



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Colossians 2:6-10

"Christ, Philosophy and the Fullness of Deity"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well when I came in at eight-fifteen of so this morning there was a type written card from one of the church secretaries on my desk from, evidentially, the conversation with the same individual. I felt rather good about it because the secretary wrote, he called and said he would like to come in and shake my hand, because he had listened to the KLRD program at seven o'clock on Sunday morning in which we do something in connection with theology and the issues of our day. He said that he was so delighted to hear some teaching that was in harmony with his understanding of sovereign grace, and he identified himself as a Primitive Baptist. For those of you who do not know the Primitive Baptist's are Calvinistic in their theology, so I was rather encouraged by it. But as he talked to you, Howard, if he said he is either a Primitive Baptist or a Cumberland Presbyterian who left the Presbyterian church and divided because they were not Calvinistic, then I'm a little puzzled about his understanding of theology. [Laughter]

So anyway, we're glad for the people who listen no matter from what background they may come. We are studying the Epistle to the Colossians, as you know. We're turning now today to Colossians chapter 2, verse 6 through verse 10 as we seek to deal with our subject, "Christ, Philosophy, and the Fullness of Deity." So if you have your New Testaments turn with me to Colossians chapter 2 and verse 6. And for those of you who

may be here for the first time and have not been following along with us in the Epistle to the Colossians, since something of what I will say depends upon the preceding context, notice that in the immediately preceding context the apostle has stated that "in Christ are hidden all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge." And Paul says in the 4th verse, "That I say this, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." For in a moment we'll make reference to philosophy and the chances are that is what Paul had in mind when in verse 8 he calls upon them to beware of philosophy which is vain deceit.

So now continuing in verse 6 the apostle says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Let me just make one comment about verse 7 since we will largely omit this in the exposition. In verse 7 when Paul states, "Rooted and built up in him," he refers to the occasion in which the Colossians heard the gospel, probably through the mouth of Epaphras, a disciple of the Apostle Paul and came to a faith in Jesus Christ and were at that time rooted in him. The following participles or the following verbal forms are largely present tense, and thus, express continuing activity on the part of the Lord God for they are in the passive voice. So the stress of the verse rests upon the divine initiative, "rooted and built up in him and established or confirmed in the faith as ye have been taught abounding therein with thanksgiving." And Paul continues, "Beware," this is a warning, an admonition. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

One point concerning the translation, when the apostle states, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit," this is not the place to discuss this technically, but let me simply say that the construction is such that the words "vain deceit" are probably descriptive of the philosophy concerning which Paul is speaking. In the context, probably related to the particular form of Colossian heresy that was troubling the saints in Colossae. A form, perhaps, we are not absolutely certain of a combination of

some Judaism, some elements of Judaism, false elements not the true teaching that we know from the Old Testament mingled with other pagan elements, perhaps, from incipient Gnosticism that flourished in the 2nd Century; So Gnostic Judaism.

Now if I were to render that, I think, as it should be rendered, I'd render it like this, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy which is vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" wise, in bodily form. A reference, ultimately, to the Lord Jesus Christ as having taken our nature unto himself, having been crucified, and having been raised to the right hand of the Father as glorified man, the God-man.

And finally in verse 10, "And ye are complete having been filled full in him, which is the head of all principality and power." May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let's turn to the Lord for a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege that is ours today. We thank Thee especially for this privilege of prayer and corporate prayer. We thank Thee for the access that we have through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are especially grateful Lord for all that he has done for us in the incarnation, in his atoning work of death and burial and resurrection and his ascension at the right hand of the Father. All of these things Lord we give Thee thanks for. We praise Thee for the Savior, the covenantal head of the people of God who has accomplished this in our behalf, and we worship Thee. We give Thee thanks and gratitude, and we pray Lord that we would be motivated in our day to serve our generation as representatives of him. Enable us to glorify him in the things that Thou hast called upon us to do and the things that we do through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We thank Thee Lord for the whole church of Jesus Christ wherever they may be, in whatever body they may be meeting. We pray for every true believer in Christ, and

pray that these things set forth in the word of God may be true of each one of them in increasing ways. May they be not only rooted in the faith but built up in the faith, growing in the faith, confirmed in the biblical doctrines, established in them, and may, oh God, abound in them with thanksgiving.

