

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

VOLUME 108, NUMBER 5

HEARTS KNIT TOGETHER

Kevin W. Rhodes

The first century world, like today, challenged Christians morally, doctrinally, and practically. The gospel barely had opportunity to reach people before false teachers, Satan’s lackeys, began sowing doubt and distrust through whatever means available. The Colossians’ doctrinal confusion over the deity of Christ, their relationship to the Mosaic law, and their susceptibility to philosophical sophistry proved this truth all too well. However, Paul confronted these issues forthrightly while making his motives and aims clear to all.

Despite not having personally met the recipients of this epistle, Paul assured them that he was doing all he could to help them, protect them, and stand together with them: “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh” (Col. 2:1). Paul wrote, in part, to explain how—despite the distance between them and not knowing one another personally—he still cared deeply for them, enough to engage the spiritual opposition that plagued them. Thus, through the truth of the gospel, Paul created an intimate tie despite not knowing these brethren individually in order to encourage spiritual unity, growth, and preparedness as they confronted spiritual adversaries (1 Pet. 5:8; 2 Cor. 11:14-15).

Paul wanted these brethren to see his own commitment to them so that they might feel and find that same unity with one another. He continued: “that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love” (Col. 2:2a). Spiritual growth begins with seeing yourself from another’s perspective, a key component of the word translated “encouraged” here. More than that, the required perspective depends on the heart—a term more than just a synonym

for mind and more than simply the emotional center of man. It describes an openness that allows us to be affected. Instead of shutting ourselves off from one another, we should welcome the opportunity to draw closer—to the point that we are joined together in true unity by means of love. This agape love reaches out to make a relationship possible through the exercise of character rather than some similarity of background or interest (cf. Rom. 5:8). This is how we build church unity: one relationship at a time rooted in love.

Paul wanted more than peaceful coexistence among God’s people; he fought for a unity rooted in and made stronger by truth, pointing the Colossians “to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”

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MAY 2022

DEFENDING CHRIST
(Colossians 2)

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So WALK IN HIM

Cody Westbrook

The world is full of ideas and individuals seeking to deceive us. The Colossian saints were under attack by doctrines which undermined what they knew to be true about Christ. Every generation of Christians faces similar threats. The Devil excels in finding new ways to trap his prey and thus we must be on constant alert (1 Pet. 5:8). The best defense is a good offense. To successfully guard ourselves against what is false, we must be intent on knowing and practicing what is true. This point is one of Paul's primary emphases in the book of Colossians.

Colossians 2:6-15 is the heart of the letter. Having established the priority and preeminence of Jesus in chapter 1, Paul turns his attention toward defense of that truth. In Colossians 1:21-23, the purpose statement of the book, Paul reminded the saints that they had been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and would remain that way provided they continued in the faith, grounded and steadfast. Colossians 2:6-7 picks up on that theme. The passage contains motivation, a command, and practical instruction for fulfilling the command.

The passage begins with motivation—“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord...” To “receive” Christ involves not only an acknowledgement of His deity and Lordship, but also a commitment and obedience to His doctrine. The Colossian saints heard the truth from Epaphras (1:6-7) and obeyed it. This implies comprehension and application on their part (c.f. Nehemiah 8 on this point), and it stands in stark contrast to Paul's warning in 2:8 to “beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and vain deceit...” (i.e., “You've received Christ, do not receive human tradition.) Note that they had not received just anyone, but “Christ Jesus the Lord.” This is the only occasion in the Greek Text where the definite article is used alongside “Christ Jesus the Lord.” Literally, they received “*the* Christ Jesus the Lord.” The purpose of the article seems to be emphasis and summation. He is *the* authentic Christ Jesus, as opposed to the false christ's of whom the false teachers speak, and He is the one of whom Paul had

been writing throughout the epistle to this point. The Son of God whose magnificence is highlighted in seven ways in 1:15-20 and is identified as the “hope of glory” in 1:27.

The motive gives way to the command—“...so walk in Him.” Because you have received Christ the Lord by hearing and obeying His will, you must continue to live in Him. The word “walk” is a present imperative in this case. It is used often in the New Testament to designate a way of life (cf. Rom. 14:15; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:1; 1 John 1:9; etc.). Earlier in the epistle Paul revealed his constant prayer that the Colossian saints grow in their knowledge of God's Word so that they might “walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him” (Col. 1:10). The present passage offers a similar sentiment. The Christian life begins by submitting to the will of Christ as Lord and it continues in the same fashion. We must live and grow in Him for “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9), we are “complete in Him” (2:10), and in Him we are “circumcised with the circumcision made without hands” (2:11). The “how” of this command is identified for us in the following passage.

