



“The righteous . . . shall grow  
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion  
to the Book of  
**Colossians**

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .  
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By

Bill Daniels

## **Preface**

The contents of this book were part of a course taught in the Bible College at New Germany Baptist Church in 2006. In order to present these materials in a form more readily available for further class use we have kept the class divisions used in the course. Therefore listed separately on the Contents page you will find the starting pages for both the 9 class portions as well the 4 chapters of Colossians.

The problems handled in this epistle are still with us today, still needing the Spirit's patient work in His church through His Word. The key theme of this epistle remains God's exultant theme to this day; "*Christ is all, and in all*". May that precious Saviour become your theme and song, your hymn of rejoicing. Indeed may He become "*all*" to you as you pursue Him in his Word.

Bill Daniels

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“Christ is all,  
and in all”

(Col. 3:11)

# **Class 1 – Introduction**

## **The Place**

When the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Colossians he wrote to a church in a small city called Colossae in an area of western Asia Minor (modern Turkey), and area known as Phrygia. The city of Colossae was situated about 160 kms inland from Ephesus in a valley out of which the Lycus River emptied into the Maeander River. The Lycus Valley was a sheep herding region, famous for its soft wool, and through which ran a major east-west caravan route (see map next page).

When Paul wrote this letter to the church at Colossae he meant that it not only should be read there in that church but that it also should be read in the church a few kms down the valley in the city of Laodicea (4:16). Seems there may have been a third church in the valley as well in the city of Hierapolis, across the river from Laodicea (4:13). These were not churches Paul had himself established. In fact we get the impression in his opening comments that Paul had never even visited the valley (1:3-4; 2:1).



## The People

Many of the churches established in the outlying areas of Asia were likely the result of Paul's years of ministry at Ephesus on the coast (Acts 19). We are told in Acts 19:10 that as a result of his years of



ministry there, *“all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”* It seems there were men called of the Lord into ministry out of the training there in Ephesus who took the Lord’s word out to the regions beyond. Or perhaps there at Colossae it was just folks returning home from Ephesus, having been saved and challenged to live for the Lord, and then used of God back home to lead others to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Soon there was a congregation of believers meeting around God’s words in somebody’s house. Either way it was the Lord who was busy building His church, pressing the reach of His light out into the surrounding darkness. Paul tended to go to the main city centres in his missionary journeys (Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi), establishing churches at the crossroads. But neither he, nor the Lord moving in him, intended that the furtherance of the gospel should stop there. From those centres God meant that His words would be carried on into the interiors, out into the valleys and mountains, out to the smaller and less populated regions. It is what we see happening there in that Phrygian valley. Paul mentions a man from their membership named Epaphras who had come to visit him in Rome. Maybe it was this man who was saved and built up in the Word and moved of God to go off establishing churches in that distant

valley (1:7; 4:12-13). Now it seems that earnest leader was in need of input from his old mentor in dealing with prickly problems developing there in Colossae. So he had gone to Paul for help. Somebody was moved of God, moved out of their comfort zone of things familiar, and out into new areas of need. Somebody was willing to grapple with the problems involved in leading souls to faith in Jesus Christ and then leading them to walk with Him. It was likely not an easy thing for Epaphras. It is never easy to leave things familiar and deal with the hard issues of people and problems and false beliefs. But it is such a needful thing. Somebody must do it. Who was going to deal with the entangling twists of Satan's lying works out there to the east if Epaphras did not? Who today in the distant valleys of this land? If not you then who? If not now then when?

We learn from the endearing little New Testament (N.T.) book of Philemon that the man to whom Paul wrote that letter also lived in Colossae and was an active member of the church there. How many others attended the church at Colossae? How big? Who knoweth? Why do we not know? Because who careth? What difference does it really make? Such concerns were not a matter of importance with the Lord's people back in those days, nor is it an

important concern to the Lord today. Only secular standards of business hype seeping into the church makes such concerns of congregation size and growth rate any kind of concern in our modern churches.

## **The Book**

The book of Colossians was another of Paul's Prison Epistles, written from Rome in 61 A.D. It is evident that the letter to Philemon was sent at the same time, and the run-away slave, Onesimus, returned to Colossae with Tychicus who carried Paul's letters (4:7-9). Tychicus probably dropped off Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus (Ephesians) along the way. Perhaps Paul's letter to the Philippian believers was delivered along the way at Philippi as well?

It is surprising to discover in Colossians 4:16 that Paul also sent along a third letter to the church at Laodicea there in the Lycus Valley, a letter which it seems has been lost to the church by some means. The Spirit of God is the great Superintendent of His writings. He is the One who has seen to the matter of which writings made their way into the sacred text when all was said and done. Though it is an interesting ponder how that other letter was lost.

Was it through some tragic event? Did Tychicus lose it? Did somebody's house burn down and the letter with it before it could be copied? Was there great anguish in the hearts of some over the loss of one of the Apostle's writings? All unknown to us. Yet by whatever means that epistle was lost we can safely conclude that it was actually the Spirit's purpose to remove that piece from circulation for some reason known only to Him. If God wanted us to have it we would have it.

We may mourn over our losses, which at the time may seem to be most tragic. But such "tragedies" are always about the Lord allowing circumstance to work His will to the best for all concerned. It is always the hand of the great Sculptor deftly chipping away with perfect stroke and timing from His yet unfinished work of a life, or of the ages. That lost epistle simply did not belong in the Book of books, what else? In the same way that some great loss you have suffered did not belong in the equation factoring out to your best or the best for others. Remember how great the heartache must have been for Ruth those many years when she could not bear children with her first husband. It is only later that she discovered the Lord had something much better for her just a little way down life's road. Though she knew the joy of discovering

the reasons for her heartache in this life, God does not always allow us that privilege. Yet by faith we know that we will know in time. Not

until glory will we know why a promising young man falls dead or drowns, or why the untimely death of a godly mother or pastor. But we will know the reason one day and will understand the eternal benefits of all such “tragedies”. Whatever the reasons, we can rest assured that it has much more to do with *gain* than *loss*, both for us and for others, in God’s eternal plan; much more to do with *triumph* than *tragedy*, if we are patient to wait. Our rest must remain firm upon the solid trustworthiness of that One who is “*faithful and true*”.

## **The Purpose**

Paul wrote the book of Colossians partly to combat the threat of false teachings and teachers there;

- He seems to hint at the influence of Jewish legalism, which he corrects with a right view of circumcision (2:11; 3:11), ordinances, foods, and holidays (2:14, 16).
- He gives answer to some form of asceticism or bodily denial (2:20-23).
- He deals with the question of worshipping

angels (2:18).

- He spoke of empty, specious human philosophies, which followed the ways of the

world rather than the truth in Jesus (2:4, 8).

Some of the errant views dealt with by Paul in Colossians eventually came to be known as Gnosticism. Gnostic views were a collection of ideas arising from the teachings of Plato and ancient Persian religion, combined with elements of Buddhist philosophy. The Gnostics;

- Claimed to possess a special knowledge of great, secret “mysteries” available only to the initiated. Compare 1:25-2:3.
- Emphasized their enlightened knowledge as superior over faith.
- Viewed Paul’s gospel as simple-minded childishness compared to their superior, elaborate system of beliefs.
- Saw a separation between matter and spirit, and considered material things evil.
- Reckoned that since God is good, He could not have been directly responsible for the creation of evil matter.

- In their thinking they devised a series of spirits or angels (“emanations”) between God and matter, each lower emanation created in turn by a higher one.
- They believed evil matter was created by an emanation called “Demiurge”, which was far enough removed from God to not contaminate Him.
- When presented with Jesus Christ, Gnostics viewed Him through their pagan philosophy and simply slotted Him into their series of emanations;
  - Making Christ less than God, denying His deity.
  - Making Christ only a part of their larger mediator concept instead of the “*one Mediator between God and man*” (I Tim. 2:5).
- Their view of matter as evil caused some Gnostics to fall to the side of asceticism in an effort to subdue their evil flesh, resulting in the sects of the Essenes and Stoics.
- Others of them felt the flesh was best overcome by indulging every fleshly craving until fully satisfied, spawning the sect of the

Epicureans.

Through the message of Colossians Paul graciously wrote off such manmade views, holding high the answer to every devious folly in a right understanding and relation to *Jesus Christ*.

*“For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”*

*“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*

*“And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power.”*

*“Christ is all, and in all . . . (and) in you, the hope of glory” (1:27; 2:3, 9-10; 3:11).*

Here is the great theme of the book, *Christ, Christ, Christ is all!!* The answer is never ordinances or philosophies or mysticism or rigorous asceticism or fleshly abandon. The answer is never the arm of flesh or the cleverest inventions of man. The answer is the Person of Jesus Christ! It is proper relation to He who is all! So the message of Colossians is a strong, positive, gracious, but forthright presentation of Jesus Christ as supreme God, suffering Saviour, sovereign Lord, source of all human help, and centre of all human attention. He alone is the one and only Mediator between true



God and man.

## **Survey**

Colossians is like the book of Galatians in that it was also written largely to correct error. “Polemic” is the term used to describe a work given to this way, to argumentation of the truth over some error. But whereas Galatians began and remained on a strong, urgent, even condemning note, Colossians proceeds on a brighter, more positive and thankful bearing. Paul indeed comes across with concern in this book, but he was not overly concerned. This perhaps indicating that the doctrinal problems there were lurking close but still on the outer edges, rather than into the heart of the church as yet. This in contrast to the situation among the Galatian believers, where they were in more urgent danger of being taken by error.

Consider how much of Paul’s writings involved polemics. The need of such an approach, and so much of it, speaks of the firmness of God’s hold on the distinctions of His truth. He is not free and easy in the matter of truth, as people tend to be, or He would not see the need to respond so vigorously against error of various kinds. The modern view of unity at the expense of doctrinal truth is Satan’s

lying ploy, aimed at the complete destruction of God's truth among men.

## **Chapter 1** – True Doctrine of Christ

- 1:3-8 – Thanksgiving – Compare how often Paul expresses his thankfulness for people (Rom. 1:8-9; I Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:15-16; Phil. 1:3-5; I Thess. 1:2-3; 2:13; II Thess. 1:3; 2:13; II Tim. 1:3; Philemon 4-5).
- 1:9-11 – Intercession – Note the focus on knowledge and understanding (vs. 9 & 10).
- 1:12-14 – Who we are;
  - Justified – “*made us meet*” (vs. 12).
  - Heirs of glory (vs. 12).
  - Rescued from darkness (vs. 13).
  - Members of God's kingdom of light (vs. 13).
  - Purchased through Christ's blood (vs. 14).
- 1:15-22 – Who Jesus is;
  - Note the many descriptive statements

of Him here. “No comparable listing of so many characteristics of Christ and His deity are found in any other Scripture passage” (Walvoord & Zuck).

- The person of Christ.
  - *“The image of the invisible God”* (compare John 14:9; II Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3).
  - *“Firstborn”* = superior over all (vs. 15, 17-18).
- The work of Christ.
  - Creator of all (vs. 16).
  - *“By Him all things consist [cohere, hold together]”* (vs. 17). Jesus is the One holding all things together at the most basic level.
  - Reconciler of all things (vs. 20).

- In 1:26-27 Paul speaks of all true believers initiated into the true mystery of the true God, *“which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”*.

## **Chapter 2** – False Doctrine

- 2:1-7 – All answers are in Jesus Christ, in whom are all the hidden, collected treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Why pursue empty human speculations when all is in Christ?
- 2:8-10 – Against human reasonings. J.B. Phillips commented on vs. 8, “Be careful that nobody spoils your faith through intellectualism or high-sounding nonsense”.
- 2:11-23 – Against human rituals. In Jesus Christ the condemnations of the law have been removed, having been nailed to the cross with Him (vs. 14). All the rituals of the law were only “*a shadow*” of that coming Messiah (vs. 17).

Note the reference to religious mysticism in vs. 18. Apparently some were claiming higher, fuller mystical experiences of God or contact with angels to support their claims. It seems they would use spiritual intimidation to belittle the lowly, “unspiritual” state of those who were uninitiated. This all was calculated to give the impression that the words of the mystic could not be questioned, certainly not by the uninitiated. “Since you

have not been there or had the experience, therefore you have no ability to assess the right or wrong of it”, they would insist. Paul pulls their curtain back, exposing their pride and calling their supposed visions lies (*“things which he hath not seen”*, vs. 18). Rather than admitting any high and heavenly source for such fanciful dreams, Paul suggests their *“fleshly mind”* as the true source.

### **Chapter 3-4:6** – True Living that Radiates Christ

Typical of Paul, the focus then turns to the practical application of truth lived out in the life.

- 3:1-17 – Personal Life. All *Mind* masters (vs. 1-2) and *member* masters (vs. 5ff) are to be put off. Rather be seeking and minding *“things above”* (vs. 1-2). Compare as well the focus in Philippians on right thinking (Phil. 2:2; 4:6-8). Every sinful *action* marks the end of a long, twisted trail of sinful *thinking*. The *“put off”* and *“put on”* of this portion gives the principle of replacement (vs. 8-14). Compare the same in Ephesians 4.
  
- 3:18-4:6 – Social Life.

- Wives (3:18).
- Husband (3:19).
- Children (3:20). Do not strike your parents (Ex. 21:15). Do not curse your parents (Ex. 21:17). Do not dishonour your parents (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 27:16). Reverence your parents (Lev. 19:3). This is where “*approved unto God*” begins for the child, and short of which there will be tragic results (Prov. 30:17).
- Fathers (3:21).
- Servants (3:22-25).
- Masters (4:1).
- The world (4:2-6). Note the proper use of time (vs. 5) and tongue (vs. 6).

**4:7-18** – Annotated list of the Lord’s Servants

## **Class 2 – Colossians 1:1-8**

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*Col 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,*

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The man called Epaphras was in Rome and speaking to the Apostle Paul of what was happening in and around the church in the city of Colossae in the Lycus Valley area of Asia Minor. His good report stirred joy in Paul for the evidence of Christian virtues in the believers there. His warnings and concerns troubled the apostle in a measure as well for the evidence of Satan's lying efforts and false teachings having an influence there. Paul's joy and thankfulness combined with his caring concern gave rise to the writing of this epistle of Colossians before us.

### **1:1-2 – Greetings**

Vs. 1 – *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God”* – As an apostle, Paul was one specially commissioned and gifted by God for the furthering of His word in the early church era. The apostolic gift was given to particular men who had seen the Lord Jesus and were commissioned to carry on His ministry, men who displayed something of Christ's

remarkable abilities in the “*signs of an apostle*” during the first generation of the early church (II Cor. 12:12). They were those who “*heard Him [Jesus]: God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*” (Heb. 2:3-4). Though many are sent as carriers of God’s words, there were only twelve with this proper apostolic gift. John, the last of the apostles, at the end of that apostolic era, in vision saw the wall of New Jerusalem standing on “*twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*” (Rev. 21:14). Are you listening? How many apostles? Only “*the twelve apostles*”. To that first generation of the early church God “*gave to some apostles; and some, prophets*” (Eph. 4), for through such specially gifted men He would complete His written words to man and lay the foundation of the church. Then, with the death of the last of the apostles, the Lord has given “*some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers*”, for the work of interpreting and explaining and applying to each new generation what He has already given in His completed words. Those who believe and teach that the apostolic gift continues even to our current day are sadly mistaken.

It seems evident that Paul was God’s choice to



replace Judas the betrayer. He therefore likely made up “*the twelve*” rather than the Matthias selected by the disciples in Acts 1.

Notice that Paul did not designate himself as an apostle at the beginning of the book of Philippians. Apparently because he did not need to do so there. Paul did not write to the church at Philippi in so much of a corrective mode, thus requiring the stamp of his apostolic authority on the document. But with this church at Colossae it was a different story. They did not know Paul personally there, and more serious were the problems developing there requiring the counsel of a truly qualified guide. Epaphras in returning to his people would need the authoritative instruction of an apostle behind him in dealing with the developing concerns. Therefore the need for Paul to introduce himself in this way.

In our own day all arguments are now settled upon the authority of the words of God, not based upon man’s imagined authority or the merits of some human experience. God’s words come to us in the very same way they came to this church, through the written instructions of God’s apostles. In every age there are some among men who wish to elevate their own authority in offering direction to God’s church. But all must be assessed according to the

*Col 1:2 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.  
Col 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our  
Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,*

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standard of God's eternal words. The church at Ephesus was commended by the Lord for putting on trial "*them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars*" (Rev. 2:2). It is a lie that still continues to this day.

Vs. 2 – "*To the saints*" – Paul wrote to those who were "*saints*", to those "set apart" as the word means, set apart to God. The very name by which believers are called implies that we are to be distinct from the world and holy unto the Lord.

