



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Colossians 2:1-5

"Christ and the Treasures of Wisdom"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are studying through Paul's Letter to the Colossians, and our Scripture reading for today is Colossians 2: 1 through 5. So will you turn in your New Testaments to Colossians 2: 1 through 5? The apostle has just mentioned in the 29th verse of chapter 1,

"Whereunto, (that is for the purpose of the mystery). I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted."

That word, incidentally, can mean things like exaltation, comfort, consolation. It can mean strengthening, and probably here, it does mean something like that; confirmed or strengthened. The next word, being knit together, in biblical Greek outside of the New Testament more commonly, almost universally has the sense of instructed. That occurs later on in chapter 2, verse 19, and there it has the sense of to knit together, and perhaps, it's wisest to say that, but it might well be instructed. In that case, the verse would read, "That their hearts might be strengthened being instructed in love, and unto all riches of

the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." That last phrase or clause, "and of Christ," inclusive of the phrase, "of Christ," strictly speaking may be rendered in three different ways; each of them being grammatically acceptable.

So it's a matter of the context, and I'm going to suggest without arguing the case here, it's not the place to do it, that we should read, "To the full knowledge of the mystery of God and of the Father that is Christ." In other words, Christ is the mystery.

Now we have just read above, "of Christ in you the hope of glory," that is, in you Gentiles, and this is the same type of thinking except here the concentration of it is upon Christ himself. He is the secret, the divine secret.

"In whom, (Paul goes on to say,) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ."

It's evident from that last verse, incidentally, that the Colossians, who were troubled by false teachers who were seeking to lead them astray, have not yet fallen prey to the false teachers. So the apostle has written the letter to warn them and to be an instrumentality in keeping them from falling into the hands of individuals whose teaching was contrary to the word of God.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let's bow in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the access that we have in him, and for the access that we have into this grace in which we stand. How marvelous it is to be able to stand in the grace of God! And Lord, we give Thee our gratitude and thanksgiving for the

position that we enjoy in Christ. For being in him we have the forgiveness of sins, we have been declared righteous through the merits of the Lord Jesus who suffered on the cross at Calvary, and bore the penalty of sinners. How marvelous to know that our sins are forgiven, and that we stand righteous before Thee in Christ!

We thank Thee for other blessings that accompany us in the Lord Jesus Christ. "All spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ," the apostle says in the Book of the Ephesians. We are very thankful. Lord, we pray that we may be truly responsive to all that Thou hast done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ who is our representative, our mediator, and who has stood for us, bearing our penalty, now stands for us at the right hand of the throne of God, and we are so marvelously protected and blessed and guarded by all that our representative is for us to Thee.

We thank Thee, Lord, for the fact that through the Holy Spirit who has been sent to indwell every believer in Christ, we have guidance, direction, comfort, consolation, a supply of our needs, and everything necessary to serve Thee fruitfully. Lord, may Thy hand be upon us to that end. We pray Thy blessing upon this local church, Believers Chapel, upon its officers, the elders and the deacons, and the members, and the friends, and especially those who might be visiting here today. Lord, may they through the Holy Spirit, sense Thy presence, respond to the ministry of the word of God, and thus, glorify Thee, and as the week unfolds, be fruitful in their own Christian lives. Lord, for those who may be here without the Lord Jesus Christ, we especially ask Thee that through the Holy Spirit there may be conviction, regeneration, and faith. We thank Thee for a sovereign God who saves in accordance with his will.

Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the ministry of the word in our day, and we pray for all who are preaching the word of God, here in Dallas, in the state of Texas, the United States, and the countries over the face of this globe. We thank Thee for the assurance that Thou art building up the church, enlarging it in accordance with Thy will, preparing it to meet the Lord Jesus Christ our head. We thank Thee for our

country. We pray Thy blessing upon our President. For others who govern, give wisdom and guidance to them and give, Lord, an appreciation of truth to them as well. We pray for the sick, particularly, for some who are bereaving, for others who have difficult decisions to make, we ask, Lord, that Thou would give guidance and direction and consolation and strength where these things are needed. We ask Thy blessing upon us in this meeting as we sing the hymn that follows, as we listen to the word of God, may Lord by Thy grace be built up in Thy faith. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Well you sang that so well I was thinking that maybe we should sing it over again and then, I reflected, well maybe I was just listening to my own voice.

