

YOU ARE COMPLETE IN CHRIST

Fresh Start Podcast Transcription

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I'd like to begin today by going back ten or fifteen years to our previous church. It was then called Trinity Church. You may have been there that particular morning. We had a speaker from Canada in for the weekend and he gave a message on forgiveness. He began by saying there are three persons that you're going to need to forgive: others, of course; yourself; and God. By the end of that message, he gave an altar call and the altar, the front of the auditorium, was filled. By all outside appearances, you would think, "That's really a good meeting! Great response! Everybody came forward, it seemed. Hearts seemed to be touched. People were feeling better. They seemed to be encouraged." But, the question I have: Was God pleased?

This connects with our series, the Colossians series, and I'd like to give a little backdrop, a bit of a review, but a backdrop for this passage that we'll be looking at today: Colossians 2:8-15. Let's start with the truth, in the way of a backdrop. Most importantly: the preeminence of Christ, taken from Colossians 1:18. *He is also head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.* That's the truth. The supremacy of Christ, the sufficiency of Christ, the first place that Christ wants to have in each heart—the place that He wants to have in each heart, first place. What is the err? Well, back in the day, in Colossae, they were teaching that Jesus was not fully God and not fully man. They weren't teaching the truth, because Jesus is fully God, fully man, both are true. They said that, therefore, He was lacking in authority and the ability to meet the needs of the Colossians. It was further taught that one could achieve spiritual fullness through special knowledge and rigorous self-discipline. Truth, or err?

Quoting from 1 Timothy the 4th chapter, verse 1: *But the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times, some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.*

Doctrines of demons? Is that devil worship? I suppose it could graduate into that. But, one of my themes this morning is exposing, revealing, discovering, becoming aware of the "instead of Christ" in your life. Let's pray.

Lord, I pray that our hearts will be opened and we will see in any and every way that You do not have first place, that You are not supreme, that You are not enough in our lives. Expose those things, Lord, maybe those good things, those seemingly good things that seem harmless, seem good, seem helpful, seem productive, but compared to You and compared to Your Word, they represent the "instead of Christ" in our lives and therefore, without even realizing it, Lord, we could be going down a path of the doctrine of demons and not even realize it. I know that no one in this place would want that, I'm confident of that, but, Lord expose those areas of our lives where we have gotten off the path, gotten away from the centrality of Christ. And, you're so redemptive, Lord, You're so merciful as you reveal these things to us. Not to condemn us, but to lift us up into the light and put us on Your path of life. In Jesus' name, amen.

I want to make a statement in the beginning and then as I go through this message today, my goal will be to persuade you, not force feed you, but persuade you to consider the premise that I'm going to be presenting in just a moment. The power of a premise has great power. I want to propose to you today that there is no Biblical foundation to forgive yourself. You will not find one verse in the Bible that admonishes, exhorts, or commands you to forgive yourself. You will find plenty that talk about forgiving others. In fact, that is the centerpiece of the Gospel: Forgiven, on God's terms, because of Jesus and His finished work on the cross, His resurrection, His life in us. We're complete in Christ; we're going to be talking about that. There's no biblical foundation to forgive yourself. We'll talk about the logic of that. We'll talk about how that's crept into our mindset, and I pray that you'll see that for what it is. Also, there is no biblical basis to forgive God. You won't find a verse in the Bible that exhorts, commands, admonishes, or in any way infers forgiving God. The truth is, we don't need to forgive ourselves, we need to humble ourselves. The truth is, we don't need to forgive God, we need to submit to God. And the truth is, we don't need to love ourselves, we need to agree with God about ourselves. That may include agreeing with God about the sin and selfishness in our lives and turning from that, that's agreeing with God. Or, it might mean that we have, but we are still dogged by shame and we're allowing shame to tell us it's too late for mercy, but it isn't if we agree with God. I want to propose to you that, though the intention is not the issue, I want to propose to you that these beliefs, these doctrines of forgiving self and forgiving God are at least—in the beginning, I'm not questioning motives—they are at least the doorway into a set of doctrines that will lead you away from the centrality of Christ and potentially into the doctrine of demons, full-blown. And you'll see that, I pray, as we continue on today.

But, it's so logical, isn't it? It's so reasonable, isn't it? I mean, the altars were filled that day at the front of the church; almost everybody came forward! It seemed good. But, was it God? Was He pleased and could it be that what will invite more power in our lives and in the church will be exposing these doctrines of demons, exposing these things that don't agree with the truth, exposing these things that don't agree with the centrality of Christ, and putting them away and inviting His centrality? Could that be, not only honoring to Him and pleasing to Him, but invite His power into our midst?

