

Colossians - Part 1: An Encouraging Beginning

MATT CHANDLER, *January 24, 2010*

If you're new here, how we tend to preach here is through books of the Bible. Now there are several reasons for that. Number one, it'll make me preach on things that I wouldn't naturally preach on. So it'll create some authenticity in our relationship – me as the preacher, you as the listener – because it will force me to preach things and teach things that, in the end, maybe aren't going to be popular and maybe aren't going to do a lot for us numerically. But it'll still be true and it'll still need to be said.

It also creates the full picture of what God's doing. So I started my first year here with the book of Ephesians. I wanted to teach Ephesians because Ephesians is the church. The first three chapters are how we're saved, how God saves us, who's responsible, how that works. And then the last three chapters are since God saves this way, this is what happens to the soul that has been transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. From there we taught the book of Hebrews. That's been my favorite series. I'm the only who that's been their favorite series. But I taught through the book of Hebrews and loved it. It ties together the Old Testament sacrificial system and what's happening in the cross of Jesus Christ. And it does so beautifully. We then moved through Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes has a man wealthier than all of us combined trying to find happiness on earth and in the end going, "It's all vanity. It's all meaningless." And so I thought, "We're in the upper class suburbs. This will teach here." And we did Ecclesiastes, then we moved into Luke, and we were in Luke for quite some time. Some of you still don't want to let go of it. It's over. Breathe. I didn't take it from you. It's still in your Bible. Read it all you want. Alright, but we're done with Luke. And that leads us to Colossians. And then after Colossians, I'm hoping to get Amos or something in. We need an Old Testament angry prophet. We haven't covered one of those yet, and I love those guys. So we're going to get into maybe Amos or something like that after Colossians.

But in order for us to understand Colossians, we have to understand Rome. If you don't understand Rome beyond the HBO mini-series, you don't going to quite understand the book of Colossians. Or you're not going to get some of the subversive elements of what he's teaching. So let's very, very, very quickly do a brief snapshot of the Roman Empire. Before Rome and since Rome, we've never seen anything like Rome. If you study this thing historically, we've never seen anything like it. In its pinnacle, Rome is 6,700 kilometers or 4,200 miles across. Are you tracking with that? The United States from sea-to-shining-sea is right at, I believe, 3,330 miles. I mean, India to England is Rome. On top of that, they rule the known world for fifteen hundred years. This July, the United States will be 243 years old. Rome rules the world for fifteen hundred years. Because of that longevity, they have impacted the modern world like you wouldn't believe.

There are three main ways that the Roman Empire not only transformed the world as they knew it, but kind of transformed even the world as we know it. If you have any seminary or any history background, you're going to know the three Romanas. The first one is the Roman roads. The first Roman road was built in 312 B.C. By the second century, there were 50,000 miles of roads in Rome, all leading to Rome. Here's what's amazing about those roads that were built 2,000 years ago. Some of them to this day are still being used, including some bridges. So, they did it faster and they lasted longer than we're able to do now. And if you don't believe me, try to go to The Shops at Highland Village for dinner tonight. Then you'll go, "Man we just need to learn from the Romans." There are a lot of things that happened with Romans roads in regard to ease of commerce, trade, and those kinds of things. But what it did more than anything else it is shrank the world. That's what it did. It shrank the world. It created a world in which cultures, ethnicity, food, and religion began to boil together and you began to see the first forms of syncretism occurring in the world. Let me help you with this. Mexican food here is not Mexican food. It's different. It's Tex Mex. So, if we hopped on a plane right now

and flew to like Southern California and had Mexican food there, you'd be like, "Something's wrong with your salsa. It's good bad." No, it hasn't gone bad. It's just onion based.

It's just different. They make differently. Because what you're used to is Tex-Mex and not truly Mexican food. So this is two cultures colliding. Spanglish would be another great example. Basically what ends up happening is you have a melting pot, or boiling pot, where multiple cultures collide and you get something new. And Roman roads created that at a massive, massive level. Whereas before, travel was really restricted to those who were courageous enough or wealthy enough, now you had a road system where anybody could travel. And so this shrank the world. It did for them what the internet has done for us. You can Google almost any image you want and see it on your computer now. You can get a live shot from wherever, which by the way, has created a great deal of personality disorder. Since we can get everything at our fingertips right now, there is an insatiable demand for information and to have that information right now. And if we have to wade through it or work for it, we tend to get frustrated. If information is delayed, we feel like someone is twisting that information or hiding that information from us to change it. And we're just really big conspiracy theorists right now. There's a conspiracy behind it, because we couldn't get the information fast enough. The internet did that to you. It jacked you up. You need to unplug. You need to unplug for just a bit. I know some of you don't even hear me right because you're on the internet. You need to breath and unplug and take Sabbath. It's okay. But, that's what the Roman roads did for them. It created an unreal amount of access to other cultures, to other ideas, to other temples, to other bits of architecture, to new kinds of food. It shrank the world.

