

# **Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 4, The Heart of the Matter, Colossians 2**

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 4, The Heart of the Matter, Colossians 2.

Welcome back to the biblical studies lecture series on Prison Epistles.

As we began in the last two lectures, two or three lectures, we looked at some basic introductions and covered chapter one of Colossians. In chapter one of Colossians, I drew your attention to a few things, namely the prayer of Paul, the thanksgiving, and some admonitions, and we concluded by talking about Paul, his ministry, his message, and his personal suffering. When I was ending the last lecture, I went a little bit over chapter two just to try to show you how sometimes, in scholarship, we have looked at the beginning of chapter two, especially from verses one to five.

So let me just read that quickly to draw your attention. And I'm reading from the ESV. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you, and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding, and that they may be saved.

And the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. From the English reading, you may not notice what scholars observe looking at a Greek text. You may not realize that.

The discussion at the end of chapter one seemed to continue in these first few verses. So, there are two ways to read the beginning of chapter two, for instance. In Greek, the word that begins translates for.

That could actually be making a direct link to the previous discussion, specifically on Paul's suffering. Then, we will go down to chapter two, pointing out some specifics and significance of this suffering as it relates to the current issues the church was facing in Colossae. You could also take that to mean an emphasis beginning a very important segment that tries to build on the previous discussion.

So, you could see in your Bible, in your English Bible, there is a break to begin a new chapter. And yet, when you pick up commentaries, you may realize that some commentators will say, no, we would like to read from verse 29 all the way to two verse five because we see that connecting word actually showing the link between 29 and verse one to five. For the sake of your English Bible, I would like to go back to

the beginning of chapter two so that we can begin the discussion in chapter two, presuming that we could begin reading it from there.

That is not to negate the important argument in support of the fact that you could actually read the end of 29 all through to one. So, let's look quickly at how to make this link. As I mentioned to you just a couple of seconds earlier, this may be read as a continuation of this previous text or as a new paragraph.

If we take it as a new paragraph, as I try to do here, then the focus of these few verses, chapter two, verses one to five, will be to highlight the nature or the significance, if you like, the essence of Paul's ministry against the background of the potential infiltration of false teaching or emergence, a slow emergence of false teaching. In the church at Colossae, for is the word that I've been referring to as the keyword, which we can use to look at whether it connects or begins a new paragraph. In Paul's discussion in chapter one, he begins by, I want you to know how great a struggle.

The word struggle can translate into contention. It is almost to say, I want you to know some great, and I am taken by surprise anytime I go to this text and realize, well, it's not just saying I was struggling because Paul had had his own share of struggling in ministry. But here he said, I want you to know about my great struggle.

And you'll see that he points out that this struggle is actually for the readers. One may pose the question, why would Paul say this is a struggle for you? And then go down and say, well, it is also for those whom I have not met face to face. The discussion in scholarship goes like this.

It is likely that there are some familiar faces in the church at Colossae. For instance, Epaphras would be someone Paul knew. There might be people that Paul knew we may come later on to look at Philemon.

In Philemon, we mention some names that are familiar to Paul's knowledge of certain figures in Colossae. So, there might be some people that Paul really knew in this church. And here, what we see Paul doing is perhaps drawing closer attention to some who know him and saying, you know, I have been struggling all this while for you.

And I'm also struggling for the believers in Laodicea. This name, perhaps, is not one of the names you like to pronounce in English and you like to enjoy. But let me draw your attention, perhaps.

Let's look at another reference to this particular name in Revelation. Giving us an idea of what was going on in this church later on. This is after Colossians.

That is Revelation chapter 3 from verse 14. I'm just giving you a quick window to have a look at this church at Laodicea. The same church at Laodicea will be mentioned in chapter 4 of Colossians.

Trying to get hold of this and read it. So, in the Revelation of John, we have, for instance, the angel said to the church at Laodicea, the same church that is being referred to here. The city that I mentioned at the beginning of this lecture is one of the tri-cities in the Lycus Valley.

Including Hierapolis. Hierapolis will be mentioned as well. But this church is the church in John's Revelation.

Mentioned from Revelation 3 verse 15 in particular. I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot.

But I wish that you were one of these. We don't know what had happened from this time of the letter and between this letter and post-revelation. But what is clearly happening is if you read through the passage in Revelation.

You are going to see a church that is involved in a kind of lifestyle that is not highly commendable. Here, Paul is reminding the church in Colossae, which is just 12 miles away from the church in Laodicea, that he has been struggling for them.