[Laughter] But I do appreciate your singing. It was really good. Mrs. Howard, I didn't know she was playing the organ because, of course, she doesn't usually play it here, but when she on the last stanza, I don't even know what a musician would call that, when she did that. I looked over because that's what she did at the eight thirty hour, and I recognized she was the one that was playing for us this morning.

As I was reflecting on that particular hymn which I enjoy singing very much, you can see how Isaac Watts who wrote that hymn has managed to make himself useful to Christians now for several centuries. And I was thinking, well maybe before I enter into the presence of the Lord, of course, that may happen at any time, perhaps, I could write a hymn on sovereign grace and see if I could fit it with some tune that I really liked. Anyway, those are some of the thoughts that were going through my mind as I sang that marvelous hymn, "Alas and Did My Savior Bleed and Did My Sovereign Die."

We are looking at Colossians chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 5, and our subject for today is, "Christ and the Treasures of Wisdom." This is not the kind of passage that you would ordinarily select upon which to minister if you were not expounding a book from chapter 1 and verse 1 through the end of the book. Most preaching today is topical or textural, and generally speaking, preachers select the passage. Ordinarily it's a passage

that has something unusual about it. It may be an outstanding presentation of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ or it may be something else. And there are certain passages, if that were the method followed by all preachers, would never be preached. And these passages are a bit of a challenge to the ministry of the word of God to make them as interesting as other sections, and I don't know that I'll be able to do it.

Fortunately, in this case there is one text in this particular passage that does stand out, and that's the 3rd verse in which the apostle says, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The two engaging things that have appeared to me as I have reflected again over Colossians 2:1 through 5, and for the first time I'm preaching a message precisely on these five verses. The first thing that engaged my thought as I reflected upon it was the influence of the truth of God on the everyday affairs of Christians.

Now Paul, of course, was no usual everyday style believer. He was an apostle. He was an apostle to the Gentiles. He had unique experiences, but you can see here, the concern that the apostle had amid the conflict that constantly went on as he sought to be the apostle of the Gentiles and an instrumentality in the building up of the children of God. In fact, it's really striking and amazing that the apostle, who is remember at this moment when we writes this epistle in a Roman prison cell, handcuffed from time to time to a Roman guard, and yet, in his mind and upon his heart are the burdens of the church of Jesus Christ. It was a lonely prison cell. It was remote from the conflicts that he had been engaged in. He had enough burdens of his own to carry, but the thing that is upon the apostle's heart is not so much his own condition as the condition of the Christian church.

In one sense, he's like a soldier who's left behind and the other soldiers have gone out to the front line. He's supposed to guard the base while his comrades are gone. But nevertheless, he's part of the fight. He listens for the sounds of battle, and his thoughts are on the field. Mr. McLaren when he speaking about this says that "his prison cell was

like the focus of some reverberating gallery in which every whisper was heard, and the heart that was held captive there was set vibrating in all its chords by every sound from many of the churches." I know you have been in buildings with galleries like that, art galleries, particularly, which a person at a certain point can hear things that are many feet away and the other people might not even realize that their thoughts were heard. If we could imagine someone standing in that kind of building in which the thoughts from every where should focus on one point. You can have an illustration of what was going on in Paul's mind as he thought all over his world and sought to reflect upon what was happening in all of the churches that had been formed through the preaching of the Pauline gospel.

Now that's not a different gospel that's just gospel that he preached with special reference to the Gentiles. So that's one thing that stands out to me. The influence of the truth on every day affairs and the apostle speaks of this conflict to struggle and no doubt represents this conflict in his daily prayers. The other thing that stands out to me is one can see here why the Apostle Paul was loved. Loved by his generation and has been loved down through the years. The apostle was an individual who had upon his heart the concerns of the saints. I think, particularly, of when he called the Ephesian elders. It's described in Acts chapter 20 and verse 17, when he called them to Miletus and ministered the word of God to them by instruction and exhortation, and in the midst of his message to them he said, "Therefore, watch and remember by the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears." And then as the message comes to a close, "When he had said these things," Luke says, "he kneeled down and he prayed with them all, and they all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him."

So I think I understand why the apostle was loved. He was a man who had brought the truth to the Gentiles. He didn't hesitate to do it boldly. He didn't cut any corners. He didn't trim any sails. He was firm. He had the assurance of the truth that the

truth that he was proclaiming was the word of God, and boldly he did it. And he did it in Christian love.

