



COMPLETE IN CHRIST

A STUDY OF PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

"For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him..." — Colossians 2:9 -10

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INTRODUCING PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Colossians 2:9–10

For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him...

Colossians 1:19

For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.

Colossians 3:11

But Christ is all in all.

Colossians 1:18

That in all things He might have the preeminence.

Such is a sampling of the teaching found in the epistle to the Colossians. It is such a glorious revelation concerning the greatness of Christ and His supremacy over all that there is no limit to the height of its reach. Yet this epistle takes the supreme revelation of Christ and brings it to the believer to live out in the mundane things of life. Yet we should expect this from the revelation of our Lord. He does not give us empty theory or knowledge, for “knowledge puffeth up” (1 Corinthians 8:1).

So Paul brings this revelation that is higher than the heavens and brings it down to earth. No thoughts are present of being “too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good.” The practical outworking of this revelation is more practically to stop being so earthly minded that we are of no heavenly good. Or maybe to be so heavenly minded that we are of the most earthly good.

Paul presents this letter as a correction. In correcting, he speaks so highly of our Lord Jesus Christ that none of the earthly things become of any significance. Christ indeed is all in all. Some key words that he uses in this epistle include:

- Head (1:18, 2:10, 2:18)
- fulfill (1:25, 4:16)
- fill (1:9, 1:24)

- fullness (1:19, 2:9)
- complete (1:10, 4:12)
- perfect (1:28, 4:12)
- knowledge (1:9, 1:10, 1:27, 2:2, 2:3, 3:10, 3:24, 4:1)
- wisdom (1:9, 2:3, 2:23)
- understanding (1:9, 2:2)
- mystery (1:26, 1:27, 2:2, 4:3)
- hid (1:26, 2:3)
- thanksgiving (1:3, 1:12, 2:7, 3:15, 3:17, 4:2)
- all (1:4, 1:6, 1:9, 1:10, 1:11, 1:16, 1:17, 1:18, 1:19, 1:20, 1:28, 2:3, 2:9, 2:13, 2:19, 2:22, 3:8, 3:11, 3:14, 3:16, 3:22, 4:12)
- preeminence (1:18)
- The call is for each believer, and for assemblies as a group, and for the Church which is His Body to be grounded (1:23), settled (1:23), rooted (2:7), built up (2:7), and stablished (2:7)

We read this great revelation of Christ as preeminent in all things, and the great practical outworking of this is that Christ is ALL IN ALL. In Christ there is neither “Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free” (Colossians 3:11). There is no distinction between these in the Body of Christ. Christ is all in all. The Apostle Paul tells us that there are no Chris-

tians that are to be separated from others as Greek Christians or Jewish Christians. There are only Christians. There is no special class of circumcised Christians to be separated from uncircumcised Christians. No Barbarian Christians, Scythian Christians, bond Christians or free Christians. There are only Christians. Whether a local assembly is composed of a single ethnic group or of many it does not matter. Christ is all in all. The ethnically singular assembly when focusing on Christ as all in all will have no problem welcoming and rejoicing when those of another ethnicity or culture have joined themselves to Christ and come among them. The assembly already composed of believers of many backgrounds will rejoice in the unity they have found in Christ. Whether there is a proper mix of social groups — what does it matter? Christ is all in all.

1 Corinthians 7:22

"For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant."

Christ is all in all. With Christ as all in all, there is no separation among the brethren. No quotas. Christ and the gospel of Him consume us! What a wonderful answer to the racial and social angst that is continually in focus! Christ now becomes the basis for all of our relationships. Christ is all in all! The things of the world, the rudiments, become nothing when we take our places seeking those things that are above, *"where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God"* (Colossians 3:1).

I welcome you to join me in this study of this most glorious epistle, preserved for us from the pen of our apostle Paul, regarding the great glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, who truly is our everything, our ALL IN ALL.

Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to read Paul's epistle to the Colossians and to be familiar enough with it so when we deal with the details, we will not forget the big picture. Until then, may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ richly bless you.

GRACE AND PEACE: COLOSSIANS 1:1-2

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

PAUL'S APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

As we begin this study of Paul's epistle to the Colossians, it is important that we get settled on the authority of its author. Paul first lets us know by what authority this letter comes: It comes with the authority of an apostle, or one who is sent, of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the epistle to the Galatians, where Paul dedicates much ink defending his apostleship, he designates himself by the following:

Galatians 1:1

"Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead;)"

Note the difference, where in Colossians he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, and in Galatians he is an apostle by Jesus Christ. In Galatians, Paul is making the point that he was sent by the Lord Jesus Himself. In Colossians, he is making the point of who he is speaking for. Now, no one could make himself an apostle. Some so-called "clergymen" today designate themselves apostles, but they DO NOT have apostolic authority. Those who the Lord calls apostles have apostolic authority. Paul was made an apostle by the will of God.

Galatians 1:15-16

"But when it pleased God, Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood..."

This designation as apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God is also letting us know the source of this epistle. The apostles of Jesus Christ have His authorized stamp of approval, and as He said about His twelve apostles of the circumcision, the same is true of the apostle of the Gentiles:

John 13:20

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me."

Those who would reject Paul's authority, or make his epistles as subordinate to the "red letters" should take this to heart. As Paul says "grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ", we take that as the greeting from God Himself. The remainder of this epistle is also from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, let us look at what Paul says to the boasters in Corinth who thought themselves quite spiritual because of their spiritual gifts:

1 Corinthians 14:37

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

If we now are now settled on Paul's authority as one sent by Jesus Christ, we can move on and continue to study this epistle. The riches contained in it are inexhaustible, but we will mine all that we can!

TIMOTHEUS OUR BROTHER

Timotheus (Timothy) is designated as “brother”. Paul calls him his own son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2), but in this case, he is “brother”. He is brother to Paul, and he is brother to the Colossian believers.

Galatians 3:26

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

It is important to recognize and rightly divide the use of “brother” in Scripture. Note how Peter uses the term “brethren”, or his group of brothers, to speak to the Jewish people:

Acts 3:17

"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."

Do you see that these brethren are the unbelieving Jews of whom Peter points the finger of blame for crucifying the Lord Jesus, Who is God’s Christ? Paul also uses the term brethren to refer to Jewish people as well:

Romans 9:1–5

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

Paul, however, is not speaking of Timotheus (Timothy) here as his brother by nationality or by physical birth. He is rather speaking of him as his brother in the Lord.

SAINTS AND FAITHFUL BRETHREN

As he called Timothy brother, the Colossian saints will also be referred to as brethren. The epistle is written to the saints and faithful brethren at Colosse. As Timotheus was a brother, so is the group to which Paul is writing. As regarding “saints”, look at how Paul addresses the assembly at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 1:2

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours..."

The assembly at Corinth was not known for its “saintly” behavior. It was known for its carnality. Yet Paul called them saints and sanctified in Christ Jesus. The word sanctified could easily be said “saintified” to get a picture of what it means. The saints (holy, set apart people) are sanctified (made saints, i.e. “saintified”) because they are in Christ. No one outside of Christ is a saint. No one in Christ is not a saint.

When Paul addresses the saints and faithful brethren, he is not speaking to two different groups of people, but rather using this two-fold term to describe a single group. They are faithful because they are believing brethren. They would not be brethren if they were not believing, because as Paul said to the Galatians, “ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26).

GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE

Grace and peace are God’s message of the day. They are the opposite of what will be the case when the day of salvation comes to a close and the Lord returns to take what is rightfully His:

Psalm 2:5

"Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure."

Revelation 19:11

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war."

When our Lord came to earth the first time, the declaration from God was one of peace:

Luke 2:13–14

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

This will not be the case when He comes the second time. Judgment and war are the opposite of grace and peace. Speaking to the nations in wrath is the opposite of a declaration saying "on earth peace, good will toward men." To get a good sense of what the shepherds saw, look to some earlier English translations, such as Tyndale, or the Geneva Bible, and you will see "heavenly soldiers". This was the army of heaven! Is it any wonder that the angels had to tell the shepherds to "fear not"? The message of heaven's army to earth at this time was "peace, good will toward men". The record shows though that man showed his enmity toward God by crucifying the Prince of Peace. The Nations and the People (Psalm 2:1), i.e., Gentiles and the

People of Israel, came together in unity against God's anointed. Even in resurrection, Israel sent the message that "we will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14) in the way that the message of the apostles was rejected. So how was God to answer? By the words of the psalmist, He would speak to them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Instead, God in His grace has postponed wrath (it will still come), and is speaking to this world with the message of grace and peace. It is the word of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:19–21

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

So as we close this study, where do you stand in regards to God's grace? The grace of God that brings salvation is freely offered by faith in Jesus Christ and His finished payment for your sins when He died for you at the cross. Will you commit yourself fully to Him to save you and stop trusting in your own merit, leaning fully on His?

Titus 2:11

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men..."

THANKSGIVING — FOR THE FRUIT OF THE GOSPEL: COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

After declaring the source of his authority in this letter, and the wonderful message of grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul begins to tell the Colossian saints and faithful brethren that he gives thanks to God for them. Notice, that Paul is very specific about the God that he is thanking. In our day, one can say “thank God” about many things and not draw irritation from any except the most militantly secular and/or athiest, but say “thank the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” and watch the reaction! That is being very specific about the identity of the God that you are thanking. Now in a “Christian culture”, it seems obvious that to say “thank God” would be assumed to mean the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or as some would say “the God of the Bible”, but during the time when Paul wrote this, there were “many that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many)”, but he was certain to remind his readers that “to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him” (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). In the previous verse, the apostle stated that “we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one” (1 Corinthians 8:4).

Now often in this day in which we live, it will be stated that “Christians, Jews, and Muslims all worship the same God”, but is that the case? The God that we worship is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, then it is another god. It is interesting that the God that was known in the Old Testament as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now is known by a further (and far greater) designation. For the Lord Jesus Christ has a Name that is above every other name!

Now Paul is thankful for these believers, and now he lets them know of his thankfulness for them. How encouraging it must have been for the apostle as he was in prison in Rome to hear of an assembly that was bringing forth the fruit of the gospel!

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

Paul is thankful to hear about their faith in Christ Jesus. He is thankful to hear about the love that this assembly has for one another, and for other saints that they had not even met. He then remind the saints that he is thankful that they have a hope — IN HEAVEN! Remembering the past position of these Gentiles:

Ephesians 2:11–12

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world..."

But praise God, that as Paul went on to teach the Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:13

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

So he could now say to the Colossians that he is thankful to the GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST for the HOPE THAT IS LAID UP FOR THEM IN HEAVEN.

Regarding the faith of these believers, let us look at the direction, or the object of their faith: This is faith in Christ Jesus. He is the object of their faith. If one talks of the kind of faith that saves, or "what does saving faith look like", this is what it looks like. It is faith in Christ Jesus. The strength of faith is another matter, but the faith that saves depends completely on its object. As an illustration, think of three skydivers. One has an amazingly strong faith in his parachute, and another is weak in faith about his. The third jumps with no parachute at all because he doesn't need such silly things. We know what happens him: he becomes a crater in the earth's surface. But let us discuss the other two: I imagine there would be four possible outcomes for their jump. The first possible outcome is that both of their parachutes open. The second possible outcome is that the parachute of the man with strong faith in it opened, and the parachute of the man with weak faith in it found his weak faith to be too strong in his unfaithful parachute, because it did not

open. The third possible outcome is the reverse. The man with strong faith found his faith to be unfounded because his parachute failed, but the man with weak faith found that his parachute was worthy of more faith than he had in it, because it did what it was supposed to do: it opened, slowed his fall, and he descended safely to earth. The fourth possible outcome is most tragic, for both the weak and the strong faith were misplaced. Both men's parachutes failed, and they joined the man without a parachute to become craters.

Other than the very obvious lesson of making sure that you have a well functioning parachute before jumping out of a plane, there is a much more important lesson. The man with no parachute needed one, whether he believed it so or not. The other two: their faith saved them only if their parachute functioned correctly. Their faith did not save them if their parachute, the object of their faith, failed.

So this is what is meant by "saving faith". If our faith is in Christ Jesus our Lord and in the gospel that the scripture tells us saves, how that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4), we are saved, and our "faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). This is true, whether it is a great faith so as to remove mountains, or a tiny faith as a mustard seed.

So faith is in Christ Jesus. Saving faith must be rooted in the word of God:

Romans 10:17

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Faith is in what God has said. It is not in what we hope to be true, but in what is true. If we do not have faith in the revealed word of God, it is merely presumption or superstition. Some would add that faith is

commitment. That could be true to an extent, in that faith in Christ is committing myself fully to Him to save me. It is not how fully I commit my life to Him. The result of that definition of faith results in what essentially becomes a works salvation — “Lordship salvation” — creating doubt and fear in all who hear it. “Lordship salvation”, like so many other errors, can trace its roots to not rightly dividing the Scriptures and bringing in to the present dispensation of grace teachings that are foreign to it, not understanding or even attempting to understand the context or the audience to which they belong.

So now that we have discussed the faith in Christ Jesus, let us explore the object of love for which Paul is thanking our God. He is thanking God that they have love to all the saints. They love each other, and their love goes out to “all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their’s and our’s” (1 Corinthians 1:2). Paul also is thankful to hear from Epaphras that the love of the saints goes out to him and Timothy as well. Now love to and from the saints is not only a feeling. In fact, a feeling is almost never what is spoken of in Scripture, but love is a choice, and love is an action. And it is good that love for and to the saints is not based on feeling. It is based on so much more than that. It is because we are in Christ. And because we are in Christ, we saints can love each other even when we do not feel love toward each other. We can love each other even when we are not lovable.

Another note of good news and exhortation — our love is to be directed toward the saints, not our faith. Faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ. The saints can and will let us down. Our Lord will not. Do not ever give up on the Lord Jesus if the saints or the church has let you down. Your faith is not in them. Your faith should only rest in Christ.

Notice that these three evidences which abide are spoken of throughout Paul’s epis-

cles. In 1 Thessalonians, notice how these three are bound together:

1 Thessalonians 1:3

“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father...”

Let us look at 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter devoted to love, translated charity in our King James Version. “Charity” is an excellent translation of ἀγάπη (“*agapē*”), the same word translated love here in Colossians, because of its similarity to the word χάρις (“*chāris*”). This word is most often translated “grace”. While not an expert at words, languages, or etymology, I can see the possibility of the relationship. And it makes sense, because the love of the saints for each other is because of grace. Grace was shown and given to us out of God’s good will. We are forgiven because of the riches of God’s grace (Ephesians 1:7), and we can love in spite of feelings. We can love, because of God’s grace.

1 Corinthians 13:13

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

THE GOSPEL THAT BRINGS FORTH FRUIT

These Colossian believers heard the word of the truth of the gospel. Paul spoke to the Ephesian believers in the book of Acts:

Acts 20:24

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

The Colossians heard the word of the truth of the gospel, and since the day they

heard it, they knew the grace of God in truth. This gospel had gone to all the world, and it brings forth fruit everywhere it goes. This is the good news of Christ Jesus and His finished work of our redemption on Calvary's cross for our sins.

Titus 2:11–12

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world..."

All achievements of every kind pale in comparison to the salvation bringing grace of God. This grace of God *will* bring forth fruit. Do we want to see lasting change in people, cities, nations, and cultures? The grace of God preached in truth will bring the change that God wants.

Warren Wiersbe writes of a man named John Seldon, who lived from 1584–1654. He was a leading historian and legal authority in England who had a library of eight thousand volumes. He was very recognized for his learning. This very learned man is reported to have said to Archbishop Ussher:

*"I have surveyed most of the learning that is among the sons of men, and my study is filled with books and manuscripts on various subjects. But at present, I cannot recollect any passage out of all my books and papers whereon I can rest my soul, save this from the sacred Scriptures: 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men' (Titus 2:11)."*¹

How wonderful is the gospel of God's grace! It is undeserved and unmerited. It

¹ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Complete: Become the Whole Person God Intends You to Be: NT Commentary, Colossians*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008, Print. P.31.

blessees those that the law curses. God's grace is the source of our salvation in Christ:

Ephesians 2:8–9

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Romans 3:24

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."

There is nothing within any of us that merits God's grace. It is not because He owes us anything, for He certainly does not. It will not be a reward that God owes:

Romans 4:4

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."

Notice too that this fruit that the gospel of grace brings forth is the faith, hope and love that we just explored. What is more, Paul's epistle to the Romans states that "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4). It is not the law that brings forth fruit, it is the grace of God in truth. More yet, the grace of God brings forth all of the manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22–23). This outward sign of inward faith becomes evident when the gospel of the grace of God is preached and believed.

DEAR EPAPHRAS

Epaphras is mentioned here as a dear fellow-servant. He is not mentioned in Paul's apostolic greeting, but he is said here to be a faithful minister of Christ. Later in this epistle, in 4:12, Paul says that Epaphras was one

of the Colossians, and a servant of Christ. From verse 23 in Philemon, he was also a prisoner with Paul.

In verse 8, Paul says that Epaphras “declared unto us your love in the Spirit”, and by this, he seems to be the messenger from the Colossians to Paul. How grateful the ambassador in bonds must have been to hear about the Colossian assembly and to hear that they declared their love! God used this message from the Colossians to Paul through Epaphras to also let Paul know that there was a group thinking of him. He may also have been used to let Paul know about what was necessary for him to write to them. In this way, God would have providentially used the imprisoning of this man, Epaphras, to be the catalyst responsible for the epistle to the Colossians that we are studying today.

I say he *may* also have been used for this because the Lord could have also revealed

directly to Paul the need to write. In either case, this mostly unsung hero of the faith probably never would have guessed that his trip to prison would cause his name to be immortalized in the pages of holy scripture. He is remembered as a fellowservant, a faithful minister, a fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus, and a servant of Christ. How wonderful to be remembered this way! What will be said of us years from now? How will we be remembered? Will those who come behind us find us faithful?

As we close this study, I will leave you with another question as well: Have you heard the word of the truth of the gospel that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the scriptures? You have now read these wonderful words of life. Will you *hear* them? Will you know the grace of God in truth?

THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL: COLOSSIANS 1:9

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...

Paul's first ministry for these saints is that he earnestly and sincerely prays for them. This unceasing prayer truly helps to understand the imperative to "pray without ceasing". We never stop praying. The Apostle of Grace then lets them know the contents his prayer for them. After hearing their love for him in the Spirit from Epaphras (Colossians 1:8), he began to pray without ceasing for them since that very day. What great praise must have filled the heart of the jailed apostle — the ambassador in bonds! But it did not end with praise, but with desire for their good and desire for their growth in the Lord.

Now we find here the desire from Paul that these saints would be filled with the knowledge of the will of the Lord. If we take a sneak-peek to chapter 4, we find out that Epaphras has prayed that the Colossian assembly would "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12). In answer to this prayer, the Lord moved Paul to write this epistle to teach and re-teach that completion is found in Christ, and in Christ alone.

In verse 9, we find for the first time that the word "filled" is used in this epistle. To the Ephesians, Paul writes telling them to "be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be *filled* with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Notice the comparison of the command to be filled with the Spirit as opposed to being drunk with wine. One who is drunk, is filled with alcohol. When filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit dwelling in believers controls

them. This is not manifest in the supernatural signs that were prevalent in the Acts period when the Kingdom was still being offered to Israel, but in the way illustrated in the following:

Galatians 5:22–25

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

This filling with the Spirit manifests itself in day to day life. Our walk in the Spirit is not a walk where we disassociate ourselves from reality, but where we walk through reality in the power of the Spirit. It is by faith that we walk (2 Corinthians 5:7), and as we yield to the Spirit as He leads *by the written Word of God*, we walk in the Spirit.

Notice that following the command to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18, there is following a description of what the filling looks like, and how it is accomplished. As we yield to the Spirit following these work instructions, we become filled with the Spirit, walking in the will of the Lord. Then as we become filled with the Spirit, we are more able to walk in the will of the Lord. The yielding to the Spirit, an active choice, becomes a change in life and lifestyle, so that we are filled, and walking in the sphere of the Spirit. This is what Paul, *by the Spirit*, says the

Spirit-filled life looks like. This is also how we get there:

Ephesians 5:19–22, 25, 6:1, 4–5, 9

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord ... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it ... Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right ... And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ ... And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him".

It is allowing the Holy Spirit to control your life and attitude to live well with each other. This is truly supernatural. Remember well, that the Spirit-filled life is not possible for those who do not belong to Christ.

Now in our passage in consideration, Paul prays that the saints would be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. This is not merely knowledge of the facts, but it is walking in the sphere of that knowledge. In this case, we must also remember where we get the knowledge of the will of God. It is not from signs and feelings and inner promptings. It is from the written Word of God. It is not from randomly looking at Scripture passages and applying them to yourself, but from reading and understanding what God is saying and what God is doing.

Now, regarding the will of God, it would do the Body of Christ a great service to itself to get settled on this fact, that it is stated in Scripture by Paul, by the inspiration of God (1 Timothy 3:16), that Paul himself is an apostle, one sent by Jesus Christ our Lord, *by the will of God*. This is stated in 1 Corinthians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, and 2 Timothy 1:1. To put this into practical application, the person who is going to be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding must accept that God is speaking to the Body of Christ in Paul's epistles. The following scriptures will be sufficient to rest this case, and notice that in "red letter" Bibles, they are all in "red letters":

John 13:20

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me."

Acts 9:15

"But the Lord said unto [Ananias], Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel..."

Acts 26:16–18

"But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me."

Any study of the will of God would be incomplete without reinforcement of the truth and importance of the authority of the Apos-

tle Paul as the one who is called as the minister of God to the Body of Christ.

Now as we trust the Scripture to make known to us what the will of God is so that we can be filled with the knowledge of it in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, we must go to the Scriptures to learn it. The question is whether or not we trust our Bibles to reveal to us the will of the Blessed Author. Aside from the "1:1's" that I spoke of earlier, let us look to Scripture first to see how they speak of will of God. Here are a few important examples:

Romans 12:1-2

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The will of God is what God wants done and what God is doing. Does God want us living as a sacrifice, a living sacrifice and not a dead one, holy and acceptable to Him, not conformed to the world but transformed by a renewed and a continually renewing mind? The scriptural answer is an emphatic YES!

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their

own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."

The Macedonian assemblies gave of themselves first, and then gave a gift out of their poverty to minister to the saints. This was the will of God. Is it the will of God that we give ourselves, and even give out of our poverty to help a *legitimate* need? YES!

Galatians 1:4

"[The Lord Jesus Christ] gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father..."

This verse on the will of God that makes all others possible. What is God's will for us regarding the present evil world? To deliver us from it! How? By the death of Christ for our sins! What is God doing in this present evil world (age)? He is reconciling sinners to Himself by the cross (2 Corinthians 5:18, Colossians 1:20-22) and making one new man (Ephesians 2:15), the Body of Christ. In the future Kingdom age — the age to come — He will make the wrongs in the world right and it will be an age of justice: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: *for they shall be filled*" (Matthew 5:6). While we hunger and thirst for righteousness (justice) today, we should truly be thankful that He is dealing with us according to His *mercy* (Titus 3:5).

Ephesians 6:5-8

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

The will of God is for those who are called by His Name to be of service to others. This service to others can be service to Christ with the right attitude. Now service for others that is wrong cannot be said to be service for Christ, but whatsoever *good thing* that can be done can be done as unto the Lord, and this is His will. And we will receive from the Lord the reward of our work, even if we never receive it from those we are for whom we are working. What is more, He will reward the bondservant or the free man. Notice also that the "masters" are to know that they have a master too, who has no respect of persons. What better incentive to treat those doing work for you properly. This is the will of God!

1 Thessalonians 4:2-8

"For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, Who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit."

Here too, do we need any more comment about God's will regarding matters of sins against one's own body (1 Corinthians 6:18)? *"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:20). There is no "it's my body and I can do what I want", or "I'm not hurting anyone because we are both/all consenting adults"! We can and should expect this kind of behavior from those who are not in Christ, but in Christ we are sanctified by position, and a duty of being

sanctified by position is to be sanctified in action, respecting the body that belongs to the Lord as HOLY.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

The last mention in this section concerning the will of God is to give thanks IN everything. Not necessarily for everything, but in everything. If there is anything that should characterize the people of God, it is thankfulness. The Apostle Peter wrote in anticipation of suffering to come the following regarding the will of God:

1 Peter 2:15

"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men..."

1 Peter 3:17

"For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing."

