

**A Firmly Rooted Faith – Part I**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**Colossians 2:6-15**  
**December 29, 2013**

I want to invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to the 2nd chapter of Colossians. We are going to be just touching on this passage, really as a point of departure for the message. Normally we are in the Gospel of John. Last week we took a week off for the Christmas story from Luke 2, and I wanted to do something related to the New Year, take another week or two on another series, another subject. The goal is, you know the New Year it is time to take stock, reevaluate, redirect our lives, kind of reset our goals and objectives. It is time for reflection and to remember what is important. A lot of times we will refocus on the priorities and try to really just recalibrate our lives. It is a good thing to do from time to time. More than just once a year, we ought to do it regularly, but it certainly is something that is just built into the very fabric of the way our calendar operates. When we do that, we look at what is important.

One of the things we need to look at as Christians is the foundation of our lives. What is our life built upon? The bedrock commitment, what is our life aimed at? As that song we just sang, is Jesus our vision and is our goal Heaven? Where are we looking? But also, what are we built upon? I want to talk about the foundation of our faith. The title of this message, and the next couple of weeks probably, is ‘A Firmly Rooted Faith’. I want to do something that has really been on my heart some. We tend to go verse-by-verse rather slowly through the books that we do on Sunday mornings. We’ve been in John’s Gospel for over three years, three years and three months, and we are almost finished with Chapter 12. So we are on schedule for about five or six years, but we do take breaks, let’s remember that. We take large breaks, like this, and we have done that, but we want to do what Luther said. Luther said, “You want to shake the trunk of the tree. Then you want to shake the branch of the tree. Then you want to shake down to the twig, and the leaf.” The word of God is like that. There is fruit to be gained by shaking at each point. Well, we’re usually shaking twigs and leaves, and today I want us to shake the whole trunk of the tree.

Something that has been a great encouragement to me, I mentioned earlier, is that the fact that the Bible is so consistent from Genesis to Revelation. That is that there are trajectories that are set. The plan of salvation is set and you can see it in the first book of the Bible. You can see it with such clarity. If you see that then you realize that what you are believing in these later books and chapters is consistent. It

is so important because so many people are led astray by false teaching. The passage we are going to look at is one where the apostle Paul is encouraging the Colossians to be sound in faith so that they won't be led astray by worldly philosophies that are trying to always influence the church, impact the church. The idea is, and when you look at the New Testament epistles, from Romans through Jude, one of the things that they were dealing with in the first generation of Christianity was false teaching.

These weren't people, not necessarily outside of the church saying, "We're non-Christians and we're trying to deceive you." No, these were people who were saying, "We are Christians just like you are," and they were teaching gospels that were not faithful to the Bible. It was happening everywhere. I mean, just read through all of the different epistles. Paul is dealing with some type of false teaching. Peter is dealing with false teaching. Jude is dealing with false teaching. John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, dealing with false teaching. In our passage this morning, Colossians, we see the same thing.

What is the anecdote for false teaching? To know the truth, to be so solid in the truth that you recognize the counterfeit. We are blessed today to have some folks that are very dear to our church, Larry and Mary Harris and their three boys are back with us from Boston. Those of you who have been at our church for a while remember Larry and Mary, and their love for the Lord. They are living in Boston. Larry is a Secret Service Agent, so don't be too mean to him, he may know all kinds of ways to subdue you quickly. No, Larry is a wonderful man, he loves the Lord, and Mary, they are precious. But Larry is in the Secret Service. The Secret Service has basically two jobs—guard the president and guard the currency. They track down counterfeiters. That is one of the things that he does when he is not on detail guarding the president, or other high-ranking officials, is he's dealing with counterfeiters. One of the things that has been true about the Secret Service's approach to dealing with counterfeit currency through the years is that they always felt the best way to train people to recognize counterfeit currency was to be so thoroughly acquainted with the true, genuine article that you recognize any departure from it. So that if you study the genuine article, that is the way. That is really, I think the consistent with a biblical mindset, that we're to be so firmly convinced, so clearly understanding. We are always growing in our understanding.

All of our lives, all of eternity we are going to grow in understanding. We are never going to exhaust it. It is like Paul said, not that we've already obtained it, we can't possibly, but we are obtaining a little more, and a little more, and becoming a little more clear. One of the things that builds our faith is to see how the whole

Bible hangs together. You know, people will come along and there are all kinds of things, let me give you one example of a false teaching that has been out in the last 10 or 15 years—the new perspective on Paul. Now you’re going to file this away. It is a little side road for just a moment and we’re going to come back to it later on in the message. I hope I remember to remind you this is what we’re coming back to, but anyway just be warned. The new perspective on Paul was something that came out within evangelical, conservative Christianity. I mean it started in the liberal circles but was introduced by a guy named N.T. Wright, a New Testament professor from England. I heard him at my seminary back in the early 90’s. What a great name for a New Testament professor, N.T. Wright. The problem is, N.T. is wrong because he taught the new perspective on Paul, and that was the idea essentially that the reformation’s way of understanding the epistle to the Romans, and Paul’s Doctrine of Justification was wrong. This is what the new perspective said, “What we need is a fresh, new perspective on Paul. We need to see that Paul wasn’t really about justification the way we understand it, that is he wasn’t critiquing a legalistic Judaism.”