We pray for our country, for our President, for those with him in government, give wisdom and guidance in these very difficult days in which we live. Guide and direct the United States of America.

And Father, we ask Thy blessing upon this assembly of believers, upon our elders, upon our deacons, upon our members and friends, and we pray especially for any visitors in our audience this morning. May the ministry of the word of God through the Holy Spirit build us all up in our faith and strengthen us. And for any who may be here who do not yet have the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins, may through the word of God they be given this assurance, and may their confidence and hope rest in Christ alone.

We pray for those whose names are listed in our Calendar of Concern. We ask Lord that Thou would minister to every one of them and encourage, and console, and build up, and strengthen. For those who are ill, give wisdom and guidance to the doctors and physicians who minister to them. For some who are bereaving, we pray for comfort and consolation for them. We thank Thee, Lord, that we can turn to Thee and know that Thy wilt hear our petitions. And so we pray for each one of them.

Bless the ministry of the Chapel. We pray for its radio ministry, and its tape ministry, and the written ministry that goes forth, and the Bible classes, and particularly, Lord, do we pray for the daily Vacation Bible School that is coming up. May it be a time of spiritual growth for the young people. May some of them be rooted in the faith at that time through the teaching of the word of God. And we commit this meeting to Thee. Bless the singing of the hymn, the ministry of the word that the Lord Jesus may be lifted up in our meeting. For Christ's sake. Amen.

[Message] As I mentioned in the Scripture reading the subject for today is, "Christ, Philosophy, and the Fullness of Deity." To Shakespeare's question, "Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?" Many Christians, unfortunately, would reply firmly, even indignantly in the negative, and they might add popular definitions to support the point. Marcus Tullius Cicero, a man whose aberrations I studied in the second year of high school in second year Latin said, "There's nothing so ridiculous that some philosopher hasn't said it." A modern philosopher, it has been said, is a person who redoubles his efforts after he loses sight of his objective. [Laughter] Philosophy is man's attempt to befuddle himself scientifically.

Well, the truth is really much different than that. The truth is that philosophy is the search for clarity and understanding of the whole of reality. Sometimes we forget that, and in particular, we evangelicals forget that. Truth is the object of philosophy, although it is not always the object of philosophers. For many are not really anxious to find the truth just as many who sit in our congregations in which the word of God is proclaimed are not too anxious to hear what is being said from the pulpit. There are various reasons why one might be interested in philosophy and there are various reasons why people sit in congregations where evangelical teaching is given.

As Christians we have come to understand that while philosophy is a legitimate discipline, in fact, a very necessary discipline for many of us. In fact, I've always recommended for theological students that a course in logic which belongs to the study of philosophy would be something good for all interpreters of the Bible to take for the simple reason that it would help them to think clearly, and we need to think clearly when we think about the word of God. But as Christians we've come to understand that we must submit our philosophy to the judgment of the divine revelation. We study philosophy, we're interested in philosophy but we recognize that it has a subordinate place to the divine revelation. In fact, philosophy will help us greatly if we have that proper relationship settled in our minds and in our hearts. We'll be able to think more

clearly about the Christian faith. Aristotle once said, "Whether we will philosophize or whether we will not philosophize we must philosophize." And he was simply making the legitimate point that we sometimes forget that if we were to say, I'm not interested in philosophy, then we have expressed our philosophy, and thus, we have philosophers. No matter how we regard philosophy we are philosophizing. So, every one of us is a philosopher. The question is, is it good philosophy or is it bad philosophy?

Now the philosophy that Paul condemns in his letter to the Colossians was not philosophy in general. I feel quite sure that if the apostle had been asked the question is philosophy worthwhile? He would have said yes, it's very worthwhile as long as we point it in its proper place. Just as many other disciplines are very worthwhile, if they are in their proper place in the whole spectrum of truth.

