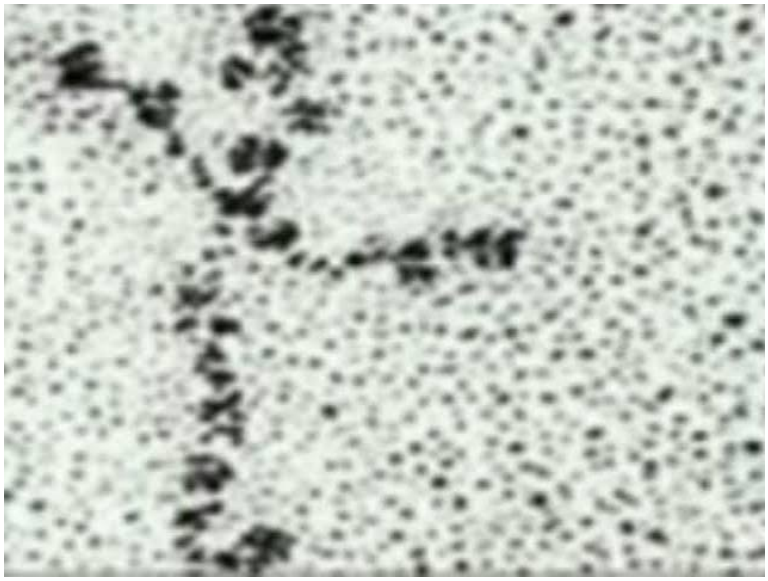
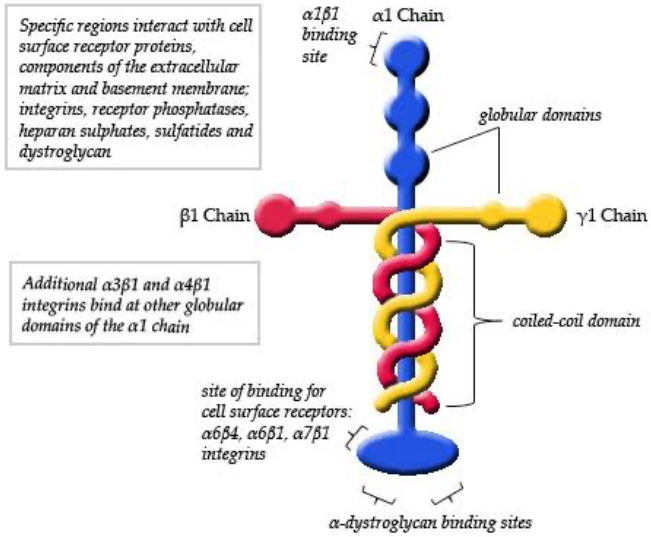
He Is, In Me, Changing Everything
Colossians 2:9-17

Last week we began our series by focusing on Colossians 1:15-20. This gives us the identity of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Someone after the service asked me about Laminin. They said do you know about Laminin and I said I don't. So I googled it. Laminin is a vital cell adhesion protein found in the human body. It essentially acts as the biological "glue" or "rebar" that holds human organs, tissue, and membranes together. When you look at the scientific diagram of a laminin molecule, it is naturally structured in the shape of a cross.





"*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*"
Colossians 1:15-20

These verses answer two massive questions, ones which will determine the direction and quality of all of our lives:
Who am I? Why am I here?

The first is you are a precious creation of almighty God. That's who you are. And you are here to be in a relationship with Jesus Christ and to shine your light on Him for His glory. That is the purpose of your life. You were created through Jesus and for Jesus. That is who you are, and it's why you are. Your purpose is not your job. Your purpose in existing is to know God. Your purpose is not your significant other; your purpose is to be in a relationship with God. Your purpose is not in how much money you have; your purpose is to worship God.

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Today, we look at Colossians 2 as we develop the theme that Jesus is first.

Over 100 years ago in 1893, the famous World's Exposition was held in Chicago. And an astronomical number of people, especially in those pre-automobile days, actually came to this convention, some 21 million of them. They visited the exhibits. Chicago had risen and begin to rebuild from the Great Fire of 1873, and they were showing off their resilience to the rest of the world. And the show was good. Among the features of the Exposition was the World Parliament of Religions, in which representatives of all the religions of all the world came together, and they were

going to share all the best points of their religions to see if they could come up with a new religion that would incorporate all the best points of all the religions. DL Moody, who was the famed pastor in the city of Chicago at the time, and an evangelist, saw this collection of people and religions as an opportunity for evangelism. He commissioned evangelists from his church and assigned them to preaching posts all over Chicago. He used churches, he rented theaters, and he even rented a circus tent to preach the Word of God. His friends were upset with him because they wanted him to attack the Parliament of Religions and their goal to create a new world religion, but he refused. This is what he said, "I am going to make Jesus Christ so attractive that men will turn to Him."