Let's move on with verse 8, which is our first verse for today in this series: *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.*

Well, definitions are important. Let's take a deeper look there. *Take you captive.* Plunder you. *Take you captive.* Rob you. Strip you. And what does the second part of that mean? *The basic principles of the world*—what does that really mean? Upon further investigation I discovered that what could apply here are actually evil spirits that use rituals of the law, referred to in Galatians 4:10, to enslave and condemn. Legalism, the doctrine that salvation is gained through good works. Not trying to put a heavy on anyone today, no shame, no condemnation from me. May the Holy Spirit convict and convince, but I'm not trying to play the Holy Spirit. I pray that there will be a holy anger rising up in you today. I pray that you will see that these doctrines of forgiving self and forgiving God are an affront to the cross and the finished work of the cross, because of putting us back at the center—which is what legalism is all about. We have been set free! Jesus set us free, not to have us enslaved again by putting us back at center.

It reminds me, we have a Fresh Start team that goes to Douglas County Corrections on Thursday. On this particular day that I was there, in the God Mod, with the team. We were giving them opportunity to share who they had been processing—processing the issues of your heart—a discovery of who had offended them or hurt them or what had they lost, and gave them opportunity to share what they'd been processing and who they had forgiven and what difference that had made in their hearts. Well, one person raised his hand and he wanted to share and I love that. So, he said, "I chose myself to process." I knew where he was going with that, but I let him go and he ended up where I thought he would. He shared that he had processed himself. Well the truth of it is, if he hadn't come to saving faith, if he hadn't put Jesus first in his life, if he was experiencing Godly sorrow—sorry about the sin because it's a sin against God—and he wanted to turn from running his life and put Jesus first, obviously he needed to process himself. But, that wasn't what he was going to share. What he shared was,

he had forgiven himself, it led to, "I forgave myself." I listened, I validated, I cared. I didn't want to embarrass him in front of everyone. But, I asked him a question. I said, thanks for sharing, and then I asked a question: Has God forgiven you? You've forgiven yourself; has God forgiven you? And it was just like someone had awakened him from a nap. He said, "I never thought of that." Case in point. Who was at the center? He had processed, he had put himself at the center, he had forgiven himself, but most importantly, it hadn't occurred to him yet that he needed to be forgiven by the One Who is all authority. He needed to be forgiven by Jesus Christ for his sins. He wasn't God, he isn't the forgiver, Jesus is. This man who shared was not the forgiver. When I shared with him, have you thought about going through this process and having it lead to your need for Jesus to forgive you? Does He need to forgive you? And he was very receptive, very open, very teachable, and we went on from there.

But, it reminds me. When we say, I just need to forgive myself, you know what is really being said? Because I like to listen below the words, behind the words, you know, not be a literalist, because people are just trying to say what they mean and mean what they say. They may not use your words; they may not say it the way you'd like them to say it. So, when I hear somebody say, "I just need to forgive myself," I know what they're really saying. What they're really saying is, "I feel shame." So, I take them further and, in many cases, they haven't surrendered to the One Who is all authority and experienced His forgiveness and their need for His forgiveness and realized that they need rescuing and realized they're hopeless without Him.

It reminds me again of the parable of the unforgiving servant who asked for more time. He didn't need more time, he needed mercy. So, when his debt was cancelled, with his request for more time, but the master cancelled it, he turned to his fellow servant who owed him a much lesser amount and was thinking, "Surely he can pay the small debt, I could have paid the big one if I would have had more time. More time, more time." That's legalism. More time. I can do it, I can improve, I can get better, I can save myself. More time, more time, more time.

No. More time won't do it. We need rescuing. We need saving. We need Jesus. We have a debt that we could never pay; we don't need more time, it's impossible! The debt of sin is impossible. We need Jesus. We need Jesus. We're slaves to sin, apart from Jesus. We don't need to forgive ourselves if we've blown it, we need to humble ourselves and receive this gift of grace that we don't deserve but desperately know we need. And Godly sorrow says we know we need it. And repentance and true turning from it says I need it. And forgiving God?