The philosophy that he condemned was something as I said in reading the Scriptures, something like Gnostic Judaism. We really don't know anything definite about it, except that which is revealed in the study of the Epistle to the Colossians. We do know this, it seems plain from what Paul writes here that it involves some form of intellectual exclusivism. That is, if you join us and be a part of us you will have an insight into truth that others will not have. It may have had some connection with the mystery religions in which individuals were initiated by teaching, and then plays were performed which the initiants could understand what was being done and through that could have an encounter with their deity, an experience with their deity, in fact, an experience of unity with him. That was the purpose of the mystery religions.

There may have been some of that in Colossae to which the Christian Colossians had been exposed. We're not absolutely certain, of course. But we do know this, the teaching that Paul condemned was a teaching that dishonored the Lord Jesus Christ that did not give him his proper place. Perhaps, it included what became of some of the Gnostic sects, that is, that God is too holy to create a creation that is evil like ours, and so they are emanated from God, a series of eons or angelic beings. And finally, out of this

emanation of angelic eons there was one angelic being or eon that was, each by the way was a little less holy than the preceding one, and finally, one emanated that was evil enough to be responsible for this creation.

Now whether that was characteristic of Colossian Gnostic Judaism or not we are not absolutely certain, but you can see from this that Jesus Christ is made less than what he is, the God-man. Then this philosophy was dishonoring to our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, any kind of teaching that does not give the Lord Jesus his proper place dishonors him. We may dishonor him in the way we preach the gospel. We may dishonor him in the things that we say about him; the way in which we express who he is from the word of God. It's very easy for us to dishonor him. We may dishonor him in our daily life as well when we proclaim certain principles as being principles that guide us, but we don't make any of it to live by them. In that sense, we dishonor him also. We do know that the individuals who taught those Colossian believers, who mind you were young believers instructed by Epaphras, probably, the disciple of Paul and evidentially, was a little too much for Epaphras to content with because he came and told Paul about the situation there. They were just what we would say would be relatively immature believers.

So they were affected by the things that were spoken to them, preached to them. Paul calls that teaching in verse 4, "enticing words." So evidentially, the heretics put their doctrine in very charming language, and as a result of it, they were beginning to influence the church. It's clear from the reading of the Epistle to the Colossians that Paul thought they had not yet yielded, very much as was the case with the Galatians. They were in process of making a change, Paul felt, and consequently, he found it necessary to write this book.

So what he wants to do is to persuade the Colossians to return to the superior fundamentals of the truth of the word of God which they had been taught by Epaphras, now expounded further by the Apostle Paul. So after he has warned them about being

beguiled by enticing words, he turns to the exposition of some of the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that is a kind of an introduction. Let's look first of all at verses 6 and 7, and as I mentioned I won't say much about verse 7, even to expound a book this slowly you have to omit some things. In chapter 2 and verse 6 the apostle writes, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Very often in the Christian life we have to say to ourselves, I know I do, probably you do too, back to the drawing board. That is, to go back again and review some of the things that we've come to understand or think that we've come to understand, but perhaps from which we strayed a bit. In my case, I know just recently I realized I've strayed a little bit in my prayer life. I've neglected it, and so back to the drawing board. So if you looked in my house now you'd find me spending a little more time by the side of my bed in which I withdrawal and have a time of prayer with the Lord, because I feel I've drifted a bit from that. Therefore, I need to get back to the drawing board again with some of the fundamentals of the Christian life.

Now Paul wants these Colossian believers to get back to the drawing board. If they had remembered the things that Epaphras had taught them in the beginning, they might not have been so troubled by the wise men who had come with charming words and enticing speech and had been drawing them away from the fundamentals of the faith. So he says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

Now I have the feeling that many Christians read verse 6 a bit carelessly. In fact, generally speaking, if you were to ask what is the prevailing view in evangelical Christianity of the 6th verse of Colossians, which is often cited incidentally, they would say something like this; they would say that this text teaches us that we should have our conduct accord with the principle by which we entered into the Christian life. And then they might ask by what principle did we enter into the Christian life? By faith.

