

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

SEPT 28 - OCT 2, 2020

## Above All

8.30 - 11.22

BOOK OF COLOSSIANS



# MONDAY

## Colossians 2:6-15; John 15:4-6; Acts 16:29-33

---

Ever heard the taunt, “Christianity is a crutch”? Karl Marx amplified such cynicism, declaring, “Religion is the opiate of the masses.”

“(Ancient Christian theologian) Augustine ... compared the church to a hospital, because it is full of wounded and ill people in the process of being healed.” (Zacharius Trust)

Concern about being “over-dependent” or “fanatic” regarding relationship with Christ causes some to take the presumed “safe route” of cultural Christianity—thinking that God exists, even “believing in God” otherwise to some degree. This shows up in periodic prayer, trying to “be good,” church-going, etc. I understand this path, having walked it for 39 years. Jesus said about this course: “[*I wish*] that you were either cold or hot! [*However*] because you are lukewarm ... I will spit you out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16).

Some say, “You can miss heaven by 18 inches (the distance between brain and heart).” One can believe in something while distant—head knowledge alone doesn’t save. Jesus’ half-brother referenced the peril in such relationship with Christ in James 2:19, “*Even the demons believe—and shudder!*” The New King James Version translation gets Acts 16:31 right: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved (emphasis added).*” Believing on Jesus means you realize that “*apart from [Him], you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).

Today's Colossians text shares Paul's related views. He reminds us that, regarding Christ, we "walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6), are "built up in Him" (v. 7). The apostle, by the Spirit's inspiration, declares that "you have been filled in Him" (v. 10), "having been buried with Him in baptism" (v. 12), that we have been "made alive together with Him" (v. 13). A crutch?! Such a metaphor falls woefully short of right relationship with Jesus, grossly underestimating our complete dependence upon Him. Saving relationship and abundance entail "believing **on**" Jesus and not just "in Him."

Do you merely believe *in* Jesus or **on** Him? Are you in danger of "lukewarmness" regarding the Lord? God is unimpressed with our knowing *about* Him. Moreover, "the LORD looks **on** the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7), not merely at works and superficial ritual. What does being "all-in" for Jesus Christ look like for you?

## QUESTIONS

How does Christianity being called a "crutch" for believers underestimate a right relationship with Christ. What's the difference between believing *in* Jesus and believing *on* Him?

## PRAYERS FOR CHURCH PLANTERS

Pray for the discerning church planters in our ECO SoCal Presbytery. May the Holy Spirit grant them wisdom, discernment, and encouragement as they seek God's will. May God show them the paths to walk, open the right doors, and close the wrong doors.

# TUESDAY

## Colossians 2:8; Matthew 2:1-15

---

In reading Scripture, some might muse, “This is somewhat interesting historically—but what has it got to do with me, with us, today?”

Colossians 2:8 warns that we have hateful enemies whose aim is to deceive, corrupt and destroy—“*elemental spirits of the world.*”

This verse’s message relates to ancient Israel escaping Egyptian bondage, the life of the Messiah, the Colossian church, and contemporary believers all at once.

God “*called [His] son (Israel) out of Egypt*” (Hosea 11:1). Ancient Israel’s exodus and Promised Land journey prefigured young Jesus, with Joseph and Mary safely returning to Israel after Herod the Great’s death (Matthew 2:14-15). It likewise pictures how we, as Christians, are delivered out of rebellious worldliness. It may also point toward Jesus, upon successfully completing His first coming mission, rejoining our heavenly Father (Mark 16:19). Colossians 2:8 reminds us that God’s love—demonstrated in Christ’s sacrifice—calls us to embrace our faith and move beyond worldly philosophies and traditions to “depart Egypt.”

“Many [Colossian] believers had been subscribing to heretical philosophies rather than ... the gospel of salvation by grace apart from works. ... These new believers struggled to resolve their former legalistic beliefs with the radical concept of the complete sufficiency of Christ—both for salvation and sanctification.” (GotQuestions.org) The Colossians grappled with “leaving Egypt,” longing for abandoned ways as some grumbling Israelites had some 1500 years earlier (Exodus 16:13, etc.).

Who are “*the elemental spirits*”? “Probably demonic beings who promote false doctrine ... [by] hawking basic worldly ideas about religion and trying to pass them off as truth.” (GotQuestions.org) Such forces evident in the 1st century are still around. They might push a “prosperity Gospel,” proposing God’s obligation to financially reward faithfulness. Or that “checking the right boxes” earns favor with God. Some maintain that in our lowliness we need intermediaries between ourselves and Jesus Christ—whether saints, Mary, or angels.