DL Moody knew that preaching Christ, the preeminent, supreme, all-sufficient Christ, would do the job, and it did. If you study the life of Pastor DL Moody, you will discover that the campaign of 1893, during this particular period of time, is considered the greatest evangelistic work in his celebrated life. Thousands of people came to Christ, not because he fought against those who were teaching false doctrine, but because he simply preached Jesus Christ crucified, buried, risen, and coming again.

Those people in 1893 were not the last to try to create a new religion. A lot of people think that if you just keep adding more gods, you'll have a better shot, so they keep borrowing from this and that to create their own god. What they end up with is a cocktail of doctrines that totally diminishes the centrality of Jesus Christ. False teachers who came after the Colossians were very much like those people at the Religion Parliament. They borrowed from everything to create their doctrine, and it seemed like they made it up as they went. What they embraced and what they were trying to get the Colossians to embrace was a blending of rituals, regulations, angel worship, legalism, and mysticism.

Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul around 60-62AD, and this small book from the New Testament is an incredibly revealing text about the true nature of Jesus Christ. The people in Colossae were heavily influenced by popular philosophy and early Gnostic ideas, which taught that the physical world was evil and that true spirituality required "secret knowledge," codes, or mystical keys. People are still easily distracted by modern spiritual trends, secret "codes," or exclusive intellectual clubs. Paul was in such great agony over what to say to this young church. In this extended passage, Paul is going to present five major errors that were being foisted upon the Colossian believers. These are five major threats to our Christian life. They're five ways we trade in the abundant life of Christ for slavery and condemnation. They're five ways we forfeit the fullness of Christ in our life for something much less.

There are three commands in this passage.

Colossians 2:8, "*Beware so no one takes you captive*."
Colossians 2:16, "*Let no one judge you*."
Colossians 2:18, "*Let no one cheat you*."

Paul is saying, "If you're not careful, they're going to steal your religion right out from you by adding all of this craziness that's in their doctrine."

The first of the five errors is in verses 8 through 10, and it's Intellectualism. The Gnostics were proud intellectuals. They considered themselves smarter than everyone else. Have you ever been around somebody like that? He warns them about four marks of this kind of intellectualism.

1. The Emptiness Of False Religion

"Beware so that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ." Colossians 2:8

Be careful, because there are people out there who want to rob you of your Christian faith. He's not putting down intelligence. He's not putting down philosophy. The word philosophy just means "the love of wisdom." Paul was warning them against a philosophy that was empty and deceitful and seduced believers away from the simplicity which is just Jesus Christ. He was telling them Jesus Christ is all you need. He's all you need. This same ideology that was creeping into the church in Colossae is popular in our culture.

J.B. Phillips translates this phrase, "*through hollow and deceptive philosophy" as* "*through intellectualism and high-sounding nonsense*." The word philosophy is not found anywhere else in the Bible. It's a reference to the highest effort of your intellect if God isn't in the picture. It's everything you can do, the best you can come up with if you don't believe in God. Philosophy is the love of wisdom, but in this text it's the love of a kind of wisdom that cuts God out of the picture. The keyword is the word deceit, which occurs 18 times in the New Testament, and it's all about people trying to pull the wool over your eyes by saying to you, "Well, if you just knew what I knew. If you just had the knowledge I have, if you'd just been to the school I've been to, if you just were as smart as I am, you would know that there's much more to being a Christian than just loving Jesus."

Here are some philosophies people are pushing on us now. "God helps those who help themselves." "He will love us more if we're good." "He will judge us according to our accomplishments." "Anything that feels good must be good." "Self-expression is the only way to self-realization." "Enjoyment is enrichment." "Christ is the best of all good men, a really good example for us to follow." "Our worth is determined by our productivity." Materialism, astrology, scientism, socialism, all trying to get the American mind to be manipulated and motivated primarily to spend money.

Christians can get caught up in this, because they are not filled with the fullness of Christ, and His fullness is what fills our emptiness. There are many false philosophies. They all share a common core. They are deceptive, and people fall for it. The people in Paul's day were saying, "You don't know what we know. If you knew what we knew, you'd crave what we have." But when you look up what they have, they don't have anything. It's emptiness. Empty deceit. Paul says it's enslaving, and it can actually capture you and take you away so that you lose your faith in Jesus Christ.

