

CONCISE BIBLE NOTES

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Dr. Stanford E. Murrell

COLOSSIANS 3:2

SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE,
NOT ON THINGS ON THE EARTH.

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THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS



Colossae, Hierapolis, Laodicea
Colossians 4:13

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

Dr. H. A. Ironside

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**Doctrinal
Part I
Colossians 1:1-3:4**

COLOSSIANS 1

Divine Author:	God the Holy Spirit
Human Author:	Paul
Date of Writing:	AD 62 from a Roman prison
Carrier of the Epistle:	Tychicus
Theme:	The glories of Christ
Purpose:	To combat evil doctrines and errors
Key Passage:	Colossians 2:9-10

**Christ the Head of the Body
Colossians 1:1-29**

**Salutation and Introduction
Colossians 1:1-8**

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

1:1. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. Thirteen Epistles in the New Testament begin with the name Paul.

1:2. by the will of God. It is God the Holy Spirit who determines the gifts of spiritual ministry. No man should intrude into a holy office apart from a divine appointment (Galatians 1:1).

1:1. and Timotheus *our* brother. Paul found in Timothy a faithful friend despite the difference in their ages. Timothy was converted during Paul's ministry at Lystra and soon united with the apostle in his missionary journeys. So close was Paul to Timothy that the latter is included in the salutation.

1:1. Though the people had not seen Paul face to face (Colossians 2:1), they would listen to his wisdom for they respected his authority, as did one of the leaders of the church in Colosse, Epaphras (Colossians 1:7; Colossians 4:12-13).

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.

1:2. To the saints. In Catholic dogma, the saints are a special class of people who have been exalted above all others in the church because of a devout life or miraculous powers attributed to them. In biblical theology the saints are all those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. The word saint means “to be set apart.” Every Christian has been set apart from the world, the flesh, and the devil by faith in Christ.

1:2. grace. The word grace speaks of favor or kindness shown without regard to the worth or merit of the one who receives it. Grace is a divine attribute. *Exodus 34:6 And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.*

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|--------------------|--------------------|
| • Saving grace | Ephesians 2:8-9 |
| • Sustaining grace | 2 Corinthians 12:9 |
| • Abundant grace | 2 Corinthians 4:15 |
| • Dying grace | 2 Timothy 4:7-8 |

1:2. peace. This word denotes quietness and rest.

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|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| • There is peace with God. | Romans 5:1 | Salvation |
| • There is the peace of God | Philippians 4:7 | Sweet fellowship |
| • There is the peace from God | Romans 1:7 | Sanctification |

1:2. and faithful brethren. To be a faithful person is to be trustworthy. There are individuals who have been faithless to Christ in that they do not live out the profession of their faith. Ananias and Sapphira are two examples (Acts 5:1-11). There are individuals who bring dishonor to the name of Jesus by renouncing what they once affirmed, reflected in the lives of Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:20).

1:2. Colosse. Located in the region of Phrygia, Colosse was the home of many Jews, some of whom were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). By the grace of God, souls came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. Unfortunately, the new saints were subject to the false teachings of the Essenes and the Gnostics. If the gospel was to survive and thrive in Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea (Colossians 4:13), doctrinal errors had to be arrested.

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

1:3. We give thanks to God. Paul felt the need for intercessory prayer. Every Christian should pray for others, and especially for the lost.

Special Note.

“Jesus wept for those who perished in their sins. Paul had great grief and sorrow of heart for the Jews, though he gave them this character, *‘that they pleased not God, and were contrary to all men.’* It well becomes us, while we admire distinguishing grace to ourselves, to mourn over others: and inasmuch as secret things belong to the Lord, and we know not but some of whom we have at present but little hopes, may at last be brought to the knowledge of the Truth, we should be patient and forbearing after the pattern of our heavenly Father, and endeavor by every proper and prudent means to stir them up to repentance, remembering that they cannot be more distant from God than by nature we were once ourselves” (John Newton).

1:3. the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the divine economy there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Bible speaks of three persons in one. This is a great mystery, but one the Christian embraces and affirms by faith. To say that God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ does not diminish the Lord’s own divinity, though some would have that to be the case. The Gnostic teaching, to which the citizens of Colosse were exposed, denied the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work of redemption at Calvary. In matchless grace Christ was presented as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and as the Son of God worthy of worship. *Matthew 14:33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

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

1:4. the love...to all the saints. Such love is precious and it is priceless. It is the evidence of the nature of God being imparted to the soul. Without love for others, we cannot love God. *1 John 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

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;

1:4-5. faith...love...hope. Faith in Christ secures the salvation of the soul. Love for others is a manifestation of the love of God shed abroad in the heart. Hope looks ahead to heaven, not in an uncertain way, but with expectation and confidence.