“We must move beyond the elemental spirits of the world and keep our faith in Jesus alone as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).” (GotQuestions.org) Leave “Egypt” behind—live out your true citizenship faithfully, inviting others to join you!

## QUESTIONS

What are some of the various ways in which “*Out of Egypt I called my son*” (Hosea 11:1) has been fulfilled? What are some ways in which “*the elemental spirits*” try to sidetrack believers? What does “Egypt” often represent biblically?

## PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Prayer for Missio Community Church, which seeks to be a light of racial reconciliation in Pasadena. As Missio church members and staff continue to engage in difficult and necessary conversations surrounding racial and social justice, may they be led by Jesus as they seek to live out the Great Commandment of loving their neighbors in their city.

# WEDNESDAY

## Colossians 2:11-14; Acts 15:1-20; Micah 6:8

---

In Colossians 2:11-14, Paul touches upon one topic controversial within the early church and another in contemporary Christendom: circumcision and baptism. Circumcision was a physical, Jewish sign of covenant relationship with Yahweh, typically applied to newborn boys. Its image of “cutting the flesh” represented embracing God’s ways.

Acts 1:1 highlights the circumcision controversy, some “Judaizers” stating, *“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”* Paul, a former Pharisee and church persecutor, justly opposed the contention that “one must first become a Jew, keeping Jewish customs, to follow Christ.” The Jerusalem church council rightly sided with Paul (Acts 15:19-20). Christianity is not “Judaism 2.0,” but an altogether new thing God has done in Christ’s saving work—Jewish rites simply foreshadowed God’s redemptive plan.

Denominations promoting infant baptism, including Glenkirk and other ECO churches, see baptism supplanting circumcision in signifying covenant relationship with God. This might prompt the challenge, “Wait! Shouldn’t baptism be an outward sign of an inward condition? A baby cannot consciously choose Christ!” I’ve wrestled with this myself. However, this objection ignores the call to the community of believers to nurture those baptized. Though none are saved by baptism—a popular denomination has gotten this wrong historically—baptism signifies covenantal grace and entrance into the visible church.

Perhaps the church's baptism controversy parallels our country's racial divide. I've heard white friends claim, "I'm not bigoted and my ancestors never owned slaves." Part of this may be true, but its self-absorption dismisses our responsibility for unbiased systems and processes. "The Bible speaks of both individual and corporate sin, guilt, and responsibility. ... Daniel repented for the sins of his ancestors (Daniel 9)." (Tim Keller) Selfishness can show up in extreme personalization of baptism and irresponsibility felt by many privileged people toward the disadvantaged.

Jesus' way is the way of a servant. However, our fallenness inclines us toward selfishness. This can show up not only in one's baptism leanings, but also in considering social issues like systemic racism. We're not called to separate "faith life" from "secular life," but to abundant life in Christ—including embracing community and loving the marginalized. Go His way!

## QUESTIONS

What did circumcision represent in ancient Israel? How does a corporate perspective and related accountability figure into both infant baptism and social justice?

## PRAYERS FOR ECO SOCIAL PRESBYTERY

Pray for more churches in ECO SoCal Presbytery to catch the vision and urgency of church planting in Southern California and beyond. ECO needs churches in cities like Downtown LA, San Diego, Anaheim, and Riverside. The best way this can happen is through new churches.

# THURSDAY

**Colossians 2:12-13; Galatians 3:23-28; Jonah 2:5-6**

---

Years ago I was speaking with a sister-in-law who had been raised in the traditions of another Christian denomination. She fretted about our nephews, “They’ve never been baptized—what if they died tomorrow?” I countered, “It’s great that you care about them so, Jo, but the greater concern is that they don’t know Christ.” After some give-and-take, I commented, “Baptism doesn’t save us—if you disagree, explain why Jesus assured the repentant thief on the cross, ‘*Today you will be with me in paradise*’ (Luke 23:43)?” She looked at me like I was from Mars.

Am I dismissive regarding baptism? Absolutely not! The Lord Himself commanded it (Matthew 28:19) and ratified it by subjecting Himself to baptism (Matthew 3:16) despite His sinlessness. While baptism itself doesn’t save us—no merely human work does—it is an important aspect of following Jesus for various reasons.