1 Peter 4:2

"That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

1 Peter 4:19

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

While the scriptures have many more things to say about the will of God that are very clear, there may be questions raised about things that we do not have a clear revelation regarding God's will. The first thing in this, to walk in wisdom and spiritual understanding, is to be sure that we are walking according to what IS clear. The Lord has not left His will for us to grasp after in the

dark. He has made it known to us in His Word. This is the case even for God's ultimate plans for the future:

Ephesians 1:9-12

"Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."

As we seek the wisdom and spiritual understanding found in the word of God, let us trust in His command, and His enabling. If He has commanded it, He will not leave it to us to accomplish it without Him. Let us remember that He has surely revealed to us the will that He wants us to walk in.

Ephesians 5:17

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Our Lord is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), and that is why the wait for His return seems to be endless. He will not wait forever, but we can thank Him that He waited for us, and that He "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). That all are not saved is evident, but the will of the Father is that all will, so our Lord Jesus died on the cross to bear all of our sins. How foolish to spurn such a precious gift!

He also will have all come to the knowledge of the truth, so it is imperative for us to find that truth in the one place that He has revealed it: in His Word! We must as Christians be faithful to that Word and not to our traditions, dogmas, denominations, creeds, private thoughts, or any other such thing.

As the Lord Jesus died to deliver us from this present evil world, He died for you too!

**BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED!**

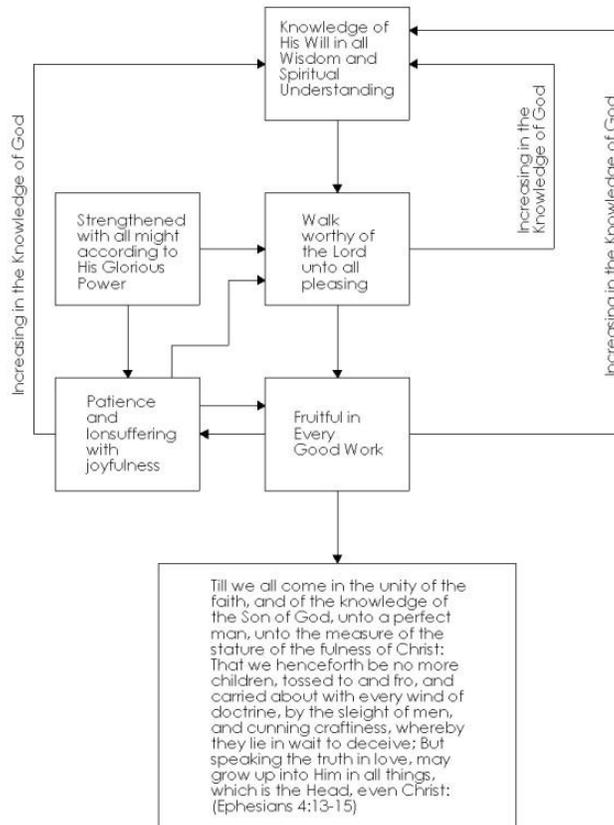
THE APOSTLE PRAYS FOR THE SAINTS: COLOSSIANS 1:9-11

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness...

Now we will continue this study in Colossians looking further into the content of Paul's prayer for these dear saints that he has learned about through Epaphras, his fellow-prisoner. The previous study concentrated on knowledge of the will of God. Knowing the will of God is the first step to walking worthy, because we cannot walk the path before we

know the path. Indeed, it is also true that we cannot know the path until we walk it, so this is again an iterative process. We learn, know, and walk, and we learn more as we walk. The Lord teaches us as we walk.

Look at the diagram for a pictorial description of this "process".



Notice how I attempted to show the “increasing in the knowledge of God” as feedback loops to the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding of verse 9. We gain knowledge of the will of God by revelation — we read it in His Word. We also come to a full and perfected knowledge of His will as we walk and experience the will of God in action:

Romans 5:1–5

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Yes, the trials and tribulations of life work to increase the knowledge of God. Notice also on the left-hand side of the diagram that we are strengthened with all might so that we can walk worthy, and that we can endure all things with patience and longsuffering.

As we move down this diagram from the knowledge of His will to walking worthy, let us examine what walking worthy looks like:

Ephesians 4:1–6

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

In his epistles, Paul always teaches the doctrines with a goal in mind, and that is to affect the lives of the saints. For instance, the doctrine of the one body and one baptism found in Ephesians 4 reminds us of 1 Corinthians 12:13, in which the entire purpose of this section is to mold behavior that ceases to puff one believer against another because of the perception of having greater gifts than another. The goal is for the Body of Christ to be a united body in which all of the differing gifts and manifestations of the Spirit work toward the goal of building each other up.

Now walking worthy also includes being fruitful in every good work. As we studied in verse 6, the gospel of the grace of God brings forth fruit in all the world. It brought forth fruit at the time when Paul wrote this epistle and continues to now. In fact, even before his Roman imprisonment, Paul and those with him were called “these that have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). As this gospel brings forth fruit in all the world, it brings forth fruit leading to every good work in individuals and assemblies as well. These good works in which we believers are to bear fruit are not specified. They do not need to be, for they are not limited. They are never completed, for just as a fruit-bearing tree continues to bear fruit, a fruit bearing Christian will continue to bear fruit.

Galatians 6:10

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Notice no minimum or maximum amount, but it is “as we have therefore opportunity”. This is what we are made for!

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Remember that this comes on the heels of learning the facts that our grace through faith salvation is not of ourselves and is the gift of God, *not of works* (Ephesians 2:8-9). These good works are the natural outworking of being filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual understanding and being strengthened with all might according to His glorious power. These good works that we are created unto are not things that we need to accomplish to prove the Lord right in saving us, because He never saved us because of ourselves, but because He loves us. He did, however, save us to this new life which has good works in us that are as natural as breathing. We breathe because we are living, and we walk in the good works that God ordained for us to walk in because we have been quickened together with Christ (Ephesians 2:5).

One more matter before we leave this study: I drew this diagram as a process to illustrate the process, but the truth is that it is very simplified compared to what is really happening in the Christian's life. The Christian, and the Body of Christ composed of true believers, are both living and breathing organisms that live because we have life, and that life is in the Son. It will not be as a simple mechanical process. Our life is one of submission to the Lord and His work in us. It is important to remember that it is not just to "wait for the Spirit to move" before we do anything, but to believe what He has said, and for us to obey His word to us, as He wrote by Paul's hand. Then we will mature and walk worthy. This is absolutely a God-empowered and supernatural work, but as Paul told the Philippians:

Philippians 2:12-13

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Our place is to work with God and "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). As we submit to His will that He has revealed to us, He will empower us to further walk worthy. The goal:

Ephesians 4:13-16

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love".

Until next time, let this prayer from the apostle for the saints be our prayer for each other as well. We have a wonderful, powerful, and gracious Lord who is willing that we grow in Him.

REDEEMED, FORGIVEN, DELIVERED, TRANSLATED, AND WORTHY:
COLOSSIANS 1:12-14

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins...

As Paul continues writing to the Colossian assembly about his prayer for them, he lets them know again that he is thankful to God, the Father. In verse 3 he speaks to the saints regarding his thanksgiving, and leads in to what he is thankful for about them. Here, when he seems to be continuing his thought about what he prays for concerning them, he goes off on an “inspired tangent”, which really brings us to the object of this epistle: The dear Son of God!

The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. So let me ask you this: Do you feel that you are worthy to be a partaker with the “holy ones”? If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you absolutely are. You probably do not feel like you are, but we walk by faith, not by feelings, so we believe what God has said in His Word. How do we know that we are worthy? Because the Father did it, and it is done.

Ephesians 2:4-10

"But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man

should boast. FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

So as we look to see what it means to be “made meet”, let us look at other ways this term is used in scripture. The Greek term is *ἱκανόω* (*hikanoō*), and for you grammarians, it is a verb. As a verb, it is used one other time, in 2 Corinthians 3:6, and is translated “made us able”. There is also a noun form, *ἱκανότης* (*hikanótēs*), which is translated “sufficiency” in 2 Corinthians 3:5. The root is an adjective, *ἱκανός* (*hikanos*), which is variously translated “meet”, “worthy”, “much”, “many”, “large”, “great”, “enough”, and “sufficient”.

Why bother with this grammar? It helps me to understand what is meant by a term, so I hope that it helps you to understand as well. In and of ourselves, we are not much, great, enough, sufficient, meet, or thy. God, however, has made those that He has saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ all of these things, and it is our job to accept what He has done by faith and to believe it. We are to take our place as worthy to be partakers of this inheritance because He said it. So just as you probably do not feel righteous, but know that you are by faith, so you are worthy to partake with the saints (“holy ones”) in light. So rather than arguing with the Lord about your worthiness, and fighting to hold on to your unworthiness, let this great fact that He “made us meet” bring

you to the place of gratitude: Giving thanks to the Father!

2 Corinthians 9:15

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

So how are we meet? We are worthy, because we are in Christ (Galatians 3:27). He has accepted us (Ephesians 1:6) because He has accepted Christ and He has graced us in the Beloved One — the Son of His Love!

Since we are in Christ, as far as God is concerned, we already have that place raised up together and sitting in the heavenlies *in Christ* (Ephesians 2:6). We are *predestinated* to receive that inheritance because we are in Christ (Ephesians 1:11). Now, how worthy are we? We are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints *in light*. The light of God, Who caused the light to shine out of darkness (2 Corinthians 4:6), does not show anything that is unworthy, because we are in Christ.

Being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints *in light*, we are no longer under the power, or authority, of darkness. He delivered us from that awful and dreadful tyrannical rule, and has translated us into the KINGDOM OF HIS DEAR SON! Notice how the Lord commissioned Paul to preach the message that would bring about this very thing among the Gentiles:

Acts 26:18

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me."

Think of the grace that is behind giving this grace apart from any covenant whatsoever! Think of it — Gentiles — no longer *"strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God"*

(Ephesians 2:19). We are part of the kingdom of the Son of His Love because He delivered us and brought us there — to make us citizens! Not slaves, not a subjugated people, but citizens! We deserved none of it, because the witness of scripture is that we were enemies (Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:21), but He did everything to make it happen. Our redemption — the means by which He delivered us — is THROUGH HIS BLOOD.

What a great cost, but what a great victory! Were we worthy of this great cost? Absolutely not, *"But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us"* (Ephesians 2:4) paid this cost, and now by His grace He has made us worthy.

Now this redemption must include forgiveness of sins. Sins, the evil that we do, have done, and will commit², must be separated from us. This forgiveness of our sins is only found THROUGH HIS BLOOD. The sinful nature — the evil that we are — must be separated from us, and this forgiveness is only found THROUGH HIS BLOOD.

"Sins" in scripture appear to fall into three categories: There are sins, which are sinful and just plain evil and no good attitudes and actions; iniquities, which are lawless actions and actions contrary to law; and there are trespasses, which are deeds going beyond that which is allowable. In Ephesians 1:7, we are told we are forgiven of trespasses (there is a different word translated "sins" in this verse). In Colossians 1:14, we are forgiven of "sins". The magnitude of both is this: the requirement for both to be forgiven is the blood of Christ. No sin is beyond the reach of this infinite price, but remember too that no sin is beyond the need of this infinite price. His blood was required, and *sufficient*, to pay this great price for this great redemption. This

² Adam's nature has not yet been removed from us, but we wait for the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23)

forgiveness of sins THROUGH HIS BLOOD is only provided according to the riches of His grace.

If you are reading this and do not know Jesus Christ our Lord and do not know by faith the forgiveness of sins through His blood, the gospel that Paul preached to be believed to receive this wonderful redemption is wonderfully simple:

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

"...Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures..."

Acts 16:31

"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

CHRIST THE KING: COLOSSIANS 1:13

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son...

In the study of Colossians 1:12–14, we left off with Paul expressing his thankfulness to the Father, and then he begins bringing us into the wonderful revelation of the person and preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. This portion of scripture is indeed the high-water mark of revelation concerning Christ, and could be well-thought of as a *singularity*, for those of you familiar with mathematics. (A singularity is when the value of a function “explodes” to infinity.)

Since all of this is such a high revelation, every detail demands as much attention as possible. The first revelation is that of the kingdom of His dear Son. In the Old Testament scriptures and the Gospels, the revelation concerning the kingdom of God’s Anointed, His dear Son, is that of David’s throne restored to Israel, and Christ ruling over all nations from Jerusalem.

Charles Baker, when discussing the offices of Christ, had this to say regarding the office of Christ as King:

Covenant theologians and Amillennialists are forced to spiritualize David’s throne and make it to be the throne of God in heaven where Christ is now seated. That the apostles did not so understand it is evident from James’ remarks in Acts 15:16 where he makes it clear that at the then present David’s throne was in a state of deterioration, and that it would be after the return of Christ that it would be rebuilt and established. It is indeed difficult to understand how one can believe that Christ is at present exercising His kingly office and that Satan is at present bound in the abyss that he should deceive the nations no more, when sin

and ungodliness are rampant in the world and have been since the days of the apostles. Such misinterpretation of the Scripture makes void nine-tenths of the promises of God and at the same time makes a farce of the Kingship of Christ.

A great deal of confusion concerning the Kingship of Christ has arisen because of a misunderstanding of the Scriptural use of the word kingdom. A kingdom implies a king. If there is such a thing as the kingdom of God today, must there not be a king in that kingdom? Assuredly there must. God Himself is King in the Kingdom of God. God’s kingdom, according to Scripture, is at times represented as the entire universe, as in Daniel 4:17; and at other times as limited to those beings who are in subjection to God spiritually, as in John 3:3. God’s kingdom reigneth over all. Thus the Body of Christ of this dispensation as well as the Messianic Kingdom of the coming dispensation are both a part of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is analogous to the United States as being one and yet comprised of several distinct States. One may be in New York or California and be in the United States, but one cannot be in New York while he is in California. And just as New York and California are separate and distinct parts of the United States, so the Body of Christ and the Messianic Kingdom are separate and distinct parts of the Kingdom of God.³

In our understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ as King, we must make the effort with due diligence (“study”, 2 Timothy 2:15), to understand when the Scripture is speaking of

³ Baker, Charles F. *A Dispensational Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Grace Bible College Publications, 1971. P. 321–322. Print.

His Kingship as the King over all creation, or as the promised Messiah, King of Israel, and ruler of all nations.

When Paul speaks of the Kingdom of God, he speaks of it in its "otherworldly" like character. He speaks of that sphere of sovereignty that is over all creation, but into which all creation has yet to enter. This seems especially true in the following verses:

Romans 14:17

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

1 Corinthians 4:20

"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

1 Corinthians 15:50

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

1 Thessalonians 2:12

"That ye would walk worthy of God, Who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory."

2 Thessalonians 1:5

"Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer..."

2 Timothy 4:18

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Some have made conclusions from this that it clarifies the meaning of the kingdom of God that the Lord spoke of as really being a "spiritual" kingdom and having nothing to do with His earthly reign. They may also go as far as to say that there is no earthly reign, and

that the only thing this world is waiting for is judgment at the last day. It also makes the promises of God to Israel void, and that all of God's promises to Israel are being fulfilled to "the Church", spiritually. Of course, all of the judgments on Israel will or already have been literally fulfilled on Israel.

The problem, as so often is the case, is that of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). "Reformed" theology for the most part seems to recognize Paul's gospel for "the Church", but also brings the prophecies specifically belonging to Israel, either as under the Law or in the Kingdom and applies all of it to "the Church". In doing so, it has to do away with a literally fulfilled Kingdom on earth, as Charles Baker stated. To be consistent with Scripture, we must accept that "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1), was born "King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2), prophesied as a "Governor to rule [the LORD's] people Israel" (Matthew 2:6, c.f. Micah 5:2), was to be given the "throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32), to "reign over the house of Jacob for ever" (Luke 1:33), and is witnessed to be the "Son of God", and as such the "King of Israel" (John 1:49).

When questioned by Pilate as to whether He was King of the Jews, the Lord answered thus:

John 18:36

"My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence."

Some might take this to mean that He would not have a kingdom here on this earth, but we cannot take this to nullify the plethora of Scriptures that say that He certainly will. He did make the point that He was not one of the "four kings which shall arise out of the earth" (Daniel 7:17) as was shown to

Daniel. His kingdom is certainly not of this world system. His kingdom does not come from this world. It is the *Kingdom of Heaven* but it will be established on earth. When Pilate further pressed our Lord about His Kingdom, He replied:

John 18:37

"Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

There is a very real sense now though, that our Lord truly is reigning as King. As He taught His disciples to pray *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10), does this not imply, or rather explicitly declare, that there was at that time a kingdom in heaven where the will of the Father is done? The words do not speak of leaving earth and going to heaven, but rather that that which is true of heaven would be true of earth. These words speak of that kingdom coming to earth.

But while the kingdom has not come to earth yet, the present place of Christ now is at the Father's *"own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:20-23).

In His relation to earth now, He is *"on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool"* (Hebrews 10:12-13). This is explained by Paul as a revelation of the mystery. Now by this revelation, it does not do away with the Messianic Kingdom on this earth, but explains where the Lord is now. The Apostle of the Gentiles reminds us that this Kingdom of

Heaven on earth has not been done away with, for the following scriptures give witness that it is yet to come:

2 Timothy 2:8

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel..."

Reference to the seed of David has everything to do with that position as Messiah of Israel, and referencing the Lord's defense before Pilate, the Apostle reminds us, and this should strike fear and reverence into all of the present rulers of this world:

1 Timothy 6:13-16

"I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in His times He shall shew, Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

This is the same *"Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us"* (Romans 8:34). In His position now at the right hand of the Father, His very presence is interceding on behalf of all those who have believed on Him and His death for our sins and resurrection from the dead. As long as He is seated on the "throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16), He is ministering reconciliation to the world, where all without exception nor distinction can come to God by faith in Him and be saved from every sin. Do you not want freedom from your sins and to be translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love? He wants to save you, and has set the

terms. Jesus Christ our Lord is truly all that you need, but you DO NEED HIM.

**BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED...**

CHRIST THE REDEEMER: COLOSSIANS 1:14

In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins...

As we consider mankind's greatest need, what could be greater than forgiveness of sins? As we get to verse eighteen of chapter one, we see that the Father's goal is that in all things, Christ would have the preeminence. And how great is that preeminence in our redemption? He is first in redemption because He is the Redeemer!

The Redeemer must be able to redeem and willing to redeem. As Redeemer, Jesus Christ is both. Redemption is found in Him alone. He is our redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption..."

But it is neither His life nor His teaching that redeem us. His life was a trial that showed no sin (Hebrews 4:15). Our life is a trial that shows sin, *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). The teachings of our Lord take the commandments of the Law and raise the standard from what is done, to what is thought. Take the time to read Matthew 5:20-32 and remember that the Lord often said *"he that hath ears to hear, let him hear"* (Luke 14:35). Mankind cannot stand against the scrutiny of the Law, much less the scrutiny of the Kingdom code of the King of kings. No, His life and teaching only condemn, so who shall stand at His appearing?

The Bible teaches that it is His death that will redeem. *"In whom we have redemption through His blood..."*

The scriptures speak of a redemption in the Old Testament known as the Passover.

Exodus 12:3, 5-7, 12-13

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house ... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it ... For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

Notice that the lamb was to be without blemish. The Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, was completely without blemish. John states that "in Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). Peter says that He "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22). Paul says that He "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21) and that He was "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Notice here how Peter describes the redemption which Christ provided:

1 Peter 1:18–19

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot..."

Please take this to heart: the lamb had to be without blemish as a requirement for the Passover, but unless the lamb was slain and the blood applied to the upper door post and the side door posts of the houses, it did not redeem. In fact, can you imagine the tragedy of an Israelite home in Egypt that night with an unblemished lamb that was perfectly qualified for the sacrifice, yet they did not kill it and apply the blood to the door posts. The firstborn in that household would have been killed. It is the same with our Lord. His life proved His qualification. His death, His precious blood, is what can redeem. *"In whom we have redemption through His blood..."*

But how is the blood applied?

Romans 3:21–26

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

The blood is applied when the sinner puts faith in His blood. He believes in the death,

burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is when the sinner believes the gospel, *"how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4), that the blood is applied. The redemption is in Christ Jesus. We are justified **FREELY** by His grace. We have *"redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"* (Ephesians 1:7). Let no one call this "cheap grace"! It came at the great price of the precious blood of the Son of God! But God does grace us freely!

God is sovereign, but God is righteous. God justifies freely because He can. The one who "believeth in Jesus" is righteous by an act of God. He declares it so, but He will not declare it so in violation of His own righteousness. There must be forgiveness of sins. They must not be attached to the sinner any more. Remember that God does not change. Witness that even the nation of Israel only exists because God does not change: *"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"* (Malachi 3:6). Recall this proclamation from the LORD to Moses:

Exodus 34:5–7

"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

God is gracious, but He must deal with sin. He does not have to forgive, but He does because He is gracious. He only can right-

eously forgive by the blood of Jesus Christ. He looks at the blood of Christ and He is satisfied. Sins can be forgiven — separated from the sinner — by the blood of Christ.

Romans 4:6–8

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Which sins are forgiven?

Colossians 2:13

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you ALL trespasses..."

"In Whom we have redemption through His blood..."

Is it not wonderful, Christian, to know the joy of redemption and sins forgiven? Join with the Israelites who left Egypt, and the twenty four elders about the throne in heaven:

Exodus 15:2

"The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him."

Revelation 5:9

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation..."

Unsaved friend, Christ died for you too! As the Israelites needed to apply the blood to the door posts, so you must apply the death of Christ to yourself, by faith. It is

not presumptuous to do so, for the blood is already shed. Think of the tragedy of a family that killed the unblemished Passover lamb and did not apply the blood! Only the tragedy for you is not the death of your firstborn, it will be that you must stand before the Lamb of God, He who was made sin on your behalf (2 Corinthians 5:21), in your own sins, and not find your name written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 13:8, 21:27).

Revelation 20:11–15

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Trust in Jesus Christ, the unblemished Lamb of God, our Passover who was sacrificed for us, and His death for your sin, and God will declare you righteous. The one Who is the judge is now the one sits enthroned as Savior.

Romans 8:34

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us."

All judgment is committed to Jesus Christ the Son by the Father (John 5:22), yet He sits enthroned as Savior. When we trust Him, we "apply the blood", and His very presence at

the Father's right hand intercedes for us, and there is *"therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1).

Acts 16:31

**"BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED..."**

CHRIST THE IMAGE OF GOD: COLOSSIANS 1:15

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature...

As we continue looking at this most glorious revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we learn about how we can see the invisible God. We learn how the image of God in man, as man was created, is restored in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Son of Man.

In tracing this idea of the image of God through the scriptures, it is first seen in Genesis chapter 1 regarding the creation of man:

Genesis 1:26–27

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

In whatever other way that mankind is made in the image of God, this one way stated in this verse is that mankind is to have dominion ("lordship") over the other living things on the earth. It is obvious from this fact of creation that man was created with a special purpose above the purpose of the animal world. This mankind in this verse extends to both men and women. Mankind, however, was not satisfied being made in the image of God, and succumbed to the tempter when he promised that "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). So the record goes on to say concerning the children whom Adam would father, represented by Seth:

Genesis 5:3

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth...

Now, this does not take away from how God sees man as bearing His image, because the punishment for murder by the death penalty as given to Noah was justified by the fact of man being made in the image of God:

Genesis 9:6

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man."

Indeed, in describing order in the assembly and proper "dress code", Paul describes man, particularly the man as in God's image:

1 Corinthians 11:7

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man."

With this, however, there is a new way in which man is NOT in the image of God. Adam, and all but one of his descendants as described in Genesis 5 to Noah have this one thing in common: "And he died". This is true of all of Adam's descendants, for "in Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22). A mortal cannot be said to truly bear the image of God, for God cannot die, but our Lord Jesus Christ *"only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto"* (1 Timothy 6:16), and is spoken of this way:

Hebrews 1:1–3

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high..."

The fact that the Son of His Love is the image of the invisible God should do much to shed light on why God, in giving the law, was so opposed to images that man made. In the "Law and the Prophets", we see strict commandments to not make any image and liken it to God:

Exodus 20:4

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth..."

Deuteronomy 4:12, 15–19

"And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice... Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and

serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven".

Isaiah 40:25

"To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One."

The nations, all of them, "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Romans 1:23). That is why God "gave them up" (Romans 1:24, 26), and "gave them over" (Romans 1:28) and called Abram to call a special people to Himself. The special people were to be a "peculiar treasure unto [the LORD] above all people" and "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5–6). A very important qualification in that role was that second commandment "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image".

There is nothing qualified in all of creation to be called the image of God. The Son of His love, the Lord Jesus Christ is the image of God, the firstborn of all creation. This is not to say that He is a created being, but that He has position of firstborn of all creation, because He is Creator.