N.T. Wright and these guys had been reading some of the writings of what they call ‘*Second Temple Judaism*’ which was Jewish writings contemporaneous to the coming of Christ. They were basically asserting that they weren’t all legalists, they weren’t all legalistic, and therefore we’ve been misreading Paul. The Covenant of Salvation isn’t so much about justification, it is about unity. Basically articulating that it is not so important to understand that we are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That’s not what Paul was saying, and he wasn’t saying that the Jewish rabbis and Judaism as a whole was legalistic, and works-oriented. This is what N.T. Wright says, and all these other guys that bought into it. It actually had impact into very reformed circles. Astonishing in reality. For me as a guy who came from outside the reformed camp originally, just a Baptist kid who didn’t know any theology, and coming into reformed theology and then seeing the reformed people departing from this. I mean not a ton of them, but a significant number. Even like PCA churches, Presbyterian Church of America, was affected by this doctrine. Well basically, it is ridiculous.

Luther’s perspective on Paul was right. He read Paul rightly and it is clear that Jesus was dealing with legalism when you read the Gospels clearly. What is the Pharisee and the publican all about? If you read the Gospels clearly, Jesus is rebuking a mindset of Judaism that thought that works was the way to Heaven. So Paul comes right along teaching just what Jesus did, but what is even better is that when you understand that what Paul taught was what Jesus taught, and what Jesus taught was Isaiah taught, and what Isaiah taught was what Samuel taught, and what

Samuel taught was what Moses taught. The Gospel of Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone is there in Genesis itself. It is clearly there. I'm going to show you the passage in a little bit. So what we need to understand is when we are rooted in doctrine that goes all the way back through the Bible, it is like the planting a plant. When you buy a plant and you pull it out of the container, one of the things that I've learned through the years is you don't just take the plant and throw it into the ground. You kind of break up the roots around it, you make sure that the dirt around the plant, the ball that you are putting in the ground is soft. Why? So the roots can grow and extend, and the plant can be rooted and sound for a long and healthy life. If its roots are held back it will not be healthy. In fact, if you put it in hard ground and you leave the ball there, you can just go pick it up in a month or two and move it somewhere else. It is not rooted. Well look with me at Colossians 2 and see this connection. Colossians 2, we're going to read Verses 6-15. This is a departure and then what we're going to attempt to do is we're going to attempt to exposit 5 books in the time we have this morning. It sounds crazy, fasten your seatbelts, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

*Colossians 2:6-15 ~ Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. 8 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. 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; 11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled 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. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.*

Let's pray together.

*Father, we pray that You would grant, by Your Spirit, the grace of illumination. That the Spirit that inspired this precious and perfect word would now illuminate the hearts and minds of everyone here to understand the things that You have communicated with clarity, and with conviction, with gratitude, that we might glory in the greatness of our God, and the glory of our Savior. We pray this in His name, Amen.*

Now, Genesis through Deuteronomy, the first five books of the Bible. These books were given as a whole, really as one corpus. Moses wrote the five books, Genesis through Deuteronomy, over a 40-year period, after he led the Nation of Israel out of the Exodus. He was the first one God called to be a prophet, to write down what God gave him, to write down the law and then all these books, Genesis through Deuteronomy. And what I want to do is walk through, in a very broad-strokes way, and look at these five books, and the message of these books. I want to start with remembering that what the Bible is aimed to do is to reveal the light of the glory of God to people who are robed, enveloped, surrounded by darkness. The Bible is intended to make those who are completely ignorant educated in the things of God. So as John Calvin has said, what God does in the Bible is He prattles with us, that is He baby-talks with us. As you look at the way Scripture unfolds, you have the reality of it being a progressive revelation. That He teaches us in images, and pictures in a way, concepts that will become more clear over time, but that we can see at the very beginning.

Have you ever watched somebody do one of those *Chalk Talks*? Anybody seen those? Where somebody is teaching about spiritual things, or a gifted artist, so they'll be drawing up on the board with pastels. If they are really good at it, I've seen guys do this where you don't know what they are drawing. There is a line here, and they are talking the whole time. Then you start to see, "I think I know what that is." You are watching that as you are listening. It is a really good, effective way to teach. I'm not going to be able to do that in this life though because stickman, Mary stickman, you know? But it is very effective and one of the things that is really neat is that at the end it all comes together. The last few strokes of the artist, suddenly you see. "There is the cross," or "There is Abraham offering Isaac." He's built up to that point and now you see that that is what is happening there. In some sense the Bible is like that. God is making brushstrokes that you can get something out of, but become increasingly clear as the pages of Scriptures are granted to us. When you see this you understand that you are walking along a trajectory that was set a long time ago. The book of Genesis, the *Book of Beginnings*, it is really like all of the major doctrines of the Bible start there. Like the headwaters of several rivers, they all start in Genesis and they flow,

and when you see that it goes all the way back to Genesis, there is something about that, it is deep-rooted faith. Somebody comes along with something like the new perspective on Paul, or some other wacky teaching, and you are not shaken because you are rooted in the truth.

### 1) Genesis:

Now, let's look at Genesis. My points are basically Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Five points. The teaching of Genesis breaks down into two sub-points—Genesis 1-11, and then Genesis 12-50.

