

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.

Box 93, Dresden, Ontario NOP 1M0

519-683-2442 standrewspcdresden@gmail.com Rev. Andy Cornell

Worship This Week Jan 8, 2023

WELCOME & Prayer –

PRAISE SONGS – Be still for the presence, Jesus name above all names

YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART – Rita

SONG – 441 Can a little child like me

RECEIVE OFFERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS –

GOD IS MY WITNESS –

PRAYER –

SCRIPTURE – Colossians 2:16-23

¹⁶ So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷ For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, ¹⁹ and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it. ²⁰ You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, ²¹ "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"? ²² Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. ²³ These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.

MESSAGE Let's do a recap of Colossians so far. The message is that the secret to a good life is not what we do or think, how we live or any religious rituals. The answer is deceptively simple – it's accepting Christ as the way to God, having Him in your heart and living for Him seeking God's will through the power of His Spirit. As we say, Christ is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to God except through Him. Amen. End of message. If only! We live in a crazy and busy world. Crazier and busier every year that goes by. We get caught up in what's new. There's always been some attraction to something different throughout the ages – it's part of human nature. Every significant change grabs our attention and takes it away from God. The more things change, it seems the more reasons people have to focus on ourselves and the world and not on the Creator. It's no coincidence that decline in faith has been increasing with the exponential pace of change in the 20th and early 21st centuries. Gadgets and technology are great. But all we really need for peace, strength and joy is Christ. Believe in the Son of God, get to know Him and make a conscious effort to follow Him. When we do that, we truly come alive.

This letter was written by the Apostle Paul to a collection of believers in the city of Colossae in what is now central Turkey, about halfway between Italy and Israel. Jesus Christ had made his human appearance, died on the cross and was restored to life. Christianity was relatively new. It was growing. At the time, it was a major city and had several vibrant religious cults. It was known for the tendency for people to blend different faiths together. The fancy word is “syncretism.” A little of this and a little of that. Pick and choose your belief system like you would put together a plate of food from a buffet. Because it was the real deal, it got the attention of the enemy. People from pagan religions, from those who clung to Judaism didn’t recognize Jesus as the Messiah – they all felt threatened. They refused to give up their earthly traditions. It’s not a stretch to say that Satan, who controls this world, also guides and empowers religions which don’t have acknowledge Christ. The enemy loves to lure people away from the true faith. The game he plays isn’t always with a sledgehammer. It’s often done in bite-sized pieces. The enemy always makes available temptations to water down the essential truths. People give in. Paul’s letter was a reminder to them that their first spiritual love, their true love, was being watered down by their weakness and lack of faith. False teachers were deceiving them.

Don’t let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud,¹⁹ and they are not connected to Christ . . . (Col. 2:18-19a)

They were trying to lure them back into Jewish dietary laws, or worship of angels or extreme sacrifice – such as going without food, self mutilation in an effort to feel what Christ experienced on the cross. Physical discipline is good and self control is important. But God is not asking us to deliberately hurt ourselves to grow closer to Him. We do not need to purify the soul by punishing the body. This is a letter of encouragement. It’s a reminder that all we need is Christ. Follow Him and we will have the hope, peace and strength to get through these dark days of human life and then enter the Kingdom. Christ is:

“the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.” (19b)

Our King is Christ. Yes, we have to follow the rules of human law. But it’s the philosophical and cultural rules that we can ignore. In fact, we can be free from spiritual nonsense.

²⁰ **You have** died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as,²¹ “Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!”? ²² **Such rules** are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. ²³ These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. **But they** provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.

There’s a myth in our world that all we need to be at peace is to indulge in the senses God has given us. If it feels good and it’s not hurting anyone else, then do it. That’s who we truly come alive, by exploring our desires within healthy limits. This can also involve meditation and mindfulness, being in touch with the divine that is within you. Namaste. Nothing new. That’s been the message from Satan from the beginning of time.