The unbelieving world does not, in fact it cannot see the glory of Christ as the image of God. They may see "the lowly Jesus, meek and mild", or the "poor man on the cross", but not the image of God. Satan has his way with them blinding their mind to the glory of Christ:

2 Corinthians 4:3–4

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Note that this does not say that they cannot believe the gospel of Christ, it is that they

cannot see the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God. They cannot see His glory. As Paul said concerning Israel:

2 Corinthians 3:16

"Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away."

So we who believe now see. God has determined this:

2 Corinthians 4:6

"For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Remember how personal this must have been for the Apostle Paul, who saw visibly with his own eyes the glory of Christ, and that was as Christ's enemy! The only Christ Paul knew was He Who revealed Himself that day on the road to Damascus as *"a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about [him]"* (Acts 26:13). This was a life forever changed by the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!

Now the rest of us who have believed on that Name above every name have a future with our Lord Jesus Christ, and God has determined to repair the loss of His image:

Romans 8:29

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

1 Corinthians 15:47-49

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

2 Corinthians 3:18

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

As we will read later in Colossians, there is a part that we play in this transformation. We "put on" the new man — which is Christ Himself, manifest in our new nature, the Body of Christ, and He actively renews that image in us:

Colossians 3:9-10

"...seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him..."

That image of glory that we see when we believe can be yours too. When you believe the gospel of your salvation, that Christ died for your sins and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3-4), He will save you eternally and you too will see the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, the firstborn of all creation!

CHRIST THE CREATOR: COLOSSIANS 1:16

For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him...

Now we will look at a truth in Scripture that when properly understood, will satisfy at once the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself as the manifestation of God in the flesh. The very first verse in all of Scripture states:

Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

A famous creed in Christendom, the Nicene creed states:

"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible."

The New Testament Scriptures, however, reveal that the work of creation was in the "hands" of the Son:

John 1:1-3

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made."

Hebrews 1:1-2

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds..."

These are to be in addition to our present verse under consideration. Jesus Christ is the

Creator. The creative agent in the Godhead is in fact the Son! All that we see in creation is the handiwork of Christ, so when we see that "we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:10), we see a special case of what the Body of Christ is to Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

For many of us, it is natural in our minds to think of creation as the Father's work, but when we believe our Bibles, we understand the Son as creator. Understanding the Son as creator, read the following verses:

Isaiah 40:12

"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"

Isaiah 42:5

"Thus saith God the LORD, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein..."

Isaiah 45:18

"For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be

inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else."

Isaiah 48:13

"Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together."

Acts 4:24

"Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is..."

Acts 17:24-25

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things..."

That He is the creator is the meaning of verse 15 which states that the Son is the "firstborn of every creature", or as *Young's Literal Translation* renders it "the firstborn of all creation". Firstborn is a title of preeminence and sovereignty, and He is the rightful holder of this title because "by Him were all things created"!

It also is not simply the material universe that He created, but He also created the authority structure — "*whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*". This reveals the Son as above any angels, and declares why: He created them! What more, as Man, the second man who is the Lord from Heaven, He has "*by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they*" (Hebrews 1:4).

This is also over the power structure of the earth. He created the earth, and has put its government under the dominion of man. But as under the dominion of man, the earth is in rebellion against his creator. He will subdue the power structure of this world,

and rule it with a rod of iron. He will rule over His enemies:

1 Corinthians 15:24-26

"Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

If we ask the questions "Why war?", "Why injustice?", "Why corruption?", "Why doesn't God do something about this or that?", remember that mankind's rebellion against God is responsible for the tragic condition of our world. Remember also that "*we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another*" (Titus 3:3). Remember also that this is what we were when He saved us, but "*after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*" (Titus 3:4-7). He saved us while we were His enemies (Romans 5:10), yet sinners (Romans 5:8), and ungodly (Romans 5:6). When we wish for God to break through and do something against our enemies, remember that we were once His enemies, and yet He saved us. Pray that He saves them too. He will make things right one day, but now He is giving His enemies grace to be reconciled unto Him (2 Corinthians 5:20). Until the time that He rights all wrongs, He is showing His greatness as Redeemer!

Consider the great condescension of the Son of God as He left the glories of heaven to

come to our world to complete the work of redemption:

Philippians 2:6–8

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Consider the wonder that it will be, when we see what God has already declared so, and the universe will rightly know the truth of Jesus Christ our Lord:

Philippians 2:9–11

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in

heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Now, in His work as redeemer, He has made a way for mankind to be right with Him now:

Acts 13:38–39

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man [Jesus Christ] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED...

The poem below is a wonderful reminder of Christ the Redeemer and Creator. The title is "The Maker".

THE MAKER OF THE UNIVERSE
AS MAN, FOR MAN WAS MADE A CURSE.
THE CLAIMS OF LAW WHICH HE HAD MADE,
UNTO THE UTTERMOST HE PAID.

HIS HOLY FINGERS MADE THE BOUGH
WHICH GREW THE THORNS THAT CROWNED HIS BROW.
THE NAILS THAT PIERCED HIS HANDS WERE MINED
IN SECRET PLACES HE DESIGNED.

HE MADE THE FOREST WHENCE THERE SPRUNG
THE TREE ON WHICH HIS BODY HUNG.
HE DIED UPON A CROSS OF WOOD,
YET MADE THE HILL ON WHICH IT STOOD.

THE SKY THAT DARKENED OVER HIS HEAD
BY HIM ABOVE THE EARTH WAS SPREAD.
THE SUN THAT HID FROM HIM ITS FACE
BY HIS DECREE WAS POISED IN SPACE.

THE SPEAR WHICH SPILLED HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD
WAS TEMPERED IN THE FIRES OF GOD.
THE GRAVE IN WHICH HIS FORM WAS LAID,
WAS HEWN IN ROCKS HIS HANDS HAD MADE.

THE THRONE ON WHICH HE NOW APPEARS
WAS HIS FROM EVERLASTING YEARS,
BUT A NEW GLORY CROWNS HIS BROW,
AND EVERY KNEE TO HIM SHALL BOW.

—F. W. PITT

CHRIST THE SUSTAINER: COLOSSIANS 1:17

He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

We left the last verse discussing the greatness of our Lord Jesus as the creator of all things. Continuing on that thought, we will begin by looking at just what it means that He is before all things. Does it mean before all things in time, or does it mean that He is before all things in position?

From my understanding of the purpose of these verses, to me it appears to mean before all things in position. While it is true that He certainly was before all things in time, as He said emphatically in John: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM"* (John 8:58), and in case we miss the full weight of what the Lord meant by this statement, the next verse says that the Jews present "took they up stones to cast at Him" (John 8:59); but this verse is not speaking of the time element. It says that He *is* before all things, the all things being those things that He created. He is before all things visible and invisible. He is before the thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. He is preeminent in creation as the Creator. As Creator, He has a greater position and a greater glory than anything in this creation.

So let us continue also to look at what it means that "by Him all things consist". This is very rich indeed. When discussing Christ as the image of God, I brought attention to the following verse:

Hebrews 1:3

"Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high..."

Notice the flow from His glory because of WHO He is to His powerful word to keep all things functioning. What holds the universe together? It is "by Him that all things consist". He upholds all. Greek mythology pictured a "god" bearing the weight of the earth on his shoulders and nearly buckling under the load. Jesus Christ upholds the universe by the *word* of His power! This entire universe that He created holds together because Jesus Christ says so!

We can look at the planets and stars and moons and suns and notice that they all function like "clockwork". Consistent and on time — every time. Why are they so consistent? Maybe because they are clockwork:

Genesis 1:14–19

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day."

Stepping away from the vast expanse of the universe, how about the irreducible complexity of the cell, or further yet, to the atom, and the nucleus of the atom. Mankind's keen ability to efficiently kill each other reached a

new high when it discovered the energy contained in splitting the atom. But what is it that holds the nucleus together in the first place? It is the word of His power! It is because Jesus Christ says so that all of the atomic and subatomic particles hold together.

A guide took a group of people through an atomic laboratory and explained how all matter was composed of rapidly moving electric particles. The tourists studied models of molecules and were amazed to learn that matter is made up primarily of space. During the question period, one visitor asked, "If this is the way matter works, what holds it all together?" For that, the guide had no answer.

But the Christian has an answer: Jesus Christ! Because "He is before all things," He can hold all things together. Again, this is another affirmation that Jesus Christ is God. Only God exists before all of creation, and only God can make creation cohere. To make Jesus Christ less than God is to dethrone Him.—Warren Weirsbe⁴

How great to know that the Creator who upholds the universe and makes it function is able also to uphold the believing sinner who takes Him at His word, and by faith accepts the gift of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Who died and conquered death and rose from the dead!

The only way any of us can know that we are saved is that we know that Jesus Christ saved us. If He saved us, then we are saved. God counts His righteousness to us when we believe, and He lays all of our sin on Him. What a weight for the Saviour to bear! He who upholds all things by the word of His power died to bear the weight of our

⁴ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Complete: Become the Whole Person God Intends You to Be: NT Commentary, Colossians*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008. Print. P.61

sins. And He did this and rose victorious. He is not a victim, but He is a mighty Victor — through the cross!

2 Corinthians 5:21

"For [God] hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, [Christ], who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Romans 4:5

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Romans 4:25

"[Christ] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Acts 16:31

"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

CHRIST THE HEAD: COLOSSIANS 1:18A

And He is the head of the body, the church...

Here in our study of the glory of the person of Christ, we see that in His assembly, He is also first. The assembly which we speak of here is “the church, which is His body” (Ephesians 1:22–23). To speak in precise terminology, and to speak of things in the way that God’s Word speaks, the important term to use to describe the group that Christ calls His own should not be “church” or “Church”, but σώμα Χριστοῦ — “Body of Christ”. When we see this term, we know exactly what group is being spoken of. If only the term ἐκκλησία is used, it is important to know which ἐκκλησία is being addressed. Often it is a local group or assembly of people. It is that simple. It has unfortunately turned into a theological term, and with that, the dogmatic assertions about the “Church” that follow.⁵

But here, we are not talking about the body, but the Head.

Christ is the Head of the *church which is His Body!* Since He is the Head, the body functions only because it is in vital union to Him. This understanding of Christ as the Head in relation to the body also keeps within the context of the passage — as the Head, He has preeminence in the body. It *should* go without saying that body is subject to the Head, not as in bondage, but in proper relation, where the body does all according to the desires of the Head. Every member of the human body is connected to the head, or the mind, the controlling entity. Now there is a physical union in the human body, and in the Body of Christ it is a spiritual union. The

⁵ See Appendix I for some examples of the Greek word translated “church” as used in the Greek translation (LXX) of the Old Testament.

members of this Body of Christ are placed in this union by God’s working. It is the operation of God (Colossians 2:12), and it is the Holy Spirit’s specific ministry:

1 Corinthians 12:13

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

So was there a time when Christ *began* to be the Head of the Church which is His Body? According to Ephesians 1, it was after He ascended, and after He sat down at the right hand of the Father in Heaven:

Ephesians 1:20–23

“Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

So our understanding of Christ in His position as Head of the Body must be understood as His ministry as ascended and seated in Heaven. *True Christianity* begins with Christ seated FAR ABOVE ALL. This is where He is as Head of the Body. Now the place which the Head occupies is also the place which the body is truly at home. Little wonder that Paul solidified the position of Christ ascended and seated far above all before explaining the place that is occupied by His saints:

Ephesians 1:20–22, 2:6

"Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come... And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus..."

This should give us the proper perspective of the greatness of God's love and mercy toward sinners who are only deserving of His wrath. It is great love that He should die for us to save us (see Romans 5:8). It is great love that imparts to those believing everlasting life (see John 3:16, Romans 6:23). Now, think of the great love that seats the sinners which He shed His blood to save with Him, far above all! This was also the most important doctrinal point to establish in Paul's teaching here in Colossians about the greatness and exaltation of Christ. It is to establish in our minds where He is to keep our minds fixed to the place where we should occupy because we are members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Ephesians 5:30).

Colossians 3:1–4

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

The truth that the Scripture places forth about the risen and ascended position of Christ at the right hand of the Father in heaven is far more glorious than the common understanding that most of us have of Him being the One in charge of our *local* churches. This position as the Head of the Body is that of the beginning of an entirely new creation that God is presently creating.

2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

This new creation is nothing less than a wholly (and holy) new man which is being conformed to His image. He is calling out His *ekklesia* and forming this new man. This new man is not under the dying headship of Adam, but under the ever-living headship of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord from Heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47).

In Ephesians, Paul wrote of the gifts that the Lord has given to His Body speaking of the way we grow into our position *in Him*. These gifts are often the people who he has given from among men:

Ephesians 4:12–16

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

We often wish that He would make this creation instant, but His ways are much better than ours, and since we will have eternity to understand why He does things the way that He does, we will trust Him and allow that His ways are much better than ours. The new creation that is the Body of Christ is not

formed from nothing, nor from dust, but from Adam's dead race. That He could take marred vessels fit for destruction and turn them into trophies of His grace (Ephesians 2:7-10) is truly a fantastic feat that we will be in awe of for ages to come.

Even better, the opportunity and call to every one of us living on this earth is to believe on Him and His finished work of redemption for us — for me and you — and accept this position as a member of His body. Jesus Christ died for our sins, yours and mine, and God only requires that we believe the testimony about Him and accept His

free gift. He finished the job and rose from the dead to prove that sin is paid for and death is defeated. Our place in this is to take Him at His word and believe what He has said. It is that simple. We do not have to change our ways and doings to be accepted of Him. We need to believe on Him and the Holy Spirit will baptize us into His Body (1 Corinthians 12:13), which He will form into that perfect man. We cannot change ourselves, we need to be created anew, and that is the promise that He will deliver on.

***BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED...***

CHRIST THE BEGINNING: COLOSSIANS 1:18B

Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.

The beginning of this verse told us of the position that our Lord Jesus Christ has in His ascended, exalted position far above all as the Head of the body. Now we are going to see Him as the beginning. As the beginning, it must be remembered what the first half of this verse is about — it is Christ as the Head — the Head of the new creation. He is also the beginning of this new creation. Perhaps, *I say perhaps*, this is the answer to the question of the meaning in Revelation 3:14 where He calls Himself the Beginning of the creation of God. He could truly be called the beginning of the first creation as well, because of His position as Creator, but here in this verse in Colossians, it is absolutely referring to the new creation, the one new man (Ephesians 2:15), the Body of Christ.

He is also here set forth as the Firstborn from the dead. He is firstborn here in exactly the same way as He was referred to previously as the *firstborn of every creature*, or the *firstborn of all creation* (Colossians 1:15). He is firstborn of all creation because He is the Creator. He is firstborn from the dead because He is *the resurrection and the life* (John 11:25). As Martha spoke and thought of the resurrection, she thought of it as a future event, which it is, *but*, the resurrection is not wrapped up in time, but in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:20–23

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own

order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

There is no resurrection of the dead apart from Christ — He *is* the resurrection, He *is* the Firstfruits, He *is* the Firstborn from the dead! It could be no other way. All other resurrections from the dead are only possible because of He Who is the resurrection and the life.

Revelation 1:18

"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

Jesus Christ is the master of death ... that in *all* things, He might have the preeminence. No one else could have brought themselves out from among the dead, but He that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore. His conquest — His exceedingly victorious conquest of death — is the only way the new creation, the church which is His Body, could ever have come into existence. His victory is the only means by which anyone ever will be resurrected to life. Because of His resurrection to life, all that are in Him can walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). In fact, every believer has been baptized into Jesus Christ and into His death (Romans 6:3), and because of this the command to walk in newness of life is possible.

Romans 6:3–11

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Colossians 2:12

"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead."

Notice this baptism is the operation of God, not of men. No clergyman has the authority to baptize anyone into Christ. It is God's work. Because God has declared us and recognized us and identified us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, the apostle later in the book of Colossians brings us to the practical reality of this position:

Colossians 3:1-4

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is

our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

Real practical teaching of Christian behavior begins with correct doctrine of the Firstborn from the dead. The position of the believer — those that have heard the gospel of Christ, and believed that He died for their sins — is risen with Christ and seated with Him in the heavens. The thought of a Christian being so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good is not scriptural. The Christian is to be so heavenly minded that he should be of most heavenly good. Then we will be walking in the will of God here on earth, and can do the most good for His Name's sake here on earth.

Perhaps the reader is unclear of the gospel message that is to be believed that saves. It is proclaimed in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians as the matter of first importance:

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures..."

THE PREEMINENT CHRIST: COLOSSIANS 1:13-19

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell...

The passage leads to this point — that in all things He might have the preeminence. This is the place of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Father's estimation. It should be the place that He holds in ours as well. Notice that His place of preeminence defines what this *fullness* that dwells in Him is. The Father estimates the Son to be worthy of first place in everything. That is the fullness that resides in Christ.

Let us go back to everything that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle to write about describing the first place, the preeminence of Christ throughout this passage.

1. He has preeminence in the heart of God, as His dear Son, or the Son of His Love — vs.13
2. He has preeminence in the kingdom of God, that is all that God is sovereign over, in that it is His Kingdom. It is the kingdom of the Son of God's love! He is King — vs.13.
3. He has preeminence in redemption as the Redeemer, and the price. We have redemption through **His** blood, even the forgiveness of sins — vs.14.

4. He has preeminence over all of creation, in that He created all things. This is His place as the preeminent one in the first creation — vss.15-16.

5. He is preeminent in all the workings of the universe: by Him all things consist — vs.17.

6. He is preeminent in the new creation, the body of Christ, in that He is the head and the beginning of the new creation of God — vs.18.

7. He is preeminent over death in that He us the victor, and all resurrection can only take root in Christ — vs.18.

So this is just the beginning of this wonderful epistle of the fullness that is Christ. He completes all. We will see in the next chapter that it is in Christ where the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily. Imagine, the fullness of the invisible God dwelling in a body — a Man's body. But this is the second Man. He is the Lord from Heaven. We will see too that because the fullness or the completeness of the Godhead dwells *in Him*, and because the believer is *in Him*, the believer is complete *in Him*. No good works, religion, or

anything else can add to the completeness that is found in Christ.

Do you need love? The completeness of the love of God is ***IN CHRIST!***

Do you need righteousness? The completeness of the righteousness of God is ***IN CHRIST!***

Do you need life? Eternal life, the life of the Eternal God is ***IN CHRIST!***

Whatever it is that we may think is our greatest need, all fullness dwells in Christ. If you have Him, or better still, *He has you*, all that you need you already have.

The fullness described in Ephesians 1:23 states that the church which is His body is the fullness of Him who fills all in all. It is the body that He is Head over. The people of God are special to Him. This is how the relationship of Christ to the church which is His body is described:

Ephesians 5:25-27

"...Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Now, we must be careful here not to confuse this with any religious organization, nor

the sum-total of all the so-called Christian churches, for this assembly is the one new man which is made up of members who are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the one Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). These are they that have heard the gospel of their salvation (Ephesians 1:13) and believed on Him who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25).

To the individual Christian, Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 12:27

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

As members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Ephesians 5:30), we are in Christ and called to a holy calling to represent Him. The wonder of it all is that He owes to mankind absolutely nothing, yet by grace has provided reconciliation to the world (all the world is savable, and there is not one person that cannot be saved), propitiation toward God on our behalf, and salvation to all who come to God by Him, hearing the word of truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ, that He died for our sins and rose again from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and He will save you, and you will be complete *in Him*.

CHRIST OUR RECONCILIATION: COLOSSIANS 1:19-23

For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister...

This wonderful Person that the apostle just spoke of who in ALL THINGS is preeminent now is shown to take upon Himself the reconciliation of His enemies. Make no mistake, the world that we live in is no friend of God. Yet God, Who owes us nothing, and in fact is the one to whom we owe an infinite debt that we cannot pay, took it upon Himself in the Person of our Lord Jesus to reconcile us to Himself.

It is because that in Him all fulness dwells that He is able to make full reconciliation for us. Because God is satisfied with the offering that the Lord Jesus made of Himself, He has reconciled the world unto Himself:

2 Corinthians 5:19

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Yes, at present, and for the past roughly 2000 years, God has been at peace with the world that has openly declared itself to be His enemy. The cross still shines as the way that all the world *can* enjoy peace with God. The very absence of God's direct judgment on this earth and its inhabitants at this time is witness to the reconciling work of Jesus our Lord on the cross. For anyone in the world to enjoy this peace that God offers, the condition is faith. As Paul explained to the Romans, since

we are justified by faith, we have peace with God:

Romans 5:1-2

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

In Christ, sin debt is paid in full and the sinner is fully and completely forgiven (Colossians 1:14, 2:13). As we saw the blood of Christ required for the forgiveness of sins, we now see that the precious blood of Christ is what makes possible the reconciliation of all things. The context of this reconciliation of all things is all things visible and invisible, "whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers" (1:16) and the "things in earth, or things in heaven" (1:20). While this world of mankind declared, and still declares its enmity toward God and His Anointed, God has by His grace made the very ultimate act of that enmity the way that mankind, His enemy, may be reversed in his relationship toward God. God has reconciled mankind through the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed on the cross, and this reconciliation is without exception and without distinction. While not all are saved because they have rejected this offer (whether actively refusing, or by indifference by ignoring it), the offer is available to all. Now, in the day of salvation (2 Corin-

ans 6:2), God is at peace with mankind and is not at present angry or at enmity with mankind; and Christ, Who was despised and rejected of men (Isaiah 53:3), sitting at the right hand of God *“expecting till His enemies be made His footstool”* (Hebrews 10:13), sits as Savior. He is seated on the throne of Grace. Sinner, do not reject or ignore this grace! This period of amnesty that God does not owe to anyone and He has never promised will last even one millisecond longer is a wonderful period of the grace and peace of God toward man in reconciling the world to Himself. God will take vengeance on this world and upon sinners, but He is longsuffering, and “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” But when He is through waiting, *“the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7–8).

This should give every man, woman, and child pause and cause to think and to act on God’s offer of peace through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Day of the Lord comes, it will be the “great day of His wrath” (Revelation 6:17), and His return will be to “judge and make war” (Revelation 19:11).

Malachi 3:2

“But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap...”

So as we consider the coming day of the Lord, let us now consider the day of His grace and reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:20–21

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, [Christ] Who knew no sin; that we

might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

So now when we consider the individual believer’s standing in this grace and peace, we must remember our past condition. As we hear things said like “it should be about the relationship”, or other such catch phrases, we should remember what our natural relationship to God is. We are alienated and enemies by wicked works on our part. Yet the relationship of the believer in Jesus Christ is that he is reconciled, and he is no longer God’s enemy, but has a standing “holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight”. Remember that this is in the sight of Him Whose word is *“quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do”* (Hebrews 4:12–13).

Now as we continue in this passage, we see an “if”. While this can seem to cause concern that there are conditions to the reconciliation that we are standing in, let us consider that this is connection with what is later being taught. In chapter 2, Paul says that he is in the spirit joying and beholding the order of the saints, and the *“steadfastness of [their] faith in Christ”* (2:5). He continues with the following:

Colossians 2:6–7

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

This continuing in the faith and being grounded and settled is not a condition to enter into and maintain the relationship that Christ purchased with His blood. It is our

walk and how we are rooted, built up, and established. It is what Paul is laboring and striving for. It is what Paul is eager to preach, warn, and teach (verses 28–29). Paul wants the Colossians to keep their roots where they belong and not to stray into “*philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*” (2:8). Paul is God’s minister of the gospel to them — to every creature under heaven — and the point of this epistle is that in Christ dwells our hope. The hope of the gospel is Christ Himself, and the fulness of God that is found in Him. The roots are to go into the ground deeper as they come to know Christ more, and not try to establish themselves in man’s wisdom *or religion*. Christ is all in all, and in Him we are complete, because He is complete!

Colossians 2:9–10

“For in Him dwelleth all the fulness (πλήρωμα — plērōma) of the Godhead bod-

ily. And ye are complete (πληρώ — plēroō) in Him...”

There is nothing that religion can add to completeness, but it will spoil you and take away the enjoyment of what we have in Christ. There is also an application, not just to individuals, but to assemblies. As assemblies think that they can add to the fulness of Christ, they turn back to religion and the things of poverty, and in so doing, they eventually become part of “world religions”, rather than finding their fulness in Christ.

Take Paul’s warning seriously. Do not be not moved away from the hope of the gospel that Paul preached. Our hope is in Christ alone. He died for our sins, He is risen, He is ascended, and He is seated far above all in the heavenlies. The things of this world and world religions have nothing in Him. HE is ALL IN ALL!