Special Note.

“The Colossians had trusted their souls to a divine person. Sometimes people are troubled by the fear that their faith is not of the right quality or that it is of insufficient quantity to save them. But it is important to observe that it is not the character of faith or the amount of faith that saves. It is the person in whom faith rests that saves. The strongest faith in self-effort, or in the church, or in religious observances would leave the soul forever lost.

But the feeblest faith in the Christ who died and rose again, saves eternally. Some people try to make a savior of their faith, but Christ alone is the Savior, and faith but the hand that reaches out to Him” (H. A. Ironside).

“I know not why God’s wondrous grace
To me He hath made known,
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love
Redeemed me for His own.

But I know Whom I have believèd,
And am persuaded that He is able
To keep that which I’ve committed
Unto Him against that day.

I know not how this saving faith
To me He did impart,
Nor how believing in His Word
Wrought peace within my heart.

I know not how the Spirit moves,
Convincing us of sin,
Revealing Jesus through the Word,
Creating faith in Him.

I know not what of good or ill
May be reserved for me,
Of weary ways or golden days,
Before His face I see.

I know not when my Lord may come,
At night or noonday fair,
Nor if I walk the vale with Him,
Or meet Him in the air”

Daniel W. Whittle, 1883

1:5. the truth of the gospel. When fully preached the gospel reveals every facet of Christ.

- His true sinless humanity.
- His deity.
- His virgin birth.
- His vicarious (substitutionary) sacrifice.
- His glorious resurrection.
- His present role as Advocate and High Priest at God's right hand in Heaven.
- His coming again the second time to reign in power and righteousness when all His redeemed will be associated with Him.

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:

1:6. Which is come unto you. The grace of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ comes to a soul. The natural man does not search out salvation until the Spirit comes to him. “An uneducated old man said, ‘I did my part and God did His: I did the sinning and God did the saving. I took to running away from Him as fast as my sins could carry me and He took after me until He run me down!’” (H. A. Ironside).

1:6. all the world. The sense of Paul’s thought here is that the testimony of the church at Colosse was well known throughout the Christian community. Every Christian has a reputation, be it good or bad.

1:6. bringeth forth fruit. The root of righteousness will produce the fruit of the same. *Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

1:6. and knew the grace of God in truth. It is possible to know the grace of God theoretically. It is possible to learn about the grace of God doctrinally in a religious class. But to know the grace of God in truth, so that it transforms the life, that is what salvation is all about.

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

1:7. Epaphras (charming) was a fellow servant with the apostle Paul and a faithful minister of Christ. He ministered to the Colossian citizens. When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, Epaphras visited with him and gave a favorable account of the church at Colossae. Remaining with Paul in Rome, Epaphras became in spirit a “fellow prisoner” (Philemon 23).

Characteristics of a Faithful Minister

- A faithful minister will protect the sheep from doctrinal error. Epaphras had to combat in Colosse several false doctrines being advocated, such as asceticism, Judaism, and Gnosticism.
- A faithful minister will preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).
- A faithful minister will suffer personal hardship for the sake of the gospel (2 Timothy 2:3-4).
- A faithful minister will live a holy life as an example of the believers (1 Timothy 4:12).
- A faithful minister will invest his life in the lives of others (John 15:13).

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

1:8. love in the Spirit. It is possible to have a natural, brotherly love for others. It is possible to experience erotic love. But to love in the Spirit is to display a divine affection for others. The characteristics of “love in the Spirit” are set forth in 1 Corinthians 13.

Prayer and Thanksgiving
Colossians 1:9-14

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;

1:9. pray for you.

Paul's Prayer Petitions

- Paul prays for spiritual growth in grace for the Christians in Colosse.
- Paul prays for their enlightenment in divine things.
- Paul prays for their understanding of the purpose of God.
- Paul prays for the evidence of spiritual power in their lives.

1:9. the knowledge of His will. The will of God in some matters has been revealed.