The second thing Rome really did is it brought about Pax Romana, or Roman peace. Now "Roman peace" is an interesting idea because if you were any enemy of Rome, or if you were on the outskirts of Rome, or you were a legionnaire in Rome's army, there wasn't a lot of peace for you. In fact, it was an extremely violent fifteen hundred years. But inside the confines of the Empire, it was unbelievably peaceful. There were little skirmishes here and there, but Roman rule did a great job of keeping order. Really the only significant uprising we see in fifteen hundred years of Roman history is in 69A.D. after the death of Nero. They call it the "Year of the Four Emperors." If you remember back in history, you kinda get confused because this guy tries to kill this king and then tries to kill his son, but the son escapes. And then twenty years later, this guy kills this guy's son, who's the rightful heir to the throne. This is kind of on repeat over and over again and you've just kind of got to remember the right names, or the right time, or the right guys. There's just not a lot of that in Roman rule. And so it's an extremely peaceful fifteen hundred years inside the walls of the Empire. Outside are little skirmishes here and there. So a great deal of peace inside the Roman Empire.

The last thing and the thing you can see the most residue of in the modern world is Roman law. The Roman rulers did a phenomenal job of creating systems. And this goes back to Roman peace. Because if people feel like they're heard, they're cared for, and they get justice, they don't have a tendency to rise up against their government. It's when they feel that there is no justice and there is no hope that they tend to rebel. And so Rome did a fascinating job of not staying to strict, rigid rules but creating flexibility within their rules for humanity. So basically they would judge action but they wouldn't judge intent. Roman philosophy was that there will be eyewitnesses to words and action, there will not be eyewitnesses to intention. So Rome would never do something like a hate crime law. Because that would be a law predicated on or built on an intention and not an action. Rome would say, "We already have a law on the books against murder.

So we're not going to judge the intent of a man's heart, because that puts us in dangerous water. But what we will do is we will judge his action." And I'll give you an example of this kind of permanent flexibility. Under Roman law a man was able to leave a will about his estate. "This is where I want my stuff to go." But if he didn't leave at least 25% of what he was worth to his children, then his children could file an injunction against him, and the magistrate, or the judge, would sit down and see if the children were legitimate, good children. If they were, then 25% of the assets were given to the

children. If the kids were idiots, then they would go, “No, you’re idiots. I can see why he didn’t give you that.” So this is an example of their flexibility. Their rule wasn’t a hard and fast, “Your children get 25%.” The rule was, “You can make your will like you want it.” If you didn’t give 25% to your children and they want to file and stand in front of a court and say, ‘I’m not an idiot,’ then they can do that. And if they can prove they’re not an idiot, then we’ll give them 25%.” So this is an example of their flexibility that created a great deal of peace in the Roman Empire. The world had never seen anything like this up until this point. The world up until this point was an extremely dark, violent, hostile, horrible place and Rome was able to bring some light into it.

Now, there are going to be two problems in Colossians that Paul is going to address. Number one: he’s going to get after the Empire a little bit. He’s going to get after, “Rome is not your hope. Your hope is not the Roman Empire. It’s not what Rome can bring.” He’s going to very subversively try and whittle away at the foundation of that. And then he’s also going to address syncretism. Now here’s what syncretism is. Basically with the boiling pot of humanity that’s occurring, this world looks very much like our world does right now, where the world shrank. And so here’s what’s happening. The Colossians are saying, “Yes, Jesus. Jesus is our main man. We believe in him and we love him. But, my next door neighbor is a Jewish mystic and, he prays so much than I do. And so I’m gonna borrow a little bit of his stuff. Jesus is still my main guy, but I’m gonna borrow a little bit of Jewish mysticism here. And then my other neighbor, he’s a druid. And outside of some weird animal stuff I’ve seen at night, he really loves his family well. So I’m going to borrow a little bit from this and little bit this, and with Jesus as my main man, I’m going to create this kind of new thing.” And Paul’s going to try to undermine and attack that.