### **1:3-8** – Thanksgivings

Vs. 3 – "*We give thanks to God*" – Among Paul's first words to this church are his giving of thanks. How very often in his writings Paul begins with the expression of his thankfulness. When writing to those at Rome he said, "*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*" (Rom. 1:8). When writing to those at Corinth he said, "*I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God*

*which is given you by Jesus Christ*” (I Cor. 1:4). To those at Philippi he began with, *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy”* (Phil. 1:3-4). So was Paul’s manner in most all of his letters. And again, in this epistle written from prison we see such a bright and positive outlook in this man. He was actively praying for these people and full of thanks for them. He began and ended his prayer with the same (vs. 12). Paul’s entire approach to God, and in behalf of these people, was in the context of a thankful heart. Thankfulness, like happiness, is more a matter of attitude than circumstance. It was an attitude Paul was never without. One he was ever careful to cultivate.

Thanksgiving must be an important part of *our* communication with our God as well. Perhaps we do not realize how important a part it plays. Indeed such should be the entire context or setting of our prayer, the very breath prayer breathes. Remember that a thankful spirit in believers is God’s command. In I Thessalonians 5:18 Paul said, *“In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”*. Right *“in”* the midst of every situation or condition we face we are commanded to be giving thanks. Even without the advantage of hindsight’s arrival as yet. Even while

the pain or frustration or pressure is at its peak. It is to be “*in everything*”, not only after. Even before the dense fog of apparent hopelessness clears. Right in it, “*in everything*”, our God has told us to be full of thanksgiving, as this happy apostle, in spite of such unjust bonds and storm and shipwreck. As Job in the face of the most complete loss imaginable could say “*Blessed be the name of the Lord*” (Job 1:21). As Jonah could say, “*I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving*” from the belly of the fish at “*the bottoms of the mountains*” (Jonah 2:9). As Paul and Silas “*prayed and sang praises unto God*” while in the agonies of a thorough thrashing, clasped in stocks, in “*the inner prison*”, and at the dark of midnight (Acts 16). Remember as well how in Romans 1:21 a thankless heart is at the tilting point to the downward slide of the godless (“*neither were thankful*”). For thanksgiving is an admission of dependence, which of course the proud refuse to allow. I am impressed with the great emphasis in II Corinthians 9 on giving, and on God’s promise to keep the sower supplied with seed, abounding those who begin to make it their practice to become channels of His blessing to others. And I am impressed as well with the happy results of it all. Folks on all sides of right giving are moved to *thankfulness* (II Cor. 9:11-12, 15). God’s smile is over that whole scene, both the

cheerful giver, whom He loves (vs. 7), and the thankful hearts of the receivers. Do you remember that unsurprising response of Boaz to Ruth's thankful heart in Ruth 2:8-17? Ruth's greatest appreciation for the smallest kindness from Boaz so drew out his heart to even greater kindness. Would we not expect the Lord to be the same with us? Would He not also be moved to greater kindness when we respond with genuine appreciation for His smallest blessing? Do we not all tend to be irritated with one who is never thankful for kindness shown, never acknowledging it, only expecting more? Do we not tend to draw back and resist such a one? Would the Lord not be the same? The whole context of His gracious giving among men is meant to move humble souls to gratitude for His benefits. Perhaps thankfulness is a whole lot bigger than we realise. Bigger to God anyway. For true thankfulness;

- Involves *humility*, as seen in Ruth. For pride refuses to say "thank you".
- Is a *dependence* thing. For thankfulness acknowledges benefits needed from another. Thankfulness says, "you have helped me, and I need your help".
- Is a *simplicity* thing. For there is no complexity in a sincerely thankful heart.

*Col 1:4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and  
of the love which ye have to all the saints,*

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- Is a *wisdom* thing. For wisdom began to blossom in me when I could look my parents and my God in the face and say “thank you”!

*“So we Thy people and sheep of Thy pasture will give  
Thee thanks forever” (Ps. 79:13).*

Vs. 4 – “*Since we heard*” – Epaphras in his visit with Paul in Rome carried the bright news of these growing saints at Colossae (vs. 8). And Paul, upon hearing of it, was full of joy and thanks. We too should be genuinely happy with every evidence of God’s working in others, even within ministries we may not be able to fully agree with, and should be genuinely saddened with the failure or heartache of any who are called by the Lord’s name. The report of Epaphras gave rise to Paul’s joy for the evidence of Christian virtues in them, and the same report saddened him for the evidence of Satan’s inroads among them. Paul, as the angels of heaven, was ever delighted when others found the Saviour he had found (Luke 15:7), regardless of whether his influence had anything to do with their finding. His heart was ever united with God’s cause and kingdom.

*Col 1:5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven,  
whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of  
the gospel;*

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*“Of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have”* – God’s kind of love and genuine faith are hand-in-glove. In Galatians 5:6 Paul tells us that faith works through or by love. In I John 3:23 both to *“believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ”* and to *“love one another”* are commanded in the same breath. Faith and love are two of the three great pillars of Christian experience. The third coming right up in the next verse.

Vs. 5 – *“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven”* – *“Hope”* here is not in the sense of hollow wishing as we commonly use the word, but in the biblical sense of confident assurance. This is the way the N.T. defines this word, for the *“blessed hope”* of Christ’s return is as sure as God’s word (Titus 2:13). In essence our hope is not so much an event or a place as it is Jesus Christ Himself (I Tim. 1:1). It is He who is reserved for us in heaven. Heaven will be the presence of Jesus, in whatever place that may put us.

These three; faith, hope, and love, form the engine of proper Christian motivation. In I Corinthians

13:13 Paul proclaims these three Christian virtues as those that abide and outlast all the temporal gifts. Because we have faith in the promises of God we have hope. And because of heightened hope our love abounds. Yet the reality of genuine love in us, where it did not exist before, is evidence of God's work in us, further contributing to our faith and hope. Faith and hope are directed toward God. Love is directed toward God and man, and is the only one of the three God Himself exercises. Faith puts one in right relation to God. Hope puts one in a right attitude toward the future. Love keeps one in right relation to both God and man. Where one of these virtues truly exists in a heart the others will be found there as well, all founded squarely upon the sure promises of God.

When at last our faith breaks forth into sight in eternity, walking never again by faith but by sight, and when our hope breaks forth into experience, when all for which we have hoped is at last realized, love alone will abide or remain of the three. This is Paul's discussion coming out the end of I Corinthians 13. It is why he says "*the greatest of these is charity* [love]". Love will be that supreme virtue permeating the very atmosphere of heaven.

*"Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of*



*the gospel*” – “*Whereof*” refers to hope. The coming of the gospel to them is what brought hope to them. Without the gospel of the grace of God where is hope? For all is hopeless. We hold in our possession in the gospel message the very power to bring hope to dying souls around us. In the words of those lepers who fell upon the incredible boon of the deserted Syrian camp in the days of Elisha, while the city of Samaria was dying of hunger, “*We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace*” (II Ki. 7:9). “How can we keep quiet about this when all are dying for lack of this that we have found in such abundance?” Even so, how can we not be a part of spreading this great and powerful message of hope? Lord, what part can I personally have, how can I do more? How can we show by our actions that we really think small of such a hugely vital work? It is *the* message, the *only* message bringing hope to our world. How could any of us not wish to be called to a place of leadership in that great work on this earth? Let it be, “Lord, show me if you *do not* want me in Your full-time work”, not, “Lord, show me if you want me”. We do not well if we hold our peace, for this message is the only one of *good hope*.

Vs. 6 – “*As it is in all the world*” – Paul saw the gospel as having been spread to the whole world even by

*Col 1:6 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:*

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his own day. He likely did not mean that the message of Jesus Christ had been made known to every individual, but that the lighthouse of some church witness had been put within sight of all. That is an amazing statement, indicating that God's people were busy. But as well, God is busy. And the gospel itself is busy making its way to the ends of the earth.

*“And bringeth forth fruit”* – God's gospel is no idle, dormant message, but carries in itself a lively, active principle. Indeed it is the very *“power of God unto salvation”*. Like a seed, just put it out there and it does what it does best and all by itself. It does not return void, *“but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”* (Isa. 55:11). In and of itself the gospel message is *“quick [alive] and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword”* (Heb. 4:12). That message is the incorruptible seed *“which liveth and abideth forever”* (I Pet. 1:23), carrying within it the power of new birth. Just as a seed is fully pre-programmed, carrying in itself fullest ability to

*Col 1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear  
fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of  
Christ;*

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germinate and grow and multiply itself. All it needs is to be scattered, to be put into the appropriate circumstance and in the right kind of soil. Even so the gospel seed. Do you see how great a load that takes off our own shoulders? We do not need to be great communicators. We do not need to be sharp, discerning counsellors. It is not a question of our own personal merits or skills or wit. We need only to be diligent carriers and broadcasters. We need only the wits of a farmer with a bucket of seed and a strong arm to scatter it around the field. Seed and soil, sun and rain do all the rest. God through His gospel seed is quite able to germinate and cause it to grow and bear fruit.

Vs. 7 – “*As ye also learned of Epaphras*” – “*Of*” in the sense of “from” here. Again, it seems this man Epaphras was the messenger by whom the Lord brought the gospel to these readers, whether the Lycus Valley had been his home previously or he made it his home in taking the gospel to the people there.

Vs. 8 – “*Who also declared unto us your love in the*

*Col 1:8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.*

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*Spirit*” – This is the second mention of the love of these people “*toward all the saints*” (vs. 4). Again, love is the grace gift surpassing all others and in every age. Walking “*in the Spirit*” is the only way to God’s genuine kind of love, for God’s love is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Paul rejoiced in the evidence of God’s Spirit at work in them through the love shining out from them (I John 4).

## Class 3 – Colossians 1:9-20

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*Col 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;*

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### **1:9-13** – Prayer for Growth

In vs. 9-11 Paul speaks of things for which he prayed for the believers at Colossae, things relating to their experience of growth in Jesus Christ, things he hoped for them to receive. In vs. 12-14 he speaks of blessings for which he gives thanks, things relating to their position in Christ, things they had already received.

Vs. 9 – “*For this cause we also . . . do not cease to pray for you*” – Such an encouragement it must have been to learn that this caring old apostle of God was always so earnestly praying for them. To “*not cease to pray*” does not mean every moment, but continuing in an intermittent way, like an incessant cough. I read of one who stated that if he could know that Jesus was actually in the very next room praying for him he would fear absolutely nothing in life. Then it dawned on him that Jesus *is* as if right

beside him praying for his best.

*“That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will”* – There is great focus in Paul’s prayers for these on growing in the *“knowledge of God”* (vs. 10). All growth begins with knowledge. When I at last picked up a Bible I began to know and to grow. Sound knowledge then applied to the experiences of life leads to understanding and wisdom. A child can never comprehend all of the emotion and understanding that good literature can provide until first he works through the slog of gaining the knowledge of the meaning and sounds of letters, and then words, acquiring at length the ability to read, and thus an avenue to understanding. Even so a growing knowledge of the truth provides the building blocks for true understanding. A hunger to know all we can about our God and His words is essential if we would grow in Christ. We cannot grow in Him without knowledge of Him. So get all you can. How often in life we have held wrong opinions or come to wrong conclusions until more facts arrived.

The word Paul uses here for *“knowledge”* carries the idea of *full* knowledge. This in answer to the Gnostic notion, which boasted of superior knowledge through their mystical teachings. Paul would have

*Col 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

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these believers filled with the fullness of God's knowledge, which far out-strips all of the imagined wisdom of man.

Vs. 10 – *“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing”* – To *“walk worthy”* is to walk in a way suitable or becoming to our God. In Titus 2:3 Paul in a similar way encouraged the older women to *“be in behaviour as becometh holiness”*. There is to be more sacred serenity than silliness about us. The details of our character are to be consistent with things consecrated to God. So Paul's prayer for these believers was that their knowledge of God's true mind might be accompanied by true submission to His will in their actions. That their whole conduct and carriage might be holiness to the Lord. That there might be in them the will to actively search out God's will in everything (*“all pleasing”*). Compare King Saul's incomplete obedience in dealing with the Amalekites in I Samuel 15. He made a great point of what he *did* do, attempting to cover up the aspects he had neglected. Compare on the worthy walk in Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27; I Thessalonians

*Col 1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;*

*Col 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*

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2:12.

Vs. 11 – “*Strengthened with all might*” – Great focus now on *ability* for these for whom Paul prayed. Literally here, “in *all power* being *empowered* according to His glorious strength”. And then quite surprisingly, rather than this great strengthening being applied to great, impressive works or notable deeds in us, it is “*unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness*” that Paul prayed for them. Power not for action but for inaction! Clearly it takes a goodly dose of God’s mighty power in us to joyfully endure life’s hardships. Ryrie made the point that joy is what distinguishes the Christian’s patient endurance from the Stoic’s. They too might patiently endure hardships, but with pride rather than with joy. We are to be strong to patiently endure all we face in life, but with the added supernatural ability to do so while still holding onto joy.

Vs. 12 – “*Which hath made us meet to be partakers*



*Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*

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*of the inheritance*” – In that God *“hath made us meet”* He has rendered us fit *“to be partakers”*. He cannot simply accept the sinner unconditionally. His standard is perfect righteousness and this He must uphold. Every soul is by nature unrighteous and therefore *must be given* God’s righteousness if we would be made fit for God’s presence and inheritance. This is God’s great work of justification in every believing soul giving to them His perfect righteousness. In Christ’s death, and through faith in Him, God is able both to remain righteous and yet become the justifier of all who believe (Rom. 4).

Paul’s reference to *“the inheritance of the saints”* alludes to the division of Canaan into portions by Joshua, each family receiving a portion of the Promised Land. Even so every saint or child of God will receive his share in our Father’s house (John 14:1).

*“In light”* – John prophesied of the coming New Jerusalem that *“there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light”* (Rev. 22:5).

Vs. 13 – “*Who hath delivered us*” – “*The power of darkness*” of course refers to Satan’s power. He ever works to forward his kingdom through darkened understanding and conscience. But with the salvation of a soul a transfer is made;

- From Satan’s kingdom and power to God’s.
- From spiritual darkness of night to brightness of light.

The verb “*delivered*” or rescued here speaks not of God’s ongoing work, but of what He did for us in the past at the *moment* of our salvation. As if as a shining knight He valiantly swept down and rescued us from hopeless captivity in the dungeon of darkness where we were held in the shackles of our sin. It speaks of *His* work, not ours. And it speaks of our fixed position in His kingdom. God’s work of salvation or deliverance has three aspects, as seen in II Corinthians 1:10;

- Past – “*Who delivered us from so great a death*”.
- Present – “*And doth deliver*”.
- Future – “*We trust that He will yet deliver us*”.

So who or what am I in Jesus Christ? I am;

*Col 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*

*Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*

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- An heir of glory, owning a portion “*of the inheritance of the saints*”.
- A one-time child of darkness now rescued.
- A citizen of Christ’s kingdom of light.

*“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8).*

*“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).*

### **1:14-20** – The Incomparable Christ

We find in these next few verses such a stunning picture of our Saviour, like we find nowhere else in the Bible.

Vs. 14 – *“In whom we have redemption through His blood”* – *“With the precious blood of Christ”* the ransom price has been paid, and we have been purchased out of slavery to sin (I Pet. 1:18-19).

Vs. 15 – *“Who is the image of the invisible God”* –

Jesus is the very *“image of the invisible God”*. As *“the image”* He is the exact representation and revelation of God. To see Jesus Christ is in every way to see God, whom we cannot see. As the writer of Hebrews expressed it, Jesus is *“the brightness of His [the Father’s] glory, and the express image of His person”* (Heb. 1:3). The meaning of the words there in Hebrews 1 is that Jesus is the brilliant shining forth of the Father’s glory, the exact impression or expression of His essence. Jesus said of Himself, *“He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father”* (John 14:9). Paul wrote elsewhere of *“Christ, who is the image of God”* (II Cor. 4:4). God is invisible to our eyes. As John said, *“No man hath seen God at any time”*, yet *“the only begotten Son . . . He hath declared Him”* (Jn. 1:18). The natural world of God’s creation can tell us many things about God, such that God proclaims all the unsaved world *“without excuse”* (Rom. 1:20). And of course David adds that the expression of that testimony of God in His creation crosses every language barrier, for *“there is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard”* (Psalm 19:2). The unsaved world can sense and understand quite enough about God, if only through the testimony of creation. But creation alone cannot reveal to us the fuller image of Him. Only in Jesus Christ is the invisible God revealed *perfectly*. And if Jesus is indeed the perfect, visible

*Col 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:*

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representation and revelation of God, *then He is God!*

Arianism is that age-old heresy which teaches that Jesus is not God. This view insists that He is a created being, though exalted above all other creatures. Jehovah's Witnesses are one modern expression of the Arian heresy. But this passage tells us that Jesus Christ is supreme, not only because of His unique relation to *heaven* as the perfect visible representation and manifestation of God, but also because of His unique relation to *earth*.