Those are things that engaged me as I thought about this particularly section of the Epistle to the Colossians this week. In Grace Seminary, I was instructing the students in the morning in the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament and spending my afternoons and night until ten o'clock in the library there. Of course, having said these things as things that stand out here, there is in harmony with the theme of the book, again, a stress upon the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the major theme that the apostle is seeking to bring home to the Colossians, and it's expressed in this 3rd verse, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Arthur Holmes, professor of Philosophy at Wheaton College has a book which he wrote a few years ago that is entitled by a common phrase among Christian philosophers, "All truth is God's truth." Totus verum est deus verum. "All truth is God's truth."

Now sometimes the connections between the truth of science or philosophy or sociology or psychology may be rather remote from what we think of as biblical truth. But if, as the Scriptures say, all truth really is God's truth there is a relationship between all of these little beams that flow from the glory of God that is valid for us to seek into, and ultimately, we shall come to know in measure, at least.

So when we read here, "in whom," that is in Christ, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," we can see this is a magnificent statement of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the truth that all truth, ultimately, is understood properly through the truth concerning Christ.

Now we look at the first verse where the apostle expresses his concern for the Colossians. "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." As is so customary in Paul's writing, he begins this verse with the little conjunction "for". Now sometimes this "for" expresses an explanatory statement having to do with the preceding context.

Sometimes it introduces the cause of a preceding statement. Sometimes it explains by stating the grounds on which something has just been said. It's clear that this particular text is related to the preceding word by that little conjunction. Where Paul has said in verse 29 of chapter 1, "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you."

So he is explaining further the reason why he has been in such conflict. This is one instance, we might say, of Paul's labor, and also one instance of God's working referred to in the previous text as well.

Now there is a Latin saying that some of you may have remembered if you studied Latin or you had any one to instruct you in Latin, "precor est laboro." Now that means to pray is to work. We sometimes have the idea that to pray is something that you do, well, if you have nothing else that you can do. You often hear people say, well, if you can do nothing else at least you can pray. As if it's easy to pray. That's the hardest of all Christian work; to pray. Oh, I'm not talking about getting down by the side of your bed and saying a few sentences. I'm talking about the kind of praying that the apostle is speaking about when he talks about the conflict that he has for those who are in Laodicea and for as many who have not seen his face. To pray is work.

In fact, it's the hardest of all Christian work, and probably, it's the Christian work that is most neglected by Christian believers. The Puritans were noted for their concern with the spiritual life. Many people think of them as being legalistic. In some cases that was probably true. In other cases, they represented the noblest kind of Christian life. Andy Moll in one of his books has a reference to a friend who was calling upon a friend who was of the noblest Puritan-type. He knocked on his door sure of a welcome there, and he wanted to have a time of fellowship with him, but he was kept waiting for a long time, and finally, a servant came to explain the delay. He said, "My master has been at prayer and this morning he's been long in getting access."

Well, I don't know whether you've ever spent much time in prayer or not, but you ought to try it, and you will probably feel like the Puritan. Every now and then you will feel like you are just uttering words, and you don't seem to be getting any response. You are, of course, but prayer is not easy. It is hard work. As I say, Paul calls it a conflict. In fact, he uses a term which can be translated by, "to wrestle." So he was wrestling with the Lord God over the concerns that had to do with the saints of God, but it was very rewarding activity. And evidentially, Paul thought that to pray was fruitful.

Now William Cowper who wrote the little couplet, "and Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees," certainly would have agreed with the apostle. Well, what was he praying about? Well, he tells the Colossians the aim of the apostolic concern in verses 2 and 3. He says, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love," first, and for "all riches of the full assurance of understanding," and then for the full knowledge "of the mystery of God, and of the Father, namely Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

So we will look at this as if Paul's concern and aim was expressed in three ways; first of all, as the strengthening of the saints through loving instruction. Now let's look at it that way. I'm not absolutely certain that this term should be rendered instruction. If some of you actually wanted to do a little study you may go back and read the commentary that I wrote on the Epistle to the Colossians over twenty years ago, and in that particular commentary on the Greek text, I made reference to this particular verb and took the position that it probably meant the same thing that it does in verse 19 in which the apostle mentions it again and translates the verb, knit together. And there is good reason for taking it in the same sense.