Now here’s the best news in all of this. We’re two thousand years removed from this, so we get to find out whether Paul is a liar or not. We get to go, “Was Rome the light or was Paul full of it or was Jesus Christ the light? Who won? Rome or Christ?” And I’ll be able to show you some allusion to power. I don’t want to get too far ahead of myself, but here is a great example. Rome exhibited its power by crucifying people to show their might. Christ exhibits his power by being crucified and taking on the sins of the world. They both use the cross to wield their power. And to this day, one of those remains a very strong, vibrant part of reality, and one of them is studied historically. But, much more of that to come.

So he’s going to attack those two problems. But for this week, he’s going to be very encouraging to the church in Colossae. Let’s look at it, Colossians 1, we’re going to pick it up in verse three. I’ve got really just three points to make and a conclusion. That sounds very Baptist, but there’s no poetry involved. There’s no poem, no skit. We’re just gonna do the three point and the conclusion. Let’s get going. Now, this first little phrase before the comma is going to be unbelievably important. And we’re going to come back to it at the end. I’m going to ask you a question. We always thank who? God. That’s going to be so important when we close this thing out.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf. . .

Here’s just another little bit of trivia for you. Paul had never met the men and women at the church in Colossae. They were converted through the ministry of Epaphras, who was converted in Paul’s ministry at Ephesus. So Paul is preaching in Ephesus, Epaphras is converted, Epaphras loves his people back in Colossae, travels back, preaches the gospel and plants the church. So Paul is in prison right now. And we’re going to see, as we get into the letter, he wants to come meet them, but up until this point he hasn’t met them. But here’s what he’s heard, look at verse 4. “. . .since we heard

of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints ..." Here's my first little notice here. In the New Testament, there is an inseparable link between trusting in the gospel of Jesus Christ and loving the saints. 1 John would say it this way, "If a man loves God but hates his brother, he lies and the truth is not in him." There is this inseparable link between trusting in the gospel of Jesus Christ and loving the body of believers. Now there's some debate of who this quote belongs to. I think it's Augustine, but there are others who think it's before Augustine. But he says, "No man can have God as his father who does not have the church as his mother." I've always loved that quote. You can't love God and hate the church. This is a very new, kind of millennial idea. Well, I love Jesus I just don't love the church. Well, the Bible calls you a liar. I'm not saying that we look out at the Evangelical scene and approve of everything going on in the Evangelical scene. In fact, a lot of it is good comedy. And by "good comedy" I mean sad and heartbreaking. But this idea that you can love God and not have a relationship with other believers is an unbiblical hatching of your imagination. It's not how it works. And he says here that their faith is public, that he's heard of it from Epaphras who's come to visit him in prison and others, as we get into the book you'll see. Their faith is evident, and their love for one another is evident.

And he's going to explain why they love one another and love the gospel. So let's look at this, "...because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel. . ." So why do they love the brethren? This is a great answer to this question. They love the brethren because their hope is in heaven. That's where their hope is. I'm going to say this, and it's not easy and every time I say it we lose some of you. So I know that by saying this I'm going to lose some of you. But I love you too much to not say it you, because no one else wants to say it to you. Are you ready? You're going to die. I'm going to do your funeral or you're coming to mine. This is an inescapable reality. You can be as responsible as you want, you can flood your body with antioxidants, you can get your yoga on, you can sit in an infrared sauna and detoxify, you can do all of it, but you're going to die. It's coming.

About three weeks ago when we met with my neurosurgeon, Lauren said, "What's best case scenario and what's worse case scenario?" And so Dr. Barnett, my neurosurgeon, said, "This is best case scenario, this is worst case scenario, or you could get killed in a car wreck on your way home like a lot of people are going to today." And that made me love him. Because it's true! But no one in here wants to think on that, dwell on that or even consider that. Everyone in this room thinks they get to live to be eighty-nine, ninety-years-old and die in their sleep, everybody. Despite the fact that it's simply not true. You're going to die. Listen, some of you are going to die this year. You know how I know that? Because I've been a pastor here for seven years and there hasn't been a year gone by yet that I haven't done multiple funerals. And most of those, for the record, are not seventy year-old-men. You want to look around? I mean, look around. I haven't done a lot of seventy-year-old men's funerals. I've done four-year-old's, twenty-eight- year-old's, twenty two-year-old's, thirty-six-year-old's. You're going to die.

