

Life Group Notes 4/23/2023
Pastor Richie on Colossians Week 2

If you have observations or questions feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net. -Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.

(This is written to give you good things to enjoy, because look again at what Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 6:17-18) **17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in God, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES ALL THINGS TO ENJOY. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share...**)

Note: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP. The purpose is to unite, not divide; to proclaim fearlessly the freedom the gospel brings. Any part of these notes might be appropriate as a crowd breaker for your own group. The goal is to create memories from Sunday that will serve for a long time. BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study. This study is also a great devotion, taken slowly through the week.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions Richie has raised this week, 4/23. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** Do not be daunted by the number of pages. As an editorial decision, I include each of the passages mentioned in full to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes, rather than having you, the reader, look up each reference. If your Bible is open beside you, you can transfer and annotate from these pages with ease.

At the end of the notes on Pastor Richie's message, pages 4 and 5, I have added notes for the end of the chapter not covered, and from pages 5 to 6 I have made footnotes to help dig deeper into some of the principles Mark covers. *These notes are offered to enhance understanding and are not designed to complicate discussions in life group.* This week I covered ideas:

1. [On Colossae and its religion.](#)
2. [On essential and non-essential.](#)
3. [On circumcision.](#)

Richie opened today with the difficulties he and Pastor Mark overcame in their relationship and as leaders of the church. **What do you remember? How do you love someone your situation places you in relationship with, but whom you do not know? What steps make the relationship work?** Richie said, "We forgive each other. We love each

other, and we watch each other's back. We need to be in relationship." **What do you think? How do you know you are growing?**

Colossians 1: Absent in Body, Present in Spirit

[\(Revelation 3:14–22\)](#)

¹For I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me face to face, ²that they may be encouraged in heart, knit together in love, and filled with the full riches of complete understanding, so that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁴I say this so that no one will deceive you by smooth rhetoric. ⁵For although I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit, and I delight to see your orderly condition and firm faith in Christ.

Alive with Christ [\(Ephesians 2:1–10\)](#)

⁶Therefore, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in Him, ⁷rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

1. Re-read this passage. What do you see? Describe Paul.
2. Review Paul's prayer for the Colossians in the last chapter. What has Paul added to that prayer? What does a community look like when they are encouraged in heart, knit together in love, and filled with the full riches of complete understanding, so that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. If this is the goal of our community, how far are we along the road?
3. Richie asks, "Are we being knitted together?" How is God answering Paul's prayer concerning us?
4. Look at verse 5. Explain. Is Paul speaking in religious? Or is it possible he is seeing what he says he is seeing?
5. Pastor Richie says, "When we're encouraged, we're on a mission. When we get discouraged, our heart is removed from the mission." Look again at verse 5. How does Paul encourage the church?
6. What is the only focus mentioned in verse 6? Why (v. 3)? What is essential? What isn't?
7. Pastor Richie mentions the youth in Poland, and says, "We're on a mission with them." Explain. How does that fit the idea of "...absent in the body, but present in the spirit?" How does that encourage prayer for them?
8. Look up Acts 2: ¹*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* How important is the relationship shown here? What happens next?
9. Richie says, "Unity is achieved when we love each other." Who comes first when the relationship is like this? And what does Jesus say is the result of this love? What are the challenges to this kind of love? Do you have a testimony?

10. Look up Proverbs 9:10. [10The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.](#) Compare this to verse 3 above. How does knowing Jesus keep us on track?
11. Richie says, “When it’s all about pleasing the Lord...’Let me please you in my words, in my work, in my family...,’ that’s the fear of the Lord.” How does that change our walk and our talk? Does it help?
12. Look at verse 4. Do you have a testimony? What is “smooth rhetoric?”
13. Do you have a testimony of someone who was led astray by “smooth speech/convincing rhetoric?” Knowing this is the time for them to return, how can we pray?
14. Richie asks, “What do you do when a friend says, ‘I’m good. I do Christianity but I don’t need the church. (Too many hypocrites)’?” Is your friend right? Are there too many hypocrites? What is the solution?

[8](#)See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, which are based on human tradition and the spiritual forces of the world rather than on Christ. [9](#)For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form. [10](#)And you have been made complete in Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

1. Richie warns of creating categories: “I’m a conservative Christian.” “I’m a progressive Christian.” “I’m an Asian Christian.” What is the danger? What is missing that MUST be central?
2. Look at verses 9 and 10. Compare this to what we read in chapter 1: [17](#)*He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.* [18](#)*And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He may have preeminence.* [19](#)*For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him,* [20](#)*and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross.* Now explain why everything that is centered on Jesus works, and everything that distracts from Jesus yields division. Richie says, “Being Christian is all about Jesus.” What happens to division when Jesus is the sole focus?
3. Look back at verse 6 above. “[6](#)*Therefore, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in Him,* [7](#)*rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*” Now what do you see in this verse? What does thankfulness add? Why is that important?
4. How does being in a community help with this walk?
5. What does it take to please Jesus?

Pastor Richie says, “God is waking up His church to be louder than ever, to be unafraid.” What do you think?

Take the time to pray.

The rest of the Story

11In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of your sinful nature, with the circumcision performed by Christ and not by human hands. **12**And having been buried with Him in baptism, you were raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead.