Baptism is one of two sacraments—along with the Lord’s Supper—emphasized in our ECO denomination. It signifies, among other things, our covenant relationship with God and His grace in Christ. As addressed yesterday, baptism’s community element is an important consideration in infant baptism. For a more mature believer, baptism is a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, a key milestone and touchpoint in one’s Christian walk.

The greater symbolism of baptism is deeply meaningful. It represents death to the old self and spiritual rebirth in Christ, affirming our estrangement from God—spiritual deadness—apart from Jesus and His atoning sacrifice. Baptism’s death and rebirth imagery—like the Israelites’



escaping Pharaoh through the Red Sea (Exodus 14)—pictures Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Paul employs this in Colossians 2:12-13: *"buried with Him in baptism ... [and] raised with Him in faith"* (v. 12) and *"dead in your trespasses ... [until] made alive together with Him, [God] having forgiven us."* (v. 13)

Baptism's profoundness calls to mind a well-known C.S. Lewis quote, "Jesus didn't come to make bad men good; He came to make dead men live." If you are a professing believer, have you been baptized? If no, why not? Disobedience here means missing out on God's best.

## QUESTIONS

If baptism doesn't save a person, why is it important? Is baptism optional for a professing believer? What does baptism portray within Christianity?

## PRAYERS FOR PERCH.CHURCH

Perch.Church seeks to love Jesus and love like Jesus by being an hospitable community for wanderers, misfits, and curious. As Perch. Church prepares for public launch in 2021, pray that they would continue to gather unchurched people, disciple current members, and serve the city of Glendale.

# FRIDAY

## Colossians 2:13-15; Matthew 27:45-46; Isaiah 1:18-20

---

Colossians 2:13-15 has the feel of a high-level courtroom: “trespasses” (v. 13); “the record of debt” and “legal demands” (v. 14); and “rulers and authorities” (v. 15). Perhaps that’s because it refers to a courtroom of sorts. The crucifixion involved, among other things, a “court case” between the Son and Father.

Jesus “posted our bail” (John 19:30) on the cross. Our Stand-In and “Defense Attorney” (1 Timothy 2:5) paid the wages of sin (Romans 6:23) that none of us could afford ourselves. There are several reasons why Jesus exclaimed at Calvary, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?*” (Matthew 27:46). Among these: He declared His Messiahship in fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 22:1; He expressed the spiritual and relational pain of temporary separation from the Father for the only time in eternity; and, the Son of Man felt intense physical and emotional pain of crucifixion and rejection.

Just hours earlier at Gethsemane Jesus called the Father “*Abba*” (Mark 14:36), which can be translated “Daddy.” Upon moving from the garden’s prayer room to Calvary’s courtroom, however, Jesus appealed formally to “*My God*,” the Judge and Ruler of the universe. Amidst those three hours of the most intense judgment—from noon to three PM (Matthew 27:45)—the Son and Father transacted legally. Jesus Christ received our sin and broken lives and we who would believe, in return, received His righteous standing before the Father.

Because Jesus handled the legalities, we can have a personal, non-legal relationship with God in Christ. Why would anyone, then, choose legalism? Perhaps you've heard, "He who acts as his own lawyer has a fool for a client." Indeed! Why represent yourself before God on your own, given that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23)? Moreover, why do this when God the Son has already stood for you, already paid the price ... if only you would willingly receive it?

Those choosing a legal or non-relationship with God nullify what Christ has handled already. Such have "*trampled underfoot the Son of God, and ... profaned the blood of the covenant.*" (Hebrews 10:29). Lovingly warn anyone you know who stands here.

## QUESTIONS

What "legal transaction" took place between the Father and Son on Calvary's cross? Why was Jesus' cry to the Father from the cross ("My God, My God ... ?") so formal? What's the problem with having a legal relationship with God?

## PRAYERS FOR NEW CITY CHURCH

New City Church continues to partner with other churches and non-profit organizations in South Bay LA. Pray for New City Church to be salt and light in the South Bay as they serve their neighbors, feed the homeless, and love those in need.

## Sources:

- Karl Marx's quote is from [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/karl\\_marx\\_136372](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/karl_marx_136372)
- The Zacharius Trust quote can be found at <https://www.zachariustrust.org/is-christianity-just-a-crutch>
- GotQuestions.org quotes are from <https://www.gotquestions.org/elemental-spirits.html>
- Tim Keller's quotes are from his article, "The Sin of Racism," which can be found at <https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/the-sin-of-racism/>
- C.S. Lewis' quote is from his book, *Mere Christianity*; publisher Geoffrey Bles (UK), Macmillan Publishers and HarperCollins Publishers (US), 1952.