*"The firstborn of every creature [created thing]"* – Those who teach that Jesus is a created being understand this word "*firstborn*" in the sense of first in order of creation, as a firstborn child. But the word is "*firstborn*", not first-created. The focus here is upon Christ's birth and thus His rights as the firstborn, not upon His creation. The Greek word behind "*firstborn*" expresses the idea of foremost or pre-eminent, either in an order or time sense, or in

*Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

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a place or prominence sense. As is true of many words, the particular way in which it is to be read is determined by its context. What is the context here?

Vs. 16-17 – *“For by Him were all things created”* – Clearly Jesus was not the first being created and then all other things created by Him, *“for”* (because) He Himself was Creator of all things as we are here told. And the *completeness* of the *“all things”* of His creating work is defined here; *“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”*. That Jesus is the firstborn of creation means that He as Creator has priority or first rank over every created thing, because He is the author of it all. *“He is before all things”* in the sense that Jesus precedes creation and is sovereign over creation.

Here is where Jehovah’s Witness doctrine gets into trouble, for they see Jesus as the first created being, and then everything *else* created by Him. This forces them to blatant manipulations of the Bible

text (see New World Translation on Colossians 1). The simple fact is, if Jesus created *everything*, as this passage abundantly confirms, *then He Himself is uncreated!* If He is Creator, then He is “*God the LORD*”, as the Lord proclaimed of Himself in Isaiah 42:5. He is foremost above all, *name above every name!!* The whole thrust of Paul’s argument in this passage is the superiority of Jesus Christ above everything; in heaven or in earth, visible or invisible. He is above every form of authority. He *precedes* creation. He is the *source* of all creation (3 times “*by Him*”). He is *sovereign* over all creation. He is the *reason* for all creation (all is “*for Him*”, vs. 16). Compare Hebrews 1:6 where “*the Firstbegotten*” receives worship, which created beings are not to receive (Rev. 19:10). Compare John 1:1-3.

“*By Him all things consist*” – To “*consist*” means to cohere or hold together. Everything *came* to exist through Jesus, by His power, and everything *continues* to exist through Him, by His power. It is Jesus who continually keeps all material things from flying apart at every moment. To what natural power could we look as sufficient to keep the positively charged protons all together in the nucleus of an atom? Such a phenomenon defies natural laws of like charges repelling. Such can only be an aspect of the on-going work of God the

*Col 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.*

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Son.

Remember this when your life seems to be flying apart. Jesus is the One with power to hold all together, right down to the details of your atomic structure, which must include the details of your life experiences as well. Such times of seeming disintegration are times to draw closer to Him.

Vs. 18 – *“And He is the head of the body, the church”* – Jesus is the Head of the church, that body of all true believers around the world and throughout this age. *“The church”* is made up of all true believers baptised by the Spirit into the body of Christ. This special work of forming the church was begun by the Spirit at Pentecost. *“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”* (I Cor. 12:27). *“For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones”* (Eph. 5:30). No man on earth, no earthly figurehead, is or ever has been the head of the true church of Christ. That honour belongs to Jesus alone, for He alone is worthy.

Herein is the marvel of the ages that that Pre-



eminent One, Jesus Christ, would so humbly identify with mankind, allowing Himself to be so disgraced and humbled unto death at the hands of His own creation through His surpassing grace. And then that He would show Himself greater than the greatest enemy mankind ever faced, *death itself*, in order that the church of all believers might become united with Him.

*“The firstborn from the dead”* – Jesus is the first to rise in a glorified, immortal body in complete victory over death. *“Firstborn”* now seems to refer more to first in order here. And this first resurrection is the assurance of others to follow. Jesus was *“declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Rom. 1:4). Why? *“That in all things He might have the pre-eminence”*. First place, highest rank, a name above every other name! Here is Paul’s theme in this section; Christ’s superiority, seen;

- In His superior relation to *God*.
- In His superior relation to *creation*.
- In His superior relation *to the church*, as her exalted Head.
- In His superior relation *to death*; man’s greatest enemy and Satan’s greatest weapon.

*Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all  
fulness dwell;*

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“*That*” or in order that or for the purpose that it might be seen by all, *that He surpasses all!* As Paul later says in 3:11, “*Christ is all, and in all*”. Should He not then be “*all, and in all*” to you and me, in our thoughts and desires and conversations and plans and wishes and efforts?

Vs. 19 – “*For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell*” – We find a similar, even fuller statement in 2:9, “*For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead [state of being God] bodily*”. This speaks of essence as well as attributes. Here is one of the clearest statements on Christ’s deity in all the Bible. Could such a thing ever be said of a mere man? “*Fullness*” = completeness. Again, something of Paul’s purpose in writing this letter to the Colossians was to fight the false teaching of Gnosticism swirling around at that time. Apparently the word translated “fullness” (*pleroma*), both here and in 2:9, was a technical term in the vocabulary of those Gnostic false teachers. To them this Greek word *pleroma* meant “the divine essence, dwelling in unapproachable light; the sum total of all the divine power and attributes”. It seems Paul purposely used their term in this context in order to

*Col 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.*

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make the point that Jesus Christ Himself is “the divine essence, dwelling in unapproachable light”. He is “the sum total of all the divine power and attributes”. In Him dwells all the fullness of deity! And now, because Jesus Christ is the fullness of God, He is able to do what no mere created being could ever do. He is able to entirely reconcile lost sinners to a holy God.

Vs. 20 – “*By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself*” – Described here is man’s dilemma, as those separated and alienated from God in need of reconciliation. Natural man is dead in trespasses and sins, as if a great gulf were fixed between himself and God. And being dead, man is incapable of bridging that great gulf. If there is to be reconciliation between man and God, then *God* must be the One to initiate it. And if there is to be reconciliation made, then it must be through One who touches both God and man, the incomparable God/man, Jesus Christ. If Jesus is less than God, then His salvation is less than sufficient, His reach falling short of heaven’s throne. But because He is who He is, therefore “*Ye are complete in Him*” (2:10).

*“Christ is all, and in all”!!* Again, should He not be *“all, and in all”* of us? *“In all”* of our thoughts and desires and plans and purposes?

## Class 4 – Colossians 1:21-29

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*Col 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*

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### **1:21-23** – The Incomprehensible Gift

Vs. 21 – “*Alienated and enemies*” – It is where every one of us was before Jesus found us. Not only was there alienation from God but there was animosity (“*enemies*”) as well. Not only separation or distancing, but actual hostility between us and God before we came to faith in Jesus Christ. “*The carnal mind is enmity against God*”, Paul said in Romans 8:7. Outside of salvation in Jesus the unsaved are “*by nature the children of wrath*” (Eph. 2:3), and “*who knoweth the power of Thine anger*”, the Psalmist wondered (Ps. 90:11), and “*who may stand when Thou art angry*” (Ps. 76:7). The counsel of wisdom to all of condemned mankind is ever the same; “*Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little*” (Ps. 2:12). The condition of the unsaved soul before God is not just a small matter of disagreement easily fixed up when the sinner gets around to it. Unredeemed man is like a tiny ant under a man’s

thumb. Unredeemed man is as the weak little nation of Judah under Hezekiah, with the unstoppable, inescapable, and totally hostile army of Assyria coming, and now camped right outside the gate, with absolutely no hope on earth for help. Such is the nature of things between natural man and God. The cannon of God's wrath against sin is fully armed and aimed and poised to explode in all of the fury of His almighty power at any moment with only the brief window period of this life for opportunity to repent and access His grace. The news is not good at all, for every soul without the Saviour shall be judged by the standard of the very perfection of the holy God of heaven, and none can hope to meet it in themselves.

*"In your mind by wicked works"* – Man's problem is not just a matter of his outward *"wicked works"*. His works are a product of his wicked *"mind"*. The principle of evil runs to the very core of every man, for *"the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked"*. The mind is that place where a man thinks and decides and formulates his rebellious ways against the Lord. *"He deviseth mischief upon his bed"* (Ps. 36:4). It does not become an evil only when we finally put our purposes into practice. It is wickedness before the all-seeing One even when it is only a dark purpose

*Col 1:22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:*

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or wish within us.

*“Yet now hath He reconciled”* – To reconcile is to restore to union and peace, to remove the hostility that once stood between. In Jesus we have not only been *“made nigh by the blood of Christ”*, but we have been brought into friendship with God (John 15:14, Luke 12:4).

Vs. 22 – *“In the body of His flesh through death”* – This speaks of Christ’s physical body. Through His physical death and shed blood was our reconciliation provided.

Docetism was another early heresy, which taught that Jesus did not actually have a physical body, but only seemed or appeared to have one. This Paul counters here with reference to *“the body”* of Christ’s *“flesh”*, and His physical death. The Gnostic view that all matter is evil tended as well to deny Christ’s actual, physical humanity. But Paul contends that Jesus is actually God the Creator, and He actually, physically became man.

*“To present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight”* – Here is God’s purpose in our reconciliation to Him. Do not miss the fact that His aim for us goes far beyond only our rescue from judgment. His design is our *perfection*. Compare Romans 14:9, where the stated end or purpose of Christ’s death and resurrection was not that He might be Saviour only, but *“that He might be Lord both of the dead and living”*. God does not save us so that we might continue on in sin without fear of His hiding. He saves us that He might change us into His own likeness.

*“Holy”* – Set apart wholly to God, living wholly for Him, dead to the attractions of the world.

*“Unblameable”* – Spotless, without fault.

*“Unproveable”* – Nothing worthy of blame.

Compare Paul’s purpose to present believers *“as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (II Cor. 11:2). Compare Christ’s purpose to present the church to Himself *“a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Eph. 5:27). Compare *“Him that is able . . . to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”* (Jude 24). Wonderful things are in store for us as believers in Jesus. But among the most wonderful will be our freedom at



*Col 1:23 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;*

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last from the groaning burden of sin in “*the manifestation of the sons of God*” (Rom. 8:19-23).

Vs. 23 – “*If ye continue . . .*” – On the surface of it the statement here appears to make salvation conditional, based upon our performance in life. But the point is that perseverance with the Lord is the proof of true possession of His eternal life. Compare Hebrews 3:6 & 14. Compare the overcomers of Revelation 2-3. Compare James’ insistence that faith without works is dead faith (James 2). Those who continue to grow in Christ demonstrate the reality of new birth within. Those who do not go on for Christ, but who in fact even go out from us, departing from any further profession of faith in Jesus, may very well be demonstrating that “*they were not of us*”, “*for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us*” (I John 2:19). Such departers are as the 2<sup>nd</sup> soil of Christ’s parable of sower and soils (Matt. 13:20-21). They make a profession of faith, yet with no true possession of

eternal life from the start. We cannot lose salvation by failing to continue in faithfulness to Christ. We only prove by this that we may never have possessed salvation in the first place.

*“Grounded and settled”* – A true heart of faith will tend to grow, just as *“newborn babes”* will *“desire the sincere milk of the word”* that they *“may grow thereby”* (I Pet. 2:2). A normal newborn does not need to be taught or even encouraged to feed and grow. Such a response comes quite naturally. Even so with a soul truly born of the Spirit. If growth and grounding in God’s Word does not develop in one claiming to be a Christian then there is good cause to doubt their salvation.

God would have us to be *“grounded and settled”* in Christ. We are *“grounded”* when we are on the solid foundation of God’s eternal words. The one hearing and doing *“these sayings of Mine”* Jesus likened *“unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock”* (Matt. 7:24). We are *“settled”* when we have become steady or steadfast in our confident faith regardless of what life throws at us. Compare the steady bearing of that portrait of a righteous man in Psalm 112.

*“Not moved away”* – Not constantly blown every

which way by the “*winds of doctrines*” like an unrooted tumbleweed. Compare the picture of well-rooted, steady growth in Ephesians 4:12-16.

*“Which was preached to every creature which is under heaven”* – Compare 1:6. This again is such an incredible statement of the range of the gospel and the work of its carriers in that early church era. Consider how God in His grace had set the world up for the widest gospel reach;

- He wrote into the Old Testament (O.T.) law the practice of pilgrimage feasts, that all devout Jews might be in Jerusalem to experience Jesus during His days of earthly ministry, and that all devout Jews might be in Jerusalem to experience the results of the Holy Spirit’s coming at Pentecost.

He allowed for Israel’s captivities and the resulting Diaspora, that Jewish people and synagogues might be scattered throughout the nations, and that devout Jews hearing and receiving the gospel in Jerusalem would carry it back to the nations like seeds on the wind, as the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8).

- He allowed for Roman rule over the centre of the world, with their strong government making for peace, and with their famous

system of roads for easy travel.

- He built up a large and effective witness in that first church at Jerusalem.
- He allowed through persecution for that Jerusalem church to be “*scattered abroad... everywhere preaching the word*”, taking the gospel with them (Acts 8:4).

All toward His gracious purpose of sending the gospel to the ends of the earth, that as many as possible might have opportunity to hear and believe. As well, those early saints were busy and committed to the work of carrying the gospel everywhere. The Lord is quite able to get His message around more extensively than we might imagine.

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## Questions

Paul says the gospel was “*preached to every creature which is under heaven*” in his day. Did gospel messengers follow even to the inhabitants of the Americas or Pacific islands at that time?

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## 1:24-29 – The Inestimable Calling

*Col 1:24 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:*

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Vs. 24 – *“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you”* – Paul, as a servant of the gospel was glad for the opportunity to suffer if it would benefit God’s people. How often we have seen similar words of willingness in Paul to suffer for Jesus Christ and His people (Phil. 1:20; 2:17; II Cor. 7:4; 12:10). Even so the other apostles rejoiced when *“they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His [Christ’s] name”* (Acts 5:41). Peter encouraged all to *“glorify God”* when suffering *“as a Christian”* (I Pet. 4:16). Compare the Lord’s call to rejoice when facing such in Matthew 5:11-12.

*“And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh”* – This is a difficult statement to get the sense of. As is often the case, such hard to be understood statements generate many varied interpretations and are applied to the support of many a false doctrine. In what way was Paul filling up in his flesh what was lacking of Christ’s afflictions? It seems this is a reference to Christ’s continued suffering in His followers. So closely is He united with believers that He feels with them in their sufferings. Indeed, *“in all their afflictions He*

*was afflicted*” (Isa. 63:9). When Jesus confronted Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road He said, “*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*”, though Saul had never personally mishandled Jesus, only His followers. Thus in our own afflictions for Jesus it seems we add to or fill up His afflictions through our oneness with Him.

There is no Catholic notion here of suffering in behalf of those who have died or for the benefit of the dead. There is no suggestion in this that Christ’s work of atonement is incomplete, requiring our works and sufferings to finish the job.

*“For His body’s sake, which is the church”* – This now refers to Christ’s spiritual body, “*which is the church*”, in contrast to the physical “*body of His flesh*” mentioned in vs. 22. This again is the body of all believers throughout this current age, all related or connected to Jesus in a union as real as the members of our physical body all connected to our head. Compare vs. 18.

That we might have opportunity to spend our physical bodies “*for His body’s sake*”, for the sake of Christ’s church. This is the greatest of privileges and Paul considered it so.

*Col 1:25 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;*

*Col 1:26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:*

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Vs. 25 – “*Whereof I am made a minister*” – Where in vs. 23 Paul was “*made a minister*” of the gospel, now he’s “*made a minister*” or servant of the church. His work, the spending of himself, was ever in those two vital directions of ministering the gospel to the unsaved world and ministering to the growth of Christ’s church. Our work is ever to be the same two-pronged approach. We are to be busy about making disciples of all nations and feeding the sheep of the Good Shepherd.

“*According to the dispensation of God*” – By the word “*dispensation*” (KJV) Paul speaks of God’s stewardship or appointment of Paul as a steward of His household, the church (I Cor. 4:1). As God’s steward he had received from God the message he was to hold pure and fully proclaim to the church. Paul was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most prominent contributor to the N.T. after Luke.

Vs. 26-27 – “*Even the mystery*” – Again, as in his writing of the book of Ephesians, Paul had on his

*Col 1:27 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:*

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heart his appointment as minister of the mystery (Eph. 2:3-7). In the N.T. the word “*mystery*” is often used in a sense different than we might use the word, as referring to something mystic or beyond our ability to see or understand. Rather Paul’s reference to “*the mystery*” here speaks of something formerly not revealed in clarity but now is made fully known by divine revelation (Eph. 3:5). And this “*mystery*” of which Paul was a minister was not something revealed only to an elite group, but was now made available to all. The mystery is;

- God’s plan of redemption in Jesus Christ, involving the gospel message that Jesus died and rose again.
- God’s purpose to gather all the redeemed under the single Head, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10, 22)
- The intimate union of all believers in Christ, in the church, “*which is His body*” (Eph. 1:22-23). This in some sense is pictured in the physical union of husband and wife (Eph. 5:30-32).