Doctrine of the Will of God

1. Being in the right geographical location is according to the will of God. *Romans 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*
2. It is the will of God that the Holy Spirit prays for the believer according to His will. *Romans 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*
3. It is the will of God that believers not be conformed to this world. *Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
5. It was the will of God that the church of Corinth be generous with their persons and possessions. *2 Corinthians 8:5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.*
6. It was the will of God that Christ die for others. *Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:*
7. It is the will of God that every believer be sanctified. *1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*
8. It is the will of God that thanksgiving be made for everything. *1 Thessalonians 5:18 In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

9. It is the will of God that some Christians suffer. *1 Peter 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. 1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

1:9. wisdom and spiritual understanding. There is human wisdom, there is satanic wisdom, there is worldly wisdom, and there is divine wisdom. Divine wisdom is the ability to use knowledge correctly. Such wisdom is imparted by the Holy Spirit, for He alone gives true understanding. “The mind of God as revealed in His Word can be comprehended when there is subjection of heart to the divine Teacher, and when there is that self-judgment and self-distrust which leads one to walk softly before God—not in self-will or egotism, but in humility and lowly dependence on the One who inspired the Holy Scriptures, which alone can make the simple wise” (H. A. Ironside).

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;

1:10. That ye might walk worthy.

A Walk that is Worthy

- A walk that is worthy of the Lord is a walk that is pleasing to Him.
- A walk that is worthy of the Lord is a walk that is fruitful in every good work.
- A walk that is worthy of the Lord is a walk that increases in the knowledge of God.
- A walk that is worthy of the Lord is a walk that finds strength in God’s glorious power.
- A walk that is worthy of the Lord is a walk characterized by patience, longsuffering and joy.

1 John 1:7

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,
we have fellowship one with another,
and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son
cleanseth us from all sin.”

1:10. pleasing. Greek, *areskeia* (ar-es’-ki-ah). The word is not found in any other passage in the New Testament, but it was used in literature to mean “a preference of the will of others before our own.” The idea here is that the Christian must delight in the will of God, not to gain His favor, but to give joy to His heart. Herein is happiness. True happiness in life is found only in doing the will of God.

“O the peace my Savior gives,
Peace I never knew before!
And my way has brighter grown
Since I learned to trust Him more.”

F. A. Blackmer

1:10. being fruitful. The believer who delights in doing the will of God, the believer who longs to please the Lord, will be fruitful in all that he does no matter how it might seem to others. One day a woman anointed Jesus in love. Others protested but the Lord had this to say. *Matthew 26:13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*

1:10. increasing in the knowledge of God. We know God as we walk with Him; we walk with Him as we obey His Word.

“We know Him as we could not know
Through Heaven's golden years;
We there shall see His glorious face,
On earth we see His tears.

The touch that heals the broken heart
Is never felt above;
His angels know His blessedness,
His way-worn saints His love.”

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

1:11. according to his glorious power. The Christian's life is a supernatural life as God supplies strength and power for the journey in grace. The gifts of God are given to the people of God so that the end result is patience, longsuffering (uncomplaining endurance), and joy. The natural inclination of the heart is to shrink and tremble at pain and suffering. But God's glorious power can enable the soul to embrace what the Father has decreed shall come to pass.

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

1:12. meet. fit. The Father has properly suited the believer to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints.

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

1:13. the kingdom of his dear Son. “This kingdom is the present sphere where Christ's authority is acknowledged, the kingdom that we see and enter by new birth, the kingdom that consists not of "meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17) (H. A. Ironside).

Characteristics of the Kingdom of God's Dear Son

- The authority of Christ is acknowledged in this kingdom (1 Corinthians 1:2).
- The kingdom is entered by the new birth based on gospel repentance. (Matthew 4:17).
- The kingdom does not consist of "meat and drink" but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

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

1:12-14.

Five Non-forfeitable Blessings of God

- The inheritance of the saints.
- Deliverance from the power of darkness.
- Translation into the kingdom of His dear Son.
- Redemption through the blood of Christ.
- The forgiveness of sins.

Special Note.

Let the Church rejoice in the non-forfeitable blessings of God. Let the lips of the saints collectively praise God and say by faith, "We thank Thee heavenly Father, that Thou hast forgiven all our sins and washed every stain in the blood of the Lamb. Thou hast brought us into Thy kingdom, given us Thy Holy Spirit, and saved us for eternity." Faith says amen to what God has declared in His Word to be true (H. A. Ironside). Better yet, let the Christian make a personal application and say, "I thank Thee heavenly Father, that Thou hast forgiven all *my* sins and washed *my* every stain in the blood of the Lamb. Thou hast brought *me* into Thy kingdom, given *me* Thy Holy Spirit, and saved *me* for eternity." There are great and precious promises that are ours in Christ. *2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

1:14. we have redemption. Salvation is a present possession. We have redemption.