And he has also been struggling for that church at Laodicea. He's also been struggling, as he said at the end of verse 1 of Colossians. He's also been struggling for those who have not met him face to face.

Scholars have taken that as a strong indication that Paul had not visited this particular town, which is very, very likely. But note verses 2 and 3. In Greek beginning with a purpose, a kind of indication that gives us that this is the purpose.

This is why Paul is saying what he's saying. He wants to actually state clearly what his goal here is. So, he says, he writes, and it translates to this effect.

That their hearts may be encouraged. Being knit together in love. To reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ.

In whom are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom of God. So, first on his list, he's struggling for them. He's struggling for the believers at Laodicea.

He's also struggling for those who have not met him face to face. Why? He's struggling, and they need to know that his struggle is not just that he wants to go and

self-induct into some kind of suffering mode so that they can call him a great martyr. No.

His suffering is all directed towards meeting this aim. They may be encouraged in the heart, so let me pause there and talk about the word heart.

In English, when we use the word heart or in our usual expression in English when we use the word heart, we tend to make it sound more emotional. I feel it in my heart. I have a colleague who is known for his kind words and gestures who would like to say, bless your heart.

And these expressions, when put, seem to convey more emotional expression. But Paul, I am struggling. I'm having this great struggle on your behalf so that you may be encouraged in the heart. The heart there in the Greek Mediterranean culture at the time carries a sense beyond emotion.

It's not to the exclusion of emotion, but it is the center of will. It's the center of life—the center of passion.

And sometimes, it can be the seat of wisdom. And so if their heart is encouraged, their minds are enlightened, their whole sense of being is ignited, and they will be able to be on the path of what God expects of them. Paul is struggling so that they may be encouraged.

Not just be encouraged in any way but encouraged from the center of their hearts or the center of their lives. He also is having this great struggle so that they may be united or be together, depending upon how you translate that phrase, in love. He's going all this way so that they may have that sense of unity.

One of the great or natural consequences of the influence of false teaching is actually to get into a church and create division among people and for some to raise all kinds of questions, as we see in the church in Corinth, for instance. We know that when there was another form of teaching that is not quite commendable in the church in First Corinthians, we have some who say, I belong to Christ. There are some who say, I belong to Paul, perhaps the great teacher.

And there are some who say they belong to Cephas or Peter, the leader of the apostles. We don't know the personalities involved in this, but maybe some say I belong to the one who was actually with Jesus. And yet, there were some who said they belonged to Apollos.

And that's what false teaching is able to do. Apollos is a charismatic figure. If you have forgotten about this figure in the book of Acts 18, he was a charismatic figure from Alexandria.

There was at some point, he was so eloquent in his speech and proclamation that people were wowed by him. And yet, his theology was not that good. And Priscilla and Aquila would take him aside to correct his theology.

In First Corinthians, we see people just following these people because there has been some form of infusion of teaching that is causing all kinds of problems. Here in Colossae, we are not sure about what is going on, but we know that a natural consequence of infiltration of false teaching is that people are not likely to be together. Paul says, I am having this great struggle so that you might be needed together, not together as accommodation, but together in love.

He also points out the third time in terms of showing his purpose that they might know the mystery. And the mystery is who? Christ. As I mentioned in earlier lectures, Paul is going to show what we call high Christology in academic language.

He shows the supremacy of Christ above all and in all so that people who have been deceived or swayed into false teaching will realize the worthlessness of such teaching and come back to focus their thoughts, their lives, and their beliefs on Christ alone. So here he says, I am having this great struggle for you. Third, so that you may know the mystery of God.

You may know all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery. And he goes on to say at the end of verse two, which is Christ, which is Christ.

Do you remember the conversation we had about the Christ hymn? Do you remember earlier on in chapter one, how he talks about Christ in a magnificent fashion because he actually drew attention to what God has done to the church in Christ as the basis for which they should solidify their faith, keep their focus, and not yield to the influence of false teaching. Paul will move on in verse three, actually highlighting who this Christ is that we're talking about. He says in this Christ, just in case you are not sure, are hidden all the measures, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

You may, by this time, be thinking that this guy is so obsessed with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. But let's pause a moment. Again, let's recap or let's begin to reflect from chapter one.

Think about words that you have come across so far about what it takes to be Christians that are developed to withstand the influence of false teaching. Think about words like learn. Think about words like knowledge.

Think about words like understanding. Think about words that actually point to some form of discipleship in the form of cognitive development. And here he says, actually in Christ is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And then Paul will move on to verse four. To make a further reason for his great struggle. I say this so that no one may delude you.