- Not only you in Christ, in His body, but as well much of *“the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles . . . is Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Col. 1:27). So me in Christ and Christ in me through my believing in Him are both a part of *“the mystery”*.
- That also *“Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body”* (Eph. 2:13, 22). That those once *“far off”* would also be *“made nigh by the blood of Christ . . . to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace”*. Jews and Gentiles now one in Christ through salvation by faith.
- And that Gentiles would partake of all benefits in Christ’s body on an equal standing with Jews.

This new relation of Jews and Gentiles united in the church of this current age can never negate God’s promise to the nation of Israel of an earthly kingdom. It only adds a wonderful feature that must first be fulfilled, the salvation and inclusion from among the Gentiles of a people for God’s name. Once the church is complete she will be removed from earth in the Rapture, and God then will again begin to deal with national Israel, bringing her at last to repentance through the events of the Great

Tribulation. All that God has promised Israel He will fulfil upon a remnant of the actual, literal sons of Jacob.

Now remember that the Gnostics were much given to their mysteries, with certain secret details and doctrines made available only to those accepted into the club. But see now the contrast, see how God's mystery is not confined only to an initiated few, but is made public domain. Christianity is no secret society, though the ability to fully comprehend God's truth only really comes with the indwelling Spirit upon salvation.

*“Christ in you”* – That Jesus dwells within believers in some mystical way through the indwelling Holy *“Spirit of promise . . . is the earnest [deposit, down-payment] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory”* (Eph. 1:13-14). That Jesus is in us is the pledge of the inheritance of the fullness of God's presence in glory.

*“The hope of glory”* – Our entire basis for hope is Jesus Christ. Without Him we have nothing, no hope. With Him we have the hope or assurance *“of glory”*. *“Glory”* refers to that happy place and state of eternal dwelling with Him. Compare 1:5 & 23;

*Col 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:*

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Romans 8:17; Philippians 3:20.

Vs. 28 – “*Whom we preach*” – Notice here that it is not “*what we preach*”, but “*whom*”. Paul preached a *Person* more than a system of belief or conduct. All is centred around the Head, Jesus Christ. Moses preached the system of God’s law. He preached it twice in fact. The O.T. book of Deuteronomy was round 2, because it was all about man remembering it to do it. Paul preached the Son of love, who brings the law written within, on the heart. All attention is now upon the Lord Jesus Christ;

- Who is truth.
- Who is the fulfilment of all prophecy, the realization of every O.T. promise of Messiah.
- Who is the Saviour, sacrificed for me.
- Who is my Sabbath rest.
- Who is both God and man, touching both heaven and earth, and therefore the only perfect ladder reaching from sinful man to holy God.

- Who is the Head of the body, the church.
- Who is the Creator and Sustainer of every created thing.

*“Warning every man”* – We are to bring strong admonishment concerning God’s promise to deal with men in justice, seeking to bring the unsaved hearer to conviction and repentance.

*“Teaching every man”* – We are to patiently bring willing hearers to the knowledge they need to receive the salvation God offers. We are to patiently lead the redeemed to a greater depth of understanding of all that Jesus is and has for us.

*“That we may present every man perfect”* – Paul here points to the coming Judgment Seat of Christ, when every believer must stand before the Lord to give account, and to *“receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad”* (II Cor. 5:10). In view of that great day Paul would see *“every man”* who is in Christ to come to the fullness of maturity and find blessing and reward there.

*“Every man . . . every man . . . every man”* – Whereas the Gnostics tended to be exclusive, Paul excluded no man! He sought the soul of *“every*

*Col 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

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*man*” coming to his acquaintance. He strove to lead “*every man*” into the vast benefits of “*the mystery*” of “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*”.

Vs. 29 – “*Whereunto I also labour*” – Paul ever laboured against all obstacles to this end, pulling alongside the Lord in a double yoke, striving against both inward and outward barriers to the forwarding of God’s word and work on earth. To this same end we must “*also labour*”.

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## **Survey of Labour**

The following is a collection of portions quoted directly from the Bible;

“In all labour there is profit, for he that gathereth by labour shall increase, as that husbandman that laboureth. For we are labourers together with God. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day we preached unto you the gospel of God. So labouring, ye ought

Prov. 14:23  
13:11  
II Tim. 2:6  
I Cor. 3:9  
I Thess. 2:9  
II Thess. 3:8

to support the weak. For God is not	Acts 20:35
unrighteous to forget your work and	Heb. 6:10
labour of love, which ye showed	
toward His name. Wherefore we	II Cor. 5:9
labour, that whether present or	
absent, we may be accepted of Him,	II Cor. 6:4
approving ourselves as the ministers	Phil. 1:27
of God in labours more abundant,	Col. 1:29
with one mind striving together for the	
faith of the gospel. Whereunto I also	Rom. 15:20
labour, striving according to His	II Tim. 2:5
working which worketh in me	
mightily. Yea, so have I strived to	I Cor. 15:58
preach the gospel. And if a man also	
strive for masteries he is not crowned,	
except he strive lawfully. Therefore,	
my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast,	
unmoveable, always abounding in the	
work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye	
know that your labour is not in vain in	
the Lord.”	

## Class 5 – Colossians 2:1-10

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*Col 2:1 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;*

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In chapter 1 we found the most incredible portrayal of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us. What is the answer to every question or concern in life? To know Him in truth! Because of who Jesus is and what the saints have in Him, Paul now labours in chapter 2 to lead believers to *continue* to walk closely with Him, rather than turning to the pursuit of any of life's lesser things.

We live in a day when psychologists speak for the church and are allowed to interpret Christianity to life. Few are willing to even listen to the words of a “non-professional”, for higher learning, high thinking, and proper qualification are all the fashion. Thus the church has been corrupted “*from the simplicity that is in Christ*” (II Cor. 11:3). The simple teaching of who Jesus is and what this means to us is largely lost to the modern church. When God would lead us in the details of a right Christian walk, what does He hold up to us but the wonderful details of Jesus of Nazareth? What else

do we need? Who else?

### **2:1-3** – Paul’s Aim for the Saints

Vs. 1 – “*For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you*” – How great the intensity of this apostle’s inward struggle over the truth of God undermined through misleading influences there in the Lycus Valley. Though his readers were people who for the most part he had never even met, yet Paul could not be complacent when trouble was brewing in the church and Christ’s name was being dishonoured. He could not be content with any old doctrine taught as long as unity prevailed among Christians. Paul, with God’s heart, was intolerant of false teaching. How could he be unconcerned when he could see the wolves creeping in close? Paul simply could not do nothing! He loved the truth too much for such non-response. How can we say we love the truth of God when we easily tolerate Satan’s error? And if we do not love the truth of God, how can we say that we love the God of truth? Paul loved *God* intensely. Therefore he loved God’s *truth* with the same intensity. Therefore he equally hated all *error*. Therefore he spoke out against it. He could do no other. The wise Preacher told us in Ecclesiastes 3 that there is “*a time to love, and a time to hate*”. This kind of proper love/hate is so essential for holy living, but essentially missing



*Col 2:2 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;*

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from the church of our day.

Vs. 2 – *“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding”* – Truth encourages. As one enters into an understanding of God’s truth he is delivered from the shackling effects of false belief, for *“the truth shall make you free”* (Jn. 8:32). Every false belief shackles in some way;

- The materialist is bound to continue to acquire and to protect what he has.
- The animist is bound to make continual sacrifice that he might keep his fickle “god” happy.
- The legalist is still under bondage to keep the law.
- Etc.

But the *“full assurance of understanding”* of truth in Jesus breaks every chain and sets the captive free! When our understanding comes to full measure our

*Col 2:3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

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going is established, and we are freed to love without fear. Compare “*full assurance of hope*” and “*full assurance of faith*” in Hebrews 6:11 & 10:22.

Vs. 3 – “*In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” – Listen to the way Paul speaks of Jesus. In lining up on the direction he is headed Paul would first have his readers understand the completeness of what they have in Jesus Christ. It was quite simply not necessary to go elsewhere, investigating into the foolishness of human philosophies and fabricated belief systems in order to discover how God has related Himself to His creation. All is fully discovered in Jesus Christ. In Him is the storehouse of all true treasure. As we come to know Him;

- We come to know the only “*living and true God*”.
- We find peace with God.
- All mysteries are resolved.
- Every question answered.
- Every doubt removed.

*Col 2:4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.*

*Col 2:5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.*

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- We come to fulfilment in Him.

## **2:4-10** – Christ Over Philosophy

Vs. 4 – *“Lest any man should beguile you with enticing words”* – There is warning here of those who would deceive by false reasoning. Lest any should lead you away or turn you aside with persuasive arguments, no matter how impressive or attractive their words may seem. God has already given to His saints the living and the written Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit. What more is needed?! Compare vs. 8, where *“spoil”* carries the idea of kidnapping or carrying off captive. Specious human reasoning is portrayed as a weapon men use in seeking to enslave the undiscerning among men. Such is the captivating nature of the occult and astrology and sensuality and eastern mysticism and the whole vanity or fashion affair. Compare in Romans 16:18 those who *“by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple”*, speaking of a smooth, reassuring style that seems to communicate goodness and trustworthiness.

*Col 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*

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Vs. 5 – “*For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit*” – Paul was given a vision (backed by Epaphras’ report) of the sound spiritual condition of the believers at Colossae, and of their orderly, steady practice of their Christian experience (II Thess. 4:11-12). He longed for them to continue in that steadfast faith in Christ, that they not be tripped up through the entrance of any false teaching leading their hearts away from Christ, Christ, Christ.

Vs. 6 – “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*” – We find a key command here. How did we receive Christ Jesus the Lord? We of course received Him by faith. Salvation in Jesus Christ is simply by believing in the promise of God. It always has been. God made a promise to Abraham, and Abraham believed God’s promise. Therefore God accounted righteousness to Abraham because of his faith in God’s promise. It is as simple as that!! Compare Romans 4 with Genesis 15:6. Compare Galatians 3:6-9, 14, 24-26. Now God calls us to continue as we began, for the principle of *living* the Christian life is the very same that *began* it; “*the stedfastness of your faith in*

*Christ*". Through faith we firmly, resolutely took hold of Jesus Christ as the one and only true Mediator between man and God. Even so now we walk with that same One by that same steadfast, believing hold. Do not lose faith in that one Mediator, falling to some other mediator(s), as suggested by the false teachers of Gnosticism.

So we walk in the same faith by which we entered into Jesus Christ, simply believing in the promises of God. Therefore if God has promised His blessing upon all who read and meditate on His words (Josh. 1:9; Psalm 1), do you show your confidence in that promise by your practice? "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord (by faith), so walk ye in him*" (believing this promise of God). If God promises His blessing upon all who live in sexual purity, and His curse on all who refuse to do so (I Thess. 4), do you believe *that* promise or warning? "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*" (believing this promise of God too). If God promises His blessing upon all who honour Him with their substance, with the firstfruits of all their increase (Prov. 3:9-10; Mal. 3:10; Haggai; II Cor. 8-9), do you believe that promise? Does your life or practice *show* this confidence in His promise? "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*".

If God promises His blessing upon all who respond to hatred and persecution with graciousness (I Pet. 2-3), do you believe that promise? If God promises His blessing upon all who pray in the right way (Matt. 6), do you believe that promise, and show it by your practice? If God promises that each of us will give account of his life before Christ, both of our good and of our unconfessed evil, do you believe that promise? Do you therefore keep your heart right with Him? “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*”. If God bids us to trust Him rather than fearing or even being anxious about the threats of others or life situations (I Pet. 3:14; Isa. 51:12-13), do you believe that you can really trust Him for that? If God bids us to trust Him instead of fearing lack, for He has promised that He will take care of us, can you trust Him for that? Do you see how it all boils down to the same thing? God makes promises to us and we have the choice to believe them and to *show* that we simply believe them by *living* according to those promises. Or we can choose rather to not really believe them at all, and to *show* that we do not believe them by not living according to those promises. And there is no middle ground. There is no room for the one who sincerely *believes* a promise of God, but does not *live* like he actually believes it. Then as we proceed through life,

*Col 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

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responding in genuine faith to the promises of God, something wonderful happens. We grow from strength to strength in our Christian experience.

Vs. 7 – *“Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught”* – *“In Him”* in vs. 6 and *“in Him”* in vs. 7. Are you hearing? Our *“life is hid with Christ in God”* (3:3). The moment we believed with our initial genuine faith in Christ our roots were sunk deep into Him. In the Greek behind our English translation *“rooted”* is in the perfect tense here, speaking of our condition, of something that took place in the past with the effects remaining. We are now in a condition of having been rooted *“in Him”*. *“Built up”* and *“stablished”* are in the present tense, speaking of a continual process still ongoing. So *“having been rooted in Him”* speaks of my fixed *position* in Jesus since the moment I believed, while *“being built up in Him and confirmed or strengthened in the faith”* speaks of what is to be my continual *experience* in Him. We who are Christ’s are in a condition of *“having been rooted in Him”*; an eternal planting which draws from Christ as our source of spiritual supply, even

as roots draw nourishment from the earth. When travelling in the mid-western states we commonly saw tumbleweed growing along the sides of the road and edges of the fields. The plant grows as a small, dense, roundish bush. When it dies and dries the bush is blown about with the wind, rolling like a ball, scattering its seeds. God's children are not to be like tumbleweeds, blown around under the influence of every passing wind of doctrine. They are *rooted* firm and deep! They are a very different kind of planting. They are "*like a tree planted by the rivers of water*" (Ps. 1:3), and there they "*shall flourish like the palm tree*" and "*like a cedar in Lebanon*" (Ps. 92:12). They possess every potential for continual growth in Christ through an ever strengthening faith, just as a tree grows stronger with every passing year. Paul greatly underscores our potential for growth and increase here in vs. 7.

*"Abounding therein with thanksgiving"* – It is in our faith that we are to abound *"with thanksgiving"*. Our faith must never come to a stand-still, but must *"increase more and more"*. Either we are moving forward or we are being carried backward, in the same way that anyone who does not keep up with what is happening in the field of his/her profession is actually falling behind. Any Christian who is not making progress in his faith becomes a target for



*Col 2:8 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.*

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the enemy, slinging his fiery darts of discouragement, bitterness, false teaching, and fleshly lust. The evil one is as the wolves following the herd, targeting those who weaken and fall behind in their faith. As a believer grows in his Christian life and establishes godly habits and sees victories over sin in his life and becomes aware of new amazing aspects of the Lord and His will and plan, and sees the Lord taking care of him according to His promise, such a growing believer's heart is stirred to an overflowing thankfulness, *"abounding therein [in his faith], with thanksgiving"*. A happy, thankful heart comes with true Christian growth. Sincere gratitude is one of the marks of genuine Christian maturity and strong faith. Thankfulness is a theme running throughout this little book of Colossians (1:3, 12; 3:15, 17; 4:2). The Lord's good purpose for the growing Christian life is to lead believers on to rejoicing and thankfulness in Him and in His work. Compare the similar picture of Christian growth in vs. 19. Being in Christ we have become a part of His body, with all who are connected to the Head. And because we are so connected, the Head (Christ) ministers nourishment

to the body, that every part of the body might increase together *“with the increase of God”*.

Vs. 8 – *“Beware lest any man spoil you”* – The term *“philosophy”* is defined as the appreciation and pursuit of wisdom – *man’s* wisdom, not God’s. From man’s perspective the term might describe the supreme purpose to which the human mind can be applied. From God’s angle this is the only time the term is even found in the Bible, and that only to warn against it! The imagined significance of human philosophy is utterly overwhelmed by the excelling splendour of Jesus Christ. *“Vain deceit”* speaks of useless things which give a false impression of having merit. *“The traditions of men”* and *“rudiments of the world”* refer to that collection of ideas, precepts, rituals, etc. sourced *“under the sun”*; things proposed and pondered by men through the ages, and loosely considered to be “truths”. The answer to all such is, *“Thus saith the LORD”*. Nothing derived here below could ever hold a candle to what *“is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights”* (James 1:17). God says *“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent . . . hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”* (I Cor. 1:19-20).

*Col 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the  
Godhead bodily.*

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Vs. 9 – *“In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”* – The word translated “Godhead” describes the essence or nature of God. Again, it is doubtful that a stronger statement on Christ’s deity can be found, yet this combined with His humanity (*“bodily”*). In Jesus Christ dwells all of the completeness of divine essence and attributes, yet *“made of a woman”, “in the likeness of men”* (Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:7).