PAUL'S COMMISSION: COLOSSIANS 1:23-29

Whereof I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.

We left in verse 23 of chapter one where Paul urges the saints to continue in the faith "grounded and settled", and "not moved away from the hope of the gospel...whereof I Paul am made a minister."

We will now get a "parenthetical" explanation of Paul's ministry and stewardship. Paul's office was "ambassador of Christ", and as we discussed in the past Colossians study, the world by nature is enemy of God, yet Paul is commissioned as the ambassador of the ascended Christ, preaching grace and peace. That Paul is preaching the message of grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ from prison is no coincidence. He was Christ's "ambassador in bonds" (Ephesians 6:20) because the world is still acting as enemy toward God.

It is quite interesting to note that suffering for Christ was an essential part of Paul's commission. In Acts 9:16, the Lord told Ananias, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake." That Paul received suffering from the world is beyond question from the record of Acts. He also received attacks from Satan which seem to have gone unhindered by the Lord. But the sufferings

had their purpose, and the Lord would reveal to Paul how He would use them:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

So now, as Paul ministers and works for the Lord from a Roman dungeon, he rejoices in his sufferings which are for the Lord, but also for the body, of which the Colossian saints were members. Indeed, all who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood on their behalf are baptized into the body by the Spirit. To think, all that have suffered for the sake of the Lord and of His Body have suffered on your behalf. When we suffer for the sake of the Lord and of His

Body, we have grounds of rejoicing too. I am reminded of when I played football in high school. We would often be bruised with helmet marks on our arms and welts and all such marks. These were marks taken for the team, and these often had pain, sore muscles and joints and all that went with it. But also, the injuries carried with them a sense of honor because they were the reminders of the struggle to win the game. They were the reminders of my contribution to the team. That is possibly a way to think of how Paul could rejoice in his sufferings for the saints. He was called to suffer, allowed to suffer, and learned to rejoice in his sufferings. As the Captain of Salvation was made perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10), so the messenger of the gospel of the grace of God would fill up in his body the sufferings that are *allowed* to him for the cause of Christ. Indeed, all who name the Name of Christ are called to suffering for His Name sake:

Philippians 1:29

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake..."

So Paul was called to suffer on behalf of Christ. Paul was also made a minister of the gospel "according to the dispensation of God" (vs. 25). Just what was this dispensation of God? A "dispensation" is the translation of the Greek word οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*), which is translated in Luke 16:2, 3, & 4 "stewardship". It essentially means the management, oversight, and administration of another's affairs⁶. It is house management. So with this definition, the management, oversight, and administration of God's affairs were given to Paul. This is exactly what he said when he said "*the dispensation of God which is given me for you*". He was given this dispensation so that he could *with authority* fulfill the word of God. Now remember that these are not my words. This is the word of God as Paul wrote

⁶ Thayer's Greek Lexicon

by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It was given to him to fulfill, or complete, the word of God. Just what was this completion of the word of God? It is stated in the very next verse: "*the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints*". Interestingly enough, Paul calls himself and the ministers of God the "*stewards of the mysteries of God*" (1 Corinthians 4:1).

This mystery hid from ages and generations is what completes the word of God. It is what makes us understand why that the prophecies of scripture have not yet been fulfilled. Remember that the Kingdom as promised in which "*the LORD shall be king over all the earth*" (Zechariah 14:9) will still be fulfilled as it is written, but presently, God is dealing with mankind in grace. That is why Paul says:

Ephesians 3:2

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward..."

Notice again — it is the dispensation given to Paul. It is his job, his calling, to steward the riches of God's grace. Again, it is this mystery, revealed to Paul, that he was commissioned to make known to all the world:

Ephesians 3:3-7

"How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power."

Let us not water down this revelation. The revelation of the mystery was given to Paul to make known. It was not given to Peter, James, John, Jude, Luke, Mark, or Matthew. Paul's gospel is "the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest" (Romans 16:25–26), which is something different than prophecy "which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21, c.f. Luke 1:70). By understanding the difference between these Scriptures, we are not "Bible-choppers", but we are believing what God has said in His Word. The mystery given to Paul was "hid in God" (Ephesians 3:9). This is not because Paul was intrinsically superior to the other apostles in any way. As the passage in Ephesians goes on:

Ephesians 3:8–12

"Unto me [Paul], who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him."

Paul was given this special task regarding the out-calling of the body of Christ and the dispensation of the grace of God expressly because of his unworthiness and his former estate as chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). He goes on to say why he was called as he was:

1 Timothy 1:16

"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

Yes, if the chief of sinners can be reconciled by the blood of the cross, so can all sinners. What a wonderful pattern! What a wonderful Savior! And this mystery of Gentiles by nature ("dogs" — see Matthew 15:26) being not only allowed to partake of the blessings of the Covenant People (Israel), but being "fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" is unheard of outside of Paul's revelation of the mystery. Indeed, now Gentile believers are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

That is what the wording in this passage is referring to when it speaks of the riches of the glory of this mystery. The riches of the glory is referring to Christ in you, *Gentiles*. The promised Anointed Savior of Israel is in you *Gentiles*. Now Gentiles have a hope of glory. Our hope of glory is in Christ, and only in Him. Now Paul has been commissioned to preach Christ, to warn and to teach every man — all mankind and every person individually — the riches of Christ, and yes, warnings of what rejection of Christ will cost. The eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41) is also the last place for those not found written in the book of life (Revelation 20:15). But it does not have to be that way. Eternal life is found in Christ and He has reconciled the world unto Himself:

2 Corinthians 5:19

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Only believing on the death of Christ for your sins is standing between life and death, and God wills that you would be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), and the reconciling work of Christ on the cross has made it possible. Why put off another day or minute accepting the gift of salvation and righteousness that God offers you?

Paul carried out his great commission with amazing energy to a world ripe for God's

judgment, and all Christians everywhere will do very well to follow in preaching *Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery*, which is no longer a mystery, but preached in the whole world, and warning every man and teaching every man the righteousness and grace of God, and God's love toward sinners in sending His own Son to die for us.

Amazing Grace!

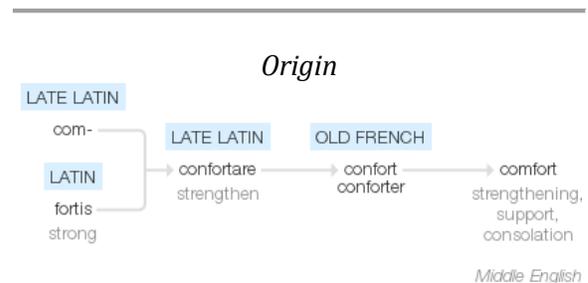
THE APOSTOLIC LABOR OF LOVE: COLOSSIANS 2:1-3

For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Now Paul begins to discuss the work that he labored fervently for throughout his ministry. The one thing that he does let the saints know, is that it is a great conflict “for you”, and for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh. This term “conflict” is the same word translated “race” in Hebrews 12:1. The Greek word is ἀγῶνα — *agōna*, which is related to our English word *agony*. It is a daunting task that he is undertaking, but it was an undertaking for the saints, because the Apostle has great love for his Lord, and for those that the Lord calls His own.

The “great conflict” of which our apostle is here speaking is the reason that he wrote this epistle. He is laboring diligently for them “that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God...”. The “agony”, is the blood, sweat, and tears that he is pouring into this letter. He is pouring his heart into this effort so that the saints would stand in correct doctrine.

The goal that Paul puts forward is for strong hearts. This term comforted is best understood as encouraged and moved on. Strengthened or helped is a great way to understand it, or even established, with help. See the following definition and etymology for the English word “comfort”.



Middle English (as a noun, in the senses ‘strengthening, support, consolation’; as a verb, in the senses ‘strengthen, give support, console’): from Old French confort (noun) conforter (verb), from late Latin confortare ‘strengthen,’ from com- (expressing intensive force) + Latin fortis ‘strong.’ The sense ‘something producing physical ease’ arose in the mid 17th century.⁷

From this definition, when thinking of being comforted, it would be better to think of a “fort”, or being “fortified” than thinking of a pillow. Further, the Greek word which is translated “comforter”, παρακαλέω — *parakalēō* — is very much the same as that used of “an advocate”, as in 1 John 2:1, and that the Lord uses of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, and 16:7. This is used of the Holy Spirit as “another Comforter”, which, according to the Scofield Reference Bible is defined like this:

⁷ Google definition and etymology

Gr. Parakletos, "one called alongside to help." Translated "advocate," 1 John 2:1 . Christ is the believer's Paraclete with the Father when he sins; the Holy Spirit the believer's indwelling Paraclete to help his ignorance and infirmity and to make intercession (Romans 8:26, 27).⁸

Notice that the next thing that the apostle say after the thought of being comforted is that the hearts of the saints would be "knit together in love". This is part of the "comforting", for fibers that are knit together are much stronger than the sum of the fibers on their own. And how could they be knit together in love, if they are not confident in their doctrine and not all speaking the same thing? The short answer is that they would not be, and that is the basic problem with the visible assemblies on earth to this day. Now, far from a call to "ecumenical unity", this is a call to follow correct doctrine and practice, and allow "no other doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3). Defective fibers that are knit together will never make anything but a defective product.

They are also being called "unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ", because this is the most important component to being built up in the faith. If we do not know our God and know His word, His call, His workings, and His desires, how can we in any way be strengthened or enriched by any other knowledge? Our confidence in our God is surely, or at least should surely be increased as we increase in the knowledge of His Word. Our confidence in the knowledge of His Word must entirely rest on what He has said and what could be said that "it is written". If our confidence is in religion, tradition, worldly knowledge, philosophy, psychology, or anything other than the Word of God as

⁸ Scofield, C I. *The Scofield Reference Bible*. Oxford UP, 1909. p. 1136

written, we are not standing on ground that we can put our confidence in.

Then we must look at something often overlooked: It is acknowledgement of the mystery of God. This mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ must be understood by its context as that which was spoken of in a few previous verses:

Colossians 1:25-27

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the MYSTERY which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the GLORY OF THIS MYSTERY among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory..."

So let us look at what this mystery is according to the previous verses, coupled with these. Paul was given a dispensation to fulfill the word of God. He next defines what he was fulfilling in the word of God as the "mystery hid from ages and generations, but now made manifest to His saints". This mystery is now completely revealed in the Scriptures, and the Apostle Paul was given the task to reveal it. It is God's prerogative to keep things secret until He decides to reveal them. As Moses told the children of Israel:

Deuteronomy 29:29

"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

As it was revealed to the children of Israel the words of the Law which they were to keep, so it is revealed to us the "riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7), and the glory of our position in Christ, "in Whom are hid all the

treasures of wisdom and knowledge". It is Christ Who is the wisdom of God:

1 Corinthians 1:22–24

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

1 Corinthians 2:6–10

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

Not only is it Christ as the Wisdom of God, but also as Paul stated earlier in the first chapter,

Colossians 1:18

"And He is the Head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence."

This is the position of Christ AS REJECTED BY MEN, yet in full glory as the Head of the body, and reconciling Jews and Gentiles into one body without distinction by the cross. That Jews and Gentiles would be members of the same Body without distinc-

tion is a mystery only revealed in Paul's epistles.

Ephesians 3:1–7

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power."

Some would argue that since it is "now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets", that all of the apostles were preaching the same message throughout their ministry. That is simply not the case. It certainly is now revealed, but it was not revealed when the Kingdom and the "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21) were being preached. How anyone can claim "no difference" between that which was "spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" and that which was "kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25) is beyond me. It is not a problem affecting the gospel of Jesus Christ in any way to say that the gospel and the mystery revealed to Paul is different than the gospel of the Kingdom which has been postponed because of Israel's unbelief. It is only a problem for Covenant theology. God has every right to keep things secret, and to reveal them when He decides to do so.

It is also that it is in the mystery revealed to Paul, and we learn it from Paul, what is the

current place of the Nation of Israel and its future:

Romans 11:25, 32–36

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in ... For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen."

It is the ignorance of this mystery that has caused so many errors regarding who and what we as the body are now as compared to Israel, and has created the doctrines that state that "God has cast away His people which He foreknew". The "Christian religion" has historically ignored a very important, Spirit inspired *fact*:

Romans 11:13

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office..."

God's promises to Israel will indeed be fulfilled, as they are written, but now we are to understand and acknowledge what God is

now doing in Christ. The apostle of the Gentiles labored fervently to the end that we all (believers, saints) would acknowledge the mystery. It interpenetrates all of Paul's epistles, and he calls it on more than one occasion "my gospel". It was given to him to make known, and now that it is made known, we are quite foolish to stay in ignorance of what God has made known.

Perhaps, as you read, you want to not be ignorant, but do not know where to start. First you must be saved — saved from your sins, and this is simply by taking God at His word and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) and His death for your sins and His resurrection for our justification (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, Romans 4:25). Then, after you are saved, God sees you — even identifies you — as having died with Christ, having been buried with Christ, and having risen with Christ. Even more, you are now, since believing, seated with Christ in the heavenlies by position (Ephesians 2:6). When you believe that gospel, you are then saved and justified, sealed by the Holy spirit, and seated in the heavenlies. So when you believe, you are in Christ. So now that you are in Christ, and I hope you are, study His word consistently, paying special attention to that which is written to you and about you. As a full member of the Body of Christ, His word to you is found in Paul's epistles. Read them. Know them. They are inexhaustible, and contain the unsearchable riches of Christ!

STAND YOUR GROUND: COLOSSIANS 2:4-7

And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Now we come back to the thought that Paul began in 1:23: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel". In the last several studies we looked at the second part of that verse and how Paul expanded the second thought of "whereof I Paul am made a minister". Now we look into this "beholding your order", which really does sound like a military inspector, something like when the platoon is visited by a general, or another high ranking officer. And this is what Paul longed to see: a well disciplined troop standing firm against the enemies of the gospel: those who would move them away from the hope of the gospel, and their completeness in the finished work of redemption and reconciliation found in Christ, and only in Christ.

And those who would move us away from the hope of Christ do not come to us trying to lure us into moral sin, as often as they will move us from the liberty we have in Christ into a religious system. This is exactly what the Colossians were being warned against as we see this epistle unfold. But first we have this "call to order" from the Apostle to see that they are walking in correct doctrine. He first wants to remind them of what they have, and then tell them of where they are not to go. He speaks of them being "stablished in the faith". Now, this idea of establishment in the faith seems to have the connotation of holding up to scrutiny and being proven officially. The Greek term translated "stablished" here is *βεβαιόω* — *bebaioō*. It is used in Mark 16:20, translated "confirming", speaking of

the signs following the 12 Apostles as they ministered as witnesses to the Nation of Israel to prove the veracity of the Kingdom proclamation and the validity of the claim that the Lord Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. It is used by Paul in Romans 15:8 about the ministry of our Lord to "the circumcision", confirming the promised made unto the fathers. It is used elsewhere as well. Paul uses it in writing to the Hebrews, saying that "*it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats*" (Hebrews 13:9), speaking as to moving away from the ordinances of Judaism to the grace that is in Christ Jesus. See the following definition:

Confirm, Confirmation:

"to make firm, establish, make secure" (the connected adjective bebaios signifies "stable, fast, firm"), is used of "confirming" a word, Mar 16:20; promises, Rom 15:8; the testimony of Christ, 1Cr 1:6; the saints by the Lord Jesus Christ, 1Cr 1:8; the saints by God, 2Cr 1:21("stablisheth"); in faith, Col 2:7; the salvation spoken through the Lord and "confirmed" by the Apostles, Hbr 2:3; the heart by grace, Hbr 13:9 ("stablished")⁹.

Another word is also translated "stablished", which book-ends Paul's epistle to the Romans. I have often spoken of this epistle to the Romans as the first place that all

⁹ Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words

who name the Name of Christ need to get a firm understanding of first:

Romans 1:11

"For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established..."

Romans 16:25

"Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began..."

If we get the teachings in the epistle to the Romans wrong, or do not get them and become established in them, we CANNOT move on, for we cannot be steadfast on shaky ground. Paul tells us that God is of power to stablish (make steadfast, stabilize, plant firmly), according to the Gospel that Paul imparted in the epistle to the Romans, and we would be wise to be established in what the word of God says is of power to stablish us.

Now as we get back to Colossians, Paul gives the "orders" pertaining to the proper walk: *"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him"*. We received Christ by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is how we walk as well. There will always be those that wish to move us from the grace of Christ to another "gospel". This is nothing new:

2 Corinthians 11:3-4

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him."

There are still those that preach "another Jesus", who is not Christ Jesus the Lord, but

some other person made in their image imitating the Lord Jesus revealed in the scriptures. He is certainly nothing like the Blessed person that Paul set forth *"Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature..."* and who is *"the Head of the body, the church: Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:15-18). It is not surprising that those who do not believe do not yet see this. We read in the scripture that *"the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them"* (2 Corinthians 4:4), but we who are believers have no excuse not to keep our eyes fixed on Christ Jesus the Lord as Paul proclaimed him, and to *"Set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Colossians 3:2).

In Galatians, the false doctrine brought in was a reverting back to Jewish things which the Gentiles Galatians were *never* under. The Gentiles as such were given up and given over (Romans 1:24-32) and would now be received as reconciled by the blood of the cross (Colossians 1:22). The saints, the called out ones, or *the Church which is His Body* is not called to a new religion, as Paul warns against here, but called to walk in the way that they received Christ — by grace through faith. It is IN HIM!

So walk ye...IN HIM!

Rooted and built up...IN HIM!

Do not let any "smooth talking snake-oil salesman" religious leader try to take away the freedom in which we walk in Christ. We will never be more complete than we are in the One Who is the Head of all principalities and powers.

COMPLETE IN CHRIST: COLOSSIANS 2:8-15

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power: In Whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Now we come to another summit in this epistle: Paul is teaching us how complete we are in Christ, and that any trying to add “the things of this world” to the completeness in Christ is much like an opposing army utterly defeating us and carrying away our goods captive.

But this should in no way be possible, unless we let them. Look quickly at verse 8 then at verse 15: *“Beware lest any man spoil you” ... “having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in [the cross]”*.

Christ has utterly defeated the rulers and authorities of this world, including the unseen forces of evil which Paul warns us to guard against:

Ephesians 6:10-13

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole

armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

That they are defeated does not mean that they do not continue the fight, and they continue the fight in hope that they may spoil YOU. And they will use MEN to do it. From the entire context here, it is not the “sinners” that entice you to sin, but it is men who will entice you back into a religious system to try and merit what you have COMPLETELY IN CHRIST. Please note, this *is* sin, but it does not appear to be sin, but actually on the surface appears to be something good. Do not fall for this trick:

2 Corinthians 11:3

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

In our passage in Colossians, we have two opposing ways to follow: we could follow after the traditions of men and the rudiments of the world, or after Christ. The two things that are according to, or after, traditions and rudiments are philosophy and vain deceit. Now philosophy is a love of wisdom, and as such it

is a pursuit of wisdom. In this context, it is obviously a pursuit of man's wisdom. God's estimate of man's wisdom and his pursuits of wisdom is spelled out clearly in the first epistle to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 1:18–31

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Chasing after man's wisdom is also foolish in trying to explain the things of God, because it is Christ "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). Christ IS the wisdom of God, and we who know Him will find our thirst for wisdom satisfied IN HIM.

As far as "vain deceit" goes, we would hope that no one would knowingly follow vain deceit, but deceit usually does not label itself as such. What we do know, however, is that the philosophy of the world is often right in line with what the Bible would call deceit. For example, the world gives the advice to "follow your heart", while the Bible speaks of the heart as being "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). So the advice that the world essentially gives is to follow the lead of a desperately wicked liar! It sounds good, but is really vain deceit. That is man's philosophy.

Now Paul is getting to his very important point here: the world system, which is "according to the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), will encourage all sorts of religious activities to involve you with. Do not think for a second that Satan is against religion. He loves it! In fact, he is moving this world's religious system in a direction that will worship him. See 2 Thessalonians 2:3–12, and Revelation 13:4. All of mankind's idolatrous religious practices *including those that go under the guise of the Christian religion* are essentially working together toward this end. Paul is telling us that believe to not get caught up in these things to try and make ourselves more complete than we are in Christ. In Christ "*dwelleth all the [completeness] of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him*", or, in Christ "*dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are [filled full] in Him*".

There are two things that come to mind when thinking of things being added to complete that which is already complete. Very

often, when discussing baptism, the Lord's baptism by John is pointed to, where He says to John that the reason why it must be done is that *"thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"* (Matthew 3:15). This is an example of using "one truth to negate another truth". It certainly did become the Lord to fulfil all righteousness, because He needed to be "numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12), and the transgressors were being baptized by John with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3). The word "fulfil" in Matthew 3:15 is the same root as that in Colossians 2:10 translated "complete". We are made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). The righteousness of God is complete righteousness. It does not need to be completed any further. *"And ye are complete in Him"*.

The other is Lent. I think about this because so many have a belief that practicing Lent somehow adds to spirituality, or frankly, makes us more full. I used to think that it was strictly a Roman Catholic custom, but more and more I am hearing the defense and even the encouragement of Lenten rituals by Protestants and Evangelicals, and wonder *have you not read...* "YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM!". But so many have walked away from, ignored, or put into a subordinate position the epistles of the Apostle of the Gentiles, who was given the dispensation (stewardship) of grace. These are especially the Scriptures that are written to the Body of Christ. Yet we ignore them to our peril, and to our spoiling. If only we really believed this wonderful truth in Colossians 2:9-10:

"...in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him..."

In Christ we find all that we need for a complete relation to God with complete righteousness. Do not look elsewhere, or the *defeated* enemy will SPOIL you! It does not seem right that those who were trampled un-

derfoot by the Saviour at the cross can still spoil us, and carry us away captive, but they will if we let them.

STAND YOUR GROUND!

COMPLETELY UNITED TO CHRIST IN DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURREC- TION

Now we will continue on this theme, but dwell more on the "what" of our completeness. We begin with the Apostle stating that *"In [Christ] ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ"* (Colossians 2:11). So what is this circumcision of Christ that Paul is speaking of here? This could not be that circumcision that was recorded in Luke 2:21, where the Lord as an eight-day old infant was circumcised. That was so He would be numbered with the Covenant people, for He was to *"save His people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21). That was a circumcision made with hands. This is "putting off the body the sins of the flesh", which takes us back to chapter 1, verses 21&22:

Colossians 1:21-22

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight..."

In the Old Testament Scriptures, Isaiah and Daniel both spoke of a "cutting off" of the coming Messiah:

Isaiah 53:8

"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken."

Daniel 9:26

"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."

The verse in Isaiah absolutely speaks of His death, for He is cut off from the land of the living. The verse in Daniel also seems to speak of His death, but could also possibly refer to the blessings promised through Messiah being cut off for a season from Israel because of the Nation's rejection of Him.

In any case, here in Colossians, the context is not His physical circumcision, nor is it us giving up our sins and "circumcising our hearts". This passage does not bring us to something that we need to accomplish, but speaks of what HE has done, and that we are COMPLETE IN HIM. If the Christian needed to put off the sins of the flesh before we could be considered complete, not one of us could ever say we were complete. This scripture, however, says that we are, so the answer of faith believes this Scripture.

The next two items mentioned are His burial and His resurrection. Since this Scripture is followed by His burial and resurrection, and from the truth of all that His death accomplished, it is Scriptural to say that this is speaking of His death. When else did He put off the body of the sins of the flesh, but at His death? It was at His death that "He was made to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). What is more, we find that this is a "once for all" act:

Romans 6:10

"For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God."

This circumcision with Him as being identified with Him in His death is very consistent with the rest of the revelation that was given to Paul. In Romans, he speaks of believers being baptized into Christ's death, and this is speaking of being identified by the Father in Christ's death. We, as believers, *saints*, have died with Christ. Having died with Christ, we are dead to the law, and dead to sin:

Galatians 2:19–20

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Romans 6:11

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 7:4–6

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him Who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

We are also buried with Christ. We see that as we have been identified with Him in His death, we are also identified with Him in His burial:

Romans 6:3–4

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Now this should in no way be construed to mean that baptism, as a water ceremony, is what identifies the Christian with the death and burial of Christ¹⁰. Our identification with the death and burial of Christ IS our baptism into Christ. Remember the entire thrust of this passage is not about following the proper religious ceremonies, but about being entirely complete in Christ, in Whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. It is reminding us that no religious works are to be added to the completeness that is found in Christ. That we would read a water ceremony into this only shows that we have been *immersed in too much religion*.

Colossians 2:12

"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead."