Now that's the truth. No one questions that. By faith we enter into the experience of Christian life. That's the means by which we receive the free gift of God. So don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying at all that we shouldn't walk by faith. In fact, that's taught all through the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Christian is an individual who does not walk by his human wisdom, by his fleshly wisdom. He walks by faith. He follows the teaching of the word of God. That's the truth. In fact, that's stressed so much that even in the New Testament we have a whole chapter devoted to that in Hebrews chapter 11. There the author of that epistle in the Westminster Abbey of faith as it has been called begins with the beginning and traces the faith principle, almost the hope principle, through the Old Testament saints experiences; Abraham standing out, of course.

So I don't by any means I don't want you to think in any way that I'm denigrating walking by faith. I just don't think that's what Paul was speaking about here. I think that it's quite plain from the context before and the context afterwards that Paul really means for us to understand verse 6 like this, Let us have our conduct accord with the truths that we received when we became Christians. In other words, when he says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord," he's thinking about the doctrines to which we yield in submission when we heard the gospel and when we came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So he's not talking about a principle by which we live. He's rather talking about the form in which Christ was received; that is, how he was received. In what way was he received; that is descriptively? Who is Jesus Christ? What has he done? And therefore, as we have received these truths concerning him, to walk in them.

Now if you just look at the context you'll see that that's plainly what he has in mind. He says, for example, in verse 3, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." In other words, he's talking about the false teaching of the Gnostic Judaizers. Then notice the 7th verse, "Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been

taught." So in other words, he's talking about the doctrines, the things they were taught; the heretical teaching. And when he writes, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord," he means in the sense in which Christ was preached to you. It's in that sense in which you are to walk.

Now if they had preached to them that Christ was the God-man, but he was the second person of the divine Trinity, if he was very God of very God, and the representative of the believers, and performed an atoning work by which believers in him are saved and sanctified and ultimately, to be glorified then that was a magnificent message of the supremacy and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ for all the Christian life. I think that's what Paul is saying. Look you have forgotten the foundations of the faith. The things which you were taught by Epaphras and as you have received him as the "one in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," so "walk ye in him." Do not be led astray by any kind of false teaching. Why should we? The teaching that should govern our thinking and living is the teaching of the word of God.

Now you who live in Believers Chapel on Sunday and others who may be here as visitors, that word of counsel from the Apostle Paul is of the greatest significance for us. We live in a day in which men have largely forgotten the teaching of the word of God in any kind of depth. If you go into the average evangelical church today, I think you will not find a very significant ministry of the word of God. There are exceptions for which we all thank God. But we are living in a day of superficiality in which the things that are proclaimed in the pulpit are proclaimed in an atmosphere of entertainment. And consequently, the ministry of the word of God is not very substantial. I'm delighted that there are many who are at least acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and salvation through him.

But the apostle, I'm sure, would have wanted us to teach the word of God with some depth. And so to the Colossians, if they had just responded to the things that they'd been taught, they wouldn't be troubled by the Gnostic Judaizers. So many of our

troubles in the Christian life come from our failure to embrace the word of God, and furthermore, we have all kinds of people telling us what you need is the truth from us. What you need is the truth from us, and so all kinds of people are preying on the Christians today saying you need us when really we need Christ. We need to enter into a closer relationship with him and to learn to draw upon him in the experiences of life. That's a challenge for all of us. That's certainly a challenge for me.

About fifteen years ago, Walter Cronkite on CBS news in the evening at five-thirty, made mention of a child abuse case in California. It was one of the most flagrant cases I've ever heard of. I clipped out a couple of clippings in the paper that described the case to some extent. There was a man in Arcadia, California who was about seventy years of age, and he had a daughter thirteen years of age. His wife was about fifty, and they were having marital difficulties, and so as a result of the marital difficulties this fact came out. They had a daughter thirteen years of age, and they had kept her practically imprisoned. It turned out when the authorities found out about it that she was unable to walk. She, thirteen years of age, she wore diapers. She had retarded muscle development. "Authorities said the child," I'm reading from the newspaper account, "Authorities said the child had the mental capacity of a twelve to eighteen month old infant." The conclusion of the article was that the authorities felt that there was a chance that the young lady might become a normal teenager with corrective therapy.