Now listen to how this verse is translated in the Watchtower’s corrupted New World Translation; *“Because it is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily”*. Not divinity, but only *“divine qualities”*. They allow only that Jesus is gilded with divine characteristics which are not essentially His own or sourced in Him, thus reducing Him to something closer to us, as mere reflectors of God’s character. But we are told that in Jesus Himself is *“all the fullness”* (1:19), *“all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (vs. 3), every answer of life and death, the *“full assurance of hope”* for mankind. In Him alone is *“the way, the truth, and the life”* (Jn. 14:6). He Himself is *“the resurrection, and the life”* (Jn. 11:25) and the great

*Col 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*

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*“I AM”* (Jn. 8:58).

Vs. 10 – *“And ye are complete in Him”* – There is nothing further for us beyond simple faith in Jesus Christ. There is nothing the believer is lacking when we are in Him. There is no aspect of our salvation that needs completing, for *“it is finished”*. What we have in Jesus is a fully accomplished deliverance. There is no place for human works in our deliverance. There is no need for other mediators of any kind. There is no place for Mary or ancestors or angels or any other imagined advocate of the afterlife of any kind. The intrusion of such as these displays a misconception of the fullness of God and deliverance in Jesus. For Jesus is the Head of all, of every *“principality and power”*, of every form of authority existing. And in Him, through faith in Him, we come at last to *“perfect peace”*.

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## **Ponder Point**

As mentioned earlier, we are saved by faith in the promise of God. Can a soul be saved without faith

in the promise of God? No. Faith is the *only* way salvation comes to a soul. Can a soul know the promises of God without the special revelation of God's written words? No. Only through the hearing of God's words can one discover God's promise of eternal life to all who receive Jesus Christ as Saviour. Only then can one believe in God's promise. Here is what Paul expresses in Romans 10:14-15, the driving force behind biblical missions. People cannot believe in Jesus unless they hear the message of Jesus. Yet there are many who would insist that one can be saved through general revelation alone, by observing God only in His creation, without access to His written words. But justification comes to a soul only when he hears God's promise of life in Jesus and *believes* God for His promise. There is no salvation outside of God's promise. And there is no salvation outside of *simple faith* in God's promise of eternal life to every soul who receives Jesus Christ as Saviour.

And again, believing the promises of God such that you *live* like you actually believe them is the only way to growth in the Christian life. It is always a question of what you choose to do with the sure words of God.

“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”

(Colossians 2:14)

## Class 6 – Colossians 2:11-23

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*Col 2:11 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:*

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The essential nature of error does not really change much over the centuries. The surface details, the names, the players change with time. But the evil one does not expend much creativity in devising new error. He just repackages the old in new forms. The Lord knew it would be this way. Therefore much of the message of the N.T. epistles was written to deal with wrong beliefs entering into the early churches, the core concepts of which God knew would always be with us. And as with every false religion ever sourced from under the sun, there was a legalistic performance aspect in the Gnostic views of Paul's day as well.

### **2:11-23** – Christ Over Performance

Vs 11 – *“In putting off the body of the sins of the flesh”* – Physical circumcision cut away a portion of one's body, marking him as part of God's covenant people under the old covenant. Even so there is an inward kind of circumcision that takes place the

*Col 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.*

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moment a soul is saved under the new covenant, marking the saved soul with the sign of God's family. It is a cut "*made without hands*", a work of God in which our old nature is condemned and dealt a death blow (Gal. 2:20), though the full practical outworking of this change will not come to fullest effect until glory. We see an illustration of this in the kingdom torn from King Saul and given to David (I Sam. 15:28), though it was years before Saul actually died and David was crowned. Only in the kingdom ruled by that coming Son of David will we know fullest freedom from our sin nature. The result of this "*putting off*" in us is that our relation to *sin* is changed at new-birth.

Vs. 12 – "*Buried with Him . . . risen with Him*" – There is a sense in which we join Christ in His death and resurrection at the moment of our salvation as well. We died there to our old way and will and wishes, and we are now raised again to newness of life in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6-7). This death, burial, and resurrection is depicted in our baptism by immersion. This work of God in us results in our relation to *God* changed at new-birth.



*Col 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;*  
*Col 2:14 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;*

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Vs. 13 – “*You, being dead in your sins*” – There is a sense in which we died with Christ at the moment of our salvation, and there is a sense in which we were already dead in our sins from birth and were thus needing to be restored to life (Eph. 2:1). God had told Adam from the beginning in the Garden of Eden that “*in the day*” he should eat of the forbidden tree “*thou shalt surely die*” (Gen. 2:17). Therefore Adam died spiritually “*in the day*” he ate, and began to die physically. And therefore, since the days of Adam, every child is born spiritually dead and in need of that new life that only God can give.

“*Having forgiven you all trespasses*” – In Christ our old dominant, sinful nature has been put down and we have been raised to newness of life. And in Him we have been cleansed and forgiven of every failure and fall into sin. This all confirms the fact of our completeness “*in Him*” (vs. 10), for the work of our redemption is complete in Jesus Christ.

*Col 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers,  
he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over  
them in it.*

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Vs. 14 – “*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us*” – This handwriting of ordinances against us refers to God’s law of the old covenant, that “*ministration of death, written and engraven in stone*” (II Cor. 3:7). It was our sin that made God’s law a “*ministration of death*”, for the law could only expose and condemn our sin. But now in Christ our relation to *God’s law* has been completely revised as well. Jesus has become the end of the law to everyone who believes. That law of God once so “*against us*” and “*contrary to us*” stood in silent condemnation of us, for sinners we were. But this condemning law has now been taken “*out of the way*”, as if nailed with Christ “*to the cross*”. On the cross Jesus cancelled our debt to the law, and therefore its dominion over us. We now owe *nothing* to the law, only a debt of love to our Saviour.

Vs. 15 – “*Having spoiled principalities and powers*” – Paul speaks of Christ’s victory in His death and resurrection over Satan and his host. They have now been completely vanquished and publicly exhibited as stripped of every power and hope of

victory. So in Christ our relation to *Satan* has been forever altered as well. As believers in Jesus we now stand as sharers in His victory. No more do we walk “*according to the prince of the power of the air*” as we once did.

So there are sweeping relationship changes in four directions through what Jesus did for us on the cross;

- Our relation to ***sin*** is changed (vs. 11). Sin’s power over us is cut off through divine circumcision.
- Our relation to ***God*** is changed (vs. 12-13). Sin’s power over us is broken through our death.
- Our relation to ***God’s law*** is changed (vs. 14). Sin’s power over us is broken through our death to the law (Rom. 7:4).
- Our relation to ***Satan*** is changed (vs. 15). Sin’s power over us is disarmed through a weakened Satan.

In Christ we are cleansed from sin, alive to God, dead to the law, and delivered from Satan’s purpose and power! *All praise to our God! “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved*

*Col 2:16 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:*

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*us”.*

Vs. 16 – “*Let no man therefore judge you*” – “*Therefore*” looks back to those great changes that have taken place in our relation to sin, God, His law, and our great enemy. In view of these vast changes in we who are redeemed by the Lord do not let anybody sit in judgment over you.

“*In meat, or in drink*” – Let no one take you to task over the foods you choose to eat. Legalism often has a mouthful of words about foods we should or should not eat. But in Christ we have liberty! Pay no attention to any condemnations or implied 2<sup>nd</sup> rate status over any dietary concerns. It is indeed a new day, a new era, an entirely new covenant. “*Meat [food] commendeth us not to God*” Paul said in I Corinthians 8:8. Food choices cannot put us closer to the Lord, “*for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse*” (Rom. 14). If somebody should think they are healthier for what they eat or avoid, that is all theirs. But never should one be looking with narrowed eyes at others who happily eat with pleasure what he avoids.

Romans 14 speaks to us of the proper attitude, that neither should the eater despise the avoider nor should the avoider be judging the eater, “*for God hath received him*” (vs. 3). *God* in no way condemns those who with clear conscience eat all things. So please pass the bacon! Every food “*is good*”, the Lord said, “*and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving*” (I Tim. 4:3).

*“Let no man therefore judge you . . . in respect of an holyday”* – These holydays refer to the yearly calendar of Jewish feast days such as Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, etc. Though some might choose to adopt such Jewish services and celebrations, as has become fashionable in recent years, let none look down their nose at you for not practicing such Jewish customs. *God* does not condemn those who with clear conscience do not participate. Let none imply the non-doer less spiritual or the doer more spiritual.

*“Or of the new moon or of the Sabbath days”* – Paul moves from yearly observances to monthly and then to weekly. Some insist that these “*Sabbath days*” refer to other than the weekly 7<sup>th</sup>-day Sabbath, since this was fixed in the 10 Commandments. In the Greek behind the English it is just the word “Sabbaths” without the definite article (“the”),

implying no particular Sabbath, but just Sabbath as we commonly understand the term. Without any pressure to promote or preserve some system of belief, how would the common man read this according to a normal understanding? If Paul meant something other than the weekly Sabbath then some clarification would be supplied, but there is none. Paul in fact speaks here of *all* the old special day observances of the Mosaic Law. The whole calendar, the entire “*handwriting of ordinances*”, was nailed to the cross, whether yearly (“*holydays*”), monthly (“*new moon*”), or weekly (“*Sabbath days*”). Compare Paul’s reproof of the Galatian believers, who were observing special “*days, and months, and times, and years*” (Gal. 4:10). Clearly Paul meant to cover all of the special holy days of the old covenant.

Ellen G. White, founding mother of 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventism, once wrote, “In the last days the Sabbath test will be made plain. When this time comes anyone who does not keep the Sabbath will receive the mark of the beast and will be kept from heaven”. Now hear again God’s true messenger, and understand! “*Let no man [or woman] . . . judge you . . . in respect . . . of the Sabbath*”! Oh the arrogance of one who would dare to imply Christ’s sacrifice and salvation insufficient, suggesting

*Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

*Col 2:18 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,*

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man's works the equal of Christ's!

Vs. 17 – “*Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ*” – Jesus Christ was and is the sum and total of the “*things to come*”. Outward observances such as those listed in vs. 16 were but “*a shadow*” of His approach, announcing His coming. But Jesus Himself is “*the body*” or reality casting the shadow. And with His arrival the shadow is forgotten for the joy of His very presence. Man was to glory in the wonderful promise of the shadow, while that was all he had. But no right-minded person continues to embrace the shadow of one who has come! Those observances of the old dispensation were only markers pointing to the true substance in the coming Christ. Though we certainly agree with Paul that “*the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good*” (Rom. 7:12), the new man “*in the Spirit*”, under the new and better covenant, is simply not under the law!

Vs. 18 – “*Let no man beguile you of your reward*” –

The single word in the original Greek translated “*beguile you of your reward*” suggests one serving as judge or umpire over athletic games. But in this case the idea of judgment *against* is added. “*Do not let anybody act as an umpire to judge against you*”, denying you the prize. The thought is similar to “*Let no man therefore judge you*” in vs. 16. Some men (and women) try to set themselves up as judges, examining and censuring the lives and beliefs and pursuits of believers, seeking to lead them in a way other than a true walk of simple faith in Jesus Christ, even leading them away from winning the *Lord’s* praise and prize. God is never pleased with those who teach error. Nor is He pleased with those who foolishly fall into following their ways and words. Such is the way of loss; loss of eternal *life* for the unsaved, who let themselves be conned by false teachers into missing God’s true salvation, and loss of eternal *reward* for the saved, who allow themselves to be diverted from the way of true gain. There is the very real danger of a believer building with “*wood, hay and stubble*” in this life, rather than with “*gold, silver and precious stones*” (I Cor. 3:8). A danger of building with consumable things that bring no reward when we stand before the Lord. You would be wise to disregard such would-be guides, rather than trembling before their scrutiny as if before valid assessors of your performance.



*“In a voluntary humility”* – Paul now expresses something of *how* such false teachers attempt to secure the submission of others. He seems to speak of a put-on or affected show of humility characterizing such teachers (NKJV). Do not allow the appearance of gracious humility to throw you off the trail of false teachers. Look carefully to what they *believe*, not to their outward sweetness. If they do not hold to Christ and His words then they are conceited proud-hearts, regardless of affected virtues on their veneer. The false humility of Gnosticism said, *“I am so sinful, and God is too unapproachably high to be worshipped directly by me”*. With seeming humility they acknowledged the great gulf between sinful man and holy God. This is why they thrust other mediators in between God and man in the *“worshipping of angels”*. We have considered how Gnostic belief put spirit-beings between man and their view of the unapproachable God. In their thinking such mediators were closer to man, and therefore able to identify more closely with fleshly man without tainting God with man’s impurity. But Jesus said, *“no man cometh unto the father but by Me”*.

Harry Ironside relates an interesting story of a gracious friend of his, who was raised a Roman Catholic. When asked why he prayed to the Virgin

Mary rather than directly to God through Jesus Christ, this friend responded with greatest humility in this way; “Oh, I am too sinful, too utterly unworthy, to go directly to our blessed Lord. He is infinitely above me, so pure and holy, His majesty is so great that I would not dare to prostrate myself before Him. But I know that no one has such influence with a son as his mother, and I know, too, that a pure woman’s tender heart feels for sinners in their sorrows and failures, therefore I go to the blessed Virgin Mary and pour out my heart to her as to my own mother, and plead with her to speak for me to her holy, spotless Son, and I feel sure that she will influence Him as no other could”. So the mother can influence the Son. And the mother is more tender and caring than the Son or the Father. It seems to make sense according to a human way of thinking. But please understand, that is all this is, a *human* way of thinking, rather than according to God’s words. It seems to express lowliness of heart and reverent humility of spirit, as if a humble man sincerely seeking God. But understand the subtle form of pride here, which suggests that such a man-devised approach to God, through a man-appointed mediator (Mary), is a wiser way than what God Himself has established and revealed in His Word and in His Son. God says He has appointed only one Mediator between God and men, “*the man*

*Christ Jesus*". When man attempts to get to God through any means or mediator other than the One God has appointed *it is rebellion*, though clothed in the lowliest of outward humility. Do you see? It is to disregard what God has given through *unspeakable cost!* And when man sets up his own mediator, one closer to him and more tenderly compassionate, is he not actually denying God's compassion? Compare the tender compassion of God in Christ (Heb. 4:15-16; Lam. 3:22-23). None are so defiled by sin that they are not invited by Jesus to "*come unto Me*". So though men show lowliest humility on the surface, it is *no true humility* when they cast aside God's words for their own words!

Understand that what had developed in that early stage of church history in men appealing to angel spirits as mediators between man and God was an easy thing to later exchange for other spirits. The imagined mediating work of the so-called "saints" and of Mary is just a churched-over version of the earlier arrogant Gnostic heresy of worshipping spirit-beings. It is just another example of Catholicism "Christianizing" pagan belief and practice, as in the many others ways the Catholic Church simply adapted its form of religion to what was already happening in the pagan religions of the

world.

*“Intruding into those things which he hath not seen”* – The word translated “intruding” is something like “entering into”, or “searching into”, or “frequenting”. These false teachers were earnest pursuers of mystical contacts with their imagined mediating spirits. They could then broadcast their experiences, which they presumed set them apart and above the average man. Thus they could claim special insights through things they had seen, pointing to fuller supernatural experiences of God or contact with angels to support their claims. This would lead then to spiritual intimidation, pointing up the lowly, *unspiritual* state of the *uninitiated* in comparison to they. All calculated to suggest that the words of the mystic *could not be questioned!* For he claimed for himself a kind of direct line to the supernatural. But Paul is rather blunt in exposing the foolishness of their sightings, writing *lie* over their supposed visions, as “*things which he hath not seen*”. Theirs was a teaching that essentially fractured Christ’s body between the “*haves*” and “*have-nots*”, those they considered properly initiated into their mysteries through such mystical contacts and those uninitiated, having had no such special experiences.

History tells of a radical religious sect that arose within Christianity in the second century, just a few decades after the last of the apostles died. It was a group that followed the teachings of a man named Montanus. The Montanist doctrines were a form of Gnosticism, and thus were appropriately condemned as heresy by the early church. Among the things they believed were the notion that the church was made up of two groups;

- The “spiritual Christians” who followed the teachings of Montanus, and claimed direct revelation from God.
- And the “carnal Christians” who only had the “dead letter” of the Scriptures.

Sound familiar? They taught that “the church of the Spirit” was made up only of those who had experienced their mystic experiences. This of course is the very same divisive approach of the modern charismatic movement, where the same imagined division is suggested between those who have “arrived” through their experience of some manifestation of the Spirit, and the “unarrived”, who have not as yet had such experiences. Charismaticism is modern-day “Christian” mysticism. They too tend to claim their sightings above questioning. To doubt them is to commit the

unpardonable sin, they insist, doubting what the Spirit has authored. This is thrown up like some kind of force field to ward off all suspicion. And behind that shield the modern mystic tips his head back in a heavenly gaze, speaking as if the very oracles of God. And out comes all manner of tripe passed for truth! Much of modern Charismatic belief follows the way of old Montanism. But the truth is, one who is truly spiritual never drives wedges within the body of Christ, creating factions and setting up levels of spirituality based on experiences. True religion is *united* under the Head, who is Christ.