The more I think about it, the more offended I am by that notion. Forgiving God? Not just because He doesn't do anything wrong because He is God, but forgiving God? Because you don't like what He did or what He didn't do? But, that doesn't mean that I start there. If somebody is upset with God or mad at God, I don't start with, "Well, you need to repent and you need to change your attitude." I start with, "Tell me more. Tell me more, what's behind that? Why are you offended with God? What happened? What went on?" Listen and care for their heart and build a bridge of grace, if you will. Something they don't deserve right away, they don't even deserve at all. And then invite them into His truth, His design. As I listen and care I can be more specific in my response, rather than just giving them an upfront platitude, "You don't need to forgive God, you need to give up running your life! What's wrong with you?!" Well, they might be ready for that, but probably most aren't. But, I want to be sensitive to who is because it could apply, but what is the Holy Spirit saying? What does the Lord saying that does apply, that will make a connection and is still true to His Word?

Legalism. The doctrine that salvation is gained through good works. How can it be? How can it be? We need revelation, Lord. Lord, give us revelation today, not just words, Lord. Not just logic, Lord. Speak to our hearts, Lord. How can we be set free? How can we be a recipient of Your grace and mercy? How can we experience what we've experienced and then turn from the centrality of Christ back to thinking that we could possibly do anything that would be good enough to be saved or to stay saved? How could it be? Lord, open our eyes to see.

In verse 9: *For in Him, all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.* This is a strong statement, asserting the deity of Christ. Jesus, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Isn't it interesting. Isn't it interesting, Paul's approach in this letter. It's not a message of "Shame on you for doing thus and so," —He's bringing the colossians back to Who God is and who they are in Him. An identity approach. Not more performance. Who He is and who you are in Him.

Verse 10: *and in Him you have been made complete and he is the head over all rule and authority.* Verse 10, *you are complete in Christ.* What does that mean? We're complete through our union with Him. We are fully grown because we belong to Christ. You'll see different references in the Bible using sometimes you're "perfect" in Christ or "complete" in Christ. It's not a sinless perfection complete kind of thing. Again, that brings us back to performance orientation. Be perfect, as He is perfect. Oh, that sounds like performance. I could never be perfect! There's only One Who's perfect! So, what does it mean to be perfect? What does it mean to be complete?

It's going to be a process of participation as we are agreeing with God, as we are agreeing with His centrality. We're not adding anything to the Scriptures. We're not adding anything that we think will help to get us saved or keep us saved, but we're staying on script in Him. There may be things we don't understand, there may be mystery, but we're not bringing in psychology, we're not bringing in spiritual pragmatics. Isn't it interesting, as human beings we tend to be spiritual pragmatists. What do I mean by that? Well, if it works, it must be good. If it works, it must be God. If it achieves a result, that must be okay. Where is the biblical basis for it? Well, I don't know, but it's good, I'm happier, I'm feeling more peace. I forgave myself; I feel better. I forgave God; I was really angry at Him. Well, I'm so glad [laughter] I'm so glad something else is true.

In the book of James, I'm so glad that mercy triumphs over the judgment I deserve. I'm thankful for that. God knows our heart, and sometimes our hearts mean well but we've bought into some stuff, we've bought into some "instead of Christ" stuff. We have bought into some stuff that is going to, if we're not careful, it's going to put us on the pathway of the doctrine of demons. The "instead of Christ" approach to life. I know you don't want that. We are complete in Christ. We need nothing more. We may not understand that. That may need to be unpacked, but we like closure, don't we? What does that mean? I want an intellectual understanding of that, I want to get things figured out. What does that really mean? I'm sorry. It's going to be progressive. It's going to unfold. That's part of the process. He wants to be the goal. You heard George [*inaudible*] say it, "He wants to be the goal." We as human beings, again, observable phenomenon. We start out on a good path, "Let's pray," and then we make a God out of prayer. "Let's worship," then we worship worship. We are so prone to worship the good things and make them the god things and we get off center. I believe He's saying, "How about Me? How about Me? You want Me more than your healing? I want to heal you, but do you want Me more than your healing? Do you want Me more than being freed from that sin in your life that is a besetting sin, you're struggling with it, whether it's pornography or something else. Do you want Me more than that?" Yeah, I want You and I want that gone. "Are you willing for it to be a process? Are you willing for Me to teach you things along the way? Are you willing to see that part of the reason it's taking as long as it is, is because I want to reveal more of Myself in the process? I don't want to just set you free, I want you to know Me more by the time you are free." How's that sound? That's the Word of God. That is consistent with the centrality of Christ.