In other words, I say this, and I put this across so that no one may delude you with plausible arguments to make you persuaded of something that you are not supposed to yield to. Though I was absent in body, of course, he was in jail. Yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in what? Christ.

Your faith that is rooted in Christ, that is in who Christ is, that is enshrined and lived out in Christ and in the Lordship of Christ. Let me just put up a, just something on the side here to draw your attention to the word spirit. It has often been a center of discussion to find out what the word spirit means here.

Is it the human spirit or the Holy Spirit? If you have a book on Colossians in your hands, you may see more than three sentences trying to clarify this, especially among commentators. The context seems to suggest more of the translation we see in the ESV here, referring to the human spirit. Culturally, though, the human spirit is not necessarily apart from some spiritual component.

In other words, in ancient anthropology, to say I am a person, that doesn't mean I am just a physical being. I have body, soul, and spirit. And so, the spirit and the body is often intertwined.

And this is why you may see or come across some debate on how you translate this. And yet, see in your English Bible, a lot of translators yielding to the spirit as a human spirit. From here, this is the passage from verses 1 to 5 as I draw your attention.

That could be used or to be seen as a follow-up or continuation of chapter 1 or as a different paragraph actually expressing the nature or the significance of Paul's ministry. From here, we are going to see Paul get to the heart of the matter. He will go on to state what scholars will sometimes see as the teasy statement of Colossians.

I don't know how old I was. I know you probably think I am young. Thank you for your compliment.

But I don't know how old I was when I memorized Colossians 2 verse 6, not even knowing how important it is to the letter. So occasionally, I like to impress students by just standing up and saying, you know what, Colossians 2 verse 6, As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. And then you have words that are not translated well into English here.

In Greek, we will call them participles. And if I will translate the ESV's translation or if I will re-translate it, I will translate it as being rooted, being built up in him, and being established in the faith, just as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving. Again, you see the pedagogical aspect there, the teaching component of dealing with false teaching.

So let's begin to look at these particular two verses, which are so important to Colossians, and break them apart a little bit. So, what does receive in verse 6 refer to? What are they receiving? Is it a reference to the tradition on which these new churches are built? Because we have a lot of references in the New Testament using the word receive in reference to receiving tradition, as you have therefore received. But clearly, in Colossians and in verse 6, Paul is not interested or talking directly about tradition in that sentence.

But sometimes, when we talk about receiving, some have thought of it perhaps to think about reception of the lordship of Jesus Christ in baptism because of the following discussion that clearly states the word baptism in relation to Christ's suffering. Well, what is going on here, though, is the text literally reads, as you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. So, the object is clear, as you have therefore received Christ Jesus, so walk in him.

So, the most natural way of reading it is to think about receiving Christ, not tradition. And not necessarily to make receiving the object that is being received to be referring to baptism. Yes, the word is used elsewhere in reference to that.

But here he's pointing to receiving Christ. Remember I mentioned to you Christ is supreme. He's in all things.

He created all things. He's in everything in Colossians. And he's supreme over everything.

We have what we call the high Christology in Colossians. Why? So that people would not yield to teachings that would sway them away from where Christ would like them to be—the heart of the matter.

Therefore, an inference from the previous statement. As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk. The word for a walk there is not literally walking or walking backward.

But it is more of conduct, the way of life. The Greek word can translate conduct. So, you maybe find some of your English translation, the word is not used to, the literal word walk is not translated as such.

But it's translated in terms of a way of life. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live out your Christian life. And in doing so, be rooted.

Look at that. Horticultural terminology is employed here. I like to use the word if horticultural is too big, agricultural terminology.

This is a civilization that most people are very, very familiar with. Agricultural and architectural stuff. You know, in English, we have all these expressions of Corinthian columns and all that referring to the columns of ancient Corinth.

Some of these places have a lot of advanced architecture and agricultural activities at the time. So, when Paul uses some of these languages, they are not going to be so distinct from the people's hearing. And so to say to be rooted, they could actually understand it this way.

They could understand it in terms of fertile soil on which a seed is planted. The seed grows, and the root has such a solid foundation that it can stand firm and strong so that in the midst of storms, these trees or plants will not break or bend or actually lose their course. As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

Being rooted, being well firmly grounded in him. He then employs another term, architectural term, which is being built up in him. This is an architectural term referring more to the foundation of a major building.