Colossians 2:7 contains four participles which explain the command to “walk” in verse 6, each one denoting a continual process. First, we are to be “rooted” in Him. The term is used only in this passage and in Ephesians 3:17. It carries the idea of a “settled state.” Like a giant tree whose roots run deep and strong, Christians are to be deeply settled and grounded in Christ. Second, we must be “built up.” Moving from horticulture to architecture, Paul uses a term which references a solid foundation. Like a multi-story building, our foundation is to be strong and steadfast (cf. Matt. 7:24-27). Third, we must be “established in the faith.” To be “established” is to be strengthened. The location of that strength is “the faith,” or, the gospel. The gospel saves (Rom. 1:16) but it also strengthens us spiritually as we continue to learn and apply it (cf. 1:9-11). Finally, all of this is to be done while abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 2 is about defending Christ. Defending

the truth about His deity, His identity, and His plan for humanity as well as defending ourselves against those who would try to spoil us. Defense is not difficult, however. Like the currency inspector who easily identifies counterfeits by studying what is genuine, we defend ourselves by continuing our daily walk, in Him.

CW

B E W A R E !

Troy Spradlin

At the conclusion of a special seminar conducted by a world-renowned detective, a group of cadets eagerly approached the investigator to speak with him. The topic of the seminar had been about anti-counterfeit measures and identifying falsified currency, in which the detective was extremely knowledgeable. Impressed with his insight and erudition, the cadets inquired, “How did you to learn all those different types of counterfeits? There must be thousands of variations!” The detective politely smiled and replied, “I never studied a single counterfeit. Instead, I focused all of my efforts on learning every minute detail of the true original. With that knowledge, it is easy to identify any fake.”

In a similar sense, the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Colossae, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” (Col. 2:8). Notice that Paul does not go on to provide an outline of, or describe in any detail, nor dedicate any space to what those philosophies, traditions, and principles might be. Instead, he simply directs all attention to Christ. It is the very same principle that the investigator had applied. Essentially, Paul is saying, “Keep your eyes on Jesus. Concentrate on the truth of God’s word and all those other counterfeit teachings will be quickly exposed.” It really is that simple. If we learn all that we can about God’s will from the Bible, then we won’t be easily deceived by fraudulent imitations.

Beware!

Paul begins this passage with a word that means “to use discernment, or to perceive by the senses.” In other words, a Christian should use cognizant vigilance, “lest anyone cheat you,” as the NKJV puts it; or as some other translations render it, “take you captive”, “fool you”, or “rob you”, through those deceptive, artificial devices. We can easily infer that Paul is condemning any system

of thought that does not completely depend on Christ. The truth is, every Christian is in danger of being misled by false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1), unwittingly adapting to worldly rituals (Mark 7:9), or wrongly placing confidence in human wisdom (Luke 18:9). This is exactly why Paul exhorts the disciples of Jesus to keep growing in the faith (Col. 3:1-2), which only comes from the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

The fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Why focus solely on Jesus and not delve into those worldly matters he mentioned? It is because there is no one like Jesus. He was Deity in the flesh. Jesus was one hundred percent deity and one hundred percent human, not part one and part the other (John 10:30; Heb. 4:15). The word used here for “Godhead” is found only once in the New Testament and is sometimes translated as “Deity.” The whole idea of the Godhead - meaning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as one and also separate - is a rather difficult concept for the finite human mind to comprehend. Yet, it is because of Jesus’ unique nature of becoming Deity in the flesh that allows Him to fully know and understand us as human beings, while at the same time, fully knowing and understanding God. With such perspective and knowledge, there is no greater system of thought (faith) that’s been made available to mankind.

You are complete in Him.

Think about that statement. If Jesus is the “fullness” of both Deity and “bodily” humanity, then adhering to His teaching, aspiring to His example, and relying on His wisdom is all that one truly needs. Ultimately, it can bring an obedient, faithful disciple to “completion,” or being “filled.”

Paul uses that same word for “complete” in his letter to the Philippians saying, “God shall supply [same word] all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (4:19). The identical principle is also found in that Scripture can thoroughly equip and complete the follower of Christ (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, Jesus is all you need, period (John 13:15, 14:6, Heb. 1:1-2)! There is no salvation in any other (Acts 4:12), nor can anything else lead one to righteousness.