Now I'm not going to suggest that in the evangelical church today we have individuals in the spiritual sphere who are twelve to eighteen months old. I would imagine they are about thirty-six months old. But the facts are that we have abuse from the pulpit. We have people who have not proclaimed the word of God. They want to entertain because they would like to have a lot of people coming, and they would also like to be able to support a large work. And consequently, the work of the ministry of the word of God we've trimmed our sails, and so we do not give the ministry of the word

of God as we should. We tend to realize that there are a lot people today who are not interested and so we want to interest them, and so we trim sails.

Now I know that it's possible for a person to speak on such a level that no one can understand. Maybe I'm guilty of that. I know that in order to keep from doing what I like to be critical of, I want to be sure to give something fairly substantial in the ministry of the word of God. Perhaps, I've overdone it. But I do believe, even if I've overdone it, that that's the way in which the evangelical church should go, and we'd be much stronger if we proclaimed the word of God. And if we have some people who will not come unless they're entertained, then I think the Christian church would be better off with those who will come and will respond, because there's a great principle in the word of God that God will do more with a smaller group who are dedicated than with a large company of people who are not really devoted to the things of the Lord God. Just read the story of Gideon and you will see how three hundred performed the work that thirty-two thousand could not perform according to the direction of the Lord God himself.

So "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord," in all of the doctrinal significance of who he is and what he has done, "walk in him." And so I say to you in Believers Chapel, I think that's what we need to do.

Now secondly, Paul admonishes the Christians in Colossae to walk in the faith. He doesn't simply exhort them. He warns them about falsehood. So he says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy, the philosophy which is vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Beware of being led away captive by those whom you actually have led away captive in your head the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 15, the passage we'll look at next Sunday the Lord willing, Paul writes, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he, Christ, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," or by it. So there Paul says Christ has triumphed, and he has triumphed for those who are related to him.

Why should we be led astray like booty by someone who has captured us when we in Christ have captured all opposing forces in this universe? That's what he means when he says, "Lest any man spoils you," lest any man carry you away as booty. It's the meaning of that word which only occurs here in the New Testament, carry you away as booty. That's what the Colossian heretics were seeking to do with their philosophy. "Beware lest any man carry you away as booty through the philosophy which is vain deceit."

So, first of all then Paul says philosophy, the philosophy of the Gnostic Judaizers, is vain deceit, empty deceit. Why should we be followers of that which is empty deceit when in verse 27, Paul has said, of chapter 1, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of the secret among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Oh the riches that are found in Christ, preached among the Gentiles today! And we like the Colossians so often go for the secondary things. Paul, I think, makes this basic point, philosophy is contrary to faith. Faith goes along with dependence. Human philosophy goes along with rationalism providing we do not recognize its proper place in the sphere of learning.

Now Paul, I think, speaks of that system that has no place for Christ, no place for sin, no place for salvation. He further says that this is "after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world," what an interesting expression that is; "rudiments of the world." Some New Testament scholars today are persuaded and persuaded quite strongly that the expression, "the rudiments of the world," may be a reference to the angelic forces that lie in the heavens; evil forces, perhaps. I'm inclined to think still that what he is really thinking about are the elements of false views that were floating around in the ancient world; speculative philosophy not submissive to the things of God.

The kind of thing Paul had to contend with when he came to Athens -- and there were certain philosophers of the Epicureans and the Stoics who encountered him who sought to think of their particular form of thinking as that which had autonomy in

Christian life and thought. Godless philosophy, not against philosophy per say, but against Godless philosophy, but particularly the philosophy of the Gnostic Judaism to which the Colossians were exposed. Later on he will make reference to angels and so the other may be true, but the essential is we should be sure to have our priorities straight. Divine revelation, philosophy's fine providing it's an honest seeking for truth under submission to the Holy Spirit of God. Luther has a lot of great things to say about this. We don't have time to talk about them. One other thing Paul makes, one other point he makes quite plainly is that philosophy, therefore, is inferior to God's truth. It's not according to Christ.