#### A) Genesis 1-11:

Genesis 1-11, primeval times basically, the story of the creation, and the fall, the flood, and the Tower of Babel. Now God is teaching us about Himself, and His glory, and about who we are, and how we're to know Him. He's teaching people in the dark how we can come to know God. He's written this well after the fall, but Moses is the one called to write it down for the first time, around 1440 B.C. What we see in Genesis 1 and 2, of course God created everything good. God is transcendent, and He's also imminent. He wants to be related to man. He forms man, breathes into man the breath of life. He is relating to man, talking to man. Man sins and falls. How great is the fall? How far have we fallen? How lost are we?

That is one of the big problems that people are plagued with today is they have way too low a view of sin, and a way too high view of man. The idea is we're not that bad, and that means that in my evangelism, all I've got to do is just kind of come alongside of you and say, "Hey, this makes sense. Believe it. It is as easy as just praying this prayer. Just pray this prayer and you are saved forever. It doesn't matter if you change or not." That is not what the Bible teaches. From the very beginning what the Bible teaches is sin is much greater than we ever imagined, God is much holier than we could have ever imagined, and we're much farther away from Him than we could have ever imagined.

You see it in Genesis 4, how bad is sin? The first thing that happens, the first thing recorded after the fall is Cain killing his brother. Murder, in the family. Adam and Eve's children murdering each other. Then you see it even worse in Chapter 5, and then Chapter 6 things come to an incredible, negative climax when God looks upon the world that He's made, and the intention of man is only evil all the time so that He must destroy every living thing on the earth, except that which is in the ark. Just think about that, how bad things were. How did they get that bad? Sin is awful

and so God wipes the world clean, makes the covenant with Noah not to ever destroy the world through a flood again. Surely now things are going to be okay.

What do you find? Chapter 9 is when He makes the covenant with Noah, come off the ark, make the covenant with Noah. Chapter 11, they've already fallen again, the Tower of Babel. Man makes this tower to exalt himself against God and it is a reverse of what God had told them in the beginning. God said, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it." When you read the Tower of Babel, they are saying, "Let's all stay here, lest we be spread out. Let's make a name for ourselves." You see? They are rebelling against God and they are trying to find a way to ascend to their spiritual zenith, to find God in their own way, and the Lord then comes down. It is such a big deal that He comes down, He spreads them out upon the face of the earth and separates them by languages. That is serious business. God had to come break it up. This was the first *'We are the World'* kind of thing going on. With all the languages being the same, there was no limit to what they could do for evil. Kind of the *'mob mentality'*. You think about a mob, people will do stuff in a mob they won't do individually, and there is something about that even spiritually so that the mob of humanity was exalting itself against God, and God had to do something redemptive to break it up. Lest we would have become content in our lostness, and just gloried in who we are, and then died and woken up in hell. So God stops that. So the first 11 chapters, if Genesis ended there, what a hopeless situation, but Genesis 12-50 you turn the corner.

## B) Genesis 12-50:

What happens in Genesis 12 is the Lord comes down. Now think about Chapter 11, man trying to go up. Chapter 12, God comes down. The Lord is prattling with us. How can sinners come to know a holy God? The world is filled with attempts to make our way up. Every religion other than biblical Christianity is about works in some way or other. It is about making our way up. The message of the Bible is unique. It is a message of grace. God must come down. Abram is not looking for God, he's not meditating, he is not trying through some kind of transcendental state, to find himself and find God. No, he's not doing anything looking for God, God goes looking for Abram. That tells us the basic tenor of the Gospel in itself, right there.

Now what He does is He says, "Look Abram, you don't have a clue." I'm paraphrasing and adding some stuff in, but basically this is what the Lord said. "You don't have a clue of what you need, but I am going to bring you to Myself, and through you I'm going to show the world how lost people come to know Me.

I'm going to let you come to know Me by what I'm going to do, and I'm going to set some paradigms, I'm going to set some parameters, I'm going to set some trajectories that will define the plan of salvation from Genesis to Revelation, so that I can restore to man what I created him to be." What He does is He comes to Abram and He says, "Look, you go to the land. I'm going to show you, and I'm going to make you a great nation," this is Genesis 12:1-3. Then Genesis 15, and I want you to turn to Genesis 15. This is a passage that we want to look at for a minute. I'm going to explain it a little bit before we look at the text. How can sinners in the dark come to know God who is light? The Lord prattles with us through the word '*covenant*'. God comes to make a covenant with Abram.

Now let me tell you about a covenant. Just to show you how important this word is, the word is used 6 or 7 times in Genesis 9, the covenant with Noah. And then it is used in Chapter 15, Verse 18, to describe what we are going to look at in just a moment, a covenant ceremony. It is used 14 times in Chapter 17 of Genesis. The word '*covenant*'. Now what is a covenant? A covenant, not a word that we use, we talk about contracts, but a covenant was a binding relationship that was unbreakable basically, or it was intended to be inviolable. A contract is something you can just enter into and you can exit. No, a covenant was a lifetime thing. Let me give you a few things. It was a relationship, a bond that was sovereignly administered. The kind of covenants that happened in Abram's day was one king would come to another lesser king and say, "You and I are entering into a relationship," and the greater king would basically set the terms, sovereignly administered. It wasn't negotiated. When God came to Abram He didn't say, "Let's have a relationship. Let's rap about it. What do you think?" No, He set the terms. God said, "This is how you will come to know Me." God is not one who is going to come ask us our opinion. How stupid would that be? What do we know, even if we weren't sinful, why would He want our opinion? But we are sinners, we are in the dark. It's like asking someone who can't see, "What do you think? Do you like my outfit?" So the Lord sovereignly administers the covenant. "These are the terms by which I will be known." And here again, this is a parameter that is set. The Lord determines how He is to be worshiped, we don't. It's not up to us. It is not up to our creativity. Our creativity within His parameters, yes, but He sets the parameters.