But in the light of the fact that the common sense of that term outside of this part of the New Testament was to instruct, it may be that what he is saying for them, it certainly fits the context, "that their hearts might be strengthened and instructed in love." If that is true, then what the apostle is saying is that he would like to see the balance of

truth and love in the Colossians. I can see how he might be interested in truth, because they are troubled by Gnostic Judaizers who want to teach things contrary to the word of God; so the balance of truth and love. We always have to put those two together. There are so many Christians who think of Christian love as sentimentality, and their ideas of truth are so fluent as to accomplish anything that might be religious. And then on the other hand, there are some who are very, very particular about their Christian doctrine, but they do it in the kind of spirit that leaves people very, very cold because their cold right in their hearts, and the result is that the precision of the truth which they have come to understand, gets itself a bad name for its coldness.

So the apostle; and this is true whether it is taught here or not, the apostle and the writers of Scripture are very interested in preserving truth, but they are also in seeing that when we teach the truth and when we seek to live the truth that we do it in Christian love, not sentimentality, in Christian love. Christian love that is thoroughly compatible with a gentle and kindly rebuke. So that's concern number one.

Secondly, the apostle in that verse says that he would like to see the Colossians have full assurance. He says, "And unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding." Let me render it this way, the wealth of certainty, such as understanding gives. Think of that. The apostle would like them to come to the wealth of certainty, such as understanding gives.

Now that means he would like for them to be sure of the truth that they have been exposed to. We live in days in which it's not very nice in the minds of some people to be assured of truth. We live in days of isolation, pliancy, shilly-shallying. Do you know how that term arose, shilly-shally? Well, have you ever heard people say after they said something, shall I? Shall I not? Shall I, shall I not? So they're shilly-shallying. That's how that term arose, just from that.

So you can see we live in that kind of day. Doctrinally, we live in days of pliancy.

Anybody who is precise in the expression of Christian doctrine, well, he's liable to draw

some kind of criticism even though he may do it in Christian love. We live in days of isolation in which it's very unpopular to express any kind of truth in any kind of dogmatic way. Why that's very unpopular, and one should never be doing that. So the apostle says I would like for the Colossians to have the wealth of certainty, such as understanding gives. And if they had the wealth of certainty, such as understanding gives they wouldn't be troubled by the Gnostic Judaizers.

And finally, the apostle speaks here about his third aim, and he says this aim is for the full knowledge of a full Christ. He says he would like for them to come to the "acknowledgement of the mystery of God and of the Father, namely Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Now I'm going to use a little expression that you may not be acquainted with. In fact, maybe this is the first time you've ever heard me use it. But it's especially fruitful here, I think, when Paul was thinking about Gnostic Judaism. Let's just call it, Gnostics. So the apostle here is going to give an answer to all the Gnostics that is the people who think they know something that's new and different. He says, "In Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He wants men to come to the full knowledge of that; that mystery, the mystery of Christ.

Especially in this context of his relationship to the Gentiles, "Christ in you the hope of glory," but in him "are hid all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge." This is, I feel quite sure, a side long glance at the rival claims of angelic intermediaries which the Gnostic Judaizers had made. So Paul is thinking no doubt about the specific situation in Colossae about those who had claimed deeper truth and that the Lord Jesus was not really the one mediator between God and men, but one of the eons or mediators between a holy God and unholy men; less than God, that kind of mediator; a secondary or tertiary kind of mediator. So the apostle will lay stress upon the fact that in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Now we have in our day all kinds of claimers of new truth. One thinks immediately of the cults. Christian Science, my what an imposing name, Christian Science. Those are genius about the choice of that. But Christian Science, as the Bible teaches, is often pointed out is like grape nuts, which are neither grapes nor nuts. It's neither Christian, nor is it science. It's not Christian science. It's not scientific. It's not Christian, but it has a lovely sounding name, and many people hearing the name are thinking when they hear its teaching that they are really getting something Christian and something scientific, and usually, something that represents deeper truth; unity. That's Kansas City, Christian Science. It has its own little flavor. We have them right here in Dallas. We have them right here in the neighborhood. We have them in the neighborhood, and you can find them if you turn to a radio station where there's a program that some of you occasionally listen to, if you turn on just a little earlier, get up ten minutes earlier and listen and see if you can tell the difference between the teaching that is given there and the teaching that follows.