Oh, I love things that happen in a snap of the finger. I love it. I love it, don't you? And there are those times. But, many times, it's a process over time. But, He's training in that process. He's equipping. And keep in mind, it's not just for you, it's to equip you to help others. Why pray? To know God more intimately. Does that mean it doesn't matter what we pray about? It does. The more you know Him, the more you know His heart, the more you know His will, and the more you'll be praying His prayers. And He always gets His prayers answered. Who is the goal? Who is the goal? Who is central?

Verse 11: *And in Him, you were also circumcized with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.* If you're new to the faith, you may be wondering, "What in the world are they talking about? [laughter] What's the flesh? What circumcision?" Well, we're talking about a physical example. When a person gets circumcised, when a male gets circumcised, the skin is peeled back from the male organ that, you know what I'm referring to, and interestingly enough, even medically a person doesn't have to have that done, but doctors have told me that if it isn't done, the person is more vulnerable to infection. Interesting. Let's draw the spiritual paralel. As we turn from the *me first* life, flesh (inclination to satisfy God-given appetites—food, sex, knowledge, status, pleasure—apart from Jesus, on our terms, not His)—*me first*, life with Jesus left out, as we turn from that, it affects our hearts. It affects our immunity. We're not as prone to get *heart infection*. We're not as prone to get physical affection, as I've already mentioned. We're not as prone to get infections in our hearts and in our attitudes. So, we put off those *me firsts*. Not because we're unhappy or it's going to make a mess of things or people are going to be unhappy with us or I won't be as successful. No, no, no. That may be true, but it's for Him.

I love what it says in Psalm 51, King David: *Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned, O God.* Well, he had sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, the nation of Israel, but what does he talk about? He realized it was between him and God. And he was sorry for the sin, not just the consequences. Not just the results or the effects on him and others, but it was a crime against God, it was committing treason against a holy God, it was not submitting to His authority, it was rebelling against the Most High. It's calling it what it is, but it's not hammering people with that, it's a revelation, a realization, a reality from within that leads to turning.

Like it says in 2 Corinthians 7:10: *Godly sorrow, of the type that I just mentioned, produces repentance without regret, turning from the "me first," leading to salvation.* Notice the progression. No Godly sorrow, no repentance, no salvation. Godly sorrow, sorry for the sin,

turning from it because of Him, submitting to Him, resurrection life comes in. Our old self was crucified with him. It's important that we draw a distinction here between the old self or the old man that's mentioned in Romans 6 and the flesh. They are not synonymous and it's so important that we see they're not synonymous because it has to do with identity. *The old man* refers to that previous moral condition, that previous condition. The old Steve before he surrendered the keys to King Jesus in 1974. That guy doesn't exist any more, he's dead. Cemetery dead! Resurrected with Jesus. I've identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was cemetery dead. Not symbolically dead, He was dead dead in His humanity. The old Steve is dead dead, so what is the explanation that I sometimes have an inclination to live for myself and please myself and put myself first, what's that then? Is that the old man trying to pop out of the grave again? No. It's the flesh which is that inclination, it's true, of the person before Christ where the old man is who they are, the old self is who they are, that's where they live, that's how they live, that's all they know. It's walking after the flesh, it's in the flesh, after the flesh, it's flesh, flesh, flesh. Old man. Me first.

But, then when I come to Christ and surrender to the King, I'm a new man. I'm a new creation, but there's still that temporary part of me that is connected maybe with belief systems or habits or other reference points and just the fallen nature of man. Because the new man is still a human and there is still temptation. But, temptation is not who I am. So, I can say yes to the divine nature within me. Yes to Him means obedience and not giving into the temptation. It won't help us to focus on the temptation and go, "No, no, no, no." The more you focus on the no, no, no of temptation, the more you'll empower the temptation. The bigger it'll get. It'll feel bigger than life and it'll try to define you. It'll try to tell you who you are, it'll try to tell you it's too late for a fresh start, it's too late for mercy, it's too late, you're no different, you used to do those things, you're tempted to do it now. See, you haven't changed. So, you might as well give into it, you're already guilty. You feel like doing it, you might as well do it. It's already on your radar screen, you already want to do it, that's who you really are. He is a liar! The truth of it is, Christ in us, the Hope of Glory, doesn't want to do it. Christ in us, the Hope of Glory, is pure, clean holy. That's who we are in Him. He's our righteousness, he's our holiness, he's our self control. As Nancy was proclaiming earlier. It's not a matter of needing more of those things, He is those things and more in us. It's who we are. We may not be caught up with that. Our minds may need to be renewed into that reality, but it's true, whether you believe it or not. And that's what we'll come to in the last verse. Don't want to get ahead of myself here. The old self. The inclination.