So, it is sovereignly administered, it is also a bond in blood. There was a covenant ceremony that always involved the killing of animals. Animals had to die, blood had to be shed, for a covenant to be cut. In fact, to make a covenant, literally the word in Hebrew is to *cut* a covenant, speaking of the cutting of the animals. So it was a relationship, it was sovereignly administered, a bond in blood, and it



involved blessings and curses. The idea is that there is an agreement, a covenant agreement that if we have obligations, and then we have blessings and curses attached. Blessings that come from fulfilling our obligations. Curses that come from not fulfilling our obligations. This is basically the structure. This is like the binding of the Bible, the covenant. Everything God is going to say from here on is going to fit into this parameter, because what is the defining problem of the Bible? We don't know God. How do we come to know God? How do you come to have a relationship with God? You come to God on His terms, and enter into His covenant based on what He says, and what He's done.

Now Genesis 15 is an amazingly rich chapter, and here it is in the very first book of the Bible. One of the things that you see, first of all, let me just show you that Abram has been promised a son. He was 75 years old when God called him, he is now 85 and he has no child. The biological clock is ticking. They lived longer back then, but 75, when you live to be 150 or 160, is akin to about 40 today. So when he's called it is like being a 45-year-old husband with a 40-year-old wife. "We don't have any kids yet." That would be disconcerting for us today. It means you probably are not going to have kids. It is very unlikely that you are going to have children. The Lord says, "I'm going to give you one." That is wonderful news. Ten years later, God comes back and he still doesn't have a child. Look at Verse 1:

***Genesis 15:1 ~ After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,***

***"Do not fear, Abram,  
I am a shield to you;  
Your reward shall be very great."***

God appears to him, and this word comes to him, and Abram says, his first response is:

***Genesis 15:2-3 ~ Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."***

"I need a child!" The Lord is going to make him wait 15 more years. We're going to talk about that in a minute, but what I want you to see right here is one of the things the Lord is doing in this particular passage is showing us how the covenant operates. This is a covenant ceremony that Abram is about to have with God. God

is going to have Abram cut the animals, separate them, and they are going to enact the covenant ceremony to bind themselves together forever. But even before the covenant ceremony, He's telling Abram about what Abram's obligation is. We're going to see that Abram doesn't have an obligation like a normal covenant. His obligation is given in the first six verses. His obligation is not to fulfill anything, to bring anything to the table, but his obligation is to believe. I mentioned earlier, the new perspective on Paul. Genesis 15:1-6 blows that out of the water because this is the way that man is made right with God. By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and here it is in the first book of the Bible.

I want you to note that this is so important that the Lord does something very unique. This is the kind of thing when we read the Bible we have to look for these things. Look at the phrase in Verse 1:

***Genesis 1:1 ~ After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram...***

Verse 4.

***Genesis 1:4 ~ Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying,...***

Verse 5.

***Genesis 1:5-6 ~ And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.***

Those two phrases, 'The word of the Lord came.', in Verse 1 and Verse 4, occur nowhere else in the Pentateuch. The first place they occur is in Samuel, when the word of the Lord comes to Samuel the prophet. It is a very familiar phrase. It occurs 102 times in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 1:1, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. The idea is, it is a formula to say, 'The word of the Lord came.' God gives the word of the Lord to His prophet, and now His prophet speaks. It doesn't occur anywhere else in the Pentateuch, but it occurs here. What it is saying is, this is like for a person who has read through their Bible and coming back to Genesis 15 again, this should be like something like lights flashing. When it says, ***After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram...*** Wait a minute, that is the prophetic formula. Abram wasn't a prophet, he is the father of the nations. That is the prophetic formula. Then Verse 4, ***Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him,...*** It's like saying, "Pay attention! This is very important what God is going to say right here." And what does the Lord say right here? The Lord says first of all,

the way to be counted righteous is by believing. This is why I think Paul, when he is arguing in Romans 4 for justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, he says in Chapter 4, Verse 1, *What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?* And he quotes Genesis 15:6. How is man made right with God? That is what Romans is all about. What did Abraham find? Here it is.