1:14. through his blood. It is not by good works that men have redemption, but through the precious blood of Christ which was shed at Calvary.

1:14. the forgiveness of sin. This forgiveness of sin includes every sin, past, present, and future. The doctrine of the eternal security of the believer is rooted in this truth, we have redemption, and, we have the forgiveness of sins.

"For salvation full and free,
Purchased once on Calvary,
Christ alone shall be my plea—
Jesus! Jesus only.

Jesus only, let me see,
 Jesus only, none save He,
 Then my song shall ever be—
 Jesus! Jesus only!

He my Guide from day to day,
 As I journey on life's way;
 Close beside Him let me stay—
 Jesus! Jesus only.

May my model ever be
 Christ the Lord, and none save He,
 That the world may see in me
 Jesus! Jesus only.

He shall reign from shore to shore,
 His the glory evermore—
 Heav'n and earth shall bow before
 Jesus! Jesus only."

Oswald J. Smith

The Person and Power of Christ

A Christian Creedal Hymn Christ is Lord of the Original Creation

Twofold Headship Colossians 1:15-19

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

1:15. the image. the portrait. Two ideas were associated with this word. The first was representation derived from an original pattern. The second was manifestation. Jesus of Nazareth is a representation and manifestation of the Unseen God. He is the image of the invisible God. He is the Great and Final Theophany.

When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father and it would be enough (John 14:8), Jesus said unto him, "*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*" (John 14: 9).

When the Pharisees asked Jesus, "Where is thy Father?" Jesus answered, "*Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also*" (John 8:19).

Jesus is indeed the perfect manifestation and likeness of God.

1:15. Who is. Paul uses the present tense. Jesus is and always shall be the manifestation of God. The cults, liberal theologians, and modern skeptics are wrong to deny the deity of Christ.

1:15. the firstborn of every creature. the firstborn over all the creation. These words are not meant to teach that Christ is part of creation or a created being for three reasons.

First, such a thought is inconsistent with the context which states that Christ existed before all things and created all things. Jesus is the Creator. In the early church, in the controversy between Arius, who denied that Christ is eternal, and Athanasius, who affirmed the divinity of Christ, Arius drew attention to this word, "firstborn." Athanasius drew attention to verse 16 where Paul says, "*by Him were all things created.*" Athanasius asked, "How can Christ be the creator of all things if He is a part of the creation itself?" The point is well taken.

Second, to think that Christ is part of the creation is inconsistent with the whole teaching of the New Testament. *John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.*

Third, if Christ were a created being, then He could not be our Savior. Only God saves sinners. Even the Pharisees knew this when they rhetorically asked, "*Who can forgive sins but God only?*" (Mark 2:7). The salvation of every sinner is a testimony to the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:15. firstborn. Greek, protokos. The word Paul uses has two connotations based on the fact that the first part of the word *protos* can mean first in order, or first in rank. The two connotations are priority and sovereignty. Paul is saying that Jesus Christ has the preeminence, the priority, the sovereignty over all things (v. 18). Christ is the Head of all that has been created, He is the Head of all that He has created (v. 16).

The usage of the word in the Old Testament confirms this understanding. The Messiah is in view. *Psalms 89:27 Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.* The idea of sovereignty is set forth.

In Jeremiah 31:9, God calls Ephraim, the son of Joseph, His "firstborn". Since Ephraim was Joseph's second son born after Manasseh, it is evident how the Scriptures use this concept. As in Colossians 1:15, the meaning is "preeminence" and does not refer to a literal firstborn son.

Special Note.

Five times in the New Testament Christ is called the "only begotten" (John 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 3:18; 1 John 4:9). This term of endearment speaks of uniqueness. A parallel is found in Hebrews 11:17 where Isaac is called Abraham's "only begotten son", though Ishmael was also his son. "And so as the "only begotten," our Lord is the unique Son. He has been that eternally, for if He were not the eternal Son, God would not be the eternal Father" (H. A. Ironside).

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:

1:16. For by him. Greek, For in him. Christ “is the place where the eternal things have their abode” (J. B. Lightfoot). Christ is not only the Builder of the universe, He is the Architect as well. Moreover, “*in Him we live and move and have our being*” (Acts 17:28) which means the Lord inhabits that which He has designed and brought into existence. The heart of the Christian can only break forth in song at such a wonderful understanding of Christ.