So, don't despise temptation. I don't want to be tempted. I don't want to visit the scenes of temptation. I don't like to be tempted. I don't want to. As far as it depends on me, I don't want to make provision for it, I don't want to visit the scenes that make it more likely. I don't want to allow my mind to dwell on certain things that will invite it or feed it. I want to participate. I want to cooperate. True, true, true. But, even if I am still tempted, don't despise that. See it as training. Opportunity to work out in God's gym of exercising your faith muscles and affirming who you are in Him. Not mind over matter. It's truth.

You think, "Man, I feel like I'm trying to brainwash myself. I know what I feel, Steve. I know what I feel. That's who I am. I'll never change." Well, that's a stronghold right there. Boom. What you believe has great power. So, guess what? That's another example of putting you at center instead of the centrality of Jesus and being complete in Him. He's given us everything we need for life and Godliness. We may not know how to draw on that yet, using bookkeeping terms or check writing terms, like if you have a checking account, if you still do, maybe you do everything online now, but, regardless, you've still got an account that has some money, hopefully. So, whether you do an online transaction or write a check, you are drawing from, in our case, as those that are in Christ and Christ in us, if we've surrendered to Him and we're children of the king, we are in union with the One Who is the infinite supply. The infinite supply. That's Who He is in us. We maybe haven't tapped into that, we maybe haven't experienced that, we may not feel that. We may doubt that. But, I'm here to tell you, we're complete in Him. He's given us everything we need for life in godliness. He is central, He is supreme, He is sufficient. That's the truth. It may not be your experience to the degree that you would like it to be, but that's curable. Here we are this morning, I pray this will make a difference.

And then we move on to verse 12: *Having been buried with him in baptism in which you also were raised up with him unto faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

So, again, we come to this word. What in the world does that mean? How does that apply? I got baptised as a baby, what are we talking about? Baptism is a picture of identification. It's a picture of identifying with the death and burial of Jesus Christ. It's a picture of identification with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it's a picture of the identification of the ascension and He's seated at the right hand of the Father, and we are too, in Christ. It's identification. Again we think, "Man, alive! You're talking Greek here. I mean, I don't have a clue what you're talking about." But, keep in mind that the Word of God and the ways of God are foolishness to our natural minds, if our minds are still natural. And, even if we've recently come into relationship with Jesus, we may still wonder. It may feel like Greek, but don't let that

marginalize you. Don't let that put you off. Don't you think, "Well, I don't know what they're talking about. They're talking a different language here. I don't belong. I don't fit." Oh, yes you do. You belong to Him. And this is part of what He wants to disciple us in. It's part of what He wants to put in us and make real to us. It may be a process. It may take some time. It's not just a head trip. It's not just a knowledge trip. It's not just informational, head to head. It'll help if you're open. It'll help if you're teachable. It'll help if you're hungry. It'll help if you want Him to make Himself real to you. It'll help if you want Him to turn on the lights and ignite your hearts and make these things real to you as far as who you are and Who He is and the centrality of Christ and how you relate to that and how He relates to you. It'll matter if you want, if you desire. So, I pray that your desire is increasing. And, like [*inaudible*] has been talking about, that you're participating, that you're not just waiting for Him to light a fire, but that you're providing the dry kindling, you're providing, you're participating, you're making provision. Being here is part of the provision. Just being here because you're putting yourself in a position to receive. And that was a part of that, continue to participate.

So, big super points here:

You are complete in Christ; you need nothing more.

Identification with Christ and His death, burial and resurrection; you need nothing more.

Verse 13: *When you were dead in your transgressions and uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive, together with Him, having forgiven us all of our transgressions.*

Now we come to the final verses of this passage that I'm focusing on today, which starts with verse 13: *Having forgiven*. Verses 13-15 capture the amazing benefits of forgiveness for the believer. In other words, being forgiven by Him.