Now, with that said, here's my question. Where have you put your hope? Since that's coming for you, where have you put your hope? The bulk of humanity puts their hope in this, "I'm a good guy." My question continues to be, "Compared to what?" Because if you're a thinker on any level, you got to admit that's somewhat of a silly game. So God is going to give you whatever the afterlife holds, in regards to goodness, because you're not the schmuck your neighbor is? That's where you're pushing all your chips? You're pushing all your chips into, "I love my wife better than my neighbor does. . . I take care of my kids better than my neighbor does?" The scary part of the Bible is not that God judges our wickedness. It's that He sees our righteousness as filthy rags. Compared to the holiness of God, it's your goodness that falls short. It's not just your wickedness that condemns you. It's your goodness. See why you need the cross so badly? See why Jesus better had paid the bill? Because all your righteous acts are filthy before Him. This is the weight of it. So my question is, "Where is your hope?" Where are you putting it? Is it in living as well as you can with the one life you've been given? Man, that is a monumental roll of the dice if there's any such thing as the afterlife. You are a much bigger risk-taker than I am. And I'm pretty risky when it comes to gambles. So where is your hope? Where are you putting it? Are putting it in

your own goodness? Your goodness will fall short. It will fail you. I think if you'd just stop and breathe, you'd figure that out for yourself.

The other place people try to put it is just in trying to get all that you can. You know, that Carpe diem, "Seize the day. Get all out of life that you can. There's one life live it to the full, live the live the great adventure." You know that kind of idea. I think, once again, it just philosophically falls flat. And that's all we talked through the book of Ecclesiastes. Because in the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon says, "Look, I'm a king. I'm wealthier than you've ever been. I've done all of these things. I partied so big that the parties at my house would require us to kill a hundred cattle to feed everyone." So I'm not saying you haven't thrown a couple of soirées in your day. I'm just saying it was a ghetto little sad party compared to what Solomon threw. He planted forests. Are you tracking with that? Forests. And had to build lakes to feed those forests that to this day, if you went to Jerusalem, you would see these craters called The Pools of Solomon that fed those forests. I'm not saying you haven't built some things that are lovely. I'm not saying you didn't landscape your front yard in such a way that you have the "Yard of the Month" flag. I'm not saying you haven't done a good job. I'm just saying, compared to Solomon, your Crepe Myrtle iss sad. And on and on we could go. In regards to wealth, women, power, and business, Solomon goes far beyond what any of us are going to be able to. And so he says after he does it all, "It doesn't work. It's meaningless. It doesn't satisfy the soul." According to Ecclesiastes, he went high brow. So he did caviar and champagne. He went low brow. He went mac-and-cheese and hamburgers and NASCAR. He kinda does both. Don't get upset with me for that. It's four left turns. That cannot be a sport. I mean, we can argue. E-mail me, alright. It's been that month for me. But if that makes you an athlete, then I am an athlete. We'll talk later. Eventually I'll have a Power Point doc on it.

So Solomon does both. Because rich people go, "Oh, if my life was just more simple and I didn't have to manage all this wealth." And poor people go, "Oh, if I could just have some more wealth and could get what I needed, then I would be satisfied." And Solomon goes, "No, no, no. I did both. Neither works." So that idea is going to be dismantled in the book of Ecclesiastes, which is why we taught it. My question to you over and over again is, "Where is your hope?" Where are you putting all of your chips when it comes to life, eternity, and your relationship with God? Where are you putting those things?

And the last thing I want to point out, and this is one of my favorite things in this text, is in verse 7. Epaphras goes to Ephesus, which is a major metropolitan area about twelve miles from the Colossians, and he hears Paul preach. His life is transformed by the gospel, and he heads back to the Colossians and begins to preach and teach among the Colossians. So listen to what he says, ". . . just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit." Go back up to verse 5. Here's what he says, ". . . because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you. . ." Who did it come through? Epaphras. Who did he learn it from? Paul. Now watch this, ". . . as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing. . ." So here's Paul's point. The gospel is working wherever it goes. Wherever it goes, people are believing and being transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament is filled with rules and regulations on what worship looks like. The New Testament is almost completely silent when it comes to it. I think there are two chapters in the whole New Testament that say, "This is what orderly worship looks like." The reason being is because the New Testament is a missionary handbook. It plugs into any culture, anywhere in the world. I know this to personally be true because I've been to India, and I've worshiped with a bunch of Indian men and women who lifted their hands, and sang "Amazing Grace" and were baptized and had the Scriptures and took communion. Now they did it in a very Indian way. We've seen it done Africa. We've seen it done in China. This is a missionary handbook. It fits into every culture everywhere. Christianity, in regards to ethnicity, is not ethnocentric. It's just not. It's not one culture. It spreads across cultures. It spreads across countries. Even, honestly, it

spreads across belief systems. It has infiltrated monotheistic cultures, it has infiltrated polytheistic cultures and it has infiltrated cultures that are irreligious, that have no religion whatsoever.