*“Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind”* – God’s apostle pulls no punches in continuing to expose this error. Such folks as these were *“puffed up”* or bloated with pride, bearing themselves loftily but *“vainly”*, without just cause. Rather than admitting any high and heavenly source for their fanciful dreams and visions, look well at what Paul indicates here. He points downward to their *“fleshly mind”* as the actual source. The fundamental problem with such attention-seekers is a carnal mind puffed with pride like an overstuffed chair. So again, on the surface they showed a *“voluntary humility”*, looking for all the world like the sweetest thing since golden syrup. Yet the Lord presses to the core of them,

*Col 2:19 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.*

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pointing out that pride was their prime mover. They were elevating themselves, their heads swelled by their search into things they had not even actually seen.

Vs. 19 – “*And not holding the Head*” – While holding to their lying visions and sightings they were neglecting the true Word of God, casting aside God’s revealed words for their hidden mysteries. Their exciting book of “things they had seen” was well-worn with use, while their Bible collected dust. Sound familiar? Consider the tragic irony of it;

- They were more fascinated with inferior spirit-beings than with the true Head.
- They had turned from the only source of true spiritual life and power to intrigues they wrongly supposed lifted their spirituality.
- They thought they were arising as an elite class of a higher spiritual order, but they had actually cut themselves off from the only source of true spiritual growth.

*Col 2:20 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,*

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Jonathan Edwards made an interesting comment in his book “On Revivals”, stating; “They who leave the sure word of prophecy – which God has given us as a light shining in a dark place – to follow such impressions and impulses, leave the guidance of the polar star to follow a Jack with a lantern”. Whenever men depart from the guidance of a normal understanding of what God has revealed in His Word it is a return to the days of the Judges when *“every man did that which was right in his own eyes”*.

*“From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God”* – Do you get the picture? It is unity rather than dissection. It is all knit together and growing together in a united hold on Jesus Christ, rather than some kind of Christian caste system. Those more given to calling attention to their special experiences and looking down on the have-nots are really the ones farthest away from heart of God after all.

Vs. 20-22 – *“If ye be dead with Christ . . . why as*



*Col 2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;  
Col 2:22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after  
the commandments and doctrines of men?  
Col 2:23 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.*

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*though living in the world”* – Paul now applies the things discussed. It is a question now of whether we are going to practice our freedom in Jesus or remain bound by human traditions or restrictions or expectations. In Christ we are now free to live according to those two great guiding principles; to love God with everything and to love our neighbour as ourselves. If it really does not matter to God whether we partake of something or not, why do we allow it to matter to us? If you are proceeding according to genuine love for God and man, holding to the Head and nurturing fellow saints, then carry on brother, allowing none to brow-beat you off track.

Vs. 23 – *“Which things have indeed a show . . .”* – Again, do not be concerned about the superficial show of religion around you. Another’s performance of their religion may demonstrate attractive aspects. They may justify their legalism with reasons that sound wise. It is what the Muslim attempts to do. Yet all he has is a mouth full of reasons to justify

his religion and shoot down everything else. But legalism only ever has “*a show of wisdom*”. A man’s practice of his religion in the things he feels he must do and must deny himself in the “*neglecting of the body*” may display an impressive strength of will. But under the surface it is really a “*will worship*”, a glorying in his own will-power. Folks may appear never-so-humble in performing their religious duties. But again, do not be taken in by it. If they are not simply clinging to Jesus Christ the Head then they are arrogant proud-hearts under the surface. The true religion of God simply holds to Christ and walks in love toward all others, striving ever for the glory of God and the good of man, in glorious liberty.

## Class 7 – Colossians 3:1-11

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*Col 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

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### Chapter 3

Typical of Paul's letters, the thrust turns now with chapter 3 to more practical considerations of truth applied to life, with nothing more said of false teachers or teaching. Attention now turns to living the Christian life in our experience. Paul begins with focus upon the crucial question of what we allow to be our *mind* masters in vs. 1-2, beginning where all sin begins. He turns then in vs. 5 to what we allow to be our *member* masters. Paul begins in a more negative vein, dealing with things to be "*put off*". Then in vs. 11 he turns to a more positive direction, to Christian character to be "*put on*". It is a common approach with God to deal first with the negative, clearing away the putrid to make way for the pure.

#### **3:1-4** – Mind Masters

Vs. 1 – "*If ye then be risen with Christ*" – Paul now

applies the truth mentioned in 2:12-13, that at the moment of our salvation we died spiritually to ourselves and rose to new life in Jesus Christ. We are dead to our old self, dead to the demands of God's law, and we are now alive to God, as actually resurrected to newness of life in Him. Since this is a spiritual reality for every soul in Christ, Paul's plea therefore is that we now become consistent in our practice with what we are in Jesus Christ, that we become more heaven-seeker than earth-dweller. Contrast the earth-dwellers of Revelation (3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8,12,14; 14:6; 17:2,8), whose settled abode is earth, and who will perish with it in the end.

*“Seek those things which are above”* – Regardless of the attitude and pursuits of those around you, be one who is heavenly-minded. Remember the great attention in the book of Philippians on our minds and right thinking. Remember the commands there in Philippians 4 to push out evil or discouraged thoughts with the good and godly habit of courageously replacing them with thoughts of virtue. In the words of Frances Hodgson Burnett,

“Where you tend a rose, my lad,  
A thistle cannot grow”

Again, every sinful *action* marks the end of a long,

*Col 3:2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

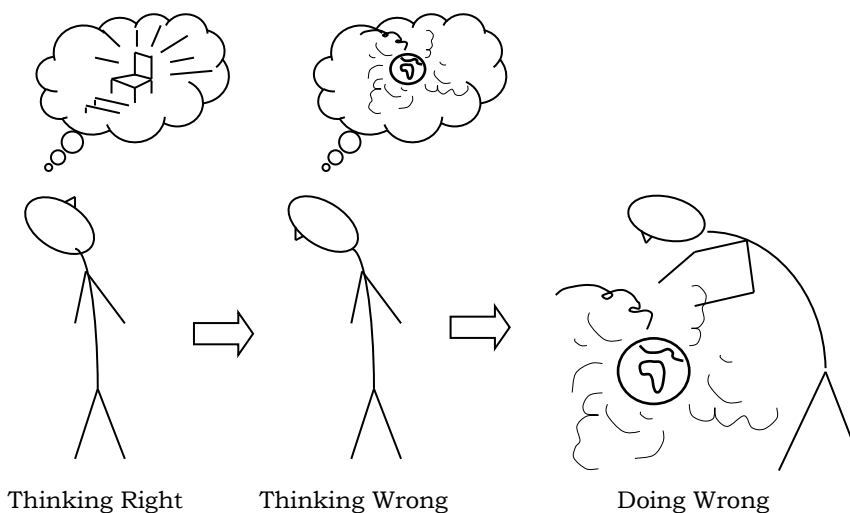
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twisted trail of sinful *thinking*. Though our body must of course dwell on earth in this life, our heart does not have to live in the filth of things worldly. Our search for things of true worth is to be aimed higher, above the vanity of all that is under the sun. Compare the account of the Preacher's search for things of true worth in the O.T. book of Ecclesiastes. Compare King Josiah, who even as a young boy "*began to seek after the God of David*", with epic results for the good of his nation!

Vs. 2 – "*Set your affection on things above*" – The word "*affection*" (KJV) might be taken as referring to feelings, but the word behind it speaks of our thinking, the way we are minded (the same word found so often in Philippians). The Lord talks again here of what we choose to *think* about. Be minding things above!!

What we have here in vs. 1 & 2 are two parallel commands, speaking of our conscious choices within the reach of our will. Commands which most of us in Christ simply refuse to obey on the whole. What a marvel the world would see in a man

resolved to fully obey these commands! Every misuse of a physical member of our body is always preceded by a misuse of our mind. Eve had to first leave the contemplation of God to consider the merits of Satan’s temptation, which then led downward to the practice of evil.



God now calls all who are renewed in Jesus Christ to reverse the arrows of my diagram above and return to where they should be; that the prevailing focus of the exploration of our new lives in Jesus Christ be of God and His things; that the principal preoccupation of our minds be “*things above*”, feasting on He who is the Bread of Life rather than

upon the forbidden things of earth. This does not prohibit the study of the natural earth, it just gives such a study new and wonderful meaning. For it now becomes a study of God's creation, every feature related to Him and a revelation of Him. As one man said, "The things on earth are not in themselves sinful, but become so if sought and thought on in preference to the things above". To "*seek*" is to strive or endeavour after, speaking of our desire. Compare Proverbs 2. To set our minds upon something is to make that something the focus of our interests. And to be found so focused "*on things above*" is to find deliverance from the vile list to follow here in chapter 3. Contrast Psalm 36, where the Psalmist describes the practice of pondering things forbidden in plotting or meditating upon evil. Why do we do this? Why do we think on such forbidden things? Because we *enjoy* thinking such things and inwardly long for the opportunity to actually practice or say what we are thinking. Why else? Oh we are wise to beware. For pondering long over forbidden things is the run-up to the practice of them, and the willingness to be minding things that are wrong is the indication that we are no longer seeking things that are right, things above, "*where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God*". Compare Romans 13:10-14, where to "*make no provision*" is to give no forethought to "*the flesh*,"

*to fulfil the lusts thereof*". Every murderer could fill dark volumes with untold hours of vicious thoughts he has thought. Every rapist or sexual pervert has left behind him a grubby trail of pornography and pornographic *thinking*. Every depressed, self-centred, fearful, or conceited person has traced a trail of sinful, selfish thoughts. Such a one has refused to rather be thinking of things above the sun. He/she has refused to bring "*into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (II Cor. 10:5). Remember David's words of encouragement to the princes of Israel who were to help Solomon with the building of the temple, "*Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God*" (I Chron. 22:19). Or as Peter encouraged, "*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts (not just carnal actions), which war against the soul*" (I Peter 2:11). Put right away from you all thinking upon such lusts, "*as strangers and pilgrims*" here, says Peter. As sojourners who rightly see this world for what it is, only a stopover. This is not our permanent dwelling place, as the "*earth-dwellers*" of Revelation. Abraham looked for a city, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11). Even so we look with confidence and live for a fairer land and a fairer day. As Abraham did not find what his faithful heart sought in this life, even so we shall not, until we are home at last in the Lord's presence.



*Col 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

*Col 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

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And as Abraham was a sojourner with no fixed dwelling place, living in tents, even so we are pilgrims and strangers in a barren land.

Vs. 3 – *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*” – And not only dead but “*buried with Him*” (2:12). Compare 2:20. Compare Galatians 2:20, “*I am crucified with Christ*”. Compare Ephesians 2:1, 4-5. Again the reminder here is that to be saved is not merely to put on some new lifestyle like a costume. It is to be fundamentally changed or transformed to our very core. Not a fresh new coat of paint on an old building, but the whole structure completely torn down, cleared away, and a new creation built on a new and sure foundation. In Jesus Christ I died, and now I live, yet it is not really me but Jesus who now lives in me.

Vs. 4 – “*When Christ . . . shall appear*” – Jesus in His trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin boldly pointed to the day when He will fulfil the prophecy of Daniel, returning to His kingdom in power and dominion.

*Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*

*Col 3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:*

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A day when that One so shamed back then will come in unquestioned glory. A day when there will be no more questions about His identity. A day when He will be the Judge interrogating lowly mankind, rather than the other way around, as there before the Jewish leaders. And in that coming day of His unquestioned glory and authority, we who stand with Him by faith now will “*appear with Him in glory*” then, standing on the victory side.

Vs. 5-6 – “*Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth*” – Put them to death. “*Members*” here is in the sense of limbs or members of the body. As if we live in heaven even now as active citizens there, but have some part of us is still on earth. As if we have already made the move to a new land (a heavenly one), but we have left a few things back in the old country, just in case we ever wish to return. And the Lord’s command now is to burn all those old bridges, for we are not going back! Do not plan or even wish to return to the evil trusts and lusts of this world. Do not be as the mixed multitude among

the children of Israel lusting after the old tastes of Egypt. Leave them! Stop your sinful longing and leaning back. Replace this rather with a forward lean, keeping your mind fixed on that Promised Land before you, rather than that old land of bondage you left behind. And then a sampling is given of the kinds of members to be mortified;

*“Fornication”* – A word meaning every kind of illicit sexual deviance whether pre-marital or extra-marital (I Thess. 4).

*“Uncleanness”* – Indulging practices that are not morally pure.

*“Inordinate affection”* – Passion, but of a depraved, unruly nature.

*“Evil concupiscence”* – Coveting or lusting after things forbidden (Proverbs 21:26). *“Concupiscence”* (KJV) is an old word speaking of an abnormally strong desire for something, especially for things of a sexual nature, stirred up to overwhelming power. Compare Amnon lusting himself sick over his half-sister Tamar (II Sam. 13). Compare King Ahab coveting to the point of depression over Naboth’s vineyard (I Ki. 21). God’s ancient commands are that *“thou shalt not [even] covet”*.

*“Covetousness”* – A greedy appetite for gain and

*Col 3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.*

*Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

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enjoyment of this world's goods. An excessive appetite for material wealth is essentially "*idolatry*", for it looks to created things rather than Creator for security and satisfaction.

It is for just such evil expressions as these of man's sin nature that God's wrath falls upon the unsaved of earth, "*the children of disobedience*". Again, pointing out the perilous condition of every unsaved soul. Compare Ephesians 5:6; 2:3. Jesus said of the lost "*the wrath of God abideth* [is currently dwelling] *on him*" (John 3:36). May such characteristics of the condemned "*not be once named among you, as becometh saints*" (Eph. 5:3).

Vs. 7 – "*In which ye also walked*" – Before we found new life in Jesus Christ this is where all of us lived and walked, within the peril and perversion of unsaved earth-dwellers. Compare Ephesians 2:2-3.

Vs. 8 – "*But now ye also put off all these*" – This command to put away all such responses can only imply that in Christ we are capable of doing so.

*“Anger, wrath”* – There are two different words used here in the original language having a difference in meaning. Behind *“anger”* is the Greek word *orge*, speaking more of a festering, settled rage, which long holds the hope of revenge. Behind *“wrath”* is the Greek word *thumos*, describing the more passionate sudden explosion of heat that subsides as quickly as it rises.

*“Malice”* – A burning, spiteful intent to bring hurt upon others.

*“Blasphemy”* – The slanderous, cutting words that hurt another’s good name.

*“Filthy communication out of your mouth”* – This is obscene, foul-mouthed, ungoverned speech (Eph. 4:29). Do your words contribute to the cause of God’s moral purity? Or do the things you say and willingly hear and laugh at rather promote depravity? Do your words lift those hearing to consider *“things above”*? Or are your words stained with the filthy muck of *“things on the earth”*? Can you *“let your yea be yea and your nay, nay”*? Or must you punctuate every line with a foul curse word? Compare Ephesians 4:30 with context (vs. 29-31). What grieves the Holy Spirit is hatred and bitterness expressed with our tongue, cutting words levelled at each other. Compare in James 3 the unruly nature of the tongue.

*Col 3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;*

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Vs. 9 – *“Lie not one to another”* – We are believers in Jesus, He who is truth (John 14:6). Therefore we are to be people of truth in all things. God has much to say about the truthful tongue of His people. He has much to say about lies and liars as well. He says lips that tell lies *“are an abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are His delight”* (Prov. 12:22), and *“a righteous man hateth lying”* as well (Prov. 13:5). He says the liar really hates the one lied to, for *“a lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it”* (Prov. 26:28). Of that shameful list of seven abominable things the Lord hates (Prov. 6:16-19), two out of the seven (28%) are *“a lying tongue”* and *“a false witness that speaketh lies”*. The Lord through Paul forbids lying to each other in Ephesians 4:25, because *“we are members one of another”*. How much more is this true of husband and wife, for *“they two”* are *“one flesh”*.

*“Ye have put off the old man with his deeds”* – *“The old man”* is a term referring to our old nature. Charles Ryrie describes it as *“the predisposition to leave God out of one’s life and actions,”* which of course was the way of our old unsaved condition. Our *“old man”* is that former self that was dominant

*Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

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in us before we received a new nature through new birth with the entrance of the Holy Spirit. This old way or nature is to be put off as one would drop from himself the corrupt clothes of his previous grave existence, leaving behind the depraved ways of *“the children of disobedience”*, those *“dead in trespasses and sins”*. Compare Cain’s ungodly line in contrast to Seth’s godly line in Genesis 4 & 5. With Cain and descendants it was all about what they accomplished in life. With Seth and descendants it was only about those who walked with the Lord.