- Rituals

The false teachers in Colossae—much like the legalists today—were trying to tell these young believers, "Jesus is a good start, but He isn't enough. If you really want to be secure, if you really want spiritual enlightenment, you need to add physical circumcision and keep our list of dietary laws." They wanted to force a physical ritual onto a spiritual reality. Paul exposes the ultimate danger of ritualism. Paul refutes this with every ounce of his spiritual strength.

"In Christ you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands." Colossians 2:11

He is talking about a spiritual surgery. At the exact moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, God performed a spiritual operation on your heart. He cut away the old, sinful nature and made you a brand-new creation. You don't need a human hand to perform an outward ritual to make you right with God, because Christ has already transformed you from the inside out.

Paul then links this spiritual circumcision to baptism. He says we were *"Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith."* Colossians 2:12

Hear me clearly: water baptism does not save you. The power of regeneration isn't in the water or the ritual; it is received through faith in the powerful working of God. Baptism is simply the outward illustration of what Jesus already did on the inside—you died to the old life, you were buried, and you were raised to walk in newness of life. The great tragedy of ritualism is that it attempts to add to a finished work. When you add anything to faith in Jesus—whether it's circumcision, a list of do's and don'ts, or church traditions—you negate grace.

- Freedom from Legalism

Legalism is measuring your own or someone else's spirituality by the ability to keep manmade rules, and it is confining, lifeless, and it will steal the joy out of your Christian life. The enemy wants to bind us up with a bunch of rules that don't come from God. The best thing you can do is fall in love with Jesus Christ. Ask Him how you're supposed to live your life. Get up every day and say, "Lord, I love You. I want to serve You today. I don't want to do anything to disappoint You. Lead me, guide me, and show me the way," and He will! You'll have joy in your heart, and you won't be under the burden of all the rules, and regulations, and restrictions that people want to put on you as a Christian.

- Mysticism and Angel Worship

"*Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility, and worship of angels, and intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, not holding fast to the head, from whom all the body, nourished in it together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God*." Colossians 2:18

What Paul is just saying is that if you are not careful, you will get caught up in worshiping things that don't deserve worship. In the Bible, angels do not want to be worshiped. They are not worthy of worship. Only God is worthy of worship. The doctrine of the Gnostics included angel worship. It included sorcery. Everything was in, nothing was out. When we search for supernatural experiences out of false motivation, what happens is we get proud, and we have to run around and tell everybody about our experiences. I believe God can give you special experiences. When we hear baptism testimonies, nobody ever comes to Jesus the same way. The message is the same, but the experiences they have and the things that happen to them that lead them to Christ are different.

- Asceticism and Sufficiency

Ascetic people believe that if you punish yourself enough it will produce godliness, that self-denial is a way toward God. Some people have bought woolen, scratchy shirts, and they wear these shirts that scratch. It's like itching will make you spiritual. Some people think that to be a Christian, you have to fast. Fasting is good. We should probably all do it sometime, but fasting won't get you to heaven. Fasting isn't going to make you a better Christian. All these things that we say we do to ourselves, you don't become a Christian because you hurt yourself. You become a Christian because you accept Jesus Christ.

Christ is everything. He's all that you need. He makes you complete. When you try adding stuff to your faith, and you try putting stuff into your faith that has nothing to do with faith, that doesn't make you better. It diminishes you. It makes you less. It makes it obvious that you don't really believe that you are complete in Christ. If you're complete in Christ, you need nothing more. Build your relationship in Him. Read His Word. Pray to Him, and worship Him. Make Christ everything, and you will have the things that will make your life meaningful.

2. The Fullness Of Jesus Christ

"*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority*." Colossians 2:8-9

The whole purpose of Paul saying that is for us to quit looking around for something else. You've already got it all. You've got Christ. What else do you need? We need to understand what we have and that we don't need something else. The Gnostics were trying to spread the fullness of God among angels and spiritual agencies, and Paul is responding by declaring that the fullness of God dwells only in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is God walking around in a body. Jesus Christ isn't just a good man. He's not just a great teacher. Jesus Christ is God. He's the Son of the living God. Jesus Christ was on this earth, and when He was on this earth, He was God walking around in a body.