God has finished the job of identifying us with Christ, for as we were buried with Him, God is faithful to raise us also with Him. It is the faith of the operation of God. It is not a minister's faith in raising the believer out of the water that identifies the Christian as being risen with Christ, it is the faithfulness of God's working that identifies the believer as risen with Christ.

The vital union between Christ and the believer, who is a member in particular of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), is a complete union. We are identified with Him in His death, in His burial, and in His resurrec-

¹⁰ See Appendix II for an overview of Romans 6:1-11 on "baptism into Christ".

tion. When He died, we died with Him. When He was buried, we were buried with Him. WHEN HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD, WE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD WITH HIM. Our history in Adam has ended when God baptizes (identifies, names) us into Jesus Christ!

"For in [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him..."

Consider the greatness of all that is freely given to the believer in Christ. All that He provided by His death, burial, and resurrection is given freely by God to all that will in simple faith believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He has done everything that it takes to save all of us, and HE WANTS TO SAVE YOU! All barriers are taken out of the way, because Jesus Christ made reconciliation by the blood of His cross. Do not wait to "clean up your act" before you will accept what God freely gives.

God loves you, Christ died for your sins and rose again from the dead, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved!

COMPLETE FORGIVENESS

Continuing now, since we are thus identified, we will discuss the end of what we were in our old nature, and the completeness of our forgiveness, justification, and victory, remembering where this all begins:

Colossians 2:9-10

"For in [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him..."

Our sins have made us dead. "You're dead to me" is an expression often said to someone who has ruined a relationship. Keep that phrase in mind. God has declared that the

world is dead to Him. The children of Adam are dead in their trespasses and sins. In Adam, we are dead in sins because as a consequence, we are under a death sentence.

Romans 5:12

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned..."

It is interesting to me here to recall when Abimelech, king of Gerar, took Sarah, Abraham's wife, to be his. Now, Abraham allowed this by misrepresenting her to him, but, nevertheless, God was not going to allow this to happen. Abimelech was told in no uncertain terms about his future if he did not change course. This was true, regardless of whether it was a sin of ignorance or not. In fact, it was God's grace and righteousness toward Abimelech to warn him of his fate before it was too late. But notice the way that God told him of his fate:

Genesis 20:3

"But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife."

God told Abimelech as though his death was a *fait accompli* — an accomplished fact. The sentence of death in Adam is also a *fait accompli*. "In Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22). That is the place that we start. Let us look at the next sentence in this passage:

Colossians 2:13

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses..."

Ephesians chapter 2 is the Scripture's great expansion of this passage. Look at the

description of the condition that we were in when we were made alive with Christ:

Ephesians 2:1–3

"And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

The love of God for us would not leave us in that condition:

Ephesians 2:4–5

"But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"

Read this entire chapter in Ephesians noticing everything that we were, especially considering what we were as Gentiles in the flesh. We were not included in the covenant people, we were not counted in the citizenship of Israel, we had no promise of a Messiah, and as a group, were without God, and without hope.

But the blood of Christ changes all of this. The blood of Christ takes down the ordinances that separated the Jew and the Gentile. In Christ we are one. The Gentile believer is no further from the Father and from Christ than the Jewish believer:

Ephesians 2:18

"For through [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Let us look at a change of things:

Ephesians 2:19

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God..."

Remember that we *were* aliens from the commonwealth (a word denoting citizenship in the community) of Israel and as such strangers from the covenants that did not include us. We are no longer foreigners (a word denoting a person living on the outside of the community or household), but fellowcitizens with the saints and of the *household of God*. We are not outsiders looking in, we are insiders. Now we can say:

Philippians 3:20

"For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ..."

In order to make us insiders, something needed to be done. Our sins stood against our entrance, but God has separated us from them. He has forgiven us ALL TRESPASSES. He will *"by no means clear the guilty"* (Exodus 34:7), but he has taken our trespasses away by nailing all charges against us to the cross. The charges were not cleared, but they

were nailed to the cross. This is the completeness of our forgiveness.

Colossians 1:14

"In [Christ] we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins..."

Forgiveness of sins is COMPLETE IN HIM.

And now, complete victory! Our Conquering Hero has spoiled the powers of darkness that He delivered us from. He has disarmed them and we can picture Christ leading them in parade out in the open as defeated foes for all to see, to their shame. He has triumphed over all enemies and has put them to an open shame. They will do their best to hide this from us, and they do this if we let them by letting anyone spoil us through the philosophy and vain deceit of the world. We must keep our eyes on our Conquering Hero, the One Who set us free from the power that the devil had over us when we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

Colossians 2:9-10

"For in [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him..."

IMAGINE NO RELIGION: COLOSSIANS 2:16-23

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Since in Christ all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in His body, and we who have believed in Him and received Him by grace through faith are complete in Him, what does adding religion accomplish?

That is the question we often must ask. The thought that Christ came into the world to start a new religion is not from Scripture. There is no religion imposed on the Body of Christ, at least not from the Lord.

Now let me say this and be perfectly clear from the beginning: the title of this chapter is an obvious reference to John Lennon's famous "Imagine". This chapter has nothing of the content of that song in view. When I hear the words of that song, I actually hear what could very well be the theme music of "the prince that shall come" (Daniel 9:26). The "earth-dwellers" will be "all in" for a world with "no religion" when they worship the dragon and the beast, while the man of sin sits in the temple showing himself that he is god. They will imagine freedom from religion, when all of the world's religions come together, imagining no heaven or hell, yet knowingly worshipping the devil and his

"christ". It will not be a world with "no religion", it will be a one world religion, where the penalty of not following that religion is death.

All that said, when I speak of religion here, I am not talking about belief in God. I am talking about ceremonies, rituals, observances, etc. that mankind tries to use to appease God, or make himself more presentable to God. In other words, to try and fix Adam. The unsaved one cannot fix Adam, because Adam is dead in trespasses and sins. The saved also cannot fix Adam. We begin from this point: We died (as Adam) when God identified us in Christ, and baptized us into His death. Adam is dead and buried, and the believer is buried with Christ. The believer is also risen with Christ, and as risen with Christ, he is in newness of life. This is where our life in Christ starts.

Having established our completeness in Christ, Paul moves on to let us know that since we are so complete in Christ — "therefore" — do not let anyone tell you otherwise. Let no one tell you that you must change your diet to a religious diet.

Romans 14:17

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The dietary laws had a time and a place:

Leviticus 20:22–26

"Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out. And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine."

The real point of the dietary laws was to put a difference between Israel and the nations (Gentiles), especially in this case the Canaanites. They were to be in every way different. Is it any wonder that when Peter was going to be sent to Cornelius the Centurion, the dream consisted of eating meat from unclean animals?

Acts 10:9–15

"...Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all man-

ner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

Peter understood what the Lord told him in the dream:

Acts 10:28

"And [Peter] said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."

The Gentiles (non-Jews) were no longer to be regarded as common or unclean. The dietary laws were to emphasize the difference, and to be a difference. But in Christ there is no difference. As we will soon be told later in Colossians:

Colossians 3:11

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

As it was once a command to be different and not to eat the unclean, and this was also to not keep company with Gentiles, nor to eat with them, now it is a sin to separate the Jew and the Gentile. In Christ we are one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). The dietary laws no longer have a place:

Romans 10:12–13

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved."

I have always found that a very interesting verse. The Jews can be saved just like the Gentiles. God's elect people [Israel] come to Christ just like the non-elect [Gentiles]: by grace through faith in the Savior who died for their sins.

Acts 15:8–11

"And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare [the Gentile believers] witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us [Jews]; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we [Jews] shall be saved, even as they [Gentiles]."

What an amazing turn of the order of things! Is it any wonder that Paul is so emphatic about not submitting to dietary laws as a religious expression? These things are done away. We are in Christ!

Let no one tell you to keep "days and months and times and years" (Galatians 4:10) to be complete in Christ either. The feast days of Israel had a also time and a place. The holy days, new moons, and sabbaths were shadows of things to come. They were shadows of Christ. But now we have the reality. The shadows no longer serve any purpose. The body is of Christ. The types in all of the festivals are wonderful teaching tools, but in and of themselves they only continue to promote earthly things, when our citizenship is in Heaven. Christ Jesus fulfilled the Passover, making full redemption through His blood. He fulfilled the Day of Atonement when He became the one sacrifice for sin, when He became sin for us. There is also a very distinct relation of these things to the Nation of Israel in the future, but as we live now, we are in Christ. The shadows that represented Him need to move out of the way to give place to reality.

Colossians 2:9–10

"For in [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him..."

HOLDING THE HEAD

Since in Christ all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in His body, and we who have believed in Him and received Him by grace through faith are complete in Him, let us talk about "worship".

Paul begins in verse 18 to again warn about the believer being beguiled, or tricked out of his reward. Now this does not indicate that someone can deprive the believer of his salvation. Salvation is a gift, by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8–9). *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* gives the word translated "let ... beguile you of your reward" — *katabrabeuō* — the idea "to decide as an umpire against one", or to "declare one unworthy of the prize", or to "defraud of the prize of victory". Unfortunately, Thayer then adds that it metaphorically is used here to deprive of salvation, which is completely contrary to all of the revelation that the Lord Jesus committed to Paul regarding the believer's security in Christ. What can happen though, is that the unbeliever can think that he can gain salvation through religious practices. He could begin to trust in himself neglecting his need for Christ to save him. But this is written to believers, so if we look in that context, it is not about losing salvation, so let us look ahead. As we go to the end of the entry, there is another usage in literature where it has the idea of giving the judge or judges a bribe to condemn someone. *Vine's* gives the following definition:

Rob:

"to give judgment against, to condemn" (kata, "against," and brabeus, "an umpire;" cp. brabeion, "a prize in the games," 1Cr 9:24; Phl 3:14, and brabeuo, "to act as an umpire, arbitrate," Col 3:15), occurs in Col 2:18, RV, "let (no

man) rob (you) of your prize" (AV, "... beguile... of your reward"), said of false teachers who would frustrate the faithful adherence of the believers to the truth, causing them to lose their reward. Another rendering closer to the proper meaning of the word, as given above, is "let no man decide for or against you" (i.e., without any notion of a prize); this suitably follows the word "judge" in ver. 16, i.e., "do not give yourselves up to the judgment and decision of any man" (AV, marg., "judge against").

If we go back to verse 15, we are reminded of the victory that our Lord Jesus Christ wrought for us over the powers of darkness. While it *could* mean a loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ, the context seems to indicate the loss of the enjoyment of that victory. It looks to mean a defeated Christian life, rather than the victorious life that is yours in Christ. That is the prize that is absolutely yours because you are in Christ, and complete in Him. This "voluntary humility and worshipping of angels" does not bring you or anyone else to a fuller relationship with our Lord. This is interesting when we think of how so many are looking for a "worship experience" when they enter a "church". The result is usually at best an emotional high. Usually, if we are honest, it is a let-down. There is also another by-product of all this nonsense. There is strife over "worship style"; but "worship" should never be about the one worshipping, but about the One who is worshipped. The "worship wars" miss this mark completely. The arguers are not "holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God". It is all about them, and not about Christ. *That* is the problem. As they condemn each other, about not being passionate enough, not being emotional enough, or not being reverent enough, they miss the most important point, that it is about the Head, even Christ.

Now this idea of voluntary humility is about a humility that God is NOT commanding. We are to bow down before our God and give Him all glory and honor. We are not commanded to continually brow-beat ourselves to self-loathing. In our sinful estate, that is, in our flesh, there certainly dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18), but in Christ we are full. "And ye are complete in Him". This "voluntary humility" is not a step to knowing our proper place, but it is a humility that exalts self (kind of an oxymoron) and keeps our eyes on ourselves and not on our Savior. It does not hold the Head in proper esteem.

Even as we talk about "worship styles", let's look at what Paul says about it. He adds the phrase "worshipping of angels". While this seems like it could mean a warning to the believers against actually worshipping angels, which of course would be forbidden (Revelation 22:8-9), the word rendered "worshipping" is θρησκεία — *thrēskeía* — which is elsewhere translated "religion". It is the "religion of angels" that is warned against. If man could get his religion to the high point of the religion of angels, it would do him no good whatsoever. A religion is not what God desires of the Body of Christ. He desires those in Christ to properly esteem Christ, and rejoice for their place in Christ, *complete in Him*. He desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). As Paul states here, the "worshipping of angels" is vanity. The best that any dwelling on ourselves and our worship, or religion, will do, is to puff up our fleshly minds. It brings us no closer to Christ.

The body as a whole, and its members individually, are united to Christ in a living union. We are "by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together". This is organic union because of how we are created. When I think of how my own body works, I think of how my fingers and hands do exactly what my mind tells them to do, because they are attached. If they become detached

(ouch) they will no longer do what my mind tells them. They will do nothing at all. They will die. Now think about this if you wonder whether God has any intention to cut off any part of His body. He does not desire that any member of His Body be cut off, nor will He do it.

Romans 8:1, 38–39

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now we come back to the place of the believer united to Christ. As we are in Adam, we died with Christ and our entire history in Adam died there. The Spirit baptizes us into Jesus Christ and into His death. We are crucified with Him, but we live because He is risen. We live because He lives, but the "rudiments" of the world in their relation to us died, and there is no reason to try and resurrect them.

Colossians 3:3–4

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

The rudiments of the world include all of the vain deceit and philosophy of men as

mentioned in verse 8, and the rudiments of religion. Remember that the religion that the LORD gave to the Israelites is the only religion that was ever divinely prescribed. That, however, was types and shadows of things to come. In Christ we have the reality to which the types and shadows pointed, so all of these ordinances have no meaning any more. We cannot get any closer to God than we are in Christ. The only thing we can do is learn to enjoy the reality of the blessings given by the Spirit that are already ours to enjoy.

It seems in every denomination of "Christianity", there are ordinances to be kept to be considered faithful. Some are things that need to be done, and some are things that the "faithful" must not do. They may have to deprive themselves for some time to properly focus on Christ or something similar to that. Yet, when they deprive themselves, the result always seems to be focusing on themselves, and not on Christ. They are not holding the Head. As we close this, let us look at the next verses in Colossians to see where we should be focusing:

Colossians 3:1–4

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

HEAVENLY MINDED: COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. is credited with saying "Some people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good."¹¹ Whatever it is that Mr. Holmes may have meant by that, it certainly was not the perspective that the Apostle Paul had and communicated *by inspiration of God*.

Paul has taken us in this epistle from the heights of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and His unfathomable and infinite greatness, and left us on the plateau with all that we who have believed on the Lord Jesus and received His gift of salvation have, because we are complete in Him. As on that plateau, or I should really say mountain peak, we ought to enjoy our stay, and never seek a return to lesser things, the things of poverty. Remember how Paul told the Galatians:

Galatians 4:8-11

"Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

These were idolaters who served false gods, but they turned from idols to the true God, just like the apostle says of the Thessa-

¹¹

https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/oliver_wendell_holmes_sr_152682

lonians (1 Thessalonians 1:9). But now these believers are turning to the weak and beggarly elements, the things of poverty, rather than enjoying the unsearchable riches of Christ. Now we should be sure to understand this well, that to be heavenly minded does not mean to be consumed with religion and its practices and observances. It should now be perfectly clear that the things of religion are the earthly things from which the apostle is telling believers to turn their affections away. If that is not clear, re-read chapter 2 until this is well understood. Mystic practices ("intruding into those things which he hath not seen", 2:18) and religious self-denial (asceticism, see 2:20-23) will never create in the Christian a heavenly mindset. The so-called "spiritual disciplines" usually lead in this direction as well. Using the flesh to get control of the flesh is not the key to victory. It is minding earthly things.

Now to set our affections on things above, we must first realize that this earth is not our "home country". While we were at one time "earth-dwellers" when we were dead in trespasses and sins, we are now quickened ("made alive") in Christ. As such, we learn that though we *were* citizens of earth, we are now citizens of Heaven. As far as God is concerned, we are already seated there in Christ.

Ephesians 2:4-7

"But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and

made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:20–21

"For our conversation [πολίτευμα — "políteuma" — "citizenship"] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

We can set our affections there because that is our home. That is where we belong. We SHOULD feel like we do not belong here, because we DO NOT BELONG HERE. Everything that we are is because we are in Christ. In verse 20 of chapter 2, Paul states as a corrective "if-then" question, "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why...". The rudiments of the world did nothing for us when we were dead in trespasses and sins. They continue to do nothing for us when we died with Christ. This is *not* a figurative word picture. Our Lord did not figuratively die. He literally died. He was literally despised and rejected of men. He literally came unto His own, and His own rejected Him. He literally was scourged and beaten. He literally carried His cross until He humanly collapsed under its weight. He literally was nailed to that cross and the soldiers literally placed a crown of literal thorns on His head. He literally hung on that cross until He was offered Him literal vinegar mingled with gall. He literally cried out to the Father, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He literally gave up the ghost after literally saying "It is finished". He literally took upon Himself the punishment that is due to us, and God has literally baptized us into His death. He died our death, and now as far as God is concerned, we literally died with Him. So Paul can say that liter-

ally we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.

We can also be certain that as Christ rose from the dead literally and physically, because we are baptized into His death, we are also literally risen from the dead with Him. That is why God through Paul can challenge us to seek the things that are above that belong to us, because we are risen with Christ.

As having died with Christ and now being risen with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenlies, we have a life that should be far different than the life before that we were identified with Him. Paul writes to Titus of how the grace of God teaches us to live:

Titus 2:11–14

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

We should live soberly — with a proper attitude and apprehension of what we are in Christ. We should live righteously — we should act rightly toward God and others as those risen to righteousness from death in trespasses and sins. We should live godly — as a proper representation of one who is called by the Name of the Lord. We should live looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ! This is no "escapist eschatology". This is what God wants for us. When Christ our life shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory. We have life that is hid with Christ in God. It is our expectation and

our hope. Our affection should be “up there” because our home is “up there”.

While we are down here, called by His Name, we are His ambassadors. We represent to those “down here” the Lord, Who owns us, and is seated “up there”. He is acting in grace toward this world because of all that He accomplished while down here, and we are calling all sinners to be reconciled to God because our Lord Jesus Christ was made sin for us, that is on our behalf, and instead of us (2 Corinthians 5:20–21). He died for us and we died with Him. Those who are called by His Name — baptized into Jesus Christ — are also risen with Him. When we come to God in the way that God has said, everything that He accomplished is complete. God has called and is calling all sinners to Himself by the way of the cross. We can apprehend the accomplishments of Calvary simply by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ Who accomplished

them. This is not “easy believism”. God does not wish to make our salvation difficult. It was difficult for the Son of God to bear the curse for us, so that we could be saved. For us, however, what came at a great cost to Him is given freely to us by His grace (Romans 3:24). He has made it by faith, because believing on Another who is infinitely more able than himself is the only thing that man can do. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17), and the Word of God says “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31).

If you have not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God, why not? He died for you because He wants to save you. He desires all men to be saved (2 Timothy 2:4), so do place your faith in Him for your salvation.

RECKONING THE OLD MAN AS HAVING DIED WITH CHRIST: COLOSSIANS 3:5-11

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Since we who believe and are saved are baptized into Christ, we are baptized into His death. This is a fact that is stated as something that is true. We do not need to “die to sin” to make it true; we *are* dead to sin. Our entire history in Adam has died with Christ. We are to live in light of what is true of us.

Romans 6:11a

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin..."

Since we are dead to sin, the only proper thing to do is to bury that rotting corpse. We do not want to keep that thing around. So what is this corpse that we are to put off?

- Fornication — this is the sin that is against our own body, as we are told in 1 Corinthians 6: *"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians

6:18-20). The thought of “it's my body, so I can do what I want with it” is gone from this. Your body belongs to God. He bought it. Remember the price. Yes we are under grace, *but remember the price.*

- Uncleanness — this refers to impurity, whether of lifestyle, motives, etc. The point is having a quality of things that do not belong. Think of pure water compared to dirty water. What is the difference? The difference is each of the components of the dirty water that are not water, and all of them combined. The uncleanness here in a person or in a corporate body are the things that do not belong.

- Inordinate affection — these are affections set where they do not belong. They should be on things above, not on the things of the earth, as we are told in verse 2. While these are not the exact opposing Greek words, the sense here is passion about the wrong things.

- Evil concupiscence — this would be an intense desire or craving

for the wrong things, especially things that are not allowed since it is “evil concupiscence”.

- Covetousness, which is idolatry — this desire to have more, where the more takes the place of an idol. It is interesting to note that covetousness and idolatry “bookend” the 10 commandments. Ask yourself if God was telling us something by ordering them this way.

These are the “members” that the Lord commands us to put to death. These seem to be the root of many other evils that follow. These are intrinsic qualities of the “old man” and should not be kept around in the life of the body of Christ. The old man is dead and his members should die with him.

Notice next that Paul says that because of these things the wrath of God comes and is coming upon the children (sons — υἱός “huios”, this is really those who have taken their place and prove their parentage by their deeds) of disobedience. The “sons of disobedience” are also referred to in Ephesians 2:2, where Paul speaks of the prince of the power of the air working in the “children of disobedience”, also “huios”. This can be compared and contrasted with Ephesians 2:3 where he states that we were *by nature* the “children of wrath”. In this verse it is τέκνον — “teknon” — which has the sense of a person born into the family.

This takes us back to chapter 1:

Colossians 1:21–22

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight...”

We should remember when discussing these things that these are the things of the

“old man”, and they are things that should not be named among the people of God. These are the sins for which God will judge the world. He is not at this time judging the world for sin (2 Corinthians 5:19), but do not think that He will not. That is the opinion of the scoffers. They will learn the truth.

2 Peter 3:3–4, 7

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation ... But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

We should also, however, consider that getting the unsaved to turn away from these things will not save them. They need to be reconciled to God by the blood of our Lord Jesus just as we were. But saints:

Ephesians 5:3–6

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, LET IT NOT BE ONCE NAMED AMONG YOU AS BECOMETH SAINTS; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”

It should not surprise us when the unsaved act unsaved. But as for the saved, “Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2:19).

Up next we have another list. These are the works of the flesh. Since the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible, let’s look at

what the Lord again says through the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 4:25–32

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Grace living is certainly wonderful! Grace turns a liar into a truth-teller and it gives us a time to give ourselves freedom to let go of our anger. It is freeing when we know that we do not have to hang onto our anger.

Grace turns the thief into a worker who works for the good of others, and it turns the one who uses words to tear others down into one that speaks words to build others up.

Romans 8:3–4

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Do you see how we have put off the old man and put on the new? Now look at the end of this passage. In Christ, we have the perfect answer for "race relations". In Christ there is *"neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all"* (Colossians 3:11). Outside of Christ, there is no answer. It is always the way of the world to pit "man against man". But look at how Paul writes when describing his ministry, why he does what he does:

2 Corinthians 5:14–17

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

In Christ our relationships with each other should be like the relationship between the fingers and the hand, the legs and the arms. It is a body, and we should relate to each other like we are. We will look more in the next passage at more of what that looks like. Until then, walk in love, and in grace toward one another.

BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD:
COLOSSIANS 3:12-14

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Since we who believe and are saved are baptized into Christ, we are baptized into His death. Since Christ is risen from the dead, and we are in Him, we are raised to walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:11

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This is the key to the "victorious Christian life". As we agree with God that the old man is crucified with Christ, we also agree and reckon it to be so that we are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Reckoning" means "to put to the account of". It is the word λογίζομαι — "*logízomai*", also translated "impute" and "count". In Romans 4:3-8, the word in its tenses is used five times. It is accounting language. God has made a deposit in our account of righteousness, and accordingly will not make deposits into our account of sin.

Romans 4:3-8

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was COUNTED unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not RECKONED of grace, but of debt."

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is COUNTED for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God IMPUTETH

righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not IMPUTE sin."

Our part of this is to write the same deposit in our "ledger" that God has written in His. We are to live as though it is true because it is true. Since it is true that we died with Christ, and are now risen with Christ, we are to no longer wear the clothes of the dead man. We are to put on the clothing of the resurrection. We put these on, not to make ourselves the "elect of God", but because we ARE the elect of God. As such, this is a position of honor and we should do our diligence to "wear it well". In Colossians 3:12-14 we are told what the clothing of resurrection looks like.

As we look over these enumerated things listed, they are not singular parts, but the entirety of the garment that we are to put on. The bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering are components woven together in this garment. This is the attitude that is proper in the members of the body of Christ, *especially with each other*. This is manifest especially in the next verse where we are told how this is to "play out":

Colossians 3:13

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel

against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

What a difference this is from those imposing the law, and how that "plays out".