The bottom line is this, focus solely on God’s word, the original source of wisdom. Just like that detective taught those cadets, why waste time or energy on anything else? Nothing about worldly philosophy, tradition, or principles can get you into heaven. Only knowing God’s word and being obedient to His will can get you into heaven!

CW

Fourth Quarter Class Schedule

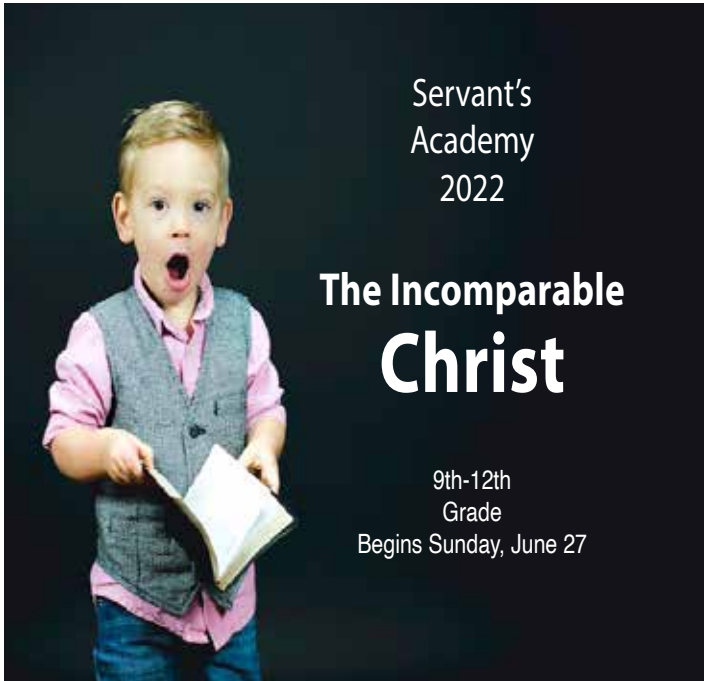
Southwest School of Bible Studies

April 2022 - July 2022

Time	First Year	Time	Second Year
Monday			
9:00-10:20	1 & 2 Chronicles - Matt Gibson	9:00-10:20	Minor Prophets - Clay Bond
10:30-11:50	Expository Preaching - Steven Lloyd	10:30-11:50	Personal Evangelism - Matt Gibson
1:00-2:20	Pro/Eccl/SS - Matt Gibson	1:00—2:20	Teaching Methods - Clay Bond
2:30-3:50	GSP	2:30-3:50	Ezekiel 2 - Steven Lloyd
Tuesday			
9:00-11:50	Messiahship - Wade Webster	9:00-11:50	Restoration History - Ronnie Scherffius
1:00-3:50	Acts 2 - Ronnie Scherffius	1:00-3:50	1, 2, 3, John - Wade Webster
Wednesday			
9:00-10:20	1 & 2 Chronicles - Matt Gibson	9:00-10:20	Revelation - Steven Lloyd
10:30-11:50	Expository Preaching - Steven Lloyd	10:30-11:50	Personal Evangelism - Matt Gibson
1:00-2:20	Pro/Eccl/SS - Matt Gibson	1:00-2:20	GSP
2:30-3:50	Apologetics - Matt Gibson	2:30-3:50	Ezekiel 2 - Steven Lloyd
Thursday			
9:00-11:50	Logos - Jim Nash	9:00-11:50	Hebrews - Steven Lloyd
1:00-3:50	1 & 2 Kings - Mel Hutzler	1:00-2:20	Teaching Methods - Clay Bond
		2:30-3:50	Minor Prophets - Clay Bond
Friday			
9:00-11:50	Advanced NT - Cody Westbrook	9:00-10:20	Revelation - Steven Lloyd
1:00-2:20	GSP	10:30-11:50	GSP
2:30-3:50	Apologetics - Matt Gibson	1:00-3:50	Preaching Practicum - Jim Lloyd



April 25	Class Begins
April 25-29	John Baker
April 30-May 5	Focal Point
May 30	Memorial Day
June 12-17	Camp Hensel
June 26-July 1	Servants Ac.
July 5-7	Finals Week
July 8	Grad. Ban.
July 10	Graduation