Imagine being built on a solid foundation in a place where, like San Francisco, there's likely to be an earthquake. That the foundation can withstand all this. Now, if you are built in this, then when the forces just come, when the storms come when other things come, you will not be swayed or broken or smashed in whatever way because you are in a firm place.

In fact, as if Paul had finished, he used another word. Here, I have to be careful about how I overemphasize the legal part of this particular word. This is the next term that Paul uses, and apart from the horticultural and architectural language, here it is a legal term.

It's a term that normally carries the sense of validation to validate something, to establish something. And for him to say, actually, you must be established or confirmed in the faith to the extent that your validity and your grounds, the grounds in which you stand in the faith, are unshakable. So, note what he's doing here.

He is using language that is very, very familiar to them to establish a strong statement. As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, conduct yourself, live in this kind of life. Make this the way of life that you would adopt.



And in doing so, think about agriculture. And be rooted in him. If that is not familiar, think about architecture.

And be established on a firm foundation. And if that is not enough, think about legal stuff. Be established, confirmed, or validated in him.

Another way of making this picture clear is a way that I'll put up in a few minutes or a few seconds. But I don't want to pass by as a teacher about the expression at the end there, as you were taught. As you were taught, in order to deal with false teaching, it does matter that people's mental processes are shaped and changed.

And that affects their way of life. And so here the emphasis is brought back not only on a cognitive dimension that I keep emphasizing in this instruction, but actually now we see another dimension that is explicit, pedagogical. As you were taught, you were supposed to know this.

As you were taught, you were supposed to be rooted and grounded and established in this. If that works well, then imagine a Christian life lived with this kind of imagery. You see the three dimensions clear now.

And you say, if this defines the foundation one has in Christ at Colossae, will the influence of false teachers leading to a syncretistic religious framework have any cause? The answer is no, because the emphasis has always been Christ. Christ should be the one in whom you reside, in whom you believe, through him whom you have been redeemed. And he is actually your model.

You have received him, walk in him. As James Dunn puts it, as you were taught confirms root digging, foundation laying, guaranteeing, and providing the character of the teaching in the establishment of a new church. The teaching was not something additional to or less important than the gospel.

It was basic to and constituted a new community of faith. From here, we move to the extension of the teaching statement, and Paul will begin to unpack from verse 18, from 8 to 15, excuse me. And I read, see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

For in him, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Verse 12, have you been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

And you who were dead in your trespasses and uncircumcision of your flesh, God made a life together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of death that stood against us with its legal demands. This is set aside; kneeling on the cross, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them in open shame by triumphing over them. In him, I like this passage.

I like a passage that shows the power of God and the total display of the failings of the powers in what Christ has done. But let's make some observations in this passage before we get further. You may want to note that in this passage, a major warning comes up, as well as subunits.

You may also notice that in the warning, there is a direct call to vigilance, and the word philosophy features in this word, in this particular passage. Actually, this is the reason why, if you remember, in the introduction, I mentioned that there were some philosophies that were going on. It is mainly because of this particular verse and the mention of philosophy here.

You will see that this philosophy will be unpacked in different forms. As you notice what is going on in this passage, you may also notice that it is a call to vigilance. A call to vigilance in a way that actually calls for personal responsibility.

The Greek tenses and construction suggest that this is what you could do by yourself. By the grace of God, let's qualify it by that, even though Paul does not say that in the text.

You could do it yourself, and this is expected of you. And in expecting this for you, you want to understand the nature of this philosophy that we are talking about here. All the empty deception that is going on here.

The source of it is according to human tradition. It is not of God, and it's not of Christ. The content is according to what in Greek expressions we call stoikia to Cosmo.

Sorry for bringing Greek to bother you. I have been restraining myself so far not to bring any Greek into the discussion. But for your sake, let's just use this word that is translated as elemental spirit.

And hold on to the elemental spirit because even the reading I had earlier on translated the expression as elemental spirit because we need to be able to understand what that is. If you have four English Bibles and are reading them, you will see that they don't translate the word the same way. After this, Paul will actually highlight the main point he's trying to emphasize.

This philosophy, the bottom line, is not of Christ. It's not of Christ. It has to be of Christ.

But all this is not of Christ. So, let's go back and look at what that expression is. These Greek expressions that sometimes all these academics say, and you don't even know what is going on, sound Greek to you. But let's try to understand what is going on and why you may have different translations in the Bibles you use.

This expression can actually mean or refer to the elements or basic principles of religious teachings. So, some will translate it to carry that sense. Two, it can also carry the sense of an elemental part of the material world in ancient Greek cosmological or worldview.