Look at what happened and study what happened in communist Russia and the breakdown of that and what happened with the subversive Christian element there. If you even read some of what's happening now in China with the House Church and how subversive that is to a government that says, "There is no God, but the guys we keep telling you are gods keep dying." So this thing works everywhere. Paul's talking about it in the first century. And here's my favorite part. One of my favorite things about all of this is that the Christian faith is not some blind kind of faith where we cross our fingers and we hope we're right. It's historically informed. You can go back to Genesis 12, our first copy being from, 1400 B.C.E. You've got God saying, "I'm going to flood the earth with the glory of my name. Among every tribe, tongue and nation on earth there will be a representation of the Christian faith." And then you start to watch it play out. And we're watching it happen. Here we are in 2010 and you can see it. There are Christians in China, there are Christians in Turkey, there are Christians in Iraq, there are Christians in Brazil, there are Christians in Africa. I mean, it's happening. It's absolutely happening.

And then the other thing to remember is that this is our forty years. But that's all it is. It's our forty years. This has been going on long before us, and if Christ tarries, it'll go on long after us. That's hard for us because every generation believes they live at this pinnacle of civilization. They believed it in the forties. I mean, think about the stuff they were figuring out in the forties. They're finding all sorts of new technology and they're like, "Wow. How much farther can we go?" I'll show you. It's called the iPhone. It's called the Mac Book Pro. I have one. I'll show you how much farther we can go. And listen it's just going to get bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

I saw that they're redoing Clash of the Titans. Go back and watch the first Clash of the Titans. It looks like I made it in my garage with some Play Doh. The new one is not going to look like that. And in just a couple of years, everything is going to be like Avatar. It's all going to be 3-D. They're going to figure out how to put that in your house. We're not far away from it. If the Lord tarries, technology is just going to continue to press and move forward. It's been going on for thousands of years. It's going to continue. Our role is to play our part well. But where I gain a lot of confidence is to look back and see how the gospel has transformed lives and cultures for centuries and lives and cultures in some of the darkest times. Because here's the thing. It's going to go bad for Rome. I hope I didn't blow the HBO mini-series for you. It's gonna go bad for Rome. And I know some of you are just like, "Oh, the gladiator. He gave his life for nothing." Yeah, you're right. He did. So sad to think about.

In the end, I want to go back to the top and end with this. One of my favorite parts of the Village is the large amount of skeptics that we draw. I haven't really been able to get my finger on why that is. We have a great deal of you that want faith, but you just don't have it. Like you want to believe, but you just don't. And so I wanted to throw this out to you. Notice that for all the encouragement he gives the Colossians, he doesn't thank them or praise them for any of it. He doesn't say, "I want to thank you guys for loving each other so well. I want to thank you guys and praise you guys for loving the gospel of Jesus Christ. I want to thank you guys and praise you guys for this." He doesn't. He says, "I thank God. I thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And the reason I want to point that out to you is because faith is not something you simply muster. If you can simply muster it, then it's yours and you can own it and you can walk with a swagger. But since you can't muster it, since it's not yours to just turn on and turn off, you're dependent on God so that when He grants it the glory is His. There is no such thing as an arrogant Christian who understands Biblically what being a Christian is. Those two things cannot grow in the same dish. It's an impossibility. By grace you are saved through faith, and even faith to believe in that grace is given to you by God so that none of you can boast.

Faith is given by God. So what does that mean? If you keep coming back and you don't know why, if you're drawn and you want faith but you don't know why it won't turn on for you, you're being wooed. You're being wooed by the God of the universe. He's wooing you. So here's what I would encourage. Breathe, stop being so frustrated, keep pressing in, keep asking your questions and dive a little bit deeper. Go on the Amazon trip. Get into Recovery. Get involved in the Christian community. See that we're not perfect, that we're flawed and that we need the gospel just as much today as the day it converted us. Let the Lord ignite it when the Lord wants to ignite it. But you press in and you ask.