The truth is that we are not our own gods. We were created in God's image. We came from Him and we have the choice whether we return to Him or some other cosmic afterlife. Our bodies do not belong to us. We can say the same about the planet Earth. They are on loan to us. We are to treat our bodies and the planet with great care – using them in accordance with God's will. The Bible, in cooperation with The Holy Spirit, is the manufacturer's guide. There's a healthy type and amount of food and drink to put in us. Our appetites come from nature. But Satan takes advantage of that. Every hour of the day, every day of the week, we are tempted to put things into our bodies (food, alcohol, drugs and tobacco) that aren't healthy. Some things are OK, in moderation and in healthy amounts. We are tempted to watch, read or do things that are designed to make us feel good in the moment but have nothing to do with God's will. But we are very poor at exercising self control.

Being right with God is not a do-it-yourself thing. The powers of this world are too great for us tackle alone. The only thing that can help us control our evil desires and act on temptation is the Spirit of Christ working within us. There's reams of scripture which attest to the power of Christ to overcome evil desires. We are invited to allow the Holy Spirit guide our lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. **These** two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. (Galatians 4:17-18)

This sounds like a war within us – and it is. We cannot escape it. But we can minimize the battles if we choose to ignore the temptation. So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7) The best way to deal with an annoying person is to walk away. Ignore them. Sooner or later, they'll stop wasting their time. It's like responding to the taunts from someone who wants to fight. Don't take the bait. We see that on social media all the time. I might post something and someone takes offence. If it's an intelligent question, I might reply. But as soon as it gets personal, don't engage, otherwise you bring yourself down to their level. It's a no-win. We can apply this logic to Satan, who is the master at lies and deception.

The solution is Christ.

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.” (John 15:4-5)

I don't know about you, but I am still subject to evil desires. It's the human condition. Don't beat yourself up over them. Just ignore the enemy. Stop what you are doing and pray. Stop, drop and pray. There are some saints who have been able to win this battle. They are so far advanced in their walks of faith that the love of Christ pours from them. Often, this state arises from physical, mental, emotional trials. Tough times can bring us down, or we can choose to fight and turn to Christ for the heavy lifting. His toughness can provide all the strength we need. This is why the early apostles were overjoyed when they were beaten and persecuted. It just made their faith stronger. Not that I am wishing this upon myself or anyone else. Don't

deliberately seek it either. Just don't fear tough times. They will happen. Be prepared by remaining in Christ. Allow His Spirit to strengthen you.

HYMN – 457 Now thank we all our God

BENEDICTION –

CONTINUE TO PRAY

Health and healing –

1. Dianne Richards – MRI in January
2. Jeff Strain – healing from knee surgery
3. Bill & Bonnie Lozon – for a bed to open for Bill in a nursing home in Wallaceburg or Chatham
4. Jennie Atherton, Becky Desjardine, Margaret Follows, Mark Labadie, Bette Northcott, Tom O'Neill, Cherie Pegg, Sandra Whitson
5. Awaiting surgery: Dan Shaw
6. Mary Templer – relief from dizziness, more able to walk normally, vision to improve.
7. Anyone seeking or undergoing treatment for addictions
8. Anyone wrestling with anxiety and depression
9. Karen Northcott – thanks for good biopsy results but continue to pray.

There are many whose names are not listed here – God know who they are and what they need.

Seniors and shut ins – Alan (Curly) Clark and Norma Latimer at Riverview Gardens, Jim Lusk and Ross Fuchs at Oaks Wallaceburg, Joyce MacTavish at Barrie Manor, Aubrey Butler at home.

Session – Mark Labadie (clerk and representative elder), Cindy Brewer, Sheila Eves, Andrew Neely, Mark Richards and Julie Shaw.

Board of managers – Wendy Weston (chair), Paul Vandenbogaerde (treasurer), Will Brewer, Ross Fuchs, Linda Malott, Jenn Mason, Von Parking, Mark Richards, Jodie Rich, Dan Shaw and Mike Wicks.

DATES

Jan. 9 – Session (meet day changed to Monday during winter/spring)

Jan. 16 – Board of managers

GIVING:

E-transfer to pcvan1313@gmail.com. Bring envelope on Sunday or if you have a key, leave it in the treasurer's mailbox. Mail it to the church, PO Box 93 Dresden. N0P 1M0. Put it in the mailbox at the home of treasurer Paul Vandenbogaerde. 1313 North Street, Dresden.

Telephone number 519-683-6194

GIFT CARDS – You pay face value for the gift cards and the church buys them at a discount through Chatham Christian Schools. **Next deadline January 29.**