That will include things like water, air, and fire. And actually, those who are not very comfortable talking about spiritual powers, demons, and all that are more likely to lean to one of these two translations. The translation that you find among some of the recent translations is referring to these elemental spirits in terms of spiritual powers.

A major voice in this discussion is a scholar I mentioned earlier whose understanding of the purpose of Colossians is now the one that we all think best explains what is going on in the text. His name is Clint Arnold, who teaches at Biola University. Clint argues that this expression should be best understood with ancient literature that he studies closely and all the evidence he marshals relating to this particular expression; the best way to understand it is to understand it as something that has a spiritual being component to it. So, in other words, these four teachers' teachings come from human tradition, and their teachings are also according to evil spiritual activity of some sort, and clearly, they are not of Christ.

In trying to explain this word, Clint writes this, *stoichia* is used for spiritual beings in Persian religious texts, *magicka papyri*, astrological texts, and some Jewish documents. The word thus represents still another term in Paul's reservoir of terminology to refer to the power of darkness in Colossians, along with principalities, powers, authorities, and thrones. The basic point of Paul's teaching here is that the dangerous teaching at Colossae has a demonic root.

One other colleague who teaches at Wheaton will add that most ancient people did not neatly distinguish the material and spiritual world in the way we do today. Heavenly bodies, in particular, are regularly associated with or even identified with spiritual beings. Hence, many commentators speak in Colossae of astral spirits. If you understand what is going on here, or if you hold on to that thought, then when we get to Ephesians, some of the things will become easier because Ephesians is going to make a similar argument to the point that the life before Christ is actually a life

that is influenced by the world without Christ, by the evil spiritual powers of the world, and by the desires of the flesh.

Ephesians will put some of these human worldly components and put in some evil spiritual activity right there in Ephesians 2, verses 1 to 3, in the way we are seeing playing out here in Colossians. If you understand this framework, then let's begin to look at that text again, verses 8 to 15. You begin to realize with more clarity that you have come to the fullness of life in him, that is in Christ, in whom the fullness of God dwells.

So, the church will not need to worry about anything. Two, you will come to realize that Christ is the head. In some translations, Christ is the head is couched on the same line as if it sounds like he's the head of all rules and authorities, which makes him the head over them.

But if you translate those words for rules and authorities in terms of rulers and authorities, then he's saying Christ is actually above all these principalities and powers. So, the head there is not necessarily the first in line or the first among equals or the one who is preeminent but the one who has headship and controls all of them. He has the power to bring them underneath him.

It is in Christ then that you were circumcised, verse 11. So, you may be noticing that Christ is in everything and anything, in the center of so many things here. But let's pause and think about this word, circumcision.

What does it mean? And perhaps I should read verse 11. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ having been buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. What does circumcision mean here? Circumcision carries so many senses in so many places in the Bible, and you know that when we think about circumcision, one of the first things that is likely to come to mind is circumcision made by hand.

But we also know in this text that it's stated clearly that this is not referring to circumcision made by hand. So, what is going on here? Well, you may read this and say this may be referring to circumcision in terms of Christian conversion. Is that it? Is it circumcision of Christ, Christian conversion? Some commentators will argue for that.

Or does it refer to baptism or circumcision as a covenantal rite? The context doesn't seem to make that quite clear. So, it's one of the least likely ways of reading the text. The most probable way of reading circumcision in this particular text, as most recent

commentators would agree, is to see it as a metaphor for the suffering and death of Christ.

So if you have the suffering and the death of Christ in mind, then let's look at a text again that says, In him, in Christ also, we were circumcised with circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. It is very, very easy, as we find among some more later commentators, to read the baptism back into the text. But the grammar seems to be awkward if you make circumcision baptism and read as such.

But if you see it more in a form of suffering of some sort, some form of identifying with Christ, then it begins to make sense. Looking at this admonition of Christ, Paul highlights the fact that in Christ, those who are dead in trespasses are being made alive—verse 13.

Perhaps an interesting feature you may see in this text if you are looking at this text right in front of you is something you will note. And if you wouldn't mind, you can pause and then look at your Bible carefully. You will see that what has happened with Christ physically is being described in analogous terms with what is happening to believers spiritually.

Christ died. The believers were dead in their sins and trespasses. The power of God raised him from the dead.

God is raising these believers from the state of death in trespasses to be with Christ. Paul is emphasizing in Christ. In Christ, Christians have attained something.

