when we reach out and we invite people. You guys at work that are witnessing to people all the time, bringing them to the church, they are getting saved, and they are coming in, and they are getting trained, they are getting disciplined. That is the way it needs to work.

He says a door of utterance, Colossians 4:3, "that I might speak the mystery of Christ." Then he says in Colossians 4:5, "walk in wisdom." I am telling you, we have to walk in the wisdom of the Word of God. There is not a time in your life, in my life, in the day and age that we live in, that we can take for granted what we have. The moment we start to take what God is, and it is so easy to do, it is so easy to do. It is absolutely one of the easiest things in all the world to do is to take what we have got here for granted because we get so caught up with everything else. We have to walk in wisdom.

Then it says Colossians 4:5, "redeeming the time." I want to talk to you about that for a little bit. That concept of redeeming the time is one of the greatest things that I have ever found in the Word of God. There are a number of different aspects to it. First of all, we have all wasted time in our Christian life, every one of us. Anything that I put on you today, I put on myself. I am not the kind of preacher that preaches at you. I am the kind of preacher that preaches at me, and some of it fills up and spills out over on you. But I do know this: we have all wasted time. Some of us are wasting time right now. But I am telling you, at some point in your life, you have to begin to do what is right, and you have to make up for the lost time, and you redeem that time.

I told you last Thursday night on Thursday night Bible study that what we were doing on Thursday night by putting the Bible together is you are redeeming the time. You know how you are redeeming the time? The stuff I am giving you on Thursday night took me 30 years of my life to get down. Took me 20 years of my life to lay out, connecting it all together. You are looking at a guy that has been in the Bible 34, 35 years. My whole life has been connecting those things and putting those things together. You know what? Some of you have not spent a spittle of time in that thing because you just got saved. You just got right with God. You know what I am doing? I am taking all of the knowledge that I have gotten in 35 years that I did to work for, that I labored for, that I wept over, and I prayed over, and I stayed up late at night and went to work bleary-eyed the next day to get it down, and came home, got in it, went, did this, came back, got some more. All of that time I am giving to you for nothing. You know why? It is part of the redeeming the time process. That is how I learned it. I learned it by men who sweated, prayed, wept over the Word of God, and they gave it to me when I knew nothing. My job is to give it to you when you know nothing. Your job is to grow up and know something and give it to somebody else that does not know anything. Redeeming the time. That is how you redeem it. You find a man who knows that book, who knows God, and who loves that book and loves God. Prove him out, and then find him, and then drive him nuts finding out all he knows about the Bible.

Next week, I have a terrible, terrible ordeal thing I have got to do, and I am not happy about it. I dreamt about it last night. I will think about it today. I will dream about it every night this week

until that black Saturday next week comes, and that is, before we go on vacation, I have got to take my three dogs and put them in a kennel. They are my kids. We talk. I preach to them. I have it down where I will run versus buy them. I know about a blink of their eyes of the wagging of their tail if I am on or off. I am kidding you, they are just dogs, but I miss them. Last year, I had to put them in the vet again. I put them in the thing. I do the best I can. I get a kennel where they are all free and being able to run together. Last year, I took them. Now Tinker, she is the black one. She is eight or nine years old. She is her own woman. She does not care. She will do what she wants to do. She has been around. She bought the T-shirt. She has been there. If we go down to this big old kennel, Tinker goes right in. Now Daisy, she is the blonde one. She is the alpha female of the group. She sits down, but I unhook her and throw her in. She goes in. Then we have Buddy. He is the brown one, 101 pounds, bigger than the other two. Looks like he could lift the roof off the house, and he is the biggest baby. The biggest baby. The other two dogs, they are already out in the run checking it out. Daisy does what Daisy does best. She is barking at everybody in the world. Buddy, I unsnap him, and I have him with a collar, and now he will not budge. I said, "Come on, Bud, go." He will not budge. I said, "I will get him here in a minute." That dog, as fast as I could, jumped around, sitting down, put both paws around my legs, and looked up at me like, "Hey, man, I do not want to leave. Do not go in there. I am not." I could not get his legs off. I am kidding you. Finally, the one lady, she is prying one leg, and I am prying the other leg, and finally his legs, and he is pushing in. Finally, I get him, and we have to literally throw him in. I was walking out of the thing, and I was feeling terrible, but then it hit me. I have people in my church just like that. They will hang on to me, and they will suck everything out of my brain. You know why? Because they know they have to redeem the time. That dog did not want to go in there, and he fought for everything he had that he did not have to go in. You have to fight for everything you get of that Bible. The thing that I hate my people to say to me is, "I just know you are so busy." Well, that is my job, and the bottom line is this: that will not wash at the judgment seat of Christ. You have to redeem the time. You have to redeem the time with your kids. There are things you have to do to get your kids back if you have lost them. You have to redeem the time with your marriage if it is on the rocks. You have to redeem the time in your own personal walk. You have to redeem the time. You find somebody who has got the answer, just like I did when I was a young Christian, and I wrapped my arms around his leg, and I said, "You may walk, but you are going to drag me along with you, and I am going to learn everything you know about God in that book, and I am going to redeem the time."