Now the teaching that you will hear is given with a great deal of charm, a great deal of eloquence. In fact, it's given with the kind of voice and approach that you'll want to listen. You will actually want to listen. But when you examine the teaching, it's anything but Christian. It's not Christian, and it won't lead to any kind of unity that is worthwhile. There are the Mormons who are constantly expounding their truth.

Now the Mormons, I like to liken to something I read this week. I was in Grace Theological Seminary, as I say spending my afternoons in the library, and I was perusing, now perusing is an old South Carolina name that individuals over there use as for meandering up and down the streets. They were perusing up the streets. That means to be walking up and down. But perusing, of course, means to go through the pages of things, and I was looking at the Ashland Theological Journal. I saw an article written by a man that I know, Samuel Hugh Moffitt, professor of Ecumenics or Ecumenical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. Professor Moffitt is a very fine Christian man, a graduate

of Wheaton College, an evangelical man who comes from a very significant Christian family. His father was a missionary to Korea, and in the days of the great rivals and the establishment of the Presbyterian Church through the evangelism of those people, Mr. Moffitt was one of the leaders in that movement. One of the evidences of that is the fact that those who preach sovereign grace are evangelistic. People who say that if you talk about Calvinism, you cannot preach the gospel only reveal their ignorance of the history of Christianity, as well of the ignorance of the doctrines of the grace of God.

Well, Mr. Moffitt, or Sam Moffitt, was writing on the theology of missions. It was a series of lectures that he had given at Ashland Seminary. In the course of it, he mentioned his father, and he described his father. I thought it was very interesting the way he described him too. He said, "My father was a strict old-school Presbyterian, very orthodox." Old-school has some special meaning in the history of the Presbyterian Church. "Old-school, very orthodox. He had in Korea; he had a statue of Buddha in his study."

Now he said, "I often wondered how a man as orthodox as my father could carry around a heathen god, but where ever he moved the statue of Buddha went in his study. But he used it as an object lesson," Sam Moffitt said, "to the Korea Christians. Pastors would come in and they would look over and see the picture or the statue of Buddha, and they would be utterly shocked that Mr. Moffitt would have a statue of Buddha in his study."

And he said, "My father would say, 'well, it is a beautiful statue, isn't it?' And then he would say, 'And you, you Koreans you really should be proud of something in your own wonderful national culture if you can remember that this is not a god, and if you do not give the impression that you are worshipping this as a god. If you can accept it as a beautiful piece of art, you do not need to be afraid of it. Remember the weaker brother, sometimes people misunderstand. Make very clear that they do, that is understand properly that this is not Jesus Christ, and Buddha is not the Savior.'" There's a beauty in this, and you know that's true. And that's something that evangelical Christians have a difficult time with. They tend, because of what that represents, to think there can be

nothing good in it. It might be a beautiful statue. It's not a god, and one shouldn't worship it. As a matter of fact, the teaching of Buddha is wrong. Buddhism is wrong at its core. But that doesn't mean that there are not some things that a Christian could find in that of which he can approve. The very fact that cults and false religions have something of the truth of the Bible in them is the reason why they are so deceptive to some people.

So we don't throw out everything because we're Christians. We just remember that the fundamental facts of Christianity can never be denied, and we remember too, that Satan is very deceptive, but we should be honest with all of the truth.

Now I said the Mormons. The Mormons have some good things in their doctrine. They lay a great deal of stress upon family life. That's good. But at heart, their doctrine is false to the word of God. In fact, it's so false as to make it astounding that so many people can be led astray by that teaching. The New Agers, we're living in the age of the New Agers, having those famous contemporary theologians supporting them; Shirley McClaine, John Denver, Warner Earhart, and others; the New Age theology. It's amazing. It's sweeping all over this country. New Ageism, pantheistic, syncretistic, humanistic, all of the things opposed to the teaching of the word of God, but essentially the attitude of many people who sit in evangelical churches. That is, there's something good in everyone. Something good in every religion, and therefore, it really doesn't make an eternal difference what you believe so long as you believe it. So foolish!