Now in this context he's talking about Christ as seen in the mystery to which he's made reference twice; verse 27, the secret of Christ being among the Gentiles and preached there and Gentiles coming into the people of God. In verse 3 he said, "In whom hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Almost as if all the secrets of truth belong in Christ. Philosophy that does not recognize the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ is, therefore, inferior to the truth in Christ. We live in a day, it's very interesting and I've said this before to some of you, but I get impressed by this when I'm back again in the environment of the theological seminary.

As you know these past two weeks I've been spending time in theological seminary teaching young men. The things that are happening in our theological seminaries are very interesting. I've been in close touch with another institution in the east and to hear the things that are happening in that bastion of conservative theology at one time are very striking. The trends in seminary education in this country are definitely negative toward the things of the word of God. And I've threatened, as you know, once or twice I've made mention of this to write an article, but I don't think I will. I think I will leave it in my lockbox and I'll entitle it, The Wimping of Our Evangelical Theological Seminaries, which are now filled with little wimplets who do not have really proper training in the understanding of spiritual truth. They do not have proper guidance as they

go out and seek to proclaim the word of God. The great stress of the day is on methods and schemes by which to do the Lord's work, whereas, there are more fundamental things than that, and the most fundamental of all, learning to trust God. Let me give you a couple of illustrations.

I will remember one time an incident that happened in my own theological instruction. As you know back in the earlier days of Dallas Theological Seminary, no prayer letters were sent out. I think I remember one time, this is by report I don't have firsthand knowledge of this, but Dr. Chafer went off and spent some time away on some speaking engagements and while he was gone things were rather bad as far as finances were concerned. The board sent out a letter which was contrary to his desire and when he came back he was very upset over that. But he hoped the institution would live by faith, and he tried to practice that and the institution tried to practice that. When I was going through school I do remember one morning in chapel, we came into chapel at ten o'clock and that's when chapel met in those days, and Dr. Lincoln said a few words to us. Dr. Chafer, I don't remember whether he was in town or not, but Dr. Lincoln said, "Men, we have a little bit of a financial crisis at the institution. We need approximately four thousand dollars." That was the only time I've ever heard any figure ever mentioned in the needs of the seminary. It was very striking to me, and I realize they must have thought it was a very serious matter. And so, he said we're going to devote the day to prayer.

Now we had a day of prayer every semester and I think that is still a practice at the seminary, but this was a special day of prayer; the only time in my over thirty years with the institution that we ever had anything like that, and so we prayed. And I was working in the insurance business and after the time of prayer in the morning at one o'clock I went down to work and when I came home, I use to come in a little late about eight o'clock, and I would walk into the major building and walk up the steps and there was a clock that was situated there and underneath was a small announcement board and

you would just kind of take a look at it and go in to the mail room which is no longer there at all. It hasn't been there for many years.

But I can remember coming up, I was by myself and I walked up and took a look down at this little announcement board not quite as large as this pulpit that I have my Bible upon, and there was just a little two by four card, and it said something like this, This afternoon we received a telephone call from a lawyer in west Texas. I forgot where it was whether it was El Paso or some other place, but I remember it was west Texas. And he has notified us that the will in which the seminary had been named has finally been brought to the place where he was able to as the agent of the executor to send out the checks, and he just wanted the institution to know that he had put a check in the mail for the seminary that day for four thousand dollars.

Well, now you know that had quite an effect upon me. That was a living illustration of what it means to trust the Lord. There was a missionary to Japan, Padjen Wilkes was his name. He had some doctrines that I wouldn't be very happy over, but he was a strong evangelical man who had a successful ministry in Japan. He was a Britisher, something of a charismatic, but not according to the charismatics of today.