Galatians 5:15

"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

Now we come to that which holds the garment together:

Colossians 3:14

"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Quite a step up from biting and devouring one another is it not? This is what makes the suit a complete outfit, and without it, the Christian, and the body itself is not fully dressed.

1 Corinthians 13:13

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

This term "charity" is often said to be better translated "love", but if we look at this term even in English, it *seems* to have its root word the Greek word "charis", which is often translated "grace". Etymology dictionaries do not speak of the word "charity" coming to us in this way, but by way of the Latin and French. It usually now means kindness shown to the poor and destitute, which is a great way to show the kindness and love *and grace* of God, because we were poor and destitute when God showed His love to us:

Romans 5:8

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Titus 3:3-7

"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

I cannot help but think that the Latin word from which we get our term "charity" is somehow related to the Greek word "charis" that is often translated "grace". God showed His love to us by giving:

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Grace is by definition a gift that never incurs debt. It is free, and we are justified freely by His grace (Romans 3:24). We can show that love by giving to others, and that is often how that word charity is defined. It is an action, but it is an action with an attitude as well. The action and the attitude go together, or else it is not charity:

1 Corinthians 13:3

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

This is also how we can forgive, even as Christ forgave us. That brings us to another thought: How did Christ forgive us? Many are beginning to teach that we do not and should not forgive until the person who

wronged us has “repented”, and will say this on the “authority” that God does not forgive until the sinner has repented. This is part and parcel to the mainstream “Christian” heresy of “Lordship” salvation.

Look, we come to Christ dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). There is nothing that we can do to change that. God forgives us because of Christ, because HE is rich in mercy, and HE made us alive in Christ because of the great love (charity) that HE loved and loves us with (Ephesians 2:4–5). We are forgiven, not because of our repentance, but because of the riches of His grace:

Ephesians 1:6–7

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved. In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...”

This is full forgiveness. In Colossians chapter 2, we just saw that when God raised us up with Christ, He forgave us ALL TRESPASSES (Colossians 2:13). We are forgiven

because of God’s grace. We can forgive others because of God’s grace. It really is that simple. It really is that freeing. We do not need our forgiveness of others to depend on them. Forgiveness of others depends on Christ. We are free to “let it go”.

Now some of these “Lordship” salvationists may accuse me of being “antinomian” and teaching “cheap grace”. The teaching here is not “cheap” grace, it is the *riches* of God’s grace provided by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not purchased with lesser things like “repentance” or anything else that depends on the sinner. We are called to a change of mind, but we must be saved first. The gospel of Jesus Christ is that HE died for your sins, was buried, and rose again. When we hear the gospel of our salvation and take God at His word and believe it, HE gives us the new life that we can only then appropriate by faith. It is only then that we can reckon ourselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He does all of the saving. We do all of the being saved. It is that simple.

THE PEACE OF GOD: COLOSSIANS 3:15-17

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

Since we who believe and are saved are baptized into Christ, we are baptized into His death. Since Christ is risen from the dead, and we are in Him, we are raised to walk in newness of life. Since we have put on, as an act of the will, the new man, where Christ is all in all, there is also a new way of life. We are under “new management”.

The ruling power in us, that is, in our hearts and souls, is the peace of God. Notice that this “rule” is a passive rule, which depends on whether the body lets it. This is characteristic of the rule of God in the day in which we live. This is an individual as well as a group rule. The rule of the peace of God is not the ruling tyrant that sin was; and when the peace of God is ruling in the life of the individual Christian, as well as and in the Body, it is noticed.

An interesting thought in this — Paul lived during a time in history known as the “Pax Romana” — the “Roman Peace” — which was ruling over the Mediterranean world. This was the world that both Paul and the Colossian reader’s knew.

But it is not the “Pax Romana” ruling, it is the “Pax Dei” — the peace of God. Now the “peace of Rome” was kept that way in much the same way that “peace-keeping missions” are kept today: with an army. Indeed, our cities in the nations of the world today have police officers to “keep the peace”. But the peace of God is not kept with an army. The peace of God can rule in the heart of the be-

liever in the midst of the greatest of chaos. We can only imagine what the people of the time really thought about the “peace of Rome”, with its gladiator fights and standing armies in every city. But the peace of God rules as the believer yields to the Lord:

Philippians 4:6-7

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God [pax Dei], which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

The Christian who is living yielded to the Holy Spirit of God, can truly live under a different rulership than the system that is ruling the world. Not that we are contrary or rebellious to our governments, but that rather than being tossed about with all that is going on in the world around us — relationally, politically, socially, financially, economically, etc., — we can find stability in the peace of God. During the kingdom reign of our Lord Jesus, the promise is true:

Isaiah 26:3-4

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength...”

Perfect peace will be the rule of the day during the day when the kingdoms of this

world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, but that promise was made to a people anticipating the future reign, so we, just as they, can enjoy the peace of God while our minds are stayed on Him.

To begin enjoying the peace of God starts with thanksgiving: "And be ye thankful". How all of us, myself included, fail to avail ourselves and enjoy the peace of God because we lack gratitude. Sure, in our minds we are thankful, but often our attitudes are anything but thankful. This is where we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), and have our will and emotions get into agreement with what our minds know to be true. Then we will have the attitude of thankfulness that should always be the attitude of the people of God. We can always find a reason to be thankful, because we can enjoy the rule of the peace of God, because in Christ we have peace with God.

Romans 5:1-2

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

This peace was made when Christ reconciled us to God and made peace by the blood of His cross.

Romans 5:10-11

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement."

Colossians 1:20

"And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether

they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

Since this peace of God is ours to enjoy, we can start with a thankful attitude. We continue to enjoy this peace of God by letting "*the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly*" (vs. 16). Now it will never dwell in us richly if we do not take it in by careful reading and diligent study meditating on the Scriptures.

Psalm 1:1-3

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

In the above Psalm, we learn the wisdom of meditating on the law of the LORD. As is true in the Psalmist's day, it is true in ours. God's word to him was given by Moses in the law, and true wisdom is found in obeying God's word to us. As "*the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17), so Jesus Christ gave to Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, the dispensation of grace to reveal it to the body of Christ. True wisdom today will learn the mystery of God revealed through Paul to us.

There is no substitute for the written word of God in our lives and on our minds. That which God has to say to us is of the greatest value to us, so we should "reckon" that to be true by more than just saying it, but by getting into the word to hear what He has to say to us.

Now as we let the word of Christ dwell in us, we have the key to true wisdom. Remember in chapter 2 that we learned that in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ, so it follows that any worthwhile wisdom to be found is in Him. The wisest of men apart from God cannot understand the things of God, and therefore lack true wisdom. The Athenians were famous for their philosophers ("wisdom lovers"), but when God's apostle visited Athens, the commentary from God's writer Luke speaks of them like this:

Acts 17:21

"For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing."

The wisdom of this world is always looking for a new answer to the issues and problems of this world, the key to happiness, or some similar need. The wisdom of this world, however, is blind to the things that the simplest of believers can accept and appropriate by faith. Indeed, the wisdom of the world could not figure out our Lord Jesus Christ. But in Christ we have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Christ we are taught by the Holy Spirit the things that only the Spirit of God can know.

1 Corinthians 2:13-16

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the nat-

ural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."

With the word of Christ dwelling in us in all wisdom, we share it with each other. That is the thought present when the apostle speaks of "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs". That is the purpose of our singing. Our singing is not primarily to showcase our talent. A single voice with grace in the heart singing to the Lord will teach those listening, especially while they are listening to the word of Christ being sung. The greatest of worldly talent has no greater chance of reaching this or any other generation than a single humble voice singing to the Lord. We don't sing from the abundance of our talent, but from the grace in our hearts to the Lord.

If you would like to know "the peace of God that passeth all understanding", you also may, for from God's point of view, the Lord Jesus Christ has reconciled the world unto Himself, and He is not holding your sins against you *right now*. All that is standing in the way of peace with God is for you to believe — accept by faith the death that our Lord Jesus died in your place for your sins and believe in your RISEN SAVIOR, and the scripture says that you are justified by faith and HAVE PEACE WITH GOD and can enjoy the PEACE OF GOD.

ALL IN THE FAMILY: COLOSSIANS 3:17-21

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Now we come to the place where we first begin to see the Christian life show itself. Verse 17 connects to verse 16, where we learn of our living together and ministry to each other in the body, so now it connects to verse 17 where we learn of our living together in the family and in work and life situations.

Verse 17 certainly gives us a good comprehensive view of how we should make our choices too. Rather than creating lists of “do this”, and “don’t do that”, we have an all-encompassing filter: “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus”. So when determining things like, “what is the will of God for me?”, we do not need to think of a singular thing. THIS is the will of God for you. And if it cannot be done in the Name of the Lord Jesus, it should not be done. If it can be done **in His Name**, then do it **in His Name**.

Again, here we come back to thankfulness. As Christians, our overarching attitude should be one of gratitude. We should be thankful for all that we can do. We should be thankful for opportunities that sometimes show themselves up as challenges. Sometimes, even as we labor for His Name, the only applause we may get is the scorn of this world. Maybe even worse than scorn; sometimes it is vehement hatred. But even in this, look at the example of Peter and the other

apostles in this: “they departed from the presence of the council, *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name*” (Acts 5:41).

So then it should go without saying that we should be characterized by thankfulness for the good things that God gives. It is surely that IN ALL THINGS we should be thankful.

Next we come to more specifics of the Christian life. Now as we look at these things spelled out, I would ask you to consider that these points of Christian character and behavior in these everyday things are every whit “the Christian Commission”. While every Christian is a representative of Christ and to speak His Word and the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, it is not said that everyone is to start an “over there” missionary campaign, or begin a great evangelistic movement in their own city. All are not called into a “full-time” ministry as that is popularly understood, but we all can learn to live as the apostle of Jesus Christ teaches here.

I purposely said “the apostle of Jesus Christ” in the last paragraph rather than simply “Paul” to make an important point: This is not simply a man’s words. This is the word of God. The apostle of Jesus Christ is the “one sent” of Jesus Christ and as a reminder of the authority of the one sent:

John 13:20

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me."

Colossians 1:1

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God..."

Now we come to instructions to husbands, wives, children, parents, servants, and masters. It seems here that no one is left out, and many people can take instructions here that pertain to more than one group.

Wives are told to submit themselves to their *own* husbands. Husbands are told to love *their* wives and to not be bitter against *them*. This is a very interesting way of putting things. In these things we find there to be shown things that no matter how things change in this world, people do not. How often now, even after around 2000 years of "progress", do we not find that wives have the hardest time submitting, or giving themselves, to their own husbands? How many men do not love their wives, and in one way or another show themselves bitter? Why is that?

The "normal Christian life", as spelled out here, is a call to be different than the world around us. Both of these reciprocal *attitudes* that the apostle speaks to are practical out-workings of "putting on the new" (Colossians 3:10). These attitudes, when working properly with each other, build each other in the proper way. Men, obey the Lord in this whether your conversation with your wife is going smoothly or not. Ladies, obey the Lord in this whether your married life is all you hoped for or not. You cannot change anyone, and it is not your job.

Before any objection in any of this regarding extreme situations, these instructions are not for "extreme situations", so let us not use

them as an excuse to disregard the word of God through His apostle. This holds true for all of the relationships spoken of in these verses. The Lord, even when the children of Israel were living under the law of Moses (which was given him by the Lord Himself), allowed for "extreme situations", but they did not overturn the rule of the law itself. So let's not argue with the Lord regarding hypothetical extreme situations and have the understanding that He knows how to deal with them when they come along.

So now that we have settled that, let's move on to children. The context is definitely children (minors) living under the rule of their parents, rather than adult children. If you children want to be well pleasing to the Lord, this is a good first step. The verse says plainly "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord". The rule does not stop there, for although the context here is specific to minors under the rule of parents as they are growing up, Paul references this in Ephesians in the following way:

Ephesians 6:1-3

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

Here, Paul absolutely references the fifth commandment, and the promise that comes with it: "*that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*" (Exodus 20:12).

That the command to "Honor thy father and mother" does not only mean obedience when minors, but actually speaks of honoring when an adult and the "shoe needs to be on the other foot" is evident when the Lord is speaking to the scribes and Pharisees of Jeru-

salem about their taking a “religious exemption” to the Law:

Matthew 15:3–6

“But [the Lord Jesus] answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”

This very much gives the indication of honoring father and mother having to do with taking care of elder parents in the time of the grown child’s strength. This honor starts when the child is young and learns to obey. Regarding parents, especially fathers, we hold the futures of our children as much, humanly speaking, as anyone. I know that the Lord truly holds all of our futures, but we as fathers have the time and opportunity to speak life into our children like no one else in the world can. We have the privilege for a short time to build them up. Yes they do exasperate us sometimes when they do not heed that which they were commanded, but we are the adults, and in the body of Christ, they are saints too if they are believers and it is our opportunity to first show to them “body life”.

In all these family relationships, it is very interesting that we all somewhat seem to know this is the way that it should be, but in reality, this life of a properly functioning family is rare, and seems to have been rare back when Paul wrote this epistle from the Lord. Wives seem willing to submit to anyone except their own husbands. Husbands do not love their wives, not as Christ loved the ἐκκλησία and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:21). Husbands are prone to bitterness

against their wives, but these things should not be. They can be expected from the people of this world’s system, but not from the body of Christ. This world’s system encourages children to obey any and everyone except their parents, and parents go from extremes of destroying their children’s lives by anything goes to “you can’t do anything right”. But parents in the body need to get off of that continuum and parent on another plane, that of bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). This may involve discipline and so-called “tough love”, but the tough should not be exalted over the love. The entire purpose of the discipline is love. We discipline our children because we know they need it.

I have said all this not because I have all answers, or anything near a perfect family life. I am speaking this about what the Lord is teaching me through this .

Philippians 3:12

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

By the life given to us by the Lord Jesus, and the resurrection life that we have in Him, we have the ability given to us to live on this plane of family life that the world cannot know because of its broken system.

If you do not know the assurance of sins forgiven, striving for this life is in vain. You need first to come to the reality of your need for a Savior from your sins. You need redemption, and this is found in Christ alone. He died on the cross in your place, for your sins, and to show the full payment was accepted, He rose again from the dead. When you believe *this* gospel, and accept this free gift of God, your sins are removed from your account, because the Lord Jesus Christ paid them in full. Then you may know eternal life.

Ephesians 1:7

***"In Whom we have redemption through
His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according
to the riches of His grace..."***

LABOR RELATIONS, THE SERVANT'S PART: COLOSSIANS 3:22–25

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

We now have arrived in our study at the place of Christian work life. To get to the very beginning, this is a part of what we discussed previously of reckoning the ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:11). The “professional life” of both employees and employers is spelled out simply, yet broadly enough to encompass all.

Now there are some things that we know in this world we live in. All things being equal, all things are not equal. Some have worked their way to “the top” and have become “masters according to the flesh”. Some have through several good turns of events found themselves in the position of “masters”, and some have made it to this place by inheritance. We also know it to be true, conversely, that some through the family or the conditions that they were born into became “servants”, or maybe even fell into servitude (forced, a.k.a. slavery, or indentured), or are simply as we now call “working class”.

The Bible, and especially Paul’s epistles to the body of Christ, are clear about the way that servants are to regard those that they work for. They also make clear the way that “masters” should regard their servants. This truth is just as applicable to employees and employers. It is even true for independent contractors, or freelancers, who are not on the official company employee roster. When we are hired for a job, we take the place of the servant, and it becomes our responsibility to look and work for the good of our employer.

In the days of state sanctioned slavery, a slave had no personal rights. They became the property of their owner, and in some cases did not even have right to life. They were another class of person not counted among the citizenry.

But this class distinction is not carried over into the body of Christ. Earlier in this chapter of Colossians, we are told that there is neither bond nor free. Christians who are “under the yoke” have a place of equal standing to their “despots” who are also in Christ. Christians who are under the yoke also have a standing in Christ without distinction to the standing of the “freeman”, or even the master; and, we do not need a change in our earthly position for this freedom:

1 Corinthians 7:21–24

“Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.”

Now, wouldn’t God want us all to be free from servitude to men so that we could be fully devoted to Him? We can be fully devoted servants to the Lord Jesus Christ right in the place where we are. Conditions do not need to change for us to be fully used by Him.

1 Timothy 6:1

"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the Name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed."

That is a good reason, is it not? We honor those that we work for by doing a good job, and this should be especially so for the worker who is saved. Now this verse does not specify what type of master is being honored, but that is because this is a general call. This is not a call that is dependent on the master but on the servant. The servant is the one in control in this situation. Here is another good reason for us, as servants, to be the best servants that we can possibly be. Remember that I am not only speaking of servants and masters in the "classic" sense, but of employees and employers in general. Not only does God's Name and doctrine not become subject to blasphemy, or evil speaking, but it is made to shine:

Titus 2:9–10

"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

The apostle then adds to this why we should do so:

Titus 2:11

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men..."

What we make the salvation-bringing grace of God look like is what the unbelieving employer/master sees. Think of men like Joseph and Daniel in the Old Testament books who were in the place of lowly servitude, lower than the low, but even in this stood head and shoulders above all of their peers, even to the place of being above all others around them, whether slave or free. These

both obtained this place of honor because they were faithful to God and their place of service. In this, it should go without saying that we do not do the wrong things that our "despots" require, but even in refusal, it should be respectful refusal, as Daniel refused to give up worshipping of the One True God because of the king's decree.

In 1 Timothy 6, the apostle continues to instruct the servants as to how they should respect a master who is a believer:

1 Timothy 6:2

"And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort."

Now, I am certain that some would object to this, but look at what Paul goes on to say here:

1 Timothy 6:3–5

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

Now some would rip that out of context and say it is speaking about making sure that we apply every word in the "Four Gospels" to ourselves without first understanding the primary purpose of the Lord's words that are there recorded. The context, however, makes it clear that these are the words that were just spoken by the apostle concerning the servant's obedience and attitude. This is about the commands that Paul gave to Timo-

thy to pass on to his flock, and that the servants that he is speaking to who argued against the command were not arguing with Timothy, or Paul, but with the Lord Himself.

Now that is only to good and fair employers or masters, right? The Apostle Peter speaks in the same way to his flock on the same subject:

1 Peter 2:18–21

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

Why would God not want us to speak up often about mistreatment?

1 Peter 2:22–23

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously..."

But I have to do so much, it is just not fair!

1 Peter 2:24

"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by Whose stripes ye were healed."

The Lord will use faithful service to earthly employers for His glory. As a faithful employee, we have a good Lord in heaven Who will reward faithfully all service to Him in all things. Our service on earth is to THE Lord, Christ. We are reminded that there is no re-

spect of persons with Him, which should make us rejoice as servants, but also sober us to remember WHO we work for and that there is no respect of persons in our favor either. Earthly "masters" may reward their servants with respect of persons (nepotism, tec.) but not our Lord. He rewards fairly. He also rewards those in high earthly positions without respect of persons. In the next study, we will look together at how a "master" who is in Christ should conduct himself, reckoning himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To be in this place of service to Christ and to learn to be content in whatever position we may find ourselves in (Philippians 4:11–13), we must first be named and known by Him. He has promised all that He will count them in the company of the elect if they will accept His offer of justification by grace. It is available to all. It is given to all that will place their faith in His death for them and believe on Him Who raised Him from the dead.

Romans 3:21–26

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

It really is that simple. Because Christ died for our sins, we can all be made righteous by Him. He is all that we need, but we do need Him!

LABOR RELATIONS, TO THE MASTERS: COLOSSIANS 3:25–4:1

But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

We started this look at labor relations as a practical outworking of reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord as it affects “servants”. Now we will look at how it affects “masters”.

Masters have a master. The word used for masters here is κύριος — *kyrios*, or “lord”. Jesus Christ our LORD is the Lord of lords, and they are responsible to HIM. In this case, the master’s responsibility to *the Lord* is proper treatment of those serving him. In Colossians 3:24, servants were told that they serve the Lord Christ. Masters also serve the Lord Christ, *and there is no respect of persons*.

So how is an “earthly lord” to properly serve his heavenly Lord? Here we see stated in this one sentence: give unto your servants that which is just and equal. Proper treatment of the servant (or employee) as a fellow human being is already considered in 3:8–14 and especially as a fellow member with no distinction in the Body of Christ. This is already a “given” in this passage. As we move on from there, we look at how the master/employer/boss is to treat the servants as such. While the servant or employee is told to work and be profitable to the employer, the employer is told that the servant’s work and time given to the employer is also valuable and it should be rewarded justly. It should be rewarded without respect of persons. The employer owes those that work for him at least that much. Payment for good work is a debt paid. That is a common-

knowledge assertion that Paul made in Romans when beginning to speak on justification by grace through faith in Romans 4:

Romans 4:4

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”

That is a principle reason why justification must be “not of works”. It is of “faith that it might be by grace” (Romans 4:16). Remember that we are “justified freely by His grace” (Romans 3:24) and it is not of ourselves, because God owes us nothing.

The employer, however, does owe those who work for him. There is no way any employer, especially one that is called by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., a Christian, should fall into the category shown here:

James 5:4

“Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.”

The law spelled out very clearly the speed at which servants were to be paid:

Deuteronomy 24:14–15

“Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth

his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee."

That which the law required is not too much to expect from employers/masters that are saved by grace. While today we are not under the law, remember that being not under the law is a reason that we do not let sin rule over us.

Romans 6:14

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

All these things being said, what Paul said in Colossians 4:1 says it all: "give to your servants that which is just and equal". There is very little that could be said against that from scripture, and any arguments, again, are not with me, and not with Paul, but with God Himself. We know that it is not always possible to pay high wages so that all employees are rich, but they should be paid fairly and rightly. It should never be said of a Christian employer that he cheats those who work for him.

Though not mentioned specifically, here is another classification in the "labor relations" spectrum. This is the "manager", or "foreman". This is an interesting and sometimes difficult place to be in, and to apply this Scripture to the manager position, both the command to servants and the command to masters apply. In relation to the "servant", the manager is in the position of the "master". In relation to the "master", the manager is in the position of the "servant". When in that position, the manager will do well to remember that he serves the Lord Christ in all things.

The Lord Jesus had something to say about the person in the position of manager. The word manager is not used. When the Scriptures speak of a manager, the word "steward" is usually used.

Luke 12:42-48

"And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Now keep in mind here, that the Lord is talking about something specific in this parable. His steward is the Nation of Israel in general, and its leaders specifically. Remember that these verses apply to the Jews to whom were committed the "oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). Also, the warning of being appointed a portion with the unbelievers is not about a believer who is in the Body of Christ losing his salvation, but about the nation that then was (Israel), and its leaders, being counted as unfaithful as stewards of the oracles of God, and their position as steward, or manager, being given to others.

We can, however learn something here about what THE Lord expects from those who have "rule" over something that is not their own — faithfulness to the one who placed them as a manager, and kindness and proper

treatment of those working under him. This is exactly what is said in Colossians.

1 Corinthians 4:2

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

The study of this term "steward", and "stewardship" in scripture is a very profitable one. The Greek term generally for steward is οἰκονόμος — *oikonomos*, and for stewardship is οἰκονομία — *oikonomia*. This study of stewardship will help us with a framework to understand scripture. As Israel was committed the "oracles of God" and had a stewardship, so now, it is to the Apostle Paul that the Lord committed the *oikonomia* of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:2), and to be faithful to the Lord in heaven, as servants to Him, we would do well to listen to His steward to whom He committed the dispensation of the grace of God.

Now it is important to know, that before we can serve the Lord in heaven, we must be saved from our sins to be counted among

those that are His. Service to Him does not gain us favor with Him to be counted as His, but we must have a righteous standing before Him first. We must have *"the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"* (Romans 3:22-26).

Believing that Christ died for your sins and rose again from the dead is that which is of first importance, and it is how the sinner, any sinner, is saved (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). God wants to save you, and He has stated His simple terms. What do *you* say to this?

A DOOR OF UTTERANCE: COLOSSIANS 4:2-4

Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

In the first chapter, Paul tells the assembly of his thankfulness for them, and of his prayer for them. Now, he makes a request of these saints that they would pray for him, and for those with him. Since this is a letter from Paul with Timothy, the “us” must refer to them.

The first thing that Paul mentions here is to continue praying. This again is related to all that came before, where we have the life that is reckoned to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We now have also what is really meant in this charge in 1 Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 5:17

“Pray without ceasing.”

The point is to never stop praying. To not give up on praying, and “watch in the same”, or to be diligent and vigilant in praying. It involves conscientious involvement in this continuous prayer. It involves conscientious thanksgiving in prayer. As Paul said to the Romans, we should pray as an instant reaction to any situation:

Romans 12:12

“Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer...”