Servant's
Academy
2022

The Incomparable Christ

9th-12th
Grade
Begins Sunday, June 27

CIRCUMCISION WITHOUT HANDS

Bill Burk

The Book of Colossians serves as treatise on the role Jesus plays as the supreme Savior. In the first chapter, Paul declares the magnificent truths about Jesus' person. In chapters three and four, he describes the life Christians ought to live if Christ is the exalted Lord. In chapter two, Paul describes the need to defend the gospel against any teaching that would declare Jesus' salvific work insufficient. In Christ dwells all the fullness (Col 1:19; 2:9), therefore, the Colossians needed only Jesus' gospel to experience all that God desired for them (Col 2:10a). To prove this, in Colossians 2:11-15, Paul reminds the brethren in Colossae that they had undergone a circumcision provided by Jesus and made without hands.

Two kinds of Circumcision

The Bible designates two types of circumcision. First, Scripture mentions ritual circumcision, that is, the removal of the male's foreskin. In Genesis 17, God, in reaffirming his promise to Abram, made a covenant with him, declaring that if the patriarch lived faithfully before Him, He would make him the father of many nations (17:1-8). As a sign of the covenant, God commanded Abraham to circumcise

every male child at the age of eight days (17:9-14; cf. Lev 17:3; Luke 2:21). The Pentateuch reinforces this command declaring that all Israelite males, as well as male slaves and foreigners living among them, needed to undergo circumcision (cf. Ex 12:43-49; Josh 5:2-12). The Law viewed any uncircumcised Israelite as a covenant breaker and cut off from God's people (Gen 17:14). Both in the Old and New Testaments, the Bible often refers to unbelievers as "the uncircumcised" (Judg. 15:18; 1 Sam 17:26; 2 Sam 1:20; Ezek 32:17-32; Eph 2:11-12, et. al). This circumcision is not the one that made the difference for the Colossians regarding their relationship with God (cf. Gal 5:6; 6:15; Rom 2:28-29).

When Paul references the circumcision made without hands, he does not mean ritual circumcision. The circumcision made with hands resulted in the removal of flesh, but not so with the circumcision of Jesus. It involves the removal of the guilt of sin. In the New Testament, the phrase "without hands," shows up more than once. Jesus, in Mark 14:58, described his resurrection body as "another made without hands." Paul, in describing the resurrection body each Christian will receive at the return of Jesus, used similar language, referring to it as "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1-2; cf. 1 Cor 15:35-58; 1 John 3:2). In other words, these things find their origin in the work of the God of heaven, and not men. In the new birth (John 3:3-5), Jesus does the circumcising, or the saving, because men cannot save themselves (Eph 2:8-9). It is Jesus who cuts away the impact of the guilt of people's sins when they willingly choose to come to him in obedient faith culminating in baptism (Col 2:12; cf. Matt 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37-41, Rom 6:3-4, et. al). Therefore, Jesus circumcises every penitent believer by removing his sins when he obeys the truth (cf. 1 Pet 1:22), just as he did for those in Colossae almost two-thousand years ago.

Summation of the passage

These ideas lead to the following summation. In chapter two, the apostle Paul mentions that the Colossian had received Jesus (Col 2:6), which involved the circumcision made without hands. In 2:11-15, he clarifies the process. After hearing the gospel and believing in Christ (Col 1:3-8), they were buried with Him in baptism (Col 2:12), and because of this, God, through Jesus, glorified them, gave them new lives, and forgave them of all their trespasses/ sins (Col 2:13). Jesus accomplished this for them by dying on the cross (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24-25; 3:18; 1 John 2:2, et. al), through which He cancelled their sin

debt (Rom 6:23a; Col 2:14; Eph 2:14-18). Not only did Jesus provide relief for the Colossians' sins (Col 1:21-22), but through His atoning work, He defeated the dark forces that rule over the world and that work to destroy humanity (Col 2:15; John 12:31; 2 Cor 2:14; Eph 6:12; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Pet 5:8; 1 John 3:8; 4:4; 5:19). By this argumentation, Paul proved Jesus' supremacy and that the Colossians had all they needed in Him.

Colossians 2:11-15 styles Jesus as supreme Savior (cf. Matt 1:21) and the victorious King of all (1 Tim 6:15; Rev 19:6). Jesus continues to circumcise. He still removes the sins of men who love him enough to faithfully respond to his love, kindness and mercy (cf. Titus 3:4-7). Those who undergo this circumcision will joyfully submit to their King, who is the head of all principality and power (Eph 1:20; Col 2:10b). Jesus is the supreme Savior. He is more than enough.