Mr. Wilkes was a very vital Christian. He has written some books and this was in one of his books. He said in one point in his life, he and his wife felt they needed a vacation and so someone had given him ten pounds. He was a Britisher. They gave pounds. And so they gave him ten pounds and he thought well I'm going to go down for he was going to stay in the resort home of the woman who gave him the ten pounds. He went down and he drew out of all the money that he had in the bank, fifteen pounds. Twenty-five pounds. So he got them, put them in his pocket, walked out of the bank and walked down the street a few blocks, reached back to feel for the money there and it was gone. Japanese pickpockets; they had taken his money.

He said he didn't have anything but a little bit of change in his pockets, but fortunately, he said the lady who had given me the ten pounds and in whose house I

believe he was going to stay had mercy upon him and took him and his wife out to the place. He said a few weeks later, he got a letter from Great Britain, a letter from a friend and the friends said something like this, just a few days ago the Lord placed upon my heart a special burden for you and I felt concerned about you and I sent the enclosed check for you to be used by you, not by the institution with which you are associated, but simply by you. And it was a check for twenty-five pounds. And Mr. Wilkes said afterwards, he said you just at the time that the Lord was putting it in his heart, the heart of his servant to send me twenty-five pounds, so Satan was putting in the heart of his servant to take twenty-five from me. [Laughter]

Well those experiences don't prove my doctrine, but the Scriptures very plainly teach that we are to walk by faith. I think we've lost a great deal. We have lost so much that we've lost that personal touch in our Christian life. One of the things the elders do through the years is to exhibit that in Believers Chapel, so we don't ask you for money. You've never heard us ask you for money. Perhaps you don't know this, by the way I'm speaking like one of the elders, I'm not one of the elders, but we have often people who write to us and say we'd like to come and present our work to the Chapel and we will take up an offering and the elders because they're opposed to taking up an offering, they have to turn them down. Many times they're fine evangelical people, but their principles, their financial principles are contrary to the Chapel. I appreciate our elders who try to follow those principles, and there have been very few times in the history of the Chapel in which the Chapel has not had sufficient supply of funds to carry on their work. As far as I know there has never really been any time, but there may have been one, I've just forgot. As far as the history of the Chapel is concerned, it's a testimony to the faithfulness of God in supplying our needs. No pledge system, no faith promise system, no appeal for you to give but simply wait upon God to work through his saints. I like that. I think that's biblical. I think when Paul says we're to beware of the false philosophy that is vain deceit; we may legitimately make application to the life by faith in that sense.

Now Paul has an even greater justification for what he's saying, and he expresses it in verses 9 and 10. I hate to do it so briefly. We ought to have a whole message on verses 9 and 10, but I think we ought to mention it, because the 9th verse is important for what precedes. He says he doesn't want anyone to spoil us through philosophy which is vain deceit, "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." And so thus, that "for" points to the additional cause for the abandonment of the Colossian error. It's in Christ that there dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and we are filled full in him. Think of those terms. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, all the fullness of deity. In other words, in Christ there is the powerful arm of deity to protect and to keep us.

And further he says it's in bodily form or bodily wise, the high priestly heart of a brother, for he too is a man such as we are apart from sin; glorified man; the heart of a brother to love us. And further, in verse 10 he says he's the head of all principality and power. He's the fountain of life and the supreme authority. He's over the angelic beings. Why should we be concerned with the eons who are suppose to be mediators between the God in heaven and men on earth when we have him who is the head of all principality and power? All the angels, all the angelic beings, all the beings of this universe are subject to him, so why should we be subject to or pay attention to secondary beings even if they were good angels when we have the head of all principality and power to worship? Worship Him. Live by faith on the source. How important that is for us!

And then in verse 10, the first clause, "and ye have been filled full in him." No subordinate power, demonic or angelic, we have been filled full in him. Therefore, my challenge as a Christian believer is to be subject to him, to learn to live from him, to learn to live in dependence upon him in all of the experiences of life. Filled full. My old teacher Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to mispronounce pleroma, but he got over the truth pretty well. He loved to say about Colossians 2:10 that we have been, because you see

the word translated fullness in verse 9 is the same root translated in the Authorized Version complete in verse 10. That's why I'm saying, "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and ye have been filled full in him." He used to say, "We've been pleromatized." He was trying to get over the fact that we have been filled full in Christ.