Now, here again, be reminded of what I said in the beginning: I hope that you will, with a good heart and a forgiving heart and not a prideful heart, but that you'll see how ridiculous, how inconsistent with the Scriptures this notion is of forgiving ourselves. Because, if you make that the issue, you put yourself at the center, and then what I'm about to read is like, "that's nice," but come on now, this is *complete*, what I'm going to be reading. Okay. Verse 14: *Having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.* Now, this is a picture of cancelling the debt. Wiping out the certificate of debt. In our case, it's like, well the handwriting requirements refers to, with Godly sorrow, we have signed our own death warrant. Because the wages of sin is death. Guilty, we've signed it, we're on death row, that's where we're going. But, the amazing thing is that He has taken that certificate, if you will,

using bookkeeping terms or accounting terms, and He took that indictment against us and nailed it to the cross. Can you see the significance of that as compared to you forgiving yourself? He forgave us. He paid the price. He did it all. He nailed it to the cross.

Do you need to forgive yourself? Or do you need to just humble yourself? Having cancelled, wiped out the certificate. The handwriting requirements, removal, obliteration of self-confessed indictment of sin, having nailed it to the cross. Jesus' triumph over sin and evil powers was accomplished at the cross. He hung from the cross, and I love those words: *It is finished*. Was it finished? Or do I need to forgive myself?

Verse 15: *When he had disarmed rulers and authorities, He made public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.* Verse 15, *having disarmed, having triumphed*. God, through the cross, stripped Satan and his terrorist band— Because that's what Satan and demons are like. They don't play fair, they're like terrorists, if we were to use that reference in today's terms, today's wartime terms. They can show up in a mall, they can show up in an airport, they can show up on a plane, they can show up in a suicide bomber attack. They are terrorists seeking whom they may destroy. They don't announce themselves; they don't say, "Here's who we are! We've got our uniforms on! Here we are, we're coming." Disarmed, triumphed. God, through the cross, stripped Satan and his terrorist band of their rule and authority over believers who were living under his lordship.

But, here's this: However, the fact that He made a public display of them affirms that they are not annihilated, but their authority has been severely restrained or held in check. That helps us understand: "If Satan's defeated, then why does he still oppress me sometimes? Demons oppress me, but I thought he was defeated!" But, you see, he's not annihilated. He's disarmed, he's defeated, but he's not annihilated and he still has influence, if you let him, based on what you believe, and the place that you give, and the things that you've dabbled in. If you have unforgiveness in your heart, then you'll open the door to him. If you have ouija boards and get your palm read and dabble with tarot cards; this fall go to the Nebraska State Fair and go into the booth and meet with a psychic or have her show you the tarot cards or numerology or whatever—just using that as an example. You may not want that, you may not think that is what you're looking for, but if you even play with that, if you even dabble in that, you are opening yourself up to the influence of the terrorist band who is defeated! If you take drugs, if you open yourself up in other ways, you will open that door for this terrorist band to influence you. I mean, I could go on and on in terms of the open doors that we could possibly open up to him.

And also, the “instead of Christ” beliefs. The doctrine of demons that are so subtle. But, what is the criteria? It may not feel like it initially, but eventually they will lead you away. They or your belief system, your participation, will lead you away and put you right back at center. And that is what Paul was addressing with the Colossians. I’ve given modern-day examples. Those may or may not have been an issue back in that day, but the DNA of what I’m talking about is it puts you at the center; it uses human reason and logic; it makes sense; and in a spiritual, pragmatic way, it’s helping! I feel better! It must be good. I feel more peaceful. Is there a biblical basis for it? Does it honor Christ? Does it lead you more to Him? Does it lead you into more intimacy with Him? Does it last? And is it inviting more power and anointing in your life? And is your relationship with Him deepening in more of an intimate way?

If you honor Him, if you keep Him at the middle; at the core. If you keep Him at the center, and as we go along we realize all the more how much we need Him, which is a good thing. Thank you for rescuing me, Lord. Just as Link was leading us today. And you can tell that this was on his heart today, and Deb as well, and others of us in this room. It’s just like, thank you, thank you, thank you. That is not weakness! That is dependency. We need Him desperately. We don’t need to forgive Him, we need to submit to Him. We don’t need to love ourselves, we need to agree with God about ourselves. *Whatever things are true.* We don’t need to forgive ourselves, we need to humble ourselves and whatever will invite Him being center, and us being more dependent, and us being more convinced that He is Father, we are sons and daughters and that we are complete. We may not understand the ramifications of that, we may not understand that, and it may take time, and there may be pain and there may be suffering, but He is the goal and He is central and He is supreme and He is Jesus!