

Chapter 4 (The inside people)

Colossians 1:22 *“But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.”*

It’s odd and ironic really. I have gone so far into the Christian world that I know it well. Yet, I am troubled by my desire to set things straight. I have no right to speak for God to the church. It disturbs me even more that I really don’t know how insiders think and feel. I never grew up Christian. I did not learn a catechism or have to memorize verses as a kid. The Christian world is not engrained in me. Yet, I know it well.

In Christian university the kids just know. They just know so many verses. They know communion. Each one of them could tell you where certain things were in the Bible. They just knew. Why? It’s because they heard it at the dinner table, Sunday school, and at family gatherings. Grampa knew as did Grandma. God is good because they grew up in a good Christian family. They just know that.

Several times in Matthew 5 Jesus said “you have heard.” That statement was on purpose. Other times throughout the Bible God, Jesus, and the prophets say “your fore fathers, your tradition, and your past.” The Bible writers are speaking mainly to those who know. Those who grew up knowing. Knowing what? Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your

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hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

You see, for me on the outside: I have no clue. How can I talk about insiders without walking a mile in their shoes? The quick answer is I can't. Jesus did walk beside the sin of people. He walked beside sex, murder, stealing, and desire. He may not have committed sin but he walked beside sin. Further to that, I think in some strange way he bore those sins on the cross. Jesus knows.

I have walked beside lifetime Christians. I have been in their conversations. I had a pastor tell me that I will love a Christian marriage much better. At the time I had only experienced a marriage outside of God. I now know what he meant, but still, I had to learn the ways of Christian marriage through other people. So, I will attempt to take my best shot at explaining what I call inside people. Certainly, I will get it wrong for some. I will insult the Christian life. Yet, it's my hope to show you why your attempt at goodness went wrong and right.

I sat at church today, in a cineplex theatre, at a mall. The place was packed. Why? There are many reasons. The location is awesome. Come to church and then shop at the mall. The theatre has great seats and good sound. The visual on the screen is perfect with stadium seating. I just wish they could use the D-box seating and 3-d glasses for effect. Yet, there is more. Most of the people in this church have very little Bible background. Many of them attend there because it's not traditional church.

This place is a church. However, there are no elders or boards. The offices are far away in rented spaces. All the ministry happens in people's homes. After the service, this church regenerates back into a movie theatre. God in the morning and avengers in the afternoon. I have

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seen people come in for a movie only to find a church going on. They leave fast. I have also seen people stay to see a baptism in the foyer. In a way, church here is a miracle. It's also safer than those other traditional church buildings. Nobody cares who you are in a mall church. they don't judge like they do in a traditional church.

Our pastor has told new people that it's not traditional church. We don't treat people like you would expect. It's the nice Christian answer. Old church has old people. I suppose there are older people in those places, yet I mean old as in long time Christians. They are insiders: born into it. The people who have attended old church might expect clicks of people, fancy dress, traditions, and structure. It's not that way in a theatre church. It's a mixture of old and very new Christians.

In a former church, I asked a pastor why more women don't preach. He said he hasn't found any good enough. Today at my mall church, the pastor did not preach. Instead, he had five people preach for five minutes on what God is to them. Three of them were women. What a moving service from all five. Each one of them were worthy to preach. Why? It wasn't because of gender. It was because God had invaded their soul.

I whole heartedly believe that a lead pastor must be learned in God and theology. It keeps us that much further from heresy and cult status. Yet, under him or her are people affected by God. People who can tell a story of God. A degree does not give you extra right. Status or gender does not give you the ability to see God clearer. Having walked a mile beside Jesus in the Christian life does. A pastor may be theologically safer and we need that. Yet, passion comes from walking that mile with Jesus, not receiving the degree.

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I have almost talked for three pages without defining an insider. Maybe I should change the chapter title? No, I needed to set it up. To tell you what I know. Church has four walls mostly. Mega church has mega walls. There is a divide within those walls. In Jesus day, there were walls and curtains in Gods house. We would have found inner courts and rooms. All of it was designed to keep certain people away from the presence of God. In Moses day they had what was called the tent of meeting. God was there. To enter the Holy of Holy was bad. You cannot be in the presence of God directly. That is why Moses was covered by Gods hand to protect him as God passed by. A church place was built to keep the outside and inside separated. Ok, that does not seem fair. Yet, God must be respected and His dwelling place must remain sanctified. In those days holy sanctified priest were the only ones allowed to enter into Gods inner court.