Now what he does after this, after he's told that, we see God's part in the covenant ceremony. He tells him to cut several different animals, you can read it but, "Birds. Cut them, kill them, and separate them, and we're going to have a covenant ceremony." Abram knows, "Hey, we're about to have a covenant ceremony. He is making a covenant with me like other people make with each other. You know local princes with this tribal head. They make a covenant and they have a ceremony like this. God is going to make a covenant ceremony. We're both going to walk through the pieces of this, and what that symbolizes is, we make promises. I'll be faithful to you. I won't attack you, you won't attack me. If somebody else attacks us, we will fight together. This kind of thing, and if we don't keep our word, let the curse of the covenant fall on us. Symbolized, let us be like these animals." You see that? The animals, there they are, cut in two, like a butcher cutting the animal in two. There it is, the blood, and the gore. Let me be like that. Well, what happens in Genesis 15:17 is a great sleep falls upon Abraham:

***Genesis 15:17 ~ It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land,...***

He said, "I've made a covenant with you. The covenant is done." The only problem is Abram didn't walk between the pieces, and here again, the original audience would have seen this. "Wait a minute. Why didn't Abram walk between the pieces?" because there are two parties to a covenant. Both walk between the pieces as they recite their vow, saying, "If I don't keep my part of the covenant, let me be like this. Abram, who was told to believe so that it could be credited to him as righteousness, is told not to walk through the pieces. The Lord walks through the pieces. What the Lord is saying when He walks through the pieces is, "If I don't keep My part of the covenant, let Me be like this," which will never happen. God is faithful to His word. He cannot deny Himself. "If you don't keep your part of the covenant, let the curse fall on Me." That's what God's saying. The curse of the covenant will fall on God. Yahweh is saying, "Let the curse fall on Me."

For you and I to come to know a holy God, we could not ever fulfill the obligations of the covenant. If we'd had to walk through those pieces, we would be in hell forever without any hope, but the God of grace and the God of glory, in His prattling with us, in the very first book of the Bible, is saying, "I will save those who believe in Me, who look to Me and trust that I have taken the curse of the covenant on Myself." That's why Jesus was cursed by hanging on a cross. He says basically, "I'm going to give you this land to your seed."

Now, Abram got that promise in 2091 BC. This is 2081 BC right now in Chapter 50, but he got the promise of Genesis 12, "The land that I will show you is going to belong to you," in 2091 BC. Abram was 75 years old when he got the promise. He leaves Er. He goes and he's following God to the place He's going to show him. He ends up in Canaan. He lives there in tents. He never owns anything except one burial plot he bought from a guy to bury Sarah. Then he passes that down to Isaac. Abraham lives a hundred years in the land and does not possess it before he dies. Isaac lives to be 180, an 80-year overlap with his dad. He lives to be 180 and he never possesses anything except that same burial plot. His son Jacob lives to be 147. He lives 130 years in the land, give or take a few years when he's out with Laban, remember, but he's 130 when he has to go down to Egypt because there's a famine. Remember there's a famine in the land and Jacob has to go down. Joseph is already ahead of him. Remember the story about the prince of Egypt retelling of that story?

So they all go down there, and basically He's saying, "This land belongs to you," and yet it doesn't. They don't possess the land until 685 years after the promise was made, 1405 or 1406 BC. The promise was made in 2091. They possess it in 1405. Why? This is where we just have to ask questions of Scripture. *Why, God? Why did You do it that way?* Isn't that a reasonable question? And you can ask the Lord questions respectfully and humbly, and He wants this. It's not when we come skeptically, saying, "You're wrong." No, we come humbly on our knees. "Lord, why did You do this? What were You trying to teach us?" Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob figured it out, because turn with me to Hebrews 11:8. Why would God make a promise and say, "This is your land and it belongs to you forever, too you and your descendents after you, forever, only you don't really possess it for 685 years"? Thankfully He didn't tell them that on the front end. That would have been tough news. 685 years... I thought about that. Do you know how 685 years ago, today, what that would be? It would be 1329. That is a long time ago. That would be 163 years before Columbus sailed the ocean blue. Isn't that amazing?

He makes the promise and He makes them wait 685 years before they possess the land. What was God doing? He was prattling with us. The author of Hebrews is a great aid in helping us figure these things out, but God intended His people to understand it all along. That's why Jesus says, "Oh you foolish and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have written. If you were just reading your Bibles carefully, you would see this, because I've made it clear. I've been prattling with you." Look what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 11:8.

***Hebrews 11:8 ~ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.***

Go down to Verse 13 where He talks about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

***Hebrews 11:13 ~ All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance,...***

So they died and they never possessed the land.

***Hebrews 11:13 ~ ...and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.***

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob figured out as they were walking with God that the Lord wasn't giving them Canaan, because Canaan was merely a type, and that heaven was the real promise, that to be in the presence of His glory, robed in righteousness, dwelling in the land that really flows with milk in honey, Canaan was merely a type. So basically what He's doing through this prattling is He's saying, "How do you get into Canaan? I'm going to give you Canaan. I'm going to give you heaven," and this whole story is becoming a typological picture of what has to happen for us to enter God's Canaan. How can sinners dwell in the presence of one who dwells in unapproachable light? Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart can. We don't have it. How can we get there? Look at the Scripture unfold.

So Genesis basically tells us it's a covenant relationship. God's going to have to take the curse upon Himself, and Canaan is a type. And then you go to Exodus.

## 2) Exodus:

When Jacob goes down with his sons, Joseph is the second in command in Egypt, and the Lord does a miraculous deliverance. I remember when we were teaching through Exodus a couple years ago, and I remember thinking for the first time it just hit me with a new clarity. I'd never stopped and asked this question. It was just kind of embarrassing that I hadn't, but maybe some of you are like me. Why did God make them slaves? You know, He promised in the land of Canaan, and now He tells them in Chapter 15, He's going to say they're going to go into the land and they're going to be in bondage there, but why? That is a valid question. What was God doing? You say, "Well, He took them to Egypt because in Egypt He delivered them from the famine." Yes, but why did He let the famine happen in the first place? So He could deliver them in Egypt. Well, yeah, that's true. A miraculous deliverance through Joseph, that's a picture of salvation itself. Okay, and maybe another reason He took them to Egypt is so they could grow from 70 people to three or four million over 430 years. It was easier than in Canaan. In Canaan they probably would have been attacked.