“O Lord my God,
When I in awesome wonder
Consider all
The world Thy Hand hath made,

I see the stars,
I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow'r throughout
The universe displayed;

Then sings my soul,
My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art!
How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul,
My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art!
How great Thou art!

When through the woods
And forest glades I wander
I hear the birds
Sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down
From lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook
And feel the gentle breeze;

And when I think,
That God, His Son not sparing;
Sent Him to die,
I scarce can take it in;

That on the Cross,
My burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died
To take away my sin.

When Christ shall come,
With shouts of acclamation,
And take me home,
What joy shall fill my heart!

Then I shall bow
In humble adoration
And there proclaim,
"My God, how great Thou art!"

1:16. The foundation for the Lordship of Christ is made manifest in the fact that He is the Creator of the universe. The Lordship of Christ is also established in that verses 16-17 teach that Christ created all things by Himself, for Himself, and in Himself.

What Christ has Created

- All things that are in heaven
- All things that are in earth
- All things visible
- All things invisible
- Thrones
- Dominions
- Principalities
- Powers

Special Note.

The authority and sovereignty of Christ was revealed to the Twelve in Matthew 8:23-27. *“And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. 24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. 25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. 26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. 27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”*

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

1:17. And he is before all things. Speaking to the Jews, Jesus said, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad”* (John 8:56).

1:17. by him all things consist. by him all things hold together. Christ is the sustainer of the universe. Jesus is “the principle of cohesion in the universe” (Bishop Lightfoot). “It is Christ who sustains the universe. His hand holds the stars in their courses, directs the planets in their orbits, and controls the laws of the universe” (H. A. Ironside). The practical application of this truth is that, if believed, peace can come to the troubled heart. Jesus is in control. He is in control of the next breathe that is taken and the next day that is lived.

“Day by day, and with each passing moment,
Strength I find, to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father’s wise bestowment,
I’ve no cause for worry or for fear.

He Whose heart is kind beyond all measure
Gives unto each day what He deems best—
Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure,
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

Every day, the Lord Himself is near me
With a special mercy for each hour;
All my cares He fain would bear, and cheer me,
He Whose Name is Counselor and Power;

The protection of His child and treasure
Is a charge that on Himself He laid;
‘As thy days, thy strength shall be in measure,’
This the pledge to me He made.

Help me then in every tribulation
So to trust Thy promises, O Lord,
That I lose not faith’s sweet consolation
Offered me within Thy holy Word.

Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting,
Ever to take, as from a father’s hand,
One by one, the days, the moments fleeting,
Till I reach the promised land.”

Karolina W. Sandell-Berg, 1865

Christ is Lord of the New Creation: The Church

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.

1:18. And he is the head of the body. Being the head of the church, Paul presents Christ as being identified with His people, but also distinct and separate from the church. Christ is the Leader of His people as He plans for them, guides and directs them. As the Head, the church is to listen to Christ, and be submissive to Him just as a good wife is submissive to her husband. The Head of the church is not in Rome, or in any other locale where denominational headquarters are established.

1:18. who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead. Christ is the founder of a new humanity, the church. Christ has the pre-eminence because He is the first to break the hold of death in a permanent, bodily resurrection. In His resurrection is the guarantee of all that believe in Him.

1:18. that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. Here is a revelation of the divine purpose. Peter learned of the pre-eminence of Christ by the Transfiguration on the Mount (Matthew 17:1-8). Not even Moses or Elijah could overshadow His glory. Joshua learned of the pre-eminence of Christ when he met the Captain of the Host of the Leader of Israel (Joshua 5:13-15).

Christ Is

• Christ is the Son of God	Acts 9:20
• Christ is Lord of all	Acts 10:36
• Christ is our peace	Ephesians 2:14
• Christ is the savior of the body	Ephesians 5:23
• Christ is able to subdue all things unto Himself	Philippians 3:21
• Christ is before all things	Colossians 1:17
• Christ is the head of the body	Colossians 1:18
• Christ is able to keep that with which He is entrusted	2 Timothy 1:12
• Christ is not ashamed to call the saints brethren	Hebrews 2:11
• Christ is able to succor those who are tempted	Hebrews 2:18
• Christ is able to save to the uttermost	Hebrews 7:25
• Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant	Hebrews 8:6
• Christ is faithful	Hebrews 10:23
• Christ is a rewarder of those that seek Him	Hebrews 11:6
• Christ is faithful and just to forgive sins confessed	1 John 1:9
• Christ is the propitiation for our sins	1 John 2:2
• Christ is righteous	1 John 2:29
• Christ is Lord of lords, and King of kings	Revelation 17:14

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

1:19. *the Father*. These words are supplied by the translators, but rightly so. The meaning of this verse, along with Colossians 2:9, is that, “In Him all the fullness of the godhead was pleased to dwell.” In Christ, deity is fully revealed. This is the “mystery of godliness” (1 Timothy 3:16).