After giving encouragement to continue praying generally, we now continue with the apostle’s specific request for Timothy and himself. He is asking for a “door of utterance”, or for opportunities to speak the word. This should not be confused with the “utterance” in Acts 2:4 and 14 which has to do

with the Holy Spirit giving the Apostles the ability to speak in new, never learned languages and giving them, specifically Peter, the very words of God to speak as a prophetic proclamation. The important point here is not the differences in Greek words, although they are different, but that what Paul is asking for has nothing to do with the “powers of the world to come” (Hebrews 6:5), and the gifts that were manifest in Acts 2, but with speaking the mystery of Christ. Now properly, the mysteries, or secrets can be enumerated into specific things, but here, it speaks more plainly of the entirety of the message that Paul preached as Apostle of Jesus Christ and by Jesus Christ. This message was given to him by revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12), and he speaks broadly of his message at the end of Romans:

Romans 16:25-27

“Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.”

The Christian is established according to what Paul calls “my gospel”. Paul takes ownership of this message because he was given it by revelation of Jesus Christ, and the Lord sent him as a chosen vessel to proclaim

it. There is a revelation of Jesus Christ according to that which was “spoken by the mouth of all [God’s] holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21, cf. Luke 1:70), and a message of Jesus Christ “according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest”. This should be understood without saying it, but just in case it is not, or is not clear, the messages are from the same God and a revelation of the same Lord Jesus Christ. They are not opposed to each other, but are built on the same foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:11

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

There are many elements of Paul’s gospel which are very consistent with all that the prophets spoke “since the world began”, and this should be expected; *but there is much additionally that Paul reveals that is unheard of in all of prophecy.*

It is that which the Apostle Paul reveals, which was given to him by revelation of Jesus Christ, which is the mystery of Christ. Notice though, this mystery, or secret, is not to remain a secret, but Paul asks the saints to pray for him that he may speak it, and make it manifest as he “ought to speak”. This brings up another important point. In discussing “the mystery”, we do not, as I have been accused of doing by those opposing my stand for the distinctiveness of the revelation of Jesus Christ given to Paul, speak of things which “only the initiated can understand”. This type of accusation tries to put us on the level of “the Illuminati”, or some other such secret society. But no one who stands for the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery is teaching a “secret society” message. We are doing the exact opposite of that. We are *teaching the revealed secret:*

Colossians 1:25–28

“Whereof I [Paul] am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus...”

Ephesians 3:8–9

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ...”

Notice also that Paul says here that it is the mystery of Christ for which he is in bonds. This statement has two possible senses, and I am persuaded that both of these senses have validity. The first is that he is in bonds because he spoke of the mystery of Christ, and that is why he is imprisoned and persecuted. The other is that he is imprisoned for the purpose of speaking the mystery of Christ, or so that he would speak the mystery of Christ.

In the first case, remember what caused Paul to be taken prisoner by the Roman government. In Acts 21 and 22, he was in the temple, in Jerusalem, and was drawn out by the riotous multitude that was stirred up against him by the Jews from Asia. This started because the Jewish believers in Jerusalem under the leadership of James urged Paul to go to the temple to show that he was not teaching the Jews among the Gentiles to “forsake Moses” (Acts 21:21), and that he himself

“walkest orderly, and keepest the law” (Acts 21:25). It seems in this episode that the Jews in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus as the promised Christ were at peace with those that did not. They were in the temple and it seems without issue. The big problem was whether or not Paul still identified himself with the Jews and still kept up the wall of separation. At this point, to the Jews, Paul became a Jew and went in with them and there would have been an offering made for them.

The problem that the Jews in the temple had was that they had seen Paul with an Ephesian (Gentile), and supposed he had brought him into the temple. They said that he brought Greeks into the temple and polluted the “holy place”. The truth is that Paul did everything that he could to be at peace with the Jews in Jerusalem. He spoke to them in the Hebrew language to keep them in silence. Speaking in Greek would never have been accepted. He recounted how he had met the Lord on the road to Damascus, and that the Lord said “I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom thou persecutest”, and they still kept silent.

Paul stated his case, even recalling that he argued with the Lord about how much he could sway the Jews in Jerusalem because he had been one of them that persecuted the Lord and His people. First the Lord told him plainly, “Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me” (Acts 22:18).

After more arguing, the Lord gave him another plain command: “Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21). That was going too far. Just mentioning going to the Gentiles caused the calm to stop, and another cry, “Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live” (Acts 21:22).

This is how Paul ended up in Roman custody and found himself in bonds for the mys-

tery of Christ. The Jews in the temple would have none of that. The nation in general would not accept the word of God for themselves, and would not allow the word of God to go to the Gentiles either. God, however, would not allow their unbelief to stand in the way of His plans to reconcile the world to Himself. Even though God gave to Abraham the promise that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, the Gentiles would be blessed in spite of the rejection by the chosen people.

Romans 11:32

“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.”

The mystery of Christ declares an obliteration of the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:14

“For He is our peace, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us...”

Ephesians 3:1–7

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power.”

The passage above though states plainly that while Paul may have been in Roman custody, he was not the prisoner of Rome. He

was the prisoner of Jesus Christ. He was held captive as an “ambassador in bonds” (Ephesians 6:20) by the Lord Himself. He could have been dramatically rescued as in the past, but he was not. The Lord saw fit to keep Paul bound for the mystery of Christ, and at what is usually considered another imprisonment, Paul reminds Timothy that although he is bound, the *Word of God is not* (2 Timothy 2:9).

In this sense, he was bound so that he would speak the mystery of Christ, and not continue to go back to Jerusalem where they would not hear the word concerning Jesus the Messiah. Paul’s job was to go to the Gentiles, and this inconvenient imprisonment would send him to the capital of the world, Rome. So now that he got there, he requests prayer to speak as he ought, for that “door of utterance” to be opened, and that he would speak boldly as he should. *The Word of God was not bound!*

Philippians 1:12–13

"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened

unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places..."

Philippians 4:22

"All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household."

So as we have spoke of Paul speaking the mystery of Christ, it is important that we make it clear that the mystery of Christ IS made known. Paul spoke of that which was of first importance, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and rose again according to the scriptures. He says plainly that this is the gospel by which we are saved if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). This applies to you as well as to all. The offer is available to all, and it is available to YOU. Will YOU accept the free gift of God of salvation in Jesus Christ by the cross? It is in the Lord Jesus Christ that God will accept you!

WALKING AND TALKING: COLOSSIANS 4:5-6

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

In Colossians 1:9, Paul lets the saints know that he is praying for them to be “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”, and here he is exhorting them to walk in this wisdom. In chapter 2, Paul tells them of his striving for them to know “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2-3). Later, there is a warning against falling prey to man’s “philosophy and vain deceit” (Colossians 2:8), and then he goes on to tell the riches of being complete in Christ.

Now the saints are exhorted to walk in the wisdom that they have, specifically toward those that are without, or toward those that are not saved. We are not to waste time, but to redeem, or buy up all the time. This means to make the best possible use of the time that we have, and we do that by walking in wisdom.

Ephesians 5:8-17

***“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*”**

***“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*”**

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”

Here, in Ephesians, we see of what walking in wisdom looks like. Paul tells them to walk “circumspectly”. This word has a literal connotation of “looking around”, with the idea of being aware of ones surroundings to make the proper choices in our walk. This was the word that the translators of the A.V. thought best to translate the original Greek word ἀκριβῶς (*akribōs*), which is elsewhere translated diligent(ly) and perfect(ly). This is walking with a well-ordered and purposeful walk, rather than a haphazard walk. We are to walk “understanding what the will of the Lord is”, and we understand His will by knowing what He has revealed. He has made known to us the secret of His will, so it is now no longer a secret (Ephesians 1:9), and we can find it by reading what He has revealed to us, specifically what He has revealed to us through the apostle that He sent to us, Paul. That is not to say that we ignore the rest of Scripture but that we understand the remaining body of Scripture in the light of the “revelation of the mystery” (Romans 16:25).

This particular aspect of walking in wisdom toward those that are without has a further instruction regarding our speech. This is connected to walking in wisdom. Going back to Ephesians, it would be speech without “filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting” (Ephesians 5:4). Rather than talk about what not to do, Paul instead focuses on what our

speech should be. It should be with grace. Not just kind and whimsical talking with those that are without, but this is what the content of our speech should be. We are to fill our speech with God's grace. Remember all of the following:

Romans 3:24

"Being justified freely by His GRACE through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."

Romans 5:2

"By Whom also we have access by faith into this GRACE wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Romans 5:21

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might GRACE reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 6:14

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under GRACE."

Ephesians 1:6-7

"To the praise of the glory of His GRACE, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His GRACE..."

Ephesians 2:5-9

"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by GRACE ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His GRACE in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by GRACE are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

2 Timothy 1:9

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and GRACE, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began..."

2 Timothy 2:1

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the GRACE that is in Christ Jesus."

Titus 2:11

"For the GRACE of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men..."

Titus 3:7

"That being justified by His GRACE, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Hebrews 13:9

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with GRACE; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

Remembering all this, we speak with grace to those "within" and "without", because the GRACE of God is where we begin. Do not be surprised that the unsaved would act unsaved. It is not our job to reform them, but to preach the gospel, preach the cross, and preach the word of reconciliation. Our "reproof" of the unfruitful works of darkness is the absence of fellowship with them. We do not partake of the unfruitful works of darkness, and that is convicting enough, but we speak and glory in the GRACE OF GOD, not preaching a probation officer, or a sin management program, but a SAVIOR. The words that we speak, whether to those within or without, are to be with grace:

Ephesians 4:29

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister GRACE unto the hearers."

So what does the apostle mean by "seasoned with salt"?

The seasoning with salt indicates the preparedness of the words of grace that they would be ready to be partaken of. The only thing that is left is for the recipient to sit down and dine. The saint needs to be prepared to speak grace to the sinner so that the sinner need not add anything else to the "meal", but to just partake.

The grace of God is not cheap, but to you it is given freely, by the offering up of the Lord Jesus Christ of Himself. He did this for you when you were at your worst.

Romans 5:8

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Don't turn away from this gift by GRACE by delay or refusal. Don't try to pay for it or earn it. Accept it by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who loves you and died for you.

Romans 4:24-25

"[The righteousness of God] shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

TWO SERVANTS: COLOSSIANS 4:7-9

All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

As we begin to reach the end of this epistle, Paul begins to introduce us to some of his fellow laborers. The first is Tychicus. He is mentioned 4 other times in scripture, the first is in Acts 20:4, as one who is from Asia (minor), who accompanied Paul into Asia after they met at Troas (in Asia). He is mentioned with another man, Trophimus, who is mentioned in Acts 21:29 as being an Ephesian. With the uproar of the Jews who had *supposed* that Paul brought Trophimus into the temple, it can be deduced that he was a Gentile Ephesian. This Trophimus, by the way, was also left in Miletum sick, at the end of Paul's ministry. This is an interesting development in the life of a man who at one time had the gift of healing. The "powers of the world to come" were no longer being manifested after the close of the period of forbearance recorded in Acts. Now if Paul, the *Apostle of Jesus Christ*, was no longer able to heal his fellow laborers, how can anyone claim to have the "anointing" now? I know that is a little bit of a digression, but it needed to be said.

Now Tychicus was sent by Paul as his messenger to several places. He is mentioned both here and in Ephesians 6:21 as a faithful minister and beloved brother. In Colossians, he is also designated a fellowservant in the Lord. At the end of Paul's life, Tychicus is no longer with him, but was sent to Ephesus (1 Timothy 4:12). He seems to be counted among the faithful fellow servants as he is mentioned after Luke, who was the one left with Paul, and Mark who was profitable to

him for the ministry. He is mentioned one other time, in Titus 3:12, as one of the two that Paul would send to Titus. Tychicus seems to be Paul's courier during his Roman imprisonment. Epaphras, who delivered news from Colosse to Paul seems to have wound up imprisoned himself, as Philemon 1:23 calls him Paul's fellowprisoner. So Tychicus became his messenger back and forth, and at the end of Colossians in the King James Version, the footnotes suggest that both Ephesians and Colossians were first carried by Tychicus. This man was obviously trusted by Paul, and the evidence of his trustworthiness is that we have these letters declaring the mystery of Christ.

Paul also wanted, and expected, that Tychicus would share his state, or those things that are happening with him. Tychicus also would comfort the hearts of the saints in Colosse, perhaps in letting them know how the Apostle was faring in Rome. They would be strengthened and encouraged by news of his welfare, even while in prison. I am certain that Paul hoped he would return with news of the state of the saints in Colosse, also with the expectation that they indeed were standing "*perfect and complete in all the will of God*" (Colossians 4:12).

So Tychicus carried a written message from Paul to the saints at Colosse, and news about his condition. This man is certainly one of the unsung heroes of the faith, for he transported this capstone of divine revelation that God preserved for us in His word. Would

to God that those coming behind us would find us faithful in carrying the Word of God faithfully, not preaching ourselves, but preaching Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.

Paul also speaks of another man, Onesimus. He is a Colossian (“one of you”) just like Epaphras (Colossians 4:12), and he is also called a faithful and beloved brother. He is mentioned here, and is the one that Paul pleads for in his epistle to Philemon. Tychicus and Onesimus together were given the responsibility to carry this epistle to the Colossians. The KJV editors also suggest that Onesimus carried the epistle to Philemon as well. One can almost see Onesimus showing up at Philemon’s door looking down so as to not make eye contact with Philemon while handing him the scroll. We have no known record of Philemon’s reaction to this, but if his relationship to Paul meant anything, he knew it true that he indeed did owe his own self to the apostle (Philemon 19). If Philemon’s relation to Christ meant anything, his reaction would have been like that which the apostle wrote to the Philippians:

Philippians 2:1–4

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

While justice would demand punishment for Onesimus’ actions, Paul pleads for Philemon to deal with his formerly unfaithful servant as “a brother beloved ... both in the flesh and in the Lord” (Philemon 16). He asks, even pleads, that Philemon would deal with

Onesimus as he would deal with Paul, and Paul assures him that he will repay all that Onesimus owes. We would almost have to chuckle at the thought of Philemon demanding this repayment from Paul. What a great picture of forgiveness to our brothers and sisters in Christ! Forgiveness under grace is to forgive “*even as God for Christ’s sake HATH FORGIVEN YOU*” (Ephesians 4:32). When we demand that others repay us justly when they have wronged us, remember that Christ has put that on His account. Now demand from Christ that *He* repay us! Go ahead, *I dare you!*

Infinite thanks to God that He does not deal with us according to His justice but “according to His mercy” (Titus 3:5)!

Tychicus and Onesimus would let the Colossians know about what is going on with Paul in Rome. As he says later “Remember my bonds”, he would likely also let them know those things that he told the Philippians:

Philippians 1:12–14

“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

As the word of the Lord made its way to Cæsar’s palace, so this wonderful “preaching of the cross” has made its way to you. Thanks in part to faithful servants such as these who delivered this letter to Colosse. We know that the word of God is not bound, and had they not delivered it, someone else would have, but we can be thankful to the Lord and to

them that they did. So now that we have it, what will we do with this good news of the grace of God? Will we do our part to make it known? How few really know this message in its fullness! Will we receive the truth of Christ, our risen Savior Who died for our sins, and accept it ALONE as our way to wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption?

Romans 6:23

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

2 Corinthians 9:15

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

FELLOW WORKERS UNTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD: COLOSSIANS 4:10-11

Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

The first of Paul's fellow laborers is also called a fellow prisoner. We might call him a cell mate, although being a fellow prisoner does not necessarily mean in the same prison, but in prison for the same reason. Paul was a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1), and also a prisoner for the mystery of Christ (Colossians 4:3). Aristarchus was a prisoner in bonds (not free to come and go as he pleased), somewhere near to the apostle so as he could add his salutations, but he is more a fellow prisoner for the same cause: *the mystery of Christ*.

Aristarchus, and the next two men that we will meet, are an interesting story. Let us see what we can learn from the Scriptures about them.

First, the Scripture here says that they are of the circumcision, i.e., they were Jews, Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah, and members of the body of Christ. Now, according to Acts 19:29, 20:4, and 27:2, Aristarchus was of the Thessalonians in Macedonia. This would put his introduction to the Apostle Paul in Acts 17:

Acts 17:1-4

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, Whom I

preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."

That Aristarchus is numbered with these who are "of the circumcision" would make him also of the Jews in that synagogue that believed and consorted with Paul and Silas. Now as Paul's pattern was, as recorded in the book of Acts, he went "to the Jew first" (Romans 1:16). Yet here in Thessalonica, as in almost every other city that he went, the Jews rejected his message and in so doing continued to show the truth that Jesus Christ "came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). But those like Aristarchus continued to illustrate the truth of the following verses:

John 1:12-13

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

There is also another important element in Acts 17:1-4 that should be addressed as we discuss these men "of the circumcision" who are of Paul's fellow workers unto the kingdom of God: the message that Paul preached in the synagogue. The message has the following elements:

- Christ must needs have suffered

- Christ must be risen from the dead
- Christ has a known identity — He is indeed Jesus of Nazareth

This that Paul spoke to the synagogue in Thessalonica is laying the foundation for the gospel, especially for Jews in the synagogue. The message that Paul spoke in the synagogue was much like that which he spoke to the synagogue in Acts 13, when he took them through Israel's history, and led them to this important truth:

Acts 13:38–39

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

Paul, however, does not end in Acts 13 as Peter did in Acts 2, declaring the guilt of the nation and demanding that they repent and be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins (Acts 2:38), but he makes it known that it is through the Lord Jesus Christ that forgiveness of sins is found. Luke does not add this here, but we find out in Paul's epistles that this forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14), and justification (Romans 3:24–26), are through the blood of Christ. This is the only basis by which God would ever forgive or justify anyone. He will *“by no means clear the guilty”* (Exodus 34:7), but all sinners can be *“justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 3:24).

Paul does not speak to his brethren according to the flesh pointing out and stressing their blood-guiltiness, although he does lay at their feet that they demanded his death, but rather that it is in Him that salvation is found. Paul's message did not stress the guilt of the cross as Peter's did (also a God-given message), but stressed that salvation is

through the cross and *because* of the cross. Indeed, Paul could take his place among those who were guilty of the blood of Christ, and those who did always resist the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51). This fact of Paul's past made him *uniquely* qualified for the work that God had for him as apostle of the Gentiles with the dispensation of the *grace* of God:

1 Timothy 1:12–17

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, Who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Paul, who was formerly known as Saul of Tarsus, could truly count himself as a blasphemer of the Holy Ghost in that he stood by and consented to the death of Stephen, who was “full of faith and power” (Acts 6:8), and appeared to the council as having the “face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). Stephen was “full of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 7:55) when the men of the council ran on him with one accord, cast him out of the city, and stoned him. Saul went from holding coats and consenting to Stephen's death, to making havock of the assembly of believers in Jerusalem. But he still found mercy! He could not be counted among the nation bringing forth the fruits of the Kingdom, for the blasphemer of the Holy Ghost would never be forgiven as such, but he could be and was saved by grace and grace

alone! This grace would drive the apostle to glory in sufferings and fill up in his own body the sufferings of Christ with joy (Colossians 1:24), *“for the love of Christ constraineth us”* (2 Corinthians 5:14)!

As a fellow worker and fellow prisoner with Paul, Aristarchus could also fill up in his own body the sufferings of Christ with joy. Aristarchus and Gaius were caught by the mob in Ephesus and these religious Gentiles were out of control and many did not even know why they were there. This was what Paul called “perils of the heathen” (2 Corinthians 11:26). This fellow worker got to experience that first hand. The only thing that kept the men of God from being torn limb from limb was that Rome was to be feared if order was lost. This record could be found in Acts 19:23–41. The silversmiths that made their money from heathen idolatry would not go down without a fight, yet God preserved His own through using the heathen town clerk with the threat of the heathen Roman government. I would venture to assume that these men appreciated that God instituted human government at such a time as this!

Aristarchus continued faithful to Paul and was with him at Troas (Acts 20:4), and sailed with him to Rome, where he ended up his fellow prisoner. He is again mentioned as a fellow labourer in Philemon. This man, as he suffered with Paul, also had opportunity to suffer for Christ:

2 Timothy 2:12

“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us...”

Philippians 1:29

“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake...”

We now come to the most well-known of the three, a man named Marcus. Paul calls him “sister’s son to Barnabas”, or we may say

“Barnabas’ sister’s son”. In short, Marcus, or Mark, was Barnabas’ nephew. He is also the man called to write the Gospel According to Mark, which Scofield points out is the “Gospel of Jehovah’s ‘Servant the Branch’ (Zech. 3.8)”¹².

We meet Mark in Acts 12, where we are actually introduced to his mother, another woman named Mary in the New Testament (Acts 12:12). He is known as “John whose surname was Mark” in Acts, and in Acts 12:25, Barnabas and Saul took him with them from Jerusalem to Antioch. When the Holy Ghost separated Barnabas and Saul, they took John Mark with them to Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos, and Perga in Pamphylia, and at Perga he returned to Jerusalem. Acts 13:5 says that they “had John to their minister”. There was opposition in Paphos from a Jewish false prophet and sorcerer named Barjesus or Elymas and it is quite possible that Mark was not ready to deal with this, for it was right after this that he is said to have returned to Jerusalem.

So Mark left, and “Saul, who is also called Paul”, and Barnabas went on. After the “Jerusalem council” and their return to Antioch, Paul said to Barnabas that he wanted to revisit all of the brethren in the cities in which they preached. Barnabas wanted to take Mark, Paul said that it was not a good idea. The contention was so sharp that they had a rift between them, and Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus with him, and that is the last we hear from Barnabas or Mark in Acts. The rest of the history would follow Paul and new companions. In Colossians, however, we find out that Mark was Barnabas’ nephew, and that is probably why this meant so much to him. He took Mark back to Cyprus (his home, Acts 4:36), and he must have helped to ready him for the ministry, not with a “baptism by

¹² Scofield, C I. *The Scofield Reference Bible*. Oxford UP, 1909. p.1045

fire” as he received on the first trip. This would be expected from the “son of consolation”. The Colossians were told to receive him, and Paul told Timothy in his last epistle that he wanted Timothy to bring Mark with him because “he is profitable to me [Paul] for the ministry”. He had become a faithful minister, but he needed time and training to grow. It could not be forced at the time just because Barnabas wanted it so.

From 1 Corinthians 9:6, it seems that Paul and Barnabas did not remain at odds, even though we do not hear of them as traveling partners anymore. Maybe the Lord was done using Barnabas as the son of consolation for Paul, and now would use him as the son of consolation for Mark. As said earlier, Mark would go on to write the Gospel of the Perfect Servant, and the apostle Peter would mention a “Marcus, my son” in 1 Peter 5:13. Mark would rise from the place of a frightened helper to the place of a faithful servant to these apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. The faithful men would need to prepare him for this service.

Another man of this group, “of the circumcision” is Jesus, called Justus. We meet a man named Justus in the book of Acts, whose “house was joined hard to the synagogue” in Corinth (Acts 18:7). Conybeare and Howson, in their classic work on the Apostle Paul¹³, say that this Justus was a proselyte who opened his door to the Apostle, but nothing more is known of him. Many others make note that “some texts” — read 2 texts, the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus — read Titus Justus, or Titius Justus. These make a point that this Justus was a Gentile, and that the addition that he worshipped God would have been an unnecessary addition if he was a Jew or a proselyte. William M. Ramsay in his classic work

¹³ Conybeare, W. J., & Howson, J. S. (1908). *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

on Paul¹⁴, following this interpretation, makes this Justus a Roman (the name is Latin), who much like Cornelius in Acts 10, was attracted to the synagogue. The “Majority Text”, and the Textus Receptus, do not have “Titus”, or “Titius” as this man’s first name. Myself, I tend to stick with the TR over the so-called “best manuscripts”, which are only the “best manuscripts” because someone said they are. Enough said...

Regarding this Justus, could this be the same man in both Acts 18 and Colossians 4? Maybe. If he was a Roman named Titus and not a Jew or proselyte, he would not be the same person, for the man mentioned here in Colossians is “of the circumcision”. If he was a proselyte, or even a natural born Jew, he could be the same man. A proselyte would be made one “of the circumcision”, and a born Jew would obviously be of the circumcision. If this were the case, the fact that it states that he worshipped God could be saying that he was a Jew who believed as opposed to those in 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16 who “please not God, and are contrary to all men”. It is hard for me to believe that one in a house joined hard to the synagogue in Corinth was not a Jew, from the point of view of the synagogue or of the man to whom the house belongs.