Okay, that's a good point too, but why did they become slaves though? Why did God let them become slaves? Why did God let them be abused by the Egyptians? Why did God let them become slaves to those who were just people of incredible spiritual darkness and moral depravity? The Lord planned all of that so that He could offer a type of salvation. He did this because His Name is glorious and He wanted to show the glorious salvation that was coming by prattling with them. And so God lets them be enslaved for the better part of that 400 years, and the bondage gets so great that they cry out to God for mercy, and God sends Moses, and Moses is used by God to deliver them through the Passover. The picture, the question, remember, is how do we get to Canaan? The Lord lets them see you can only get to the land if you realize first that you're in bondage in the darkness, and that you have no hope of getting to the land. This is what Jesus was saying when He said—remember what He said to the Jews in John 8:32? "If you continue in My word, then truly are you My disciples, and you'll know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Remember what the Jews said? We've never been enslaved to anyone. That's a ridiculous statement, but they said, "We've never been enslaved to anyone." Jesus said, "He who sins is a slave of sin. If the Son makes you free, you'll be free indeed." He goes on to say, "You're of your father the devil."

What He's saying is, listen, we were all in bondage to sin. It's a lot worse than we think. It's not a small thing to get saved. It's not just stepping over this little step and you're saved. No, it's a giant leap because you're of your father the devil until you're born again, and Egypt was showing them that. "Look how much it's going to take. How can we ever hope to get to Canaan and be the people God promised us to be? How can we ever hope? Look, we have no weapons. We have no power. We're completely subjugated." God is going to deliver them. The one who said that, "I'm going to do everything necessary to save you," is going to come, and He did come. He heard their cries. He saw their affliction.

It wasn't like He had forgotten them. Was the Lord busy? "I was busy doing some other things and I didn't realize you had become slaves." Of course not. He's ordering where every molecule falls. Every dust particle lands where He ordains it, and so every moment in history, everything that's happening is happening according to His perfect will. Even that which evil does which is evil and which is against His command, He allows for His sovereign purposes, and so there is Pharaoh in all of his wickedness, and he's right where God has allowed him to be, and Pharaoh is choosing of his own will to rebel against God, and he's worthy of judgment for that, and the Lord delivers His people through the ten plagues culminating with the Passover lamb.

The apostle Paul sees that as a type of salvation. It's in 1 Corinthians 5 where he says, "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed." How do we get saved? How do you go into Canaan? There must be blood upon the doorframe of your life. There is no other way for you to be delivered from darkness. This is why Colossians says that to be saved, Paul says in Chapter 1, Verse 13, "It isn't a small thing. You have been delivered from the domain of darkness, transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son." It wasn't a small thing. To get saved, Jesus said He had to come in and find the strongman. When He comes to save people, He comes into the world, and He's binding Satan who had all of his goods in order. He had all of us in order under his dominion, and God comes in, Jesus comes in, and binds the strongman, ties him up, kicks him to the side, and makes a public spectacle of him when He dies on the cross and leads many sons to glory. All of that's typified in the Exodus.

Then you have the people leave and plunder the Egyptians on the way to Canaan. They go to Sinai. They're given the Ten Commandments. This is the covenant. Now He's showing us that even through the law, we see we can't keep it. He's prattling with us. He's telling us a little bit more. It's kind of like how you learn mathematics. You learn  $2 + 2$ , and then you learn  $2 \times 2$ , and then you learn  $1/2 \times 1/4$ , and then you learn decimals, and then you learn algebra, etcetera, all the way

up. Maybe you don't learn algebra and you just *try* to learn algebra. You start with the basics. And so the Lord is prattling with them. He's showing them, "Okay, you're on the way to Canaan. How do you come in to live with a holy God? God must deliver you, but what does that deliverance look like?" Then He gives the book of Leviticus.

### 3) Leviticus:

You read Leviticus and it's kind of just laborious and somewhat depressing. Of five major offerings in Leviticus, four of them require an animal. The only one that doesn't is the grain offering, and it's offering grain. The peace offering, the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering require the death of an animal. I was thinking about this the other day, how many animals must have been killed. When the people were being faithful and realizing that they had sinned, there must have been a thousand offerings a day, to make up, that would be one family offering one offering a year in addition to the Passover. So they already got those, but there are 300,000 to 500,000 families. There are 365 days in a year. That's a thousand offerings a day, a thousand animals dying a day. Blood was always flowing from the courts of the tabernacle.

Why did God do that? Did God just not like animals? Was He not an animal rights activist? What is He doing? He's showing us how obnoxious, and filthy, and disgusting sin is. It takes *this!* God made those animals, but for you and me to be holy in the sight of a holy God, there must be an awful offering, an expense of blood that we can't stomach, and the wonder of it is, all of the animals, all of the blood of the bulls and goats that was ever spilled, thousands upon thousands that became millions, were a small glimpse of the awful injustice when Christ shed His blood, when the wrath of God fell upon the sinless and spotless Son of God.