Medieval church was designed to honor God too. Did you know that in many cathedral churches, the building faces east? It was designed that way to represent the coming of Christ on the clouds from the east. Today we have churches of all shapes and sizes pointing in all directions. Yet we still have walls. We still have separations between church leaders and the people. To me, that's a massive mistake. We are not separating Gods presence from people. Instead we are separating people from people.

When Jesus died the curtain was torn in two. In 70Ad, the temple was destroyed. Why am I saying all this? After Jesus died, God broke down the barriers to him. Modern Christianity has no walls. It has no Jewish requirements. You don't have to be in the line of David or Arron to approach God. Think about it. Where did Moses come from? Why was David the last and not the first in his line? Who is Elijah? How about Ruth, Esther, and Mary? God has always invited in the outside. Only humans-built walls and curtains keep us from God. It was not really meant to be that way.

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This morning in church I heard almost every one of the speakers mention having God in their heart. Every one of them proudly repeated that they knew of God from outside of church. However, they all agreed that through life's trials they now know God better. That is the message from the outside. People who were not raised to know God. Yet, they have a story to tell when God found them.

What I'm getting at is that insiders are lifers. They were born into church life. Many are PK kids (pastors' kids). It's a long line of Christian heritage. Insiders know of God because they were born into it. It's true that Jesus chose 12 Jewish men. He came to speak to the Jews. He said so. Yet, he chose all of them from the bottom of the Jewish barrel. From the outside of religious circles. Their story is not an inside story.

I only know what I have witnessed. In university the PK kids were highly favored. Since I graduated many of those PK kids have church jobs. Were they the best candidates or the best stock? Insiders come from good stock. They know church. They know goodness. At the top of the first page of this chapter is a verse. I believe verses like this are good and heartwarming. Yet, I cringe at the damage done by the misrepresentation it's brought.

That verse is redemption. It's about being brought into the kingdom. It is what salvation does. We go from being outside to inside. Yet, people are people no matter what side of the church walls were on. Pride and expectation are Christian killers. I say church killers too. Underneath each insider is a belief. A belief that they are Christian. That they are saved. That verse in Colossians 1 "without blemish and free from accusation" has hurt the great commission.

There are other verses too. Romans 8:1 "*therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" What being "born into" means is this? Those children are told

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these verses all their lives. In church, as young adults, they heard sermon after sermon calling on them to hold dear to those verses. They are staples, pillars, and promises. Insiders sit in their place on Sunday rest assured in Christ. It's all they know.

They are the safe inside the walls. Safe inside their Christian homes and schools. They may not have curtains and inner chambers but they do. I knew a pastor that left because he had to make an appointment to see the other pastors right next door. In a time-lapse camera, you would have seen the lead pastor's office slowly move farther down the hall. Protecting himself from the world. No matter if they're a little girl home schooled or a pastor in a church, Christians are schooled to protect themselves. To grasp on to the promises at the demise of anything else.

It comes back to "you have heard." Jesus had a terribly hard uphill battle with the religious rulers. I'm sure the crowds struggled too. Why did some of John's disciples walk away from Jesus? It probably was tough teaching for those disciples. What was tough? Getting past what they knew. How they were raised. What was engrained in them about outsiders? My wife had a friend who lived in England. She was raised Christian. Yet, clearly, she was not Christian. In one conversation my wife said to her friend that she needed Jesus to go to heaven. This friend phoned her mommy in England and asked "Mommy, I'm Christian right?" What really makes us Christian?

To be born in North America means your Christian right? To be born in Israel means your Jewish. Born in Iran means your Muslim. Yet, Jesus said in John 3:5-7 *"Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"*

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It's an unfortunate problem. The insiders are born into Christianity. Yet, they are not Christian. The family (flesh) is your earthly home. They represent the Christian realm on earth. An insider's spirit must also be born again. So why do outsiders have such a hard time communicating within the old church? Insiders believe they were born Christian. They also believe that outsiders were not.