Well, I can just imagine the heretics coming to Colossae. They told those simple, new believers there we have deeper truth. Paul didn't tell you about this, but we have deeper truth. And they persuaded the simple Christians to listen to them. They gained converts in the city, and Paul recognized from Ephesus, that they were troubling the true believers there. And so, in their particular doctrine, incidentally, they would take someone and say we have deeper truth and they would take them to their little theological seminary, whatever, and they would instruct them in the truth. And frequently, then they would put

on a public play. But only those could understand the play who had been instructed in the secrets that were represented in the play. So if you were not one of them, that is, apart of one of the mystery religions, you could sit in the audience and say what in the world is all of this about? But if you had the truth that you had been instructed in, then you would understand what was being portrayed on the stage. And it was said that if you understood then as the play went on you could enter into an experience with their god; an experience of unity with him.

Well, now that was appealing to simple-minded people. Deeper truth, you can have an experience of the Lord God that's different. The apostle would have been very, very much opposed to that kind of thing. Christianity, he says, has its secret, but its secret is Jesus Christ. In him are stored away, not hidden in the sense of made secret to everybody, but stored away. In him are stored away "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." John Calvin says, "Listen, the meaning, therefore, is that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ by which he means we are perfect in wisdom if we truly know Christ. So it's madness to wish to know anything beside him." I think that's right. It's mad for Christians not to want to know Christ. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." All the treasures of truth concerning salvation preeminently concerning your destiny, your life now and your life to come are hidden away in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Exposition of the Word of God at seven o'clock this morning over KLRD, I was expounding Romans 11:33 through 36, the last section of Romans chapter 11. And you remember the apostle there says, "Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out." Did you notice that conjunction of those two words, wisdom and knowledge? In Romans 11:33, it's quite plain what Paul is talking about is the wisdom of the divine plan of salvation or the knowledge of the divine plan of salvation and of the purposes of the ages, and specifically of how the Jews and the Gentiles as the nation and the nations fit

into the overall program of God. He says here, "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," all the truth of salvation, all the truth of God's great plan of the ages is ultimately related to the Lord Jesus as the secret, in particular, as the One in whom the Gentiles may find their place also.

Now finally in the section the apostle says in verses 4 and 5, you need a caution against deception. So he writes, "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words."

Now that's an interesting thing. Is it safe for a simple man to hear heretics? The apostle has a word to say about that here. He thinks little of both the manner and matter of the false teachers. Charm of manner and utterance often hide false reasoning. Religious horn swagglers sell their fakery and hoaxes under the trade name of wisdom, and thus as we say, they gall the unwary. The Shamans are back in Christianity and in evangelicalism. We have all kinds of fakers who stand behind the pulpit, and they're not interested in the great doctrines of the word of God. They're interested in what they call Christian fellowship. They're interested in a large crowd coming, and they are preeminently interested in your money. Don't think for one moment that that is not true. That's their appeal. That's what they would like to have so that their little empire can manage to survive. I like what Paul says. He says, "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you," plausible, false arguments. This word, incidentally, is found in the Old Testament. It really means something like literally, if you just put the components of the word together, to reason aside.

Beguile, well it's the word that was used of Jacob and Laban. Jacob, you remember worked seven years in order that he might have Rachel as his wife. My, Rachel had beautiful eyes. When Jacob looked at Rachel's eyes, he was a goner. He loved Rachel; his real love. So he worked seven years for her.

Now I've seen a lot of love today. Some guys will work two weeks for their wife.

[Laughter] Jacob worked seven years for Rachel. So what happened? Well, unfortunately

for Jacob he fell victim to the custom of the feast, the wedding feast. And evidentially, things were served there that were not simply water and orange juice. We read in verse 22 of Genesis chapter 29, "And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her." How he didn't know the difference, I don't know. It was nighttime. He couldn't see her eyes; that was one thing.

"And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? Did not I serve with thee for Rachel? Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?"

Now we tend to say that is someone has managed to get the best of someone else in a bargain, we say he jewed him out of it. Now it's clear that Laban, gentiled Jacob out of Rachel. [Laughter] And he, by so doing, got seven more years of labor out of Jacob. He beguiled him. Well, Paul says using the same expression in verse 4, "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." It's bad enough to marry the wrong girl, but in those days you could marry more than one. But it's even worse to be beguiled concerning your eternal destiny. So Paul says beware lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

That word, incidentally, is used only here in the New Testament the one translated, enticing words. It was used in the time of the New Testament of thieves who frequently escaped by fast talk. Dangerous to couple glib with fast talk with feeble reasoning, excellence of speech is very fine, except when it's used to deceive and distort. Attractive packaging does not guarantee the contents. We all know that. We have all kinds of enticing words floating over the air waves and over our TV screens today by individuals who pose as those who can tell us how to understand divine things. We have

men, such as Robert Schuller, the Armstrong's, well listen, Garner Ted Armstrong had the most pleasing of all radio voices. Maybe he still has it. I'm told on pretty good authority that men who were of the highest standard of knowledge in radio voices said that he had the finest voice of anyone on radio.