That was the greatest injustice of all time, and it was God's justice, but you understand that if anyone deserved to be praised and worshiped and adored, it was Jesus, and yet He experienced the wrath of God against the sin of everyone who would ever believe. And to look at the cross, to look at the horror of what He went through, was only slightly anticipated by the blood that flowed from the temple mount day after day, year after year. So how do you come to live with a holy God? There must be blood. A terrible offering must happen. Then you go to the book of Numbers.



#### 4) Numbers:

God gives them that. They're operating and they now have a tabernacle. They're making their offerings, and after they've been there for a couple years He leads them over to the border of Canaan, and they send the spies in, remember? And what's the point of the book of Numbers? They've grown to be this multitude, they're about to go into the land of Canaan, and when the spies come back, ten spies say, "There's no way. We can't do it." Two spies say, "We can." Why did God allow it to be so difficult? Couldn't He have had more foresight and understand that people are slow of faith? Why did He let there be giants in the land? Remember what they said? "There are giants in the land. The walls stretch up to the heavens. The giants make us look like grasshoppers." That's a pretty intimidating report if you're looking at it from a human perspective. Why did God allow that? Why did He allow it to be so difficult? It's because He was teaching. He was prattling.

How is it that you and I cross over into Canaan? It is when we realize that it is a big deal, that we can't do it ourselves. It's when we realize that He must do it. This is what Joshua and Caleb, the two spies that went in of the twelve, understood. Yeah, they're big. Yeah, their walled cities are great. It's not so much that. It's who is the Lord who has called us? Is it too hard for God? It's too hard for us. Yeah, but it's not too hard for God. And so the message was: *Believe*. Just like He said back in Genesis 15, "Believe and it will be credited as righteousness." So they had to just trust God. How do you enter the land? There's got to be a sacrifice, and you've got to believe. But they didn't believe, and the Lord's teaching us even through that. Even through their wickedness, their guilt that they have for not believing, the Lord is still working, and then He gives them Deuteronomy.

#### 5) Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy is the second giving of the law. This just occurred to me this week, actually. I was thinking about why give the second law? These things we just don't think about. You know, we take them for granted, Deuteronomy and the second giving of the law. Okay, so He gave the law to the generation right before they go in. Why didn't He just say, "Read the law I already gave you"? I mean, if you look, a lot of Deuteronomy is word for word verbatim of what Exodus says, particularly the laws. I mean, the Ten Commandments are given in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. Why did He do that?

Well, I think one of the reasons was that He was going to expand on His law, saying, “I want you to understand more about who I am.” And what He does, this struck me when we studied Deuteronomy a couple years ago, that Deuteronomy is a book of love. Do you know the word love occurs eight times in the first four books of the Bible? Eight times, and only one time relating to the vertical relationship. The other seven are, “Jacob loved Rachel.” That’s horizontal, right? It’s eight times in the first four books, two times in Genesis. I think it’s found two times in Exodus. Anyway, it’s a total of eight before we get to Deuteronomy.

In Deuteronomy, it occurs 16 times, and 15 of the 16 refer to this vertical relationship—God’s love for us and our love for God. It’s like saying, “Look, I’m giving you My law, but I want you to understand, remember, it’s about relationship, covenant, and I want you to understand more of who I am.” And basically in Chapter 7, He says, “Why did the Lord set His affection on you and choose to love you? Was it because of who you are? No, it was because He chose to love you. And now what are you to do in return? Just obey Him? No, you’re to love Him. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength (Deuteronomy 6:5). It’s about loving Him.” In fact, turn to Deuteronomy 10. Let me show you this there and in another place in Deuteronomy. Look at Verse 12:

***Deuteronomy 10:12 ~ “Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the Lord’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? 14 Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.***

So think about who God is. Everything belongs to Him. Look at Verse 15:

***Deuteronomy 10:15 ~ Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.***

He said, “You have been loved.” Why do we love Him? We love Him because He first loved us. He’s basically saying that way back there. “Love Him because He loved you.” But look at Verse 16:

***Deuteronomy 10:16 ~ So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.***

One of the things God's teaching us is it's about love, but the problem is you and I need a heart change. This whole idea of circumcision, I've touched on that in Genesis 17 and now Deuteronomy 10:16. Why did God give that sign? Why that? One of the things He's showing is that it's a cutting, a removal of flesh, that then makes you clean. It's the cutting away of something that makes you clean. Then He says, "Circumcise your hearts," that is, you need to have surgery done on your heart if you're going to love God. And if you're really going to be able to be loved by God and love God, you must have heart surgery. This theme is going to be picked up and expanded.

Here's another stream that's flowing from Genesis 17, the covenant of circumcision, all the way through Deuteronomy 10. It's going to come again in Jeremiah 4:4. *Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts.* And then Ezekiel is going to pick it up when he says, "The Lord your God is going to take out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. He's going to pour out His Spirit upon you. He's going to make you where you're able to love Him and walk in His commandments," in Ezekiel 36:24 and following. So the idea is the Lord is showing this is what has to happen. All the trajectories of salvation are there, and we're going to end up with just really quickly Leviticus 16. I'm going back to the middle again. I've covered the five books.