The experiences of what is good or bad is the defense. Insiders are born into good homes. (In theory). Outsiders come from bad places. Where the trouble arises is in where the good and bad are. Insiders believe that anything labeled Christian on it is good. Outsiders believe there is a lot of good outside church walls. Basically, insiders are from Mars and outsiders are from Venus.

Church is good. Jesus is the head of the church. That building and body must protect itself. From? From where the bad is. Outside! To be fair, insiders were told this from birth. So, my high school friend calls me a chum and not a friend. PK kids get the good church jobs. Ministry begins with the pastor's discretion. 1 Timothy is a guideline on who can be an elder. On and on I could go. Insiders believe they have the market on goodness. Outsiders believe life is built on a mixture of the good and bad. That's terrible news to the insider.

Here are some troubling thoughts. Jesus says when we enter heaven he will declare "*I know you or I don't know you.*" In church circles they say: *I know your stock or I don't.* Those born and bred Christian know a lot. They have been trained from birth. Yet, sin, they do not know. Oh, sure they have heard about it. They know it smokes, watches porn, and swears like a trouper on the outside. They know. Yet, Jesus also told a few religious rulers "You have heard." Yet, clearly, many times they did not know. God tells Caine that sin is crouching at his door, he must learn to master it. How does an insider master sin they have never experienced? The hard

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truth is they can't. It's exactly why church has a bad rap with outsiders. Sin crushes church insiders over and over because they leaned no defenses.

Insiders have heard the sin stories. Their parents scared the hell out of them at night. Telling them the chilling tales of outsiders. They are the bad stock. They have heard it from their parents. Jesus always goes farther though. Insider parents: doesn't Jesus say that the religious think too highly of themselves? Read Matthew 5. Jesus is busting what insiders thought they knew about their own goodness. What they teach their children about God, that outsiders matter to the Lord too.

Insiders are bred to protect the Bible, Church, Jesus, and their heritage. It's the right thing to do. Someone said Christianity is only one generation away from extinction. We could say that about anything. Live sports are dying in North America. Kids are watching it on TV but they are not playing it at the park. Attendance is dropping. The latest generation of parents are not making their kids attend sports as they once did. I think live sporting events are less than one generation away from extinction.

Old church has struggled these last few decades. The parents are not making their kids go to church as they once did. The Bible is not being read as it was. Insiders are not breeding insiders. They say about 20% of church kids go to church after they're 20 years old. That is alarming. The protecting of our heritage has fallen asleep. What was bad outside is now not so bad inside. Hence, church in a mall has risen. There is light in this tunnel. A new breed of Christian is rising. It's not great news for old church.

I was in ministry very early on in my Christian life. A young girl began to attend church. She was on fire for God. Yet, she was told that she could not take care of the kids until she had

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seasoned a little. She was from the outside. Only insiders could care for the young. Over and over, she tried ministry doors. Eventually this young girl gave up and left. Insiders will let certain people fall away if it means protecting their kids from the outside. Regardless if bad stock is on fire for Christ.

Again, to be fair, it's the outside that has crept into church attendance. Sin is not as sinful these days. Where did that come from? From the outside? I don't believe that is totally the picture. You see, insiders protected their generations. They put them in Christian homes. Parents only let their children play with Christian kids. There are Christian schools and Christian sports. These well-meaning Christians missed one valuable point. Christianity is built on fighting for it, not by sheltering it.

Inside children are told they are Christian. Yet, they are not battle tested. When an outside boy or girl invades their lives, all hell breaks loose. I have read stories of countless Christian children growing up in good homes but they turned out bad. Why? I read a story of a serial killer who got caught and went to jail for life. One day he looked up from his cell and started talking to another killer across from him. They both told stories of being brought up in a Christian home. Then they realized it! They had bought the lie. The lie that they were good no matter what.

Insiders are generally good people. They built the Salvation army and food banks. They built houses for the needy in other nations. The Christian community by and large are good people. It's good to protect your children. I would protect my church. Yet, that is not how God rolls. He put Christianity in harm's way. Jesus was threatened as a baby several times. God put his trust in a carpenter and his young wife. Experienced theologians? Christian schooled? Question? Did Joseph drink or swear? Did Mary gossip? We just assume too much.