Vs. 10 – *“And ye have put on the new man”* – Here is our new nature, brought to life in us through a creative work of God at salvation. The new man within the believer is a new creation of God, *“created in righteousness and true holiness”*. This is a new being come to existence where there was only spiritual death before. *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new”* (II Cor. 5:17). Yet though this be true of our *position* in Jesus Christ, alive and renewed through God’s wonderful creative, resurrection work in us in our new birth,

still there is need for a *personal application* of this reality to our lives, what we must “*put on*” or make good through our own determined purpose. Though God gave the victory to the nation of Israel under Joshua, yet still it was necessary for them to get up and cross over and actually take that land. They had to physically climb the mountains and cross the streams and fight the foe. The new creation in us of our “*new man*” is a *positional* truth, fixed and sure and unchangeable since the day of our salvation. But the command to work out this new nature in our practice is an *experiential* truth, becoming more true of us as we learn to live out the character of our exalted Head. You are created anew in Christ, now put off the old and put on the new.

In Ephesians 4 we see this same replacement principle of putting off the old and putting on the new. We are not to just stop our old evil way. There is a much greater promise of success if we then follow in obedience by putting on the new way in its place. We see the same principle in Philippians 4. We are not to just stop our anxious fretting over concerns. We must replace worry with trusting prayer (Phil. 4:6). Our Lord would not only have us refuse to think evil things. We are commanded to replace evil thoughts with thoughts of things true, honest, just, pure, lovely, etc. (Phil. 4:8). Therein is



*Col 3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew,  
circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian,  
Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

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where we find *“the peace of God”* and *“the God of peace”*. God has always insisted both that the false altars to Baal must first come down and that the Lord’s altar must then be renewed in their place.

Vs. 11 – *“Where there is neither . . .”* – *“Scythians”* were inhabitants of Scythia, the Ukrainian and Cassock area of modern Russia. It was a term used by the Greeks of any culture foreign to them. Again, Paul refers to our new relationships. And as in Ephesians 2 his point is that all fences are down now in Christ. All of the normal human distinctions have been over-ruled in His church.

*“But Christ is all, and in all”* – All focus on Him. All is fulfilled in Him. In nothing does His salvation come short. There is no respect of persons with Him.

“And above all these things  
put on charity,  
which is the bond  
of perfectness”

(Col. 3:14)

## **Class 8 – Colossians 3:12-4:1**

Paul dealt in 3:5-9 with the matter of putting off “*the old man with his deeds*”, that old original disposition in us to deny God and live for ourselves. He then turned in vs. 10 to the matter of putting on “*the new man*”. This “*new man*” is a new existence or creation of God in every saved individual; a positional, eternal reality from the moment of new birth. And never does God speak of this new existence in us as something that can be lost because of our failure to live up to Christian expectations. He deals with us as a child now, and gives hidings if need be for all who are His own. But though the existence of this “*new man*” in us is fixed and sure, yet still we have a practical responsibility to put into effect on the ground what we are in essence, to remove the “grave clothes” of “*the old man with his deeds*” so that “*the new man*” within can shine through.

I saw some unpolished silver at a jewellery shop once. It was ugly! A misshapen lump all covered with dross from refining. When I asked what it was I was surprised to hear that it was actually silver. The quality of that ugly lump was equal to that in any piece of polished silver. The only difference was that that lump was unworked. At new birth we were

*Col 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;*

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wonderfully transformed by God's grace from those who were fit to perish into the very quality of the sons of God. Yet still the ugly dross of our old nature tends to precipitate to the surface and needs the continual work of polishing away the old, that our true, new nature might glisten through. It is vital for us to recognize that we have been born into the King's family, and then, while working together with the Lord, to begin to work the lump of our renewed lives into the image of God's own son.

In vs. 1-2 of chapter 3 it's about *God-centred* living.

In vs. 5-9 it is an end to *self-centred* living ("*put off*").

From vs. 10 it is all *others-centred* living ("*put on*").

In vs. 10 it is about the new *man*.

In vs. 11 it is about new *relationships*.

From vs. 12 it is about new *lives*.

### **3:12-17** – New Man in the Church

Vs. 12 – "*Therefore*" – In light of things new in and

around us in Christ, therefore the command to “*put on*” what we are, as those chosen and holy and loved by God. “*Holy*” squares with the description of the “*new man*” in us in vs. 10. “*Beloved*” speaks of God’s ongoing attitude toward all the saved, who are now “*accepted in the Beloved*” (Eph. 1:6). In Christ we may not be perfect sons in our practice, but we are ever “*accepted*” sons, “*beloved*” of God.

“*Bowels of mercies*” – The word used here actually refers to intestines. It is the same that “*gushed out*” of Judas when he fell headlong and “*burst asunder in the midst*” (Acts 1:18). In the old days the bowels or intestinal region were considered the seat of our passions, of anger and tender affection and such. Today we use the word “heart” in the same way that folks once spoke of “bowels”, lifting the centre of our feelings a few centimetres. We would say “heart of mercies”, referring to tender sympathies of heart-felt compassion. As an unsaved boy I had little compassion for people or animals. But a heart of more tender compassions entered when I was changed at new birth.

“*Kindness*” – A mellowed agreeable nature. Having nothing harsh about one’s character. Compare II Timothy 2:24ff.

*Col 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.*

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*“Humbleness of mind”* – Having a deep sense of our own personal littleness before God. Esteeming ourselves as we truly are, those fit for judgment and quite worthy of it. This is the same word translated *“humility”* in 2:18, except that here it is the genuine article whereas there it was only a show of it. *“Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility”* (I Pet. 5:5).

*“Meekness”* – Trench’s lexicon defined this word as “That temper of spirit in which we accept His [God’s] dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting”. The same attitude directed toward men will recognize that “the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted and employed by Him [God] for the chastening and purifying of His elect”. Compare David’s attitude toward Shimei’s reviling (II Sam. 16:11). Compare Ecclesiastes 7:21-22.

*“Longsuffering”* – A combination word in the Greek (as this English word), joining “long” and “passion”, thus literally “long-passioned”. The readiness to long endure provocations with a level, steady

*Col 3:14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

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temper.

Vs. 13 – *“Forbearing one another”* – Enduring or putting up with each other, though others may have beliefs or mannerisms that tend to irritate us. A dose of this is necessary in dealing with everybody, though some of us may perhaps require double and triple doses.

*“Forgiving one another”* – The readiness to grant forgiveness rather than holding a grudge. There is no place for resentment in the Christian life or in the church. Such will only lead to the ugly vices mentioned in vs. 8 to be put off. *“God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:8). If anyone has good cause for bitter resentment it is God and toward us. God served us in love while we hated Him and did Him disservice. Therefore *“even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye”*. As He was big enough to do loving service even to those who hated Him, those with whom He had a genuine *“quarrel”* or complaint, *“so also do ye”*.

Vs. 14 – *“And above all these things . . .”* – This love

*Col 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

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is the willing commitment in us to the very best for others. It is what Paul prayed for this church in 2:2, the very greatest virtue over every virtue (I Cor. 13:13). It is “*the royal law according to the Scripture*” to “*love thy neighbour as thyself*” (James 2:8).

“*The bond of perfectness*” – Love is the glue that perfectly binds together all other virtues, and like a good glue it sets itself hard against every hurtful vice, against all effort to make separation.

Love, long-suffering, gentleness, and meekness are all listed in Galatians 5:22-23 as “*the fruit of the Spirit*”. It is a reminder that though we are called and commanded to “*put on*” these things, we do so through the Spirit’s power as we “*walk in the Spirit*”. Spirit-filling always moves us to an others-centred attitude.

Vs. 15 – “*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts*” – A command it is to be allowing God’s peace to be the guiding principle of our hearts. If thoughts or actions make for God’s right kind of peace then they



*Col 3:16 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.*

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are right and good thoughts or actions. If not then they are to be denied and avoided. For it was to peace, both within our hearts and within Christ's body, that we have been called in the Christian life. Compare Romans 12:18, "*As much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men*".

"*And be ye thankful*" – Be mindful of favours and grateful for the same. Gratitude is an attitude so greatly conducive to peace among any people. Spirit-filling will always tend to move us to joy and gratefulness.

Vs. 16 – "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*" – This again is an ongoing command, speaking of what should be our way of life. We must be allowing God's words to fill us. "*Richly*" means abundantly. It should not seem a burden to us that our Lord would expect us to abundantly fill our hearts with His words. We are wrong to allow other things, lesser things, to crowd this vital feature out of our daily existence. How can we effectively use "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" in

combat against *“the wiles of the devil”* if His words are not in us richly? It is what Jesus used in warding off Satan’s multiple temptations (Matt. 4), for He had been reading and memorizing from Deuteronomy from which all His quotes came. It is the same effective weapon of defence and offence available to us still. It is what the Psalmist so treasured, saying, *“Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee”* (Ps. 119:11). Only because *“the law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide”* (Ps. 37:31). He rejoiced in the treasure of God’s words *“as much as in all riches”* and more *“than thousands of gold and silver . . . yea, above fine gold”* (Ps. 119:14, 72, 127), and Job *“more than my necessary food”* (23:12). How can we hope to make wise decisions in life without being saturated with God’s words and way? It is the Spirit of God in us who uses the Word of God in us at the point when we need it. How can the Spirit of God remind you of something you have never learned?

*“Teaching and admonishing one another”* – This expresses ministry to others. As always, being full of the Lord will fill us with desire to minister to one another. Again, Spirit-filling always runs together with concern for God and others.

*Col 3:17 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.*

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*“In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”* – “Psalms” generally referred to the O.T. psalms, once sung with a stringed instrument. “Hymns” were specifically songs praising and glorifying God. “Spiritual songs” speak of singing about things of a spiritual nature. Examples are given in Revelation 5:9; 14:3; 15:3 where the same word is used. David, in the great blessedness of God’s forgiveness cried *“Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance”* (Psalm 32:7).

Do not miss how God’s songs and the singing of them is no empty exercise. They are meant to have a positive *“teaching and admonishing”* ministry in the lives of those who hear. Spirit-filling will always put a song in your heart and on your lips. Compare in Psalm 40 that *“new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord”* (vs. 3).

Vs. 17 – *“And whatsoever ye do”* – It is guiding principles for the Christian life that we see in this portion. As we saw in vs. 15, our practice is wholesome if it makes for peace in ourselves and

*Col 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*

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God's church. Now we see that our words and works are wholesome if we can speak or practice them in the Lord's name. Let it be a guide for everything. Can you do or say it to the glory of God? Compare I Corinthians 10:31.

*"Giving thanks"* – Note again the great emphasis on this theme (vs. 15, 17, 4:2). Seems it is a response too easy to forget and therefore one that bears reminding.

### **3:18-21** – New Man in the Home

These are all ongoing commands in this portion, describing what is to be our new way of life with each other in the home. And do not miss the fact that in all of these interpersonal relationships the commands given are completely unqualified. Regardless of the nature of the husband, the wife is to submit. And the husband is to love his wife though she seem quite unlovable. Children and servants are to obey fathers and masters though the one over them seem more hardship than friendship. Not one of these commands is given with a provisional "if/since" sort of condition (I Pet. 2:18).

*Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

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Vs. 18 – “*Wives, submit*” – Submission is a voluntary attitude of cooperation, a willing conformity of our will to the will of another. “*Your own husband*” is now the head and protector of his wife, he having taken the place of her father in this regard upon marriage.

“*As it is fit in the Lord*” – According to what is due or duty for all who are saved and safe in Jesus. Though it may seem best to demand or simply take the course you want in life’s decisions, understand how this can put God against you in this life, and diminish what might have been in the life to come. These are not merely the words of a man’s shackle, but the words of God. As with a child under authority, such a command becomes a shackle only when we choose to resist. Upon genuine repentance, submission becomes the helpful and happy boundary it was meant to be. Though it may seem that such threatens the loss of things you want in life, we must remember that we are now “*in the Lord*” and have all glory before us.

Vs. 19 – “*Husbands, love*” – Here again is that supreme virtue “*above all*” (vs. 14), the active

*Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.*

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pursuit of the best for the other. Do not seek only to please yourself through her, making her the servant of your desires, husband. Love takes into account her best, her joys, her wishes in a reasonable manner.

*“Be not bitter against them”* – A godly husband’s ongoing way with his wife should not be with a harsh, exasperated sort of manner. To be sure there are stands that must be taken and fights that must be fought. But our usual way with our wife must not be with a feeling of irritation toward them. We must see and speak of that one God has given to us as more partner than failing, frustrating servant. Compare I Peter 3:7, *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them [wives] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered”*. To honour is to esteem high, as one would his parents. Handle her carefully and with honour or your prayers will get nowhere with God.

Vs. 20 – *“Children obey”* – The verb here involves the idea of hearing. This is obeying in the sense of a

willingness to listen to their words of command.

*“In all things”* – Here is the extent of this obedience. It is not to be just in some things. The option of choosing which of the parent’s words to obey does not belong to the child, except when it comes to matters that are morally wrong.

*“For this is well pleasing unto the Lord”* – Here is the reason for this right way of a child with their parents. Simply because the Lord approves of it and disapproves of the refusal to hear them.

The O.T. fleshes this response out with further details. Do not strike your parents (Ex. 21:15). Do not curse your parents (Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9). Do not dishonour your parents (Ex. 20:12). Remember the 1<sup>st</sup> word of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tablet of the Ten Commandments, relating to man. *“Honour thy father and thy mother”*, with the promise that *“thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee”* (Deut. 5:16). How things go for you in life depends to a large degree on your response to this. Leviticus 19:3 even uses the word *“fear”* or reverence, *“Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father . . . I am the LORD”*. Among the cursings of the law is this, *“Cursed be he who setteth light by his father or mother”* (Deut. 27:16). In Proverbs 30:11-

*Col 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger,  
lest they be discouraged.*

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17 the body of the parent-mocker is left unburied for the birds to feed upon. The Lord is rather serious about this. There is clearly no room for the scorning of parents or for child-ruled homes in His economy.

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## **Question**

At what point is a child no longer a child?

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Vs. 21 – “*Fathers, provoke not*” – Do not be irritating or frustrating or unreasonable, aggravating your children in the wrong way, though of course standing on clear rights and wrongs before the Lord. Yet notice that the Lord through Paul does not say “Be sure to hammer with the rod for every offence”. Rather He adds a goodly measure of reasonableness into the mix. Good fathering;

- Is not about never making mistakes, but is about being honest and humble to admit our mistakes before our family.



- Is about firm limitations or boundaries, but with a measure of reasonableness in this.
- Is not about using our children for our own selfish advantage, but is about seeking what is always for their long-term best.

*“Lest they be discouraged”* – The word here is literally without spirit or courage. Lest they be dispirited, having heart or passion bled out of them for one reason or another. Careful awareness and loving thoughtfulness must be given toward maintaining their passion for life and encouragement in it. Compare Hebrews 12:15. We provoke our children to discouragement when;

- We are too exacting with them.
- We are too easy on them.
- We are inconsistent with them.
- We do not keep our word to them.
- We try to serve our own advantages or image through them.
- We use them like currency, as Laban with his daughters.

Compare God’s confidence in Abraham’s firm way with his children in Genesis 18:19.

*Col 3:22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:*

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### **3:22-4:1** – New Man on the Job

Vs. 22 – “*Servants obey in all things your masters*” – The same command word is used here as of the children in vs. 20, and is to be carried to the same extent, “*in all things*”. The Christian servant or employee is to labour at listening well with a heart to fulfil the will of his master or employer completely.

“*Not with eyeservice as menpleasers*” – Not only performing appropriately for the boss or teacher or parent or policeman when under their eye, but giving our best for that one over us at *all* time, knowing that above that one is our ever-watching heavenly Father. It is Him we see and reverently serve in our faithful service of our “*masters according to the flesh*”.

“*In singleness of heart*” – This speaks of the complete absence of anything false or insincere, without guile. It does matter to our God even how we conduct ourselves in our job, and in relation to every authority figure.

*Col 3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;*  
*Col 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*  
*Col 3:25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.*

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Vs. 23 – “*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily*” – “*Heartily*” is literally “out of soul”, similar to Ephesians 6:6, “*doing the will of God from the heart*”. It speaks of motivation from the very core of us in our work rather than only superficially. Compare Ecclesiastes 9:10, “*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*”. Our God would have us do everything we do in a devoted manner, doing all with energy thoughtfulness, and with His watching eye ever in our awareness rather than the eyes of men.