In Leviticus 16, in the heart of the Pentateuch, in the part that's teaching us about the blood that must flow, you have the picture that is amazingly clear of the atonement. People want to argue about what the death of Jesus was about. Was it really that He experienced the wrath of God? They want to argue that, and there are false teachers out there teaching that it's not. Well, they just need to go back and read from the beginning. Look at Leviticus 16:

***Leviticus 16:1 ~ Now the Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the Lord and died. 2 The Lord said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.***

Remember the tabernacle itself is God prattling with us, and there was the holy place which was inside the tent, and the holy of holies. The most holy place was the veiled area called the holy of holies, and that's where the Ark of the Covenant was. And God says, "Aaron shall never enter there, because My glory is dwelling there. You can't come into My glory. You can't come into My presence except

once a year.” Now, He’s going to explain that when you come, what Aaron’s got to do is he’s got to wash himself thoroughly. He’s got to put on the special garments. He’s got to put on the breastplate. He’s got to kill—he’s got to bring first of all incense and he’s got to kill a bull for himself. He’s got to bring incense. When he walks behind the veil, listen, it was so serious that the high priest would have a rope tied around his ankle and bells in his garments. The bells were there so that they could tell if he had died or not. If there were no bells ringing, he was dead and it was time to reel him out. Nobody’s going back there to get him, but we’ll pull him out by the rope on his leg. So Aaron, to go back there behind the veil, what must he do? The first thing he’s to do is to take a pan full of incense, and he’s to go just inside the veil, and he’s to lay the pan down there as a sweet-smelling aroma to God. Then he’s going to take the blood for the bull that’s just for his sins, and he’s going to offer it on the horns of the altar and then drip some on the mercy seat, because only by blood can he hope to come into His presence. And then after he does that, he’s going to offer the blood of the sin offering, one of the two goats, which I want to talk about now, and you see in Verses 7 to 10. He’s to choose two goats by lot, and these are to be the two goats of the sin offering:

***Leviticus 16:7 ~ He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 8 Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. 9 Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the Lord fell, and make it a sin offering. 10 But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat.***

So what he does is he offers the blood of one of the goats on the altar, again, behind the veil, and then what he does, look at Verses 20 to 22 with the scapegoat:

***Leviticus 16:20 ~ “When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar,...***

That’s after he’s offered the incense, the blood of the bull, the blood of the goat, now, the sin-offering goat.

***Leviticus 16:20 ~ “When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. 21 Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins;***

Here Aaron the high priest, wearing a breastplate that has each of the twelve tribes inscribed on his breastplate, he represents the people. He confesses the sins of the people. His sins by this picture, this prattling, are being transferred to the goat, and look what happens to the goat:

***...and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. 22 The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.***

Their iniquities must be carried away outside the camp. This is all telling it. This is what happened at Calvary. Jesus is both of those goats, and He is the High Priest Himself, too, who offers His own blood, the blood of the sin offering. But where He was crucified, Hebrews 13 again, showing us how these pictures come together, says He was crucified outside the camp. Why? Because He bears sins and He's taken to a solitary land, and why is it Jesus cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He's telling us in quoting Psalm 22:1, I am the sin bearer, and I have been sent far away from the glory of My Father. I am dwelling in a solitary place. I am the scapegoat."

When He then says, "It is finished!" He's saying, "I have made complete atonement. It's not going to need to be done again next year. I have done it once and for all. I have taken your sins and removed them from you, and My blood has been spilled, and it has paid to the fullest. Every bit of the wrath of God that you would ever have had to bear had been exhausted. It is finished, paid in full." And then He breathes His last, and the veil in the temple, Matthew tells us in Matthew 27, the veil that Aaron couldn't go behind, that the high priest couldn't go behind without his rope tied on his leg, once a year, that veil was torn from top to bottom at the instant He died. That is atonement. That is substitutionary atonement. That is a sin-bearing, wrath-bearing Savior dying for us, and it's from Genesis to Revelation—that is our Savior.

So when we root it in the truth like that, don't be led astray when men come giving you worldly philosophies, trying to make salvation seem like something light and trendy. No, when we see it as God has made it in His word, sin is so great, salvation is so distant, that it takes a glorious and a wondrous Savior, and it makes us treasure Him. He's not something we add into our lives. He is the One who is everything that we could possibly imagine. Paul says, "Forgetting what lies behind, I just want Christ. All I want is Christ." Praise God, all you need is Christ.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

*Father, we worship You, and we stand in awe of the amazing wisdom of God, for man in his wisdom could not come to know God, and You made that which at first glance is foolishness to man, the cross, to be the way to come into Your presence. Unbelievers scoff at it. Those who don't understand mock it, but to we who have been born again, it is the wisdom and power of God, and it is so wonderful, so beautiful, so perfect. You who are holy and just, remain just, and at the same time justify the ungodly so that Your purity is maintained and our sins are washed away. Our part is to do nothing but repent and believe.*

*There are those in this room today who need to repent and believe, to stop trusting in anything in themselves, and cast themselves upon such a worthy Savior. Lord, loosen the hold of the things of this world, the love of this world, the love of the approval of men, whatever it is, open eyes to see the only thing that matters is heaven. Eternity is coming and it's coming sooner than we think—eternity separated from You in agony and darkness, or an eternity of bliss, and joy, and wonder in the presence of One who loves us so much. May Jesus Christ be praised. We pray in His Name, Amen.*

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