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David had to run. Moses has to hide in the desert. Paul was put in harm's way. God loves to put his word and reputation in the hands of Satan. Why? Ask Job. Ask Peter. Insiders made little Jesus'. Yet, they also try to protect them from harm's way. Are church walls built to keep the bad out or to keep the good in? Why do insiders' gossip? Why do they steal money and abuse children? Very few insiders are that extreme but it happens. Why? They were told they are good for life. Without blemish and free from accusation. It gives permission for sin to run amuck.

When a pastor lies what happens? They hide it within the walls. He knows he can come to God for forgiveness. Yet, not once do they believe their status with God is broken. I'm not saying it was. Yet, they believe what they have heard. It's just a small lie and I'm still forgiven. It's an affair but I'm forgiven. The serial killers ended up looking at each other in jail directly because they just knew they were from good homes. What could possibly go wrong when you're without blemish and forgiven? Sin gets a free pass. It's not just crouching at your door, it lives there!

Insiders are some of the nicest people I've met. I have one prayer friend who is so good. It's Jesus standing with me every time he is near. He is a good man. I can feel it. In a goodness place (like a church) what can go so wrong? How can clicks form? How can partiality to ministry jobs form? Why are life groups designed by friendship and flavor more than strangers? Why do insiders give to missions but rarely go on missions? It's all built on the goodness of the yard stick. Keep distance between what we believe is good and know is bad.

Saint *"a person acknowledged as holy or virtuous and typically regarded as being in heaven after death."*

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The word Saint and Holy being applied to humans is a very bad idea. If the chief sin in humans is pride, then why on earth would you puff them up using the word “Saint.” I know people who think they have achieved Sainthood. The Pope thinks so too. I went through words associated with Saint and got the impression it means Holy. However, the words good person can describe a Saint.

If insiders are called Saints, then we have a problem. If the term holy and people like Saint Teresa or Saint Mary are considered good, where do most insiders stand? We think people like that are the bench mark. Perfect. That view is dangerous ground for humans. Add words like “*without blemish and free from sin*” to the mix and our pride meter will explode. Patrick, it’s just a term. Oh, I wish it was. I do think that the congregations by and large are good people. Saints? Holy? Outsiders believe they should be. Insiders by and large think they are. Forgiven right?

Paul says in Romans 8:27 “*Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*” Paul is no dummy. Sure, I wish he left out the word Saint. Yet, it’s there. The problem is it runs smack dab into Jesus’ statement “*only the Father is good.*” Houston, we still have a problem.

Insiders have unfortunately been led down the garden path. Probably, from Jesus’ death to around the late 1800’s, people were told they were filthy rags. Condemnation and judgment reigned. Then in came the Holiness movement. The words changed. Now enters joy, saint, holy, forgiven, salvation, and a bunch more feel-good words to massage our pride. Miracles, healing, love, and grace took center stage. All of a sudden God loves us.

It’s not that God’s love had changed. What changed is insiders love towards themselves. We are now empowered to love, heal, forgive, and speak for God. Cults have risen alongside this

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Pentecostal movement. Just a few examples. There is a song by Jesus culture that I really love. it's called "Show me your Glory." At one point the singer joyfully wants to jump into Gods fire and glory. Ask Moses if that is a good idea? Yet, God now loves us so much that we can come near to him without fear. Who said *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom?*

There is a story in Acts 19 of a few men believing they could cast out a demon in the name of Jesus. The demon replies "*And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"*" The demon then thrashes the men. It's one thing to say or claim your Christian or a saint. It's another to be worthy, holy, and able to work the miracles of God. What fuels the cults and Pentecostal movements? Affirming that we are little Gods under the Father in heaven. The holy ones.

When you begin to preach to insiders that they are bullet proof; oh yes, we have a problem. When insiders begin to believe they are without blemish and free from sin. Oh yes, we have a problem. I believe one of the reasons we have built massive mega church buildings is not about accommodating people. Rather, it's to hide sin. In a small group sin is much more evident. Who knows who in a large group?