"In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." The word "fullness" means full, full. It's a double word. It means in Jesus Christ is the full fullness of all of God. In other words, in His body He's God. The body of Jesus was fashioned by the Holy Spirit in the virgin's womb. In that body Jesus lived, in that body He displayed His Deity, in that body He died, in that same body He came out of the grave, in that body He ascended to heaven, in that body He's seated at the right hand of God, in that body He's going to come again and take us to be with Himself, in that body one day He'll sit on the throne of David and rule over the empires of the earth. That body is now His, and it's forever. In Scripture, it is clear that Jesus is the Godhead. He is the answer to whatever weird mysteries were being taught to the Colossian church. They don't need all this stuff. If you've got Jesus, you don't need intellectualism.

"*and in Christ you have been brought to fullness*." Colossians 2:10

Our completeness comes from His fullness. God is in Christ filling Him up. Christ is in us filling us up. We have the fullness of God in our hearts. That empty vacuum inside us will remain empty until God comes to fill us. When you become a Christian, that empty space gets filled up with the fullness of Christ. Who is Christ? He's filled with the fullness of God.

- We Are Complete In Him.

These verses are the most powerful presentation of the preeminence of Jesus Christ you will find in the Bible. We learn about the person of Jesus Christ and discover who ow He is. We will learn about what He did and what He is doing.

3. The Freedom From The Power Of Sin

"*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*" Colossians 2:13–15

Paul pictures the Colossians' sins and our sins as a charge list. In ancient times, these charges were listed out against a person, and if he signed it, it was an admission by his own hand of his guilt.

The Greek word for charge is an interesting word. It's the word which is translated "autograph." In other words, here's all my sins, everything that I've done, and I'm signing it at the bottom. I did it. According to Paul, our guilt before God is immeasurable. Our failure to obey God and our disobedience to what God tells us to do, all those things become a part of the charge list.

Martin Luther, the reformer, helps us with this. He experienced the reality of this truth. He had a dream. He said he was visited at night by Satan, and Satan brought him a record of his own life written with his own hand. The tempter said to him, "Is that true? Did you write this?" And poor, terrified Luther had to confess it was all true. Scroll after scroll was unrolled, and the same confession was made from him again and again and again. Finally, the evil one prepared to leave, having brought Luther down to the lowest place in his life in his dream. Suddenly, Luther thought of something. He turned to the tempter, and he said, "It is true, every word of it is true, but write this across that scroll, *'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.'*" Amen?

"We can never redeem ourselves from death; we cannot pay God the price for our lives, redemption does not come so easily, for no one can ever pay enough." Psalm 49:7-8

Jesus said, "I'll pay for their mistakes." Jesus knows you miss the target. Jesus knows you can't pay for your mistakes. Jesus paid your price.

"God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin." Romans 3:25

"Christ has set us free! Stand, then, as free people, and do not allow yourselves to become slaves again." Galatians 5:1

God didn't overlook your sins, or He would endorse them. He didn't punish you, or He would destroy you.
He found a way to punish the sin and preserve the sinner. Jesus took your punishment, and God gave you credit for Jesus' perfection.

- Calvary Cleanses It All.

"Having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us." Colossians 2:14

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

Only Christ, our perfect Savior, could pay the price and endure the punishment in our place. Those words in 1 John 1:7 are some of the greatest words in all of the Bible. I think that's the greatest visual ever. Paul said, "Because you've been forgiven, all your sins have been taken away." Don't get caught up in trying to add to that with your legalistic life.

God didn't change, we did. God didn't change so He could reconcile with us. We changed through the blood of Jesus Christ to reconcile with God. Because of sin, creation is out of sync. But because of Jesus, one day all creation will be reconciled.

Paul is saying, "Don't forget where you were, and don't forget what you were before you were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Sin alienates you from God. Sin alienates you from other people, too. Sin separates and isolates. Sin makes people lonely and sad. But most of all, sin separates us from God. It is impossible to overstate the effect that sin can have on mankind. Sin debases character and ruins lives. Sin makes us enemies and aliens from God.

Christ's substitutionary death on the cross paid the full penalty for our sin, and made it possible for us to be reconciled to God. When we were at enmity with Him because we were sinful and He was holy, Jesus Christ came and grabbed hold of our hands and brought us together so that we can know God.

- Calvary Carries It All.

"He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross." Colossians 2:14

"*Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha)."* John 19:17

Some people are overwhelmed! Maybe you are overwhelmed by your job, marriage, children, finances, pain from your past, stress of a custody battle. If you woke up and said, "Dear God, please just help me get through today."

Life comes at you quick, doesn't it! You can't do it alone, you need Him! He hasn't delivered me from difficult circumstances, but He has ALWAYS walked with me through them. The cross gives us the power to FINISH the race.