CW



of what is called the “Colossian heresy” had taken a role that was not their right. Colossians 2:16-23 gives us insight into the nature of their teachings, but more importantly, the necessary focus to avoid following similar deceivers today.

Imagine you were invited to play for a basketball team but when you arrived the rules were strange. The referees used part of a basketball rule book, but also selected rules from baseball, football, and chess to impose on the players. The error that was circulating in Colossae must have been similarly confusing, containing elements of Judaism, Asceticism, and Mysticism mixed with Christianity. The solution glorifies Christ only, not every other way.

Let No One Judge You (Col. 2:16-17).

Paul describes the food, drink, festivals, new moons, and sabbaths of this hodgepodge religion as elements of Judaism that God intended to be only a “shadow of things to come.” They, along with the rest of the Law of Moses, had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). The substance is of Christ. When the false teachers in Colossae enjoined these elements on Christians, they were serving “the copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Heb. 8:5). The elements of body of Christ (the church) were chosen before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:18). It is the substance that existed in the mind of God before the law of Moses arrived and cast the shadows of festivals and sabbaths. “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second” (Heb 8:7). While they could have turned to a “book, chapter, and verse” for these commandments, in a manner of speaking, they would have had to ignore the context to apply them so inappropriately to New Testament Christians. This was being done for the purpose of assuming power over the Lord’s people. Today we must handle the inspired text with great humility and give attention to studying the context so we do not bind where God has not bound.

Let No One Cheat You (Col. 2:18-19).

Like playing a game with the wrong rules, a Christian cannot achieve victory if they allow a false teacher to serve as an illegal umpire over them. This is the concept of the phrase, “Let no one cheat you of your reward.” These influencers were leading the way in the delight of false humility, an undue reverence toward angels, and claiming to have visions, cobbling together elements of mysticism with the worship of the one true God. Because angels have not actually delivered their own law or system of religion to the world, leaders of this movement would have the freedom to write their own rules while pretending to be submissive. They were delighting in the thoughts of their

LET NO ONE JUDGE YOU!

Ross Haffner

Paul established the authority of Christ when he wrote, “He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). You would think divergence from His doctrine would be easy to detect—we can compare His word with other philosophies and make the right choice. But the warnings of Colossians 2 remind us that we can be “deceived by persuasive words” if we are not “walking in Christ, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith” (Col. 2:4-6). This is why Paul writes, “So let no one judge you” (Col. 2:16). The teachers

own minds when they should have been holding fast to Christ, the Head of the body. We must not be cheated out of our reward by being deceived that looking within for truth is better than looking to the word go Christ.

Do Not Subject Yourself to the Commandments and Doctrines of Men (Col. 2:20-23).

The choice set before the Colossians is the same we face today. We can follow the world's wisdom or Christ (Col. 2:20-21). Paul preached Christ crucified, and spiritual things to spiritual people (1 Cor. 2:1-2, 13-15). There is no spiritual value to imposing ascetic regulations that do not originate in heaven, no matter how spiritual they make you feel (Matt. 15:8-9).

There are more “experts” than there used to be—anyone with a podcast or YouTube account can tell you the best diet, parenting style, mental health strategy, organization method, or workout routine. Everyone on Twitter and Facebook gets to change hats daily from medical doctor to foreign policy advisor and everything in between. Out of hunger for power and praise or a genuine desire to help, it seems like everyone wants to be the one to tell others what they should do. When it comes to religion, only the word of God has the authority to do that.