I had a roommate who had particular sexual tastes. Basically, it was a smorgasbord. He was a church goer. Eventually, he believed it was time to be baptized. This man took the course and was approved by the pastors. In his baptism they asked him if he was dedicated to a life of Christ. He wholeheartedly said yes. People cried and there were shouts of joy. To be frank, at home, he still had a ton of porn and several types of dildos. I know because we cleaned out his room when he left. Insider approved, what do I know?

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An insider of a church is supposed to be a Saint (good person). They are supposed to be dedicated to Christ. Yet, church is set up to say “*we are*” not “*we should be.*” Admit it, at church they sometimes end the congregational prayer “and all the saints say.” I just shudder at the thought that we leave church feeling far too good about ourselves these days. I’m not so sure I would have liked hell and damnation sermons in medieval times. I’m equally not thrilled with love and joy. The trouble with humans is the middle ground. There isn’t any.

I believe Paul was writing to the Saints. I equally believe that he was calling them good people. Even those in troubled churches like the church in Thyatira in Revelation 2. Jesus said that he knew of their good deeds. It appeared that their love and faith were growing. Yet, he had harsh words for them. Saints? The reason church in the modern era has struggled is complicated. I can’t really blame them. Insiders call themselves Saints. J Vernon McGee says often in his radio Bible study that there are Saints and aint’s. He is referring mostly to those inside and outside church walls. As a pastor for 40 plus years, J. Vernon McGee has also said that 95% of the church just might not be saved.

This book is going to talk in great detail about solutions. There is no point in throwing out what the church body has gained or built. If we are told we’re good then what do we focus on? Goodness or growing goodness? Running church like it is a (growing goodness) corporation is a bad idea. It was never meant to be that way. Think about it. Jesus group was growing. Exactly how big was Jesus group at its pinnacle? Twice he fed over 4000 people. Were they following him? Where they Christian?

Yet, at one point a few of John’s men left because they could not handle the teaching as I said earlier. The crowds eventually turned-on Jesus. Specifically, Jesus invited three men to witness his transfiguration and a small number of miracle’s. Why? It’s because insiders that see

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too much power begin to ask if they could sit at his right and left in heaven. Humans are built that way. People stop wanting to be good; but rather, they tend to bottle it and sell it.

A church that grows powerful and rich will lose their sight though the mounds of gold. They just will. Pile up the programs and ministries and you will lose friendships. Christianity was meant to be intimate with God and a few friends. Insiders are good people. Yet, when they are given the keys to heaven, by their church, all hell will break loose. Is it really the fault of a congregational member if they are encouraged to attend and get involved more than read their Bible? I had a couple ask me if I could speak in tongues yet? I said not yet. They replied “it will come, don’t worry.” That’s it in a nutshell. Losing sight of why were Christian. It’s not to gain spiritual power but to see the glory of God.

It's not the insider's fault they have been repeatedly called Saints. How can you blame a PK kid from accepting a job? We should make sure that good Christians run the church. We must keep Christianity theologically safe. I get it. The only problem with all this good protectionism is the great commission. They do not jive together. The Christian movement was meant to be in danger of extinction. It always has.

The reason there are insiders and outsiders are perception. Where is the good in this world? Who are the saved and saints? I remember reading from an author Alan Hearsh that he witnessed the power of the Spirit in the back alleys of sin more than in his own church. Where God is: that is where goodness triumphs; rather than resides. You can't bottle that. You can't memorize that. I dare say you can't grow that. It happens because regardless of outside and inside: God is happening.

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Ok, we must move on. I will repeat again that insiders are not the problem. It's the message. They are not as holy as they are told they are. These wonderful people are encouraged to believe they are saved because they feel saved. I would rather have 1 fearful Christian doubting his worthiness than 1000 saints. I'm positive the demons would fear one repentant Saint over 10 PK kids.

One last thought. 1 John 1:8 *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."* Think about that for a while. A long while too. Is it more powerful to claim your inside the walls, or is it more powerful showing your good deeds to the unsaved? Where would Jesus be? Come on, be honest here. If you believe that there are insiders and outsiders you're not in a good place. What if you said everyone in the whole world are sinners (even Christians) while singing *"he's got the whole world in his hands."* Then just maybe, outsiders might want to come in to see your side of the walls.