And in fact, what they owe God has been canceled. I don't know how many debts you have from way back in your student days. I don't know how much you owe on your mortgage, as I do.

And I don't know how much you worry about what you owe and how that is likely to weigh heavily on your head and sometimes put you in a place with a tendency to compromise some of your convictions so that you can meet some of those needs. Paul says in Christ, the debt is canceled. It's forgiven.

You don't owe anymore. You can have peace of mind. Don't yield to deception around you.

He goes on to point out that, in fact, the powers who are responsible, I mean evil spiritual powers, who are responsible for causing all kinds of problems, have been disarmed. And look at the imagery. It is such a beautiful imagery.

First, from verse 14, by canceling the record of debts that stood against us with each legal demand, that is, the IOU, having canceled that. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Verse 15, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them into open shame by triumphing over them in him.

The image is this. Think about a powerful figure. Think about the Goliath, who is maybe more than the Goliath you think about in the Bible, but who is also scary, who is intimidating, I mean, who makes you just shrink.

And think about a powerful figure called Christ coming and coming in the power of God, disarm this powerful figure, reduce him to nothing, and then make a public spectacle of him. The imagery that is going on is perfect imagery of what happened in the ancient world when they had battles, won the battles, and came home. Normally, when they win the battles and are able to capture the king or the military commander, they will come in triumph, parade their booties and their captives, and walk through their streets and march.

It's a great sign of victory for those who have won the battle. It's also a great sign of humiliation for those who lost the battle because their strongest in terms of leadership for the warfare is now in the hands of their enemies. Here, we see Paul says that he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him.

In other words, if you live in Colossae, you may think about a God Demeter. You may even think about Asclepius, the God of healing, whose shrine we know was present there. You may think about other religious groups, and you will come to realize that all these influences are actually there, and it is very easy to yield to their influence.

Paul says, wait a minute, whatever power they think they have compared to Christ, they are not that powerful. And therefore, keep your standing in Christ. I like how Moore will put this regarding the canceled debt.

He writes that Paul's first word picture portrays a document in which all human beings have signed an IOU in which we pledge complete allegiance to God. Our sins stand as conclusive evidence that we have failed to give God that allegiance. And so that documents against us and condemns us.

But God has taken that document and wiped it clean. Indeed, he has taken it completely out of the picture. He has, in fact, in a second-word picture that both highlights the completeness of the removal and the means by which it was accomplished.

He nailed it to the cross. It is not a secret document. It's a damn deal.

So, if this is so, how would you enjoy reading these words? And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made a life together with him—having forgiven us all our trespasses and canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. Now that you understand this, if someone offers you anything else outside Christ to find a sense of security, peace, and well-being in your life, would you yield? That is exactly what Paul is doing here: encouraging the church to keep their faith in Christ intact and to live life that will glorify him. In verses 16 and 19, we then begin to see an interesting pattern here.

Therefore, he writes, on the basis of what I have said prior, let no one pass judgment on you. Now, it is within your power. And you will see that from here, he's going to actually turn the curve, and he will say, from verse 16, you should let no one pass judgment on you.

In verse 18, he says, you should let no one disqualify you. And as you go down, he will still tell you, you should make sure you don't let anyone hold you back. It is within your power because you have been given the resources.

Here, what we find from the beginning of chapter two is that Paul has clearly stated that as they have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, they should walk in him. Walking in him requires being rooted, being established, and being firmly founded in him. Consequently, the life that is supposed to be lived in Christ must be a life that does not give in to all these deceptions that come from human beings or human traditions or that comes from the elemental spirit.

Why? Because they are not in Christ. Consequently, Paul will make the case and establish clearly what has happened with Christ. Yes, in Christ, the enemy has been defeated.

The things that should lead us otherwise have no sway over us. And therefore, we can keep our focus and believe in him alone. So far in this lecture, we have covered the introduction, chapter one.

In chapter two, I drew your attention to the issue in scholarship about chapter two, verses one to five. I also reminded you that the heart of the matter in Colossians is chapter two, verses six and seven. And then, we went on to discuss verses eight to 15, where we actually see the extension of that thesis statement, grounding the church's faith.

When we come back in the next chapter, I will remind you about the personal responsibility this time, now that they know what they know, they know what they have been taught, and they know what they have believed. And what is required of them to resist, given the resources that have been given them. I hope you are enjoying the biblical studies lecture on prison epistles so far.

There are more exciting stuff to come. So keep on studying with us. Thank you.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 4, The Heart of the Matter, Colossians 2.