As the Apostle John puts it in John chapter 1 and verse 16, he says, "And of his fullness of all we received and grace upon grace." Dr. Chafer was a magnificent man of faith in many respects whom we loved and highly regarded. I heard him preach once in Dallas at the Old Scofield Memorial Church when it was down on Hardwood and Brown. And I was just a young believer, and I hung upon every word of Dr. Chafer. When I ran around the country later on preaching, people would come up to me and say I heard Dr. Chafer. Some of them would say that I was greatly blessed by his teaching, usually individuals who thought a bit about the Christian faith. And then there was some who would say, yes I heard Dr. Chafer. I thought he was rather dull.

Well, I can understand how they might say that. He was seventy-two years of age when I first heard him. He was a little man, very quiet, didn't say too much. Had a nice smile on his face when he smiled, a winning smile, but he was a man of God and a man of faith. He had a great influence on me. I heard him at the Old Scofield Memorial Church because I use to attend the church and teach the college class, and he was speaking this morning on "Ye in Me and I in You." I didn't know this but he stood in the pulpit and he held his arms like this because this is the way he usually did it. He didn't roam all over the pulpit shouting and hollering, but he just stood there and talked and I listened to every word he had to say. He was talking about our union with Christ, and in discussing our union with Christ in the midst of his sermon he said, "Medical science has not yet been able to perform an operation by which a limb is taken from one person and attached to another person." So far as I know that was true at that time. I don't know that that's happened sense from one person to another person.

So anyway, then at that moment, this is the first time that we noticed that he was just standing here, he reached down and took his coat like this and held it up like this. He didn't have his left arm in his coat when he came in the pulpit. He was going to use this as his illustration. This was his gimmick that morning. [Laughter] So he reached down and pulled it up like this. Of course, we all smiled. Then he said, "Now let us suppose that there is a king who has lost his hand, and let us suppose that word goes out from the king to anyone in the empire, and particularly, those who are suffering for some reason from the authorities, those in prison if they would like to dedicate their hand to the king then they would be delivered from their incarceration."

"And let us suppose," he said, "someone comes forward with a life sentence for murder and says I would like to get out of prison. You can have my hand. And so his hand is amputated and is attached to the king's hand." He said, "Now here is a hand that is now attached to the king." He said, "That's the hand of a murderer. And therefore, it has all of the associations of crime and evil and wickedness and murder. But now it's attached to the king, and it has all the associations of authority and exaltation and power that belong to the king." And then Dr. Chafer would say to us, "You see that's something like that which is happened to us. We've been taken out of the first Adam and we have been grafted into the last Adam; the second man, and we now are in him. And in him we are associated with him. Our position is that of being in him with all of the authority, with all of the blessing, with all of the privileges that belong to one who is attached to the arm, well in the illustration, attached to the king."

Well, our time is up. I apologize for going over a little bit. But Charles Wesley said it nicely, and I'll just close with this, "Thou oh Christ art all I want, more than all in Thee I find." My fellow believers everything that we need for this life and the life to come is found in Christ. May God in his marvelous grace cause you to see that and enable us to live by it.

If you are here today and you never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ we invite you to trust him. Acknowledge your lost condition, for that's what you are, lost under sin, under divine condemnation, Christ has died for sinners, and if you by the Holy Spirit have been brought to the conviction of what you are before the Lord God and you flee to him, you'll have ready acceptance by the Lord God. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust in him. And be pleromatized, filled full in him, and may God help you to learn to trust in him in all of the experiences of life. Come to Christ and believe in him.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege that is ours to study the Scriptures together. We recognize so often Lord that we fail. Enable us to grasp the greatness of the Son of God, his supremacy and his sufficiency for life now and forever. May the challenge of life by faith in him transform us and enable us to glorify him who loved us so much that he gave himself for us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.