Now I can testify to the fact that when I use to go out and visit at night at eight o'clock I would turn on my radio, if I ever heard that voice, I'd listen to him. I didn't hear any real truth there, but he was interesting to listen to. So enticing words, and as I've said so often, enticing words of those who are giving us that contrary to the teaching of the word of God is over against old M.R. DeHaan whose voice sounded like the gravel in your driveway, but who nevertheless, gave out that which was generally harmonious with the teaching of the word of God.

And what shall I say about Gene Scott? Have you ever sat up and listened to Gene Scott? Well, there you have the epitome of modern PR presentation of himself on the TV screen from about eleven-thirty or twelve-thirty until four-thirty in the morning. Can you imagine that? He talks about those evangelists who are seeking to get their money out of you all the time while he is seeking to get forty-two million dollars out in order to buy the building of the Church of the Open Door in Las Angeles, and people listen to them. They listen to them. My son-in-law told me about him. I told him this morning I thanked him for the fact that he introduced me to Gene Scott. I looked at it and couldn't believe my eyes, and I couldn't believe my ears either here. And don't think for one moment that that kind of thing is not in evangelicalism. Preaching today, it's the tendinous antidote, it's the exaggerated rhetoric, and it's the theatrical appeal all gathered together in order to have some entertainment.

Now Paul goes on to say, for our time is up, "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." Now it's clear that the apostle says they have not yet fallen. He appreciates what they are and where they stand. The heresy at this point has no secure

ground there yet. There's no wavering gullibility. They're standing firm as Stonewalls with unbroken ranks. He uses a military metaphor.

Let me sum up. Our time is up. If wisdom and knowledge are stored away in Jesus Christ then we must apply ourselves to him finding the truth on all the issues, problem, and decisions of our lives. The man wishing to be wise apart from Christ with whom the Father has manifested himself is a man who wishes to be wise apart from God and is not contented with Christ alone. I'd like to repeat that. We don't have time to do it.

Alexander McLaren, I said a few weeks ago, noted two tendencies in his day. One, the tendency to degrade the preacher of the word of God into a priest because people were desiring signs. And so, the priest as the master of liturgical ceremonies has become what may be seen by many as a Christian minister; a priest, the master of liturgical ceremonies. On the other hand, to turn the minister into a professor who's lecturing on Christianity is his favorite academic subject. Those, of course, are all wrong when one thinks about Paul. But as far as I'm concerned, I think I see a third tendency which Mr. McLaren couldn't see because he didn't live here now. He could have seen it, and he would have expressed it better than I expressed it. But to my mind, today the minister has been degraded into a worldly entertainer who mc's a musical comedy show with Christianity and the Bible as props. No wonder the Christian church is anemic, confused, and unfruitful. May God help us in Believers Chapel to be satisfied with the word of God and satisfied with Christ and to give ourselves wholly to the mining of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are found in Christ and in the living of the truths concerning him that we find there.

If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ, we invite you to turn to him who is the image of the invisible God, who is offered the once and for all sacrifice for sinners, and through whom, through faith in him, through turning away from your trust and trusting him for your eternal salvation you shall have forgiveness of sins, a

righteousness that is acceptable to God, and a companion through the Spirit who will go with you through this life and on into the ages of eternity. We invite you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus to come to him and trust him. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the word of God. We are thankful for all of the blessings that are ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for these marvelous words of the apostle that "in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Lord, as we read and ponder the word of God, may we truly draw from that store of infinite knowledge the things that will minister not only to us, but to others with whom we may come in contact for the glory of God.

We give Thee thanks for all who are in this audience and especially for those who have never believed in Christ. May at this very moment their hearts turn to Thee. May they renounce their trust in anything other than the Lord Jesus of the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross for their salvation and may they lean upon him and through the Holy Spirit and his regeneration and faith trust him for eternal life.

For Christ's sake. Amen.