CW

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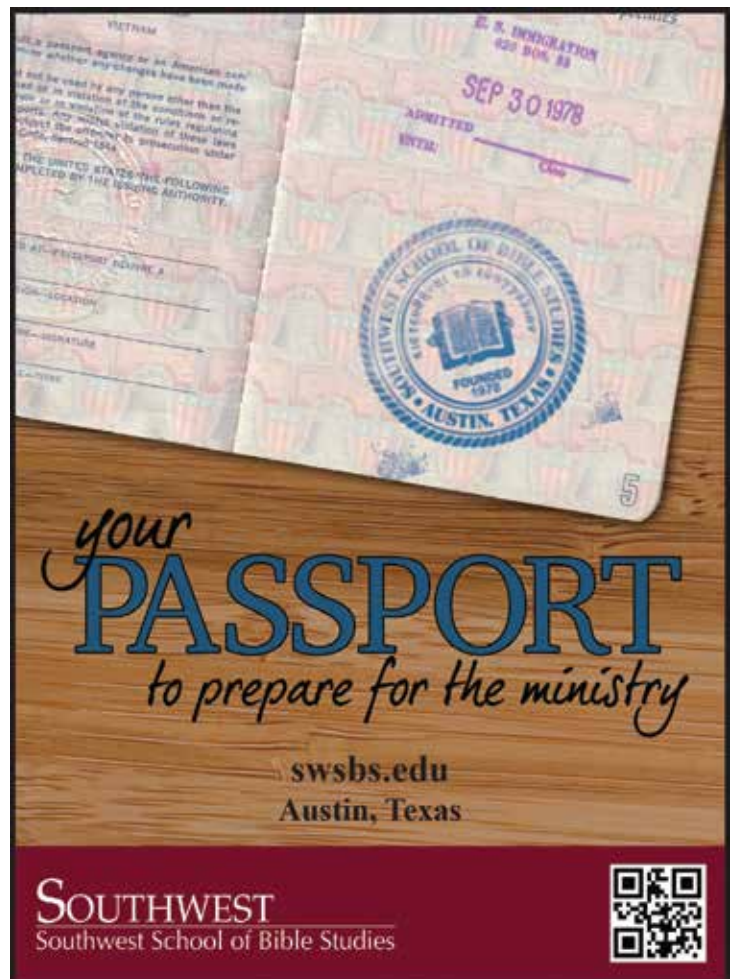
(Col. 2:2b-3). The apostle emphasized that the unity available in the church must encourage growth in spiritual knowledge if that unity is to mature and be meaningful. True spiritual wealth is the confidence we can have when our understanding of the gospel deepens and when we learn more and more about what God has revealed (1 Pet. 2:2; Rom. 1:16-17), and this, in turn, is designed to grow our understanding of God. Only by appreciating all that God has done in Christ and by working to comprehend how He has done it can we unlock the fountain of information available in the gospel and in Christianity.

Having encouraged their unity and growth, Paul still feared the Colossians' vulnerability to the onslaught of opposition they faced through a combination of Judaizing teaching and philosophical musing. Thus, he explained that his work, their unity, and their growth were all essential to prepare them to reject the “pithy analogies” of those offering some alternative to the reason of the gospel, writing, “Now

this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words” (Col. 2:4). Unity, spiritual growth, and biblical admonition are therefore essential in preparing God's people to face the tricky untruths of Satan's minions.

Paul had never met these Christians, but he was fighting for them daily. They needed to know that. In fact, this alone likely served as valuable motivation for congregations without the privilege of an apostle's personal preaching. In this Paul expressed the transcendent nature of spiritual unity: “For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ” (Col. 2:5). Paul did not have to be physically present in Colossae to enjoy unity with the Colossians. Establishing spiritual order and solid faith that was fully committed to Christ was sufficient for these Christians to enjoy unity with him just as it is enough for those of us separated from him by both distance and time. Paul's struggle then makes our unity possible now, which is why we should give our hearts to the cause today as much as he did. If we do, we will be knit together with a bond that no one can break.

CW





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“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

From the Director's desk



Steven Lloyd
Director SWSBS

Students at Southwest are facing their final quarter of the year. Our second-year students will graduate early July. These include Greg Campbell, Tara Griffith, Adan Hernandez, Caleb Nash, Anthony Scherffius, Hailey Scherffius, and Hannah Surles.

First year students advancing to the second year are: Ryan Brewer, Grace Cox, Raoul Ferris, “Augie” Freiley, Declan McCarn, Ty McClellan, Curtis Scherffius, Taylor Stein, Jesse Stuart, and B.K. York.

Our incoming student list continues to grow. To date we have 14 names, but as you can imagine, we never know for certain until the first day of orientation how many will show up. The attendance of some is contingent on whether they will be approved by the US Embassy in the country in which they live.

May I encourage you to take another look at the number of students represented above, and the amount of support it takes for them to complete two years of study? They cannot work and attend school at the same time because there is little time for anything else in their two years with us. A full-time college student takes 3-4 courses every quarter or semester. Our students take 9 courses every quarter. They are in school from 8:30-4:00 Monday through Friday, and they are expected to put in an average of 5 hours of work every evening—not to mention the time they spend on their work on Saturdays and Sundays.

Those of you who support students help make this possible. You are mentioned in the prayers of the students every day. The staff gives thanks for you as well.

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