Jesus PAID for our sin on the cross so that ALL people could have a relationship with God.

"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." Isaiah 64:6

"It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore." Isaiah 59:2

Only Christ, our perfect Savior, could pay the price and endure the punishment in our place. The whole Bible centers on the redeeming story of Jesus' love and how He poured His blood out for our sins.

- Because of Calvary, you have been justified.
- Because of Calvary, you don't worry about the sins of the past.
- Because of Calvary, guilt doesn't haunt you.
- Because of Calvary, you don't live in defeat.
- Because of Calvary, the devil can't rob you of joy.
- Because of Calvary, you have peace.

When we come to Calvary, we find the answer to our needs. When we come to Calvary, we find the food for our hungry souls. When we come to Calvary, we find the love for our sinning hearts. When we come to Calvary, we find the comfort for the longing and the deepest needs of our lives. Have you ever really come to Calvary and met Jesus

there? Being saved is more than missing hell and going to heaven. Being saved means entering into a relationship and moving toward Jesus Christ and walking with Him day by day. You can ask Jesus to become your Lord and your personal Savior and to live within your life.

"*By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand*." Romans 5:2

"*Access*" means introduction into the private quarters of a monarch.

Jesus has forgiven your past. He will restore you. This is Jesus and your future, and His goal is to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight. Jesus' goal for you wasn't just that you become a Christian having your sins forgiven and get saved. He wants to present you to the Father, and the Bible says, as a blameless son of God. He wants to be able to stand in front of the Father and, in the words of Hebrew, say, "Father, here I am and here are My children." He wants us to grow in such a way that we don't stop living for Jesus just after we get in the door of salvation, but that we go on and we grow. Jesus Christ's goal is that one day you will stand before the Father complete in Him, not as someone who has just gotten saved and then went back to living like you used to live.

He has reconciled you, that's Jesus and your past.
He's going to restore you, that's Jesus and your future.
He's remaking you, that's Jesus and your present.

- Calvary Conquerors It All.

"*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross*." Colossians 2:15

"He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone." 1 Timothy 2:6

Hiroo Onoda was a lieutenant in the Japanese army. In 1944, he was sent to the land of Lubang off the coast of the Philippines to hamper enemy attacks on the island. Under no circumstances was he to surrender. Unfortunately, nobody told him when the war ended. Eating rice, coconuts, and meat from stolen cattle, Hiroo Onoda hid in the jungle for 29 years, carrying out occasional guerrilla activities and waiting for further instructions. He avoided search parties sent to find him, believing they were enemy scouts.

Leaflets announcing the end of the war were assumed to be propaganda. Newspapers, letters, and family pictures dropped from the air were taken to be a trick. Friends and relatives even spoke out over loudspeakers, but Onoda remained suspicious. He did not believe that the war had really ended. Eventually, his former commanding officer was located. He was working as a bookseller in southern Japan, and he flew to Lubang to officially read the terms of the ceasefire to Onoda and relieve him of his duty. On March 9, 1974, nearly 30 years after the war ended, Onoda finally surrendered. Onoda was 22 years old when he left on the island. He returned a prematurely aged man of 52 and this is what he said, "Nothing pleasant happened in the 29 years in the jungle."

There are a lot of Christian people living in bondage, fear, and guilt, and Paul wants us to know the war is over. You have been forgiven. God loves you. His Son died for you. Quit living like it didn't happen. I know a lot of Christians who live like they're not forgiven. They act like they don't know that God loves them and Jesus died for them. If you're one of those people, I want to announce to you today on the authority of the Bible, the war is over, and we win; and you don't have to live like that. How sad it is to be free and not know it, but how much sadder it is to be free and know it and live like you didn't know it.

All of us are slaves to something.

- Maybe it's our peers.
- Maybe it's our lust.
- Maybe it's our money.

- Maybe it's our popularity.
- Maybe it's our work.
- Maybe it's our image.
- Maybe it's our schedule.
- Maybe it's our fears.
- Maybe it's our relationships.

In what ways do you let things other than God have mastery over your life?

"You are a slave to whatever controls you." 2 Peter 2:19

You may be allowing yourself to be controlled by your desires, your relationships, your schedule, or your fears, but because of Jesus you can be free! All of us were slaves to sin until Jesus purchased us out of the slave market and set us free from sin's bondage. The Greek word for redemption actually refers to slaves who were purchased in a marketplace. The price for our freedom was so high we could never pay it, but Jesus paid the price to set us free.