This Justus, with his house joined to the synagogue, opened his door to the apostle of Jesus Christ. This would not make him repudiate his “Jewishness”, for Jews who accepted the promised hope of their Nation, and all that the prophets have spoke truly became Jews indeed, in spite of the majority of the nation, who were uncircumcised in hearts and ears. These believers of the circumcision are “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

¹⁴ Ramsay, W. M. (2001). *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

In either case, this Jesus called Justus also brings out another very important point: “Jesus” was a common name, yet we know one Jesus, Whose Name is above every name, and He is our Lord Jesus Christ. This JESUS Who died for our sins on the cross and rose again is the same JESUS that will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords one day. While many platitudes are made to “worshipping Jesus”, and “loving Jesus”, and “following Jesus”, we should with our words honor the Name above all names and worship Him as LORD, for that is truly the identity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many even seek to reverence His Jewish pronunciation and only refer to *Yeshua*, but even this, as they seek to be true to “Hebrew roots”, should certainly own Him as *Adonai* — LORD.

In this introduction to these men, Paul says that “these only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me”. Depending on which translation is used, there is a different meaning to this. Some make it to mean that these are the only Jewish believers working with Paul unto the kingdom of God, some make it sound that they are the only fellow workers that he has, and others stress that they are the only ones that are a comfort to him. There were others “of the circumcision” working with Paul, one being Timothy who was “of the circumcision” by Paul (Acts 16:3). Paul had other fellow workers, who he will continue to list, and others who would be of comfort to him: consider Luke.

So how should this be understood? These men of the circumcision who worked closely with Paul, one being even a fellow prisoner, are a comfort to him in his grief over the majority of his “brethren according to the flesh” and their unbelief. The word translated comfort here (παρηγορία — *parēgoría*) is found only here and indicates “a soothing solace” (Vine’s). The sense is that these men working with Paul, being of the circumcision, have brought him a soothing relief from the pain of

the rejection of the kingdom of God by the nation of Israel.

Now before leaving this study, I will briefly touch on the kingdom of God. This is that which God rules over as Sovereign. In our day, God is reigning in grace, and even in believers, the strength of His reign is dependent upon our yieldedness to Him. Some may find horror in this statement, limiting the sovereignty of God, but God is not ruling over the nations with a rod of iron today. God is letting man have *his own way* today, for *all* the nations of this world are in rebellion, ruling as *they* see fit. This is not the kingdom of God, neither is “the Church” advancing His reign as king here. Some may think and preach it, but that is not what God is doing in this dispensation of His grace. God has reconciled the world to Himself through Jesus Christ our Lord and His finished work on the cross, and is calling all men without exception or distinction to be reconciled to Him. But keeping consistent with the reign of grace, He is not forcing anyone, but appealing to them in grace by the gospel, that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and that through THIS MAN sins are forgiven and all of us can be justified from all things. We are saved by His grace through faith, that is, when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, He credits His righteousness to our account and He delivers us from the power of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son. We are given eternal life as a gift, through Jesus Christ our Lord, when we place our faith entirely in Him, and not in ourselves, for it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. (reference 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, 2 Corinthians 5:18–21, Romans 4:5, 6:23, Ephesians 2:8–9, Colossians 1:13–14, 20–21, etc.)

What will YOU do during this gracious reign? Will you accept His offer of grace and peace, or will you try and do it your way? Your way *will* fail.

PERFECT AND COMPLETE: COLOSSIANS 4:12-13

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

We first met Epaphras in chapter 1, where we found out that the Colossian saints learned the gospel of the grace of God from him:

Colossians 1:5-8

"...the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit."

According to Philemon 1:23, Epaphras was another fellow prisoner with Paul. As such, we are not told whether he went to prison with the apostle or if he found Paul there after he himself was sent to prison. As a fellow prisoner, he must have in some way have been imprisoned for the same cause, the mystery of Christ.

Epaphras is said to be the one that taught the Colossians. He was a minister of Christ for them, and he let Paul know the love that the saints had for him. This caused Paul to pray unceasingly that the saints of this assembly would be *"filled with the knowledge of [God's] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"* (Colossians 1:9). Now the apostle not only prayed that the Colossian saints would be filled with the knowledge of God's will, but he wrote this epistle to them by the will of God to make known unto them the knowledge of the mystery Christ.

Now that the epistle has been written, Epaphras added his salutation to it, while Paul adds that Epaphras is praying fervently that they would stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God". The epistle begins with praying for the saints to be filled with that knowledge. It ends with prayer that they would stand in what they are taught by the epistle, which if they stand in the teachings of this epistle, they would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. So this is a good time to review that which is "all the will of God".

In 1:10-12, Paul says that he is praying that the saints walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

In 1:13-19, the subject is Christ, and not as much a command to hold Him in proper esteem, as much as the apostle declares the greatness of our Lord, so that in all things HE might have the preeminence. In knowing and coming to grips with this great message of the greatness of Christ, we do hold Him in proper esteem, and in all things He will have the preeminence. What is the most practical message for the Christian today? The greatness of Christ — that in ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PREEMINENCE!

In 1:23, Paul expresses his desire that the saints would continue in the faith grounded and settled and not moved away from the hope of the gospel. Being not moved away means to actively stand strong against that which would move us away.

In 1:28, the apostle writes of how he preaches, warning every man and teaching every man, each and every one of YOU, SAINTS, that every man, i.e., every one of you would be presented perfect in Christ Jesus.

In 2:2, he speaks of his conflict for the saints "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ".

In 2:6-7, he implores the saints to walk in Christ Jesus as they received Him, that they would walk rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith.

In 2:8-15, that they would walk as they are, *complete in Him*.

In 2:16-23, that the saints would hold the Head and not fall back into religious practice, which is not only unnecessary, but it is contrary to the will of God, because we are *complete in Him*.

In 3:1-4, we are implored that because we are complete in Christ, as having died with Him to the things of the earth, that we would seek those things that are above, not the things of the earth.

In 3:5-9, we are told that since the old man has died with Christ, we are to put off the old man and his deeds, and in 3:10-4:1, we are instructed in the practical outworking of putting on the new man since we are risen with Christ.

In 4:2, we are instructed that since we have put on the new man, we are to continue in prayer and thanksgiving, and in 4:5 to walk in wisdom.

So this epistle to the Colossians is the instruction to walk and how to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, and to know what His will is. Now the apostle lets the saints know how Epaphras is praying that they indeed would stand in His will. Epaphras prays with great fervor that they would stand. "*And having done all, to stand. STAND THEREFORE*" as the apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 6:13-14.

Epaphras did not only pray for the Colossians, he prayed for the other assemblies of the saints in the nearby cities of Hieropolis and Laodicea. If he were with us today, he would pray that each and every one of us who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. We know that it is the will of God that in all things Christ would have the preeminence, "*for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power*" (Colossians 2:9-10).

If you would like to be complete in Christ, you must first be in Christ. We are baptized into Christ when we believe that Christ died for our sins and was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. There is nothing that we can bring to God of our own righteousness, neither will our religion settle the matter with Him. We need Jesus Christ to save us from our sins and their penalty. He is ALL we need, but we do need Him. Stop trying to do it your way, and come to the Father by the way of the Son, and you will be saved from your sins, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and seated with Christ. You will be *complete in Him*.

DOCTOR'S ORDERS: COLOSSIANS 4:14

Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

As we near the end of this epistle to the Colossians, we meet another faithful friend of the Apostle Paul. We also meet one who proved not to be faithful.

Luke is well known among those who know the Scriptures as the writer of the “third Gospel”, the one known as *the Gospel According to Luke*. It is also almost as well known that along with the “former treatise” (Acts 1:1), he wrote the *Acts of the Apostles*. Paul, however, speaks of him here, not as the beloved historian, but as the beloved physician. While Paul found himself confined to prison, what wonderful mercy the Lord provided that he had a trusted friend and companion who was also a physician!

It was early in Paul’s ministry that he wrote how he “bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Galatians 6:17). How much more he must have bore those marks now that he learned experientially “how great things he must suffer for [the Lord Jesus] Name’s sake” (Acts 9:16). What a toll this would take on the human body:

2 Corinthians 11:23–27

“...in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in

watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

Yes, the apostle could rejoice in his sufferings for the saints, to “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in [his] flesh for [Christ’s] body’s sake, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24), but it surely would be counted as part of the Lord’s all-sufficient grace (2 Corinthians 12:9) to call a faithful travel companion who was also a physician. This is scriptural witness to the fact that this is not the dispensation of divine healing, but the dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:2). The healings associated with the coming of the kingdom were then and still now no longer being manifest. A ministry to all nations, the whole world without exception or distinction, began, where God “commandeth all men every where to repent¹⁵: Because He

¹⁵ By “repent” here, the apostle is using the word μετανοέω (*metanoēō*) in its Scriptural usage to change their mind about what they think God to be. As he told the Corinthians: “Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led” (1 Corinthians 12:2), he was teaching them as he said of the Thessalonians, to “turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). This is not as many have taken it to mean that there needs to be a certain level of sorrow for sin (who sets the level and how do we know we have reached it?), or that one must fully turn from all of their sins in order to receive the grace of God which is found in Christ. Repentance in Scripture is a change of mind from one thing to another, and in our salvation, it follows belief, and we repent many times after salvation. Before one is saved, repentance is futile. See 2 Corinthians 7:8–12 in this regard. Much preaching re-

hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30–31).

Until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ judges the world in righteousness, God is allowing man to have his day and his way. And if there is any doubt as to who is running the world around us, just watch the news! Folks, it is not going to get better until our Lord Jesus comes to judge the world in righteousness. The best of men running the world right now are men at best! But during this day of mankind’s continued rebellion against God and His Christ, God in grace has given this world the “ministry of reconciliation; to

garding repentance seems to go in this direction: A man is drowning in the sea and a boat comes by to rescue him. The rescuer in the boat yells out to the man that he needs to think about the error of his ways and promise to never fall into the sea again (and really mean it). The man, flailing and gulping salt agrees to just about any demand because he is drowning. After the rescue, he is reminded of one of two things: the Calvinist salvation that says that if he does fall into the sea again, he was never saved from it in the first place, because he didn’t persevere in not falling into the sea, or the Arminian salvation that threatens to throw him back in if he is not full. Both views are practically the same, leaving the poor rescued man with no assurance that the rescuer will get him safely to shore. It all depends on the rescued man to save himself. To the Christian, we came to Christ at the end of ourselves and drowning in sin. He rescued us and brought us safely to shore. After He rescued us, we find ourselves more and more appreciative of all that He is and as we grow in grace and knowledge of Him, we become more and more loyal to Him, and then become more and more in tune with His Lordship. The “Lordship gospel” leaves salvation in the hands of the sinner, either front-loaded or back-loaded, and is totally a works-based salvation. It is the result of not “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For [God] hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, [Christ], Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:18–21).

As Paul told the Corinthian assembly to not receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1), so I say now to all who read, do not carelessly receive the grace of God, which He is now granting, as though His promise to judge the world in righteousness will not happen. It is only His longsuffering that keeps the day of salvation open before the day of wrath begins. We tell all of you now to accept God’s gift of salvation, and all that comes with it by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel that He died for your sins and He rose again from the dead to be your Living Savior. When you accept this salvation by faith, God, Who did all to make this possible, will save you. He wants to save you, but do not think that you can be saved on your terms and conditions. He is setting the terms, and has made them very simple — “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31).

So, back to Luke—

While there is much more to be said about this great man of God and New Testament author, the greatest that can be said as a testimony about him is that which the Apostle Paul said concerning him as the time of the apostle’s departure was at hand:

“Only Luke is with me” (2 Timothy 4:11).

The great adventures chronicled by Luke in Acts culminated in this: Luke did not forsake the Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ as all others did. As Paul urged Timothy, “*Be not*

*thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner”, (2 Timothy 1:8), we have that example in the beloved physician, Luke. Although all in Asia had turned away from the apostle, Luke did not. How much of “church history”, and all of its black marks, could be accounted for in this — that the professing church has forsaken the gospel entrusted to our apostle, Paul. What is the remedy? Follow the physician’s example here, stick with the Apostle Paul as the one that the Lord Jesus Christ sent with His *good news of the grace of God*.*

Along with Luke, we find Demas named, and what a sad story he is. Demas did not stick with Paul, for he loved this present world (2 Timothy 4:10). What of the present world, or age, lured Demas away is not said. Maybe that is so that we may be on our guard against all entrapments of this present evil age, that we may fight the good fight, finish our course, and keep the faith. While much at times can lure us away, remember that what is found only in our Lord Jesus Christ is far better!

HOUSE CHURCH: COLOSSIANS 4:15-16

Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

A few closing salutations from the apostle to the Colossians come as we near the end of this blessed epistle. Paul sent his own salutations through the Colossian assembly to another group of brethren in Laodicea, a city not far from Colosse.

This epistle to the Colossians was meant also for the Laodicean assembly, and there was also something meant for the Colossians to read that was from that assembly. What epistle did Paul write from Laodicea? We do not know. In fact, it may not be something from him at all, it may just be something from the Laodicean assembly that he wanted the church at Colosse to read. There is no concern over a "lost epistle", for God is more than capable of preserving His Word. It may simply have been communication from the church of the Laodiceans to the church of the Colossians. Many have made this to be the epistle to the Ephesians, but that is just as much a conjecture as what I have stated here; and it does violence to what is actually written. Paul did not write the epistle to the Ephesians from Laodicea, and that the term "to the Ephesians" IS in the text. Some "Bible correctors" might argue otherwise, but it is not necessary nor wise to cast doubt on the Word of God because "some manuscripts omit in Ephesus".

The Apostle states here that he wants this epistle read to the Laodiceans, for they must have needed the correction just as the Colossians did, that they also would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. The sad

fact of the churches in Asia is that they did not take heed to the apostle or to his message from the Lord Jesus Christ. That sadly includes the Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Laodiceans.

2 Timothy 1:15

"This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me..."

We, however, do not need to follow in their path. We have the message that they were given, so stand fast!

We also meet in this little salutation one Nymphas, who had an assembly (church) in his house. We find this pattern throughout Scripture, and the only reason that an assembly of believers would be required to meet somewhere other than a house is that the assembly becomes too large for the people to meet. There is no need for building programs (and budgets) to make a "beautiful house for God". The temple in Jerusalem was just that, and even it was left to them desolate when they rejected the very Object of their Divine religion. But a church is never a building, it is the assembly of believers meeting together; and "THE Church" is the church which is His Body. It is not any one denomination of so-called Christians, nor is it the sum total of all of the religious organizations calling themselves Christian, but it is the living body of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the ever-living Head. The members are baptized by one Spirit into that body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Now it is also not only here where a church is mentioned as in a house. In Romans 16:3-5, we meet Priscilla and Aquilla, who we first met in Acts, Jews of Rome having been expelled from Rome by Caesar, who were tentmakers like Paul, who also believed Paul's gospel. When we meet them in Romans, we find out that they must have returned to Rome, and that they had an assembly of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in their house. As Paul finished his course, we met them again in 2 Timothy 4:19, where Paul sent his salutation and held them in high regard. How greatly these two were used of God is not fully known, but we do know that they were used of God to teach Apollos the "way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). This is not to indicate that he had some things wrong knowing "only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25), but that his knowledge was incomplete. He did not know what God was now doing, and as He is still doing today, and that is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as He committed to the Apostle Paul. It is not even indicated whether Apollos knew anything of the Lord Jesus whatsoever; but he did after these house-church leaders got his ear!

The believer Philemon, also had a church in his house (Philemon 1:2). The witness of Scripture about this brother, along with Apphia, is that "*the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother*" (Philemon 1:7). Besides being a meeting place, this must have been a house where travelling saints from all over could find refreshment along with the company of other believers. How refreshing

it is to meet with the saints, not in the impersonalness of a cathedral, but in the *homes of the saints!*

Again, Nymphas was in this number of "church-hosts"; and never think of it beneath you to have a small number of believers meeting in humble quarters. The "mega-church" movement always stresses the "small-group", but wants to control the meetings. We must remember in this too, that there is ONE LORD, "*and it ain't them!*"

In writing this, I never want to fail to leave you the reader with the clear gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I assume that most of you who are reading have already come to know the truth of that gospel, how that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). But maybe you have not accepted that it was for YOU that He died. Maybe you have not put your faith in Him and in Him alone for your salvation, or maybe you have been believing that your salvation and standing with God is up to you. Please reconsider and hear the witness of scripture, that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; but in Christ we are being justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. How can God do this? Because our Lord Jesus Christ settled all of your accounts, by paying the debt that you owe! Do not wait and receive the grace of God in vain — believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and THOU shalt be saved!

ONE LAST CHARGE: COLOSSIANS 4:17-18

And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

As we have reached the end of this great epistle in God's Word, the apostle has a charge to one, Archippus. This Archippus is associated with Philemon, possibly a member of his household, as we read in the epistle to Philemon.

Now Archippus has received a ministry, "in the Lord". What that ministry was is not stated, so anything that we say about it is an assumption. The word used is *διακονίαν* (*diakonian*), from which we get our English transliteration "deacon". This is someone who has received a ministry (what that ministry consists of is not stated) and the command from scripture about "deacons" can be found here:

1 Timothy 3:8-13

"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Most often this is thought of as a lesser office in a "church" than that of elder or pastor, yet often commentaries speak of Archippus as possibly the pastor of the church in Colosse. A better (in my estimation) view of this is that anyone who ministers for the Lord

in any capacity must be found faithful, not just those in a "church" position. "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19) is the charge that the Apostle gave Timothy and must be remembered always by us who do indeed name the Name of Christ.

So as the Apostle gives this final charge to the saints at Colosse to give to Archippus, he then offers his own salutation. It is with his own hand. He certifies it, just as any official letter must be certified.

Furthermore, the Apostle adds "remember my bonds" as he closes to give a reminder of his place as "an ambassador in bonds" (Ephesians 6:20). The ambassador in bonds is how he wants them to remember him. I almost get this as how, if asked, Paul would have signed an autograph!

The scriptural record of Acts closes as the apostle is confined to a Roman prison. It was "his own hired house" (Acts 28:30), as he was awaiting a hearing from Caesar. Whether that hearing ever came, we do not know. The last epistle that we have from Paul is 2 Timothy, where we have his rejection by man, but faith in the Lord who stood with him:

2 Timothy 4:16-18

"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall

deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The King James Version adds the following footnote to 2 Timothy:

“The second *epistle* unto Timotheus, ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians, was written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time.”

The first time, no one but the Lord stood with Paul; but the Lord was the only One that he needed. Tradition tells us (however reliable it may be) that Paul was executed shortly after 2 Timothy was written, yet Paul could trust the Lord even in this.

Philippians 1:20

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”

Looking at this from our human point of view, this would have been a good time for divine intervention, and a delivering miracle. The apostle’s hope, however, was not in miracles but in the Lord Himself. He had been delivered by miraculous intervention before, but now even though it seemed as though God was not acting, the apostle could say that he finished his course and that the Lord would be faithful even in the event of his death. He even makes the bold statement that “by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear”. Think of the reach that the word of truth had by the time of the writing of 2 Timothy! We saw in the first chapter of Colossians, “the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you...” (Colossians 1:5–6), and now at the

end of the apostle’s life, he restates that the preaching is fully known. How gracious of our God to allow all mankind to hear his wonderful message of grace! The Word is fully available to all. It is not shrouded for only some to hear, but the salvation-bringing grace of God has appeared to all men! This gospel is God’s gospel, and it is the gospel of His grace. While mankind still shakes his fist at God, and is in his mind the enemy of God, God Himself has broken down every barrier between Himself and man, reconciling the world to Himself in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). A great “amnesty” has been declared giving man a time to “be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). The duration of this time is unspecified, but we know it has been nearly 2000 years thus far. How much longer it will be has not been revealed to us, but the long duration surely shows us the longsuffering of God toward man. We deserve only His judgment and wrath. He is now speaking to us in “grace and peace”. There is but one condition on us, and it is an offer of God’s grace.

The scripture tells us that if we but believe the gospel that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead, we are saved (1 Corinthians 15:1–4). Those that are saved are justified freely by God’s grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, because that by Him, God’s justice is satisfied, and yet He can show mercy on whom He will show mercy, which in His desire is all mankind, for His will is for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). That all are not saved is not because of partiality on God’s part, but because man’s willful rebellion does not obey the truth, but they have pleasure in unrighteousness. God will let them have their way, but I pray that YOU will believe God and His gospel of grace to you. Jesus Christ our Lord finished all that is necessary for you to be saved when He died on the cross for YOU. What is YOUR answer to this gracious offer?

As we close this study of this magnificent epistle to the Colossian saints, ponder the words with which the apostle closes: *Grace be with you. Amen.*

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: ON THE GREEK WORD TRANSLATED "CHURCH"

See some examples of ἐκκλησία from the Old Testament

	KJV	LXX
Deuteronomy 4:10	<i>Specially</i> the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together , and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and <i>that</i> they may teach their children.	ἡμέραν ἣν ἔστητε ἐναντίον κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ ὑμῶν ἐν Χωρηβ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὅτε εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς με ἐκκλησίασον πρὸς με τὸν λαόν καὶ ἀκουσάτωσαν τὰ ῥήματά μου ὅπως μάθωσιν φοβεῖσθαι με πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἅς αὐτοὶ ζῶσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς αὐτῶν διδάξωσιν
Psalms 26:5	I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.	ἐμίσησα ἐκκλησίαν πονηρευομένων καὶ μετὰ ἀσεβῶν οὐ μὴ καθίσω

APPENDIX II: ROMANS 6:1-11, AN OVERVIEW

In writing the studies in Colossians, there have been several times where I pointed to Romans 6 as a starting point regarding the believers identification with Christ. I also noted on a number of occasions the necessity of understanding the doctrines that are taught by Paul in Romans correctly in order to properly move on and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.

In this study, which is more of an overview, my intention is to get the point of this most important chapter in Paul's fundamental "establishment" epistle. My comments will be in italic type to distinguish them from the scripture quoted.

Romans 6:1-11

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? *{This is continuing from the previous chapter where Paul stated that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound", and he already anticipated what a "scoffer" might say about what he was teaching.}* **God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?** *{How are we dead to sin? Now Paul will introduce this teaching on our union with Christ, and how God recognizes us as dead to sin.}* **Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ** *{when were we baptized into Jesus Christ? By the immediate context, it was when we received of the "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness" (5:17), which is "unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:22)}* **were baptized into His death?** *{Here is where we find how we are dead to sin. We died to sin when God united us with Christ in His death. When we were baptized into Jesus Christ, God united us so fully with Him that when He died, we died with Him.}* **Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death:** *{dead and buried = this act is done. The burial is the final hit of the "death stroke". When at a funeral, when the casket is closed, there is something that hits your heart. It hits even harder when that first shovel of dirt is thrown on the coffin. It is when it really hits everyone present that this person is dead.}* **that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father** *{we are so united to Christ that when God raised Him from the dead, those that the Father baptized into Him and His death are raised from the dead with Him.},* **even so we also should walk in newness of life.** *{To answer the question, "shall we continue in sin?" It is a resounding NO! God Forbid!}*

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: *{Continuing the point here: we are identified by God as dead and buried with Christ. This is because we are identified with Christ, and since we are identified with Christ in His death, since He was raised from the dead, we are raised from the dead as well.}* **Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.** *{Why do we not continue in sin? We died unto sin when we died with Christ. This is a positional fact because God declared it so. Just as He declares us righteous (justification by grace through faith), after declaring all under sin, He now declares us as we are in Adam, to be dead in Christ, because He identifies us with the death of Christ.}* **Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.** *{His resurrection is our resurrection, and He lives, so we live — in Christ.}* **Likewise reckon ye also your-**

selves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. *{It is so, so accept that it is so, and live by faith that it is so.}*

ADDENDUM: BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD (1 CORINTHIANS 15:29)

1 Corinthians 15:29

"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

Almost every explanation of this verse leaves me with the thought: "It cannot possibly mean that!" The best understanding of this must be from the context of the chapter, so let us back up a few verses:

1 Corinthians 15:12–19

"Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

If you are baptized into Jesus Christ, you are baptized into His death. If Christ died but there is no resurrection, then He did not rise, so your identification with Christ is only in death and burial. If there is no resurrection, then you are only baptized for the dead.

BUT NOW IS CHRIST RISEN!

So the understanding that I have come to on this is that this "baptism for the dead" is the conclusion reached if we stay with the argument that there is no resurrection from the dead. It is useless to glory in being baptized into Christ and thus being baptized into His death if we throw away the truth of the resurrection. It becomes being baptized for the dead, which is completely useless.

1 Corinthians 15:20

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."