Vs. 24 – “*Of the Lord ye shall receive*” – It is the Lord’s reward that is to be our main interest over any earthly rewards. It is His pleasure that means everything to us. This awareness of Him by faith leads us to labour here for the approving smile of our God rather than seeking only the praise of men.

Vs. 25 – “*But he that doeth wrong*” – This refers to God’s fair punishments for our wilful wrong-doing, for only He is truly impartial. It will be when we

*Col 4:1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*

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stand before the Lord at “*the judgment seat of Christ*” that every believer will “*receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*” (II Cor. 5:10). And the doings of which Paul speaks, which will make such a difference in that coming day, are the day-to-day activities of our lives in the home and church and work place. This puts a sacred significance upon all that we do, all day, every day.

4:1 – “*And ye masters*” – Masters and employers are to handle those under them in a way that is fair and equitable or impartial. And this with the awareness that they too will give account for their actions to their “*Master in heaven*”.

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## **Thoughts on Spirit Filling**

We find an interesting parallel with Ephesians 5 at this point. By comparing Ephesians 5:18-6:9 with Colossians 3:16-4:1 we discover essentially the same list of commands. Now mark the commands heading these two parallel lists. In Ephesians 5:18

it is *“be filled with the Spirit”*. In the Greek behind the English this is written with an ongoing “be being filled” sort of sense, speaking of a lifestyle rather than an event. Here in Colossians 3:16 the parallel command is *“let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”*. Do you see that? This again written as an ongoing, life practice sort of command to be filling our hearts and heads to overflowing with the abundance of God’s wonderful words. This seems to suggest that a life of being filled with the Spirit is directly related to the ongoing practice of filling ourselves to abundance with God’s words and applying them with wisdom to our lives. Thus walking in the Spirit cannot be our experience without time spent in God’s Book of books, sincerely seeking God’s ways in His words. But there are many with a knowledge of the Bible who are not godly people or walking in the Spirit. For true godliness begins with new birth, finding salvation in Jesus Christ through faith in Him. We then allow Christ’s words to dwell in us richly while seeking to put what we discover into practice in our lives. As Ezra, who set his heart in a holy resolve to study, and to do, and to teach God’s word.

“Walk in wisdom  
toward them that are without,  
redeeming the time”

(Col. 4:5)

## Class 9 – Colossians 4:2-18

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*Col 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;*

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### **4:2-4** – Request for Prayer

Vs. 2 – “*Continue in prayer*” – The verb here is a strong one, expressing continual steadfastness or attention, and written as a command in an ongoing sense, something like “be giving constant attention to prayer”. The same word is used of what the disciples were doing in the upper room while awaiting the promised coming of the Spirit. They were all continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication (Acts 1:14). The same word is used of the apostles’ giving of themselves “*continually to prayer*” (Acts 6:4). It is used again in Paul’s encouragement toward “*continuing instant in prayer*” (Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18). Here is an important key to vitality and power in our personal lives and in the church. Consider that unnamed woman with the issue of blood in Mark 5 as an illustration. Though the excited crowd was pressing close around Jesus it meant little to Him, for He knew that excitement did not mean commitment. But when that woman got close and touched Him

and received the blessing of healing as a result, Jesus noticed! Though the crowd pressed in all around Him, only she is spoken of as having actually touched Him. Though great multitudes throng Jesus today, though they draw near, yet they do not touch Him in faith as this woman did. What was her secret?

- She was not satisfied with only being close to Jesus, she must touch Him.
- She would not be defeated by the resistance of the pressing crowd. It is not always easy to get to Jesus, for many things get in the way.
- She would not be put off by;
  - o The apparent busyness of Jesus.
  - o The fact that she was a woman in a society that looked down on the interaction of women with men.
  - o The fact that she was unclean, defiled by her issue of blood (Lev. 15). She was unfit to touch the hem of the Master's garment, and very likely felt quite undeserving to come to Him.
- She believed that Jesus was her only answer and could indeed help her.



She allowed none of these things to keep her from Jesus, but pressed on until she had touched Him in faith. And with that touch she was healed and blessed and changed! We do not come to Jesus with worthiness or a with plea of personal righteousness or any such merits. We come only as those who are loathsome, unclean sinners. And if we come with understanding then we come with only a confession of utter unworthiness on our lips. And yet we are blessed when we press through in earnest, believing prayer to touch Him. As Spurgeon once said, “O my hearer, when you are in prayer alone, never be satisfied with having prayed; do not give up till you have touched Christ in prayer; or, if you have not got to Him, at any rate sigh and cry until you do . . . unless you have gone right through the veil into Christ’s own arms . . . the whole has been a mere dead performance, without life or power.”

*“Watch in the same”* – Not only persevering prayer, but *alert* prayer. When you pray, be praying with focus and effort and care, ever aware of the efforts of the evil one to rob us of the power of this vital weapon. Never approaching the Lord in a listless, lazy, distracted manner. Never in a hollow, mechanical way. But awake and aware.

*“With thanksgiving”* – Not only persevering and alert

*Col 4:3 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:*

*Col 4:4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

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in prayer, but ever thankful.

Vs. 3-4 – *“Praying also for us”* – As you pray be asking God as well for the furtherance of His work through us, Paul asked. The principle applies to our prayer for others who labour in the Lord’s work.

*“That God would open unto us a door of utterance”* – Paul was asking God for opportunities for the instruction of others in the things of Christ. It is unclear whether by this door he referred to an opened prison door, releasing him to freedom of ministry in the provinces again, or just open doors of opportunity with people right where he was. It probably did not matter to Paul which. His longing was for receptive hearts and minds to the preaching of God’s words.

Vs. 4 – *“That I may make it manifest as I ought to speak”* – Paul asks for boldness to speak as and when he should. He asks for the right words in expressing the message of Jesus, fitted to each new situation. Jesus approached Nicodemus differently

*Col 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without,  
redeeming the time.*

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than He did Zachaeus or the woman at the well or the Jewish leaders. Infused with the Spirit of wisdom, He knew how to handle every soul He met in the way suited to their particular needs. We should be asking God for the same, for opportunities to speak of Jesus and to make Him known to others as we pass through life on earth, and for God's wisdom to know best how to do it.

Notice that Paul does not ask prayer for the unsaved, that they might be saved. He asks only for opportunities and abilities for he and his co-workers in approaching the unsaved.

#### **4:5-6** – Our Way with the Unsaved

Vs. 5 – “*Walk in wisdom*” – Again, we too should be looking for that way of wisdom with “*them that are without*”, speaking of the unsaved around us, those outside God's fold. Not only must we be asking God for that wisdom, but we must be searching it out as well. We must become students of evangelism, as taught in God's Book. The book of Acts is a good place to begin, for it is the record of the forward moving church of Christ employing the correct

method and message. Paul's command here is that we be eager students of the right way of dealing with the unsaved.

*“Redeeming the time”* – Making wise use of every opportunity to effectively present Jesus to a soul, turning each and every opening to the best advantage. Because time is like water flowing under a bridge. Once past there can be no recalling it. As Clark put it, “Seizing the right time, the right act, the right word for the cause of God and the good of the unbelieving”. May we miss or mess no chance to make a difference in our generation. It is all about the work of learning how best to communicate the truth. Many a man will labour at learning a language that he might more effectively communicate with those of another speech. But how many have truly laboured at learning the proper language to best communicate the most important message known to man. How much have you laboured that you might have the right answers for the one asking you a reason for the hope that is in us? How much have you sought to know how to stir up the right questions, as Jesus did with the woman at the well, and as Paul did on Mars Hill? Sometimes the opportunities just happen, and sometimes they must be stirred or generated through our own forthrightness.

*Col 4:6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

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Vs. 6 – “*Your speech*” – Still with a focus on “*them that are without*”. The wonder of God’s ministry is that when a Christian speaks the right message in the right way to his world God is somehow quite able to save and transform lives through his words.

“*Always with grace*” – At all times with a kind and gracious spirit. Compare I Peter 2:21-23; 3:8-11. Compare Joseph, who would not be bitter (Gen. 45). Compare Elisha’s response to the blinded Syrian army in II Kings 6. Rather than killing them as enemies, he fed them as guests (vs. 21-23). In so responding we more effectively “*heap coals of fire upon their head*” (Prov. 25:21-22; Rom. 12:20). “*For so it is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*” (I Pet. 2:15).

This does not mean that nothing but sweet, non-offensive words should ever come from our mouth. John the Baptist, Jesus, and Stephen were quite blunt with the rejecting Jewish leaders. Yet though forthright in our dealings, harshness and hatred must ever be avoided.

*“Seasoned with salt”* – Pleasantly seasoned with wisdom and wholesomeness, even as Paul would be *“made all things to all men”* that he *“might by all means save some”* (I Cor. 9:22).

Again, it’s about knowing *“how ye ought to answer every man”*. Knowing with God’s wisdom how to tailor our words to each individual hearer. Proverbs presents the picturesque beauty of a word fitly spoken (25:11-12). How fitly, though differently, Paul moulded his words when speaking to the philosophers of Athens or to Felix or Festus or Agrippa or to the Jews at Jerusalem or Rome. Make a study of how masterfully the argument of the book of Hebrews was put together in presenting the “better” way of Jesus to the Jew. We are called to study how to answer, as does *“the heart of the righteous”* (Prov. 15:28). We are to build our speech upon the solid structure of wisdom, and then dress it in the pleasing garment of graciousness, and then season it with good taste, that we might be capable of making the most of every opportunity of conversation with the unsaved. We must seek to do no damage to the gospel message we bring, avoiding all things inappropriate or rude or hurtful or thoughtless, and quick to apologize when such things are spoken.

*Col 4:7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you,  
who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and  
fellowservant in the Lord:  
Col 4:8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same  
purpose, that he might know your estate, and  
comfort your hearts;*

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## **4:7-18** – Greetings and Closing Words

Vs. 7 – “*Tychicus*” was apparently the one who actually penned the words of this book as Paul dictated, and then carried the epistle to Colossae. His name comes up in Ephesians 6 as well, the postscript there stating that he also served as the secretary for the writing of that book. Paul now commends Tychicus with the same titles as in Ephesians, adding here “*and fellowservant*” or slave. This was a man known and loved by his Christian brothers, faithful to the Lord in his work, and like Paul he was wholly given to the Lord, as if a slave owned by his heavenly master.

Vs. 8 – “*Whom I have sent for the same purpose*” – As Tychicus was to let the believers at Colossae know how Paul was faring in Rome, even so he was to get a more accurate feel for the state of affairs there and bring what encouragement he could to them.

Vs. 9 – “*With Onesimus*” – This is now the runaway

*Col 4:9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother,  
who is one of you. They shall make known unto you  
all things which are done here.*

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slave of Philemon, who somehow became acquainted with Paul in Rome and was saved and disciplined in Christian growth there. Onesimus now returned with Tychicus to his offended master in Colossae, for he had stolen and must put things right. And they came with a personal letter from Paul to Philemon as well, pleading for the preservation of Onesimus and offering to pay any damages incurred. The situation between the three; master, slave, and mutual friend (mediator), becomes a perfect picture of the situation between the sinner and God, who is offended by our sin, with our Saviour pleading and paying in our behalf as the mutual Friend of Father and sinner.

*“They shall make known”* – See how Paul subtly includes both Onesimus with Tychicus in this work, lifting this lowly, runaway slave to the status of a fellow messenger of the apostle, perhaps elevating his chances for a warmer reception there at Colossae. In this we see the levelling, unifying effect of the gospel, which puts master and slave on level ground as brothers.



*Col 4:10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you,  
and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching  
whom ye received commandments: if he come unto  
you, receive him;)*

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Vs. 10-11 – Aristarchus was from Thessalonica. He was among those who accompanied Paul at the end of his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey when returning to Jerusalem through Achaia and Macedonia. He stayed with Paul when he was a prisoner at Caesarea and accompanied him to Rome (Acts 27:2). In referring to him as “*my fellow prisoner*” it is uncertain whether Paul meant as a captive to Christ or as also being held as a prisoner at Rome.

Marcus or John Mark was the cousin of Barnabus. This was the man who disappointed Paul on his 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey with Barnabus. Marcus quit and went home after the missionary team left Cyprus (Acts 13:5, 13). The question of his inclusion in their 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey was the point of contention that separated Paul from Barnabus (Acts 15:36-40). But Mark continued in ministry with Barnabus, and later came to be a fellow labourer highly valued by Paul (II Tim. 4:11). Marcus is an example of a quitter who later proved himself worthy and was restored to the Lord’s work.

Vs. 11 – “*Who are of the circumcision*” – The three

*Col 4:11 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.*

*Col 4:12 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.*

*Col 4:13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.*

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just mentioned, Aristarchus, Marcus, and Jesus Justus were converted Jews, the only converts from Judaism working there with Paul at that time.

Vs. 12- 13 – Epaphras was from among them at Colossae, seemingly the one serving as their spiritual leader.

*“Always labouring fervently for you in prayers”* – The word from which we get “agonize” is behind *“labouring fervently”* here. And again, intensity in prayer is in the spotlight. The way of Epaphras in prayer was as Jacob striving or wrestling with the angel of the Lord. He was a man given always to the same for the people of the church at Colossae. And his prayer for them was a good one, asking always that those people he loved might *“stand perfect and complete in all the will of God”*. What better could we ask for anyone than that they might be standing

*Col 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.*

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resolute and pursuing hard after every detail of God's will for them, inwardly thinking and desiring things completely pleasing to Him, outwardly practicing only things completely pleasing to Him, actively shunning everything displeasing to God. Even as Paul prayed for these same believers in 1:10, "*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*", that every aspect of their lives be pleasing to God, with no dark, secret stash of shame, willing nothing but God's will.

Paul witnessed to a "*great zeal*" that was real in this man, Epaphras, not only for the believers at Colossae, but for those in the other two cities in the Lycus Valley as well. Hierapolis and Laodicea were situated on opposite sides of the river about 20 kms down the valley from Colossae. It may be that Epaphras was instrumental in establishing and developing the works in these two cities as well. Epaphras becomes an example of an utterly sold-out believer, wholly given to ministry to the Lord and to others.

Vs. 14 – By referring to Luke as "*the beloved physician*" we are given an image of one who was

loved by all, a truly caring doctor with an attractively tender disposition. Luke's two major works (Gospel and Acts) written for the help of his friend, "*most excellent Theophilus*", speak of the same loving concern, labouring for the help of others. Luke is a good example of a Christian doctor, caring and serving people both in body and soul.

Demas is only mentioned by name here, without any commendatory comment. This was the man who just a few years later deserted Paul when he was again a prisoner, leaving the Lord's work because he "*loved this present world*" (II Tim. 4:10). Perhaps Paul could see even at this point something of the leaning that would lead ultimately to that break. Demas becomes an example of a willing worker turned quitter in the end (opposite of Marcus), a man who let the love of the world get the better of him. Marcus was the man who began badly but ended well, while Demas the man who began well but ended badly. For the former there is commendation. For the latter there is none. It is never too late to turn the tide of your life's purpose to the Lord's pleasure.

Vs. 15 – We are given the impression that this church meeting at the house of Nymphas was in

*Col 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*

*Col 4:16 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.*

*Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*

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Laodicea, but that it was a different group than “*the brethren which are in Laodicea*”, since they received separate greetings. It may be that the church in each city was made up of groups meeting in more than one home around the city.

Vs. 16 – It seems there was a letter from Paul dropped off by Tychicus at Laodicea as he made his way up the valley to Colossae. Both letters were to be read in both churches. Why the letter to the Laodicean believers was lost is an unknown. Some believe this is actually the epistle known to us as the book of Ephesians, written perhaps as a circular letter to be read among several churches, beginning at Ephesus. Why the believers in Hierapolis were not included is unknown.

Vs. 17 – Archippus is also mentioned in Philemon 2 in connection with the church meeting at Philemon’s house. By the statement here he was evidently appointed to a position of ministry at

*Col 4:18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul.  
Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.*

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Colossae, perhaps as a trainee. It may be that he was appointed as pastor in the church there while Epaphras was away, thus the encouragement to give himself fully to his appointment, leaving nothing undone.

Vs. 18 – “*The salutation by the hand of me Paul*” – Here was the point where Paul himself took the pen from his secretary or amanuensis and signed off the letter, the recognized mark of authenticity (Gal. 6:11; II Thess. 3:17).

“*Remember my bonds*” – A reminder of the apostle’s suffering in behalf of both Jews and Gentiles. A reminder of his love for God and man that put him in bonds. A reminder of Paul’s enduring of the same contradictions from both Jews and Gentiles as Jesus did, being held by Gentiles, yet through the demand of the Jewish leaders. A reminder to pray for God’s will concerning him and for his release. Paul’s wish for God’s grace or favour to be with them was proven to be a genuine desire by his own sacrificial life.

May a double portion of Paul’s spirit be upon us!