13When you were dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our trespasses, **14**having canceled the debt ascribed to us in the decrees that stood against us. He took it away, nailing it to the cross! **15**And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

16Therefore let no one judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a feast, a New Moon, or a Sabbath. **17**These are a shadow of the things to come, but the body that casts it belongs to Christ. **18**Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you with speculation about what he has seen. Such a person is puffed up without basis by his unspiritual mind. **19**He has lost connection to the head, from whom the whole body, supported and knit together by its joints and ligaments, grows as God causes it to grow.

20If you have died with Christ to the spiritual forces of the world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its regulations: **21**“Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!”? **22**These will all perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. **23**Such restrictions indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-prescribed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body; but they are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

1. See the footnote below on circumcision. What do you know about the practice? What is the purpose?
2. Who does the circumcision here? What is the purpose? Look up Deuteronomy 30:6, and see what God promised Moses. “*And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*” What is the purpose of circumcision?
3. Look at verses 13-18 and list in order the steps to your salvation. What part did you play? (What was required of you to receive this salvation?) Who did all the work?
4. Remember from our study in John, the condemned will have the nature of his crimes printed on a plaque above his head. Though onlookers saw “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews” in the flesh, what was actually written above Jesus’ head in the Spirit according to this passage? (Verse 14)
5. How, by nailing the decrees that stood against us to the cross, did He disarm the powers and authorities? What can the accuser no longer do? Describe the nature of this triumph.

6. In Romans 8, you remember, Paul asked, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” Answer him.
7. Verses 16-22 come to the meat of Paul’s message to those who were being distracted by the angel cults of Colossae. Read the passage. Is there anything wrong with feasts or Sabbaths? What is wrong with requiring them?
8. The church has had its disruptions over what day the Sabbath is, whether or not to celebrate Christmas and the Resurrection...What does Paul say? Is it wrong to celebrate? Is it required? What guides you in your choices?
9. Look at verses 20-23. How liberating are these verses? Why?

Scribe’s notes:

1. **On Colossae**—The city of Colossae, as you can see on the map is in what is today southwestern Turkey. You will notice in this map, the delineation of territories as they were named in the Empire in Paul’s day. The area/province around Colosse/Laodicea was also known as “Phrygia” and “southern Anatolia,” and were part of what was referred to as “Asia.” You will notice that the seven churches to which Jesus wrote letters in the Revelation are all situated in an oval shaped area of “Asia.” Colossae did not receive Jesus’ attention, because it is only ten miles from Laodicea, the recipient of the last letter written to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3.



Most noteworthy in this letter is the fact that Paul is addressing the church in Colosse that he himself did not plant. The message of Jesus Christ, and His participation in all of creation, stands out here because Paul is highlighting what must have been the message that he gave to churches he was visiting for the first time. This is one of the “Prison Epistles,” because, as we’ll see in chapter four,

Paul is writing from prison. *“The town was known for its fusion of religious influences (syncretism), which included Jewish, Gnostic, and pagan influences that, in the first century AD, were described as an angel-cult.[17] This unorthodox cult venerated the archangel Michael, who is said to have caused a curative spring to gush from a fissure in the earth.[4] The worship of angels showed analogies with the cult of pre-Christian pagan deities like Zeus.[18][19] Saint Theodoret of Cyrrhus told about their surviving in Phrygia during the fourth century.[20] Colossae - Wikipedia* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossae#:~:text=Paul%20%27s%20letter%20to%20the%20Colossians%20points%20to,century%20AD%2C%20were%20described%20as%20an%20angel-cult.%20>)

2. **On essential and non-essential**—Colossae was apparently a city of spiritual pursuits. This is an essay I found covering in depth not just the beliefs and superstitions of Colossae, but also the sources from which their ideas were derived. [010_413.tif \(biblicalstudies.org.uk\)](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jts/010_413.pdf) (https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jts/010_413.pdf) It is an interesting read, but essentially, you will notice that, despite the antiquity of its sources, the deeper they went into the study of angels, the further they got from Christ, the first, foremost and only essential, as Pastor Richie said. Today again, there is so much material written about angels, it becomes distracting...and has been known to be a distraction throughout the history of the church. It seems clear that this is why Epaphras was troubled enough to come to Paul and ask for his help and his insights. There was great devotion to Jewish mysteries, well-known angels and the rites and requirements of the Law, but there was little understanding of what obedience to the gospel requires, as expressed in Ecclesiastes 12:13, “Fear God and obey His commandments. That is the whole extent of the Law...”, which John rendered deeper in 1 John 5 when he said, “2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments” Micah 6:8 highlights the simplicity of obedience as well: “He has shown thee, oh Man, what is good and what the Lord requires of thee: That you do justly, and you love mercy and you walk humbly with your God.” Paul brilliantly narrows all debate down to one basic essential: Jesus Christ is the sole answer to all mystery and godliness.
3. **On circumcision:** Circumcision was the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham and to all of Abraham’s descendants. Abraham was to cut off his foreskin and that of his children. No explanation is given, and we are left to conjecture as to the purpose. Until we read further on in the life of Abraham’s family and see five times in the Old Testament, in Leviticus, twice in Deuteronomy, in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and throughout the new testament that God is interested in the circumcision of the heart, and not the flesh and begin to understand that God is calling us to be sensitive to His touch, and, notice, in the most intimate way possible. Here we see we were circumcised by Christ Himself, in fulfillment of the promise God made to Moses in Deuteronomy 30:6, *And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.* How does this fit with the love Pastor Richie spoke of?