I'm in the car the other day. I'm driving and my seven-year-old daughter Audrey is with me. And Audrey says, "Hey dad, sometimes I think some of the things you tell me about God are hard to believe." And so I'm immediately going, "This is a test. She's shady. I know she's testing me." And so I said, "Like what, Boo?" And so she goes, "Um. . . that God made everything out of nothing. I think that's hard for me to believe." But then she followed it up with, "I know how He made the lions and tigers. I just don't know how He made the trees." So I immediately go, "Lions and tigers are far more biologically complex. How could she believe that? Oh, she's seven. I'm not having that talk." Then I said, "So how did He make the lions and tigers?" And she said, "He just spoke them into being." And so I'm going, "Okay, this is a test then. 'I wonder if daddy can handle if I disagree with him.'" So I told her the story where Jesus asked the lame man, "Do you believe that I can heal you?" and he said, "I do believe. Help my unbelief." And so I just said, "Even men in the Bible at times have difficulty believing what Jesus is saying. And so when that happened they didn't turn off their brain. They asked for help. Help me believe." And so I don't want Audrey, I don't want Reed, I don't want Nora, I don't want any of you to just blindly go, "I believe." I want you to press in and then to pray, to humble yourself before the Lord and go, "Help me. Help me. Open up my mind. Open up my heart. Give me faith." And then let the Lord work so that He gets the glory and He gets the praise when He does it. Versus you going, "I did these things and I mustered the faith." That's going to turn you into, really, the other end of things. And that doesn't help us either.

The fundamentalist (and I don't mean fundamentalist in the good, happy fundamentals of the faith way, I mean fundamentalist in the back-woods, arrogant, close-minded, bigot way, lacking in grace, lacking in patience, lacking in mercy, lacking in compassion, that's kind of how I'm using that.) goes, "I saved myself. I did this. You should do this for yourself." And that doesn't help anything. But if we can humble ourselves before the Lord and just go, "Help me. I'm frustrated here. I'm angry. I don't get this. I don't know why I don't want to worship. I mean I want to worship you, but something in me doesn't want to. I don't want to surrender this area of my life," if we can be honest, how refreshing is that, to not have to pretend? But here's the crux in it all. God already knows. You haven't tricked Him. For those of you with kids, the first time you're trying to teach your kid hide-and-go-seek and they just lay on the floor and close their eyes. Because they can't see you, you can't see them. That's how they're thinking. That's how you're thinking spiritually right now. You're just like, "Come find me, come find me." You're on the living room floor. And you're talking to me. So God already knows your heart. To confess it will be healing to you and not surprising to God. It's a great idea just not to play games with Him. He already knows your heart. You're not going to upset Him by confessing what He already knows. In fact, He says in Psalm 51 the broken and contrite spirit He'll never despise. If that's not the best news in the universe, I don't know what is.

So press in, confess, be honest and ask for faith. Ask for the Lord to ignite your heart. I don't think you're going to get all your questions answered before you believe. That was definitely not the case with me. I've met very few people that said, "Once all my questions were answered, then I believed." I haven't met that guy. If that's you, please e-mail because I just need to talk with you because you'd be the first. But for a great deal of us, we start to have questions answered and then God ignites it and we continue to seek our answers after we're converted. Get involved, get plugged in, keep fighting the good fight. Don't give up, don't get frustrated. Be patient, ask for faith, ask for belief. And this is how Paul starts Colossians.

Let's pray. "Father, we do confess tonight, some of us, that we have come in here and we do want to believe, we do want faith, we do want a heart that longs for You and loves You. We do want to dig into the Word and to pray and to have our lives transformed by You, and we're just not there. And so we just spend a second here kind of confessing that, just confessing that we're not there and we want to be. We're confessing that we're hurt because of this in our past that came from the church or someone who said they knew you or said they represented You. And so we confess that hurt, and that anger, and that frustration. We ask that You would grant us forgiveness for them. We've come in here tonight and we love You and we believe. And that's not because we were in the right place at the right time, but because You wooed us, and called us, saved us and were gracious to us. I pray as we move into about fifteen or twenty minutes of worship through song, God, that You would seal these things in our hearts. I pray that we would contemplate and think about what these words in the Scriptures mean for us, what might need to be laid down, what needs to be changed, what needs to be confessed, what needs to be addressed. And as we sing words that are true and right before You, I pray that our hearts would be stirred. Help us. We need You. We need You, Father. We love You. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

© 2010 *The Village Church*