Special Note.

In the Authorized Version (KJV) of the Bible, words which are italicized are not there for emphasis. Rather, the translators are indicating they have supplied the words in order to smooth out the reading or make the text comprehensible.

1:19. in him should all fullness dwell. The fullness of which Paul writes is the fullness of Christ as Mediator, the only Mediator, between God and men. The dogma which exalts Mary to be a co-Redemptrix diminishes the pre-eminence of Christ and so is a false teaching. Only in Christ does the fullness of God reside.

The Astonishing Claims of Christ

- Jesus claimed a heavenly origin. *John 8:23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.*
- Jesus claimed a unique relationship to God. *John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

Special Note.

The holiness of Jesus is the holiness of God.

The wrath of Jesus is the wrath of God.

The love and compassion of Jesus is the love and compassion of God.

The cross of Jesus is both the revelation and the justice of God.

- Jesus claimed many divine prerogatives such as the ability to forgive sins. *Luke 5:20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.*
- Jesus claimed a special knowledge of God. *John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. Matthew 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*
- Jesus claimed supreme authority. *Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*
- Jesus claimed power to quicken the dead. *John 11:11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*
- Jesus claimed absoluteness with the Father. *John 10:30 I and my Father are one.*

- Jesus claimed to have a life so valuable it would give as a ransom for many. *Isaiah 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*

The Theme of the Gospel of Reconciliation

Twofold Reconciliation Colossians 1:20-22

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.

1:20. through the blood of his cross. “How the redemption is procured: *it is through his blood* (v. 14); he has *made peace through the blood of his cross* (v. 20), and it is in *the body of his flesh through death*, v. 22. It was the *blood which made an atonement, for the blood is the life; and without the shedding of blood there is no remission*, Hebrews 9:22. There was such a value in the blood of Christ that, on account of Christ's shedding it, God was willing to deal with men upon new terms to bring them under a covenant of grace, and *for his sake*, and in consideration of his death upon the cross, to pardon and accept to favor all who comply with them” (Matthew Henry).

1:20. to reconcile all things unto himself. Reconciliation is a finished work of God by which He brings men, and creation, from the position of enmity to Him, to an attitude and status of amity, or friendship, to Himself by the cross of Christ. In this passage Paul is not teaching Universalism which contends that everyone shall be saved. While that is a grand concept, the Bible is clear that some men like Judas, go to their own place (Acts 1:25).

1:20. all things. What God will reconcile to Himself are those things in earth, and those things which are in heaven which have been affected by the Fall. *Job 25:5 Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight.*

Sin has affected all of creation which is said to groan. *Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

The angels also have been affected, for the church is told that one day we shall judge the angels. *1 Corinthians 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?*

Paul explains what God will reconcile to Himself in Romans 8:18-23. “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

23 *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”.*

“Depth of mercy! Can there be
mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God his wrath forbear,
me, the chief of sinners, spare?

I have long withstood his grace,
long provoked him to his face,
would not hearken to his calls,
grieved him by a thousand falls.

I my Master have denied,
I afresh have crucified,
oft profaned his hallowed name,
put him to an open shame.

There for me the Savior stands,
shows his wounds and spreads his hands.
God is love! I know, I feel;
Jesus weeps and loves me still.

Now incline me to repent,
let me now my sins lament,
now my foul revolt deplore,
weep, believe, and sin no more.”

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

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

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:

How Christ wants to Present the Believer

- Holy
- Unblameable
- Unreprouable.

Twofold Ministry Colossians 1:23-29

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;

1:23. If ye continue. The conditional word “if” is used in order to test the reality of a person’s profession of faith (1 Corinthians 15:1-2; Hebrews 3:6). Endurance is the proof of a real conversion experience, for some will make a shipwreck of their faith (1 Timothy 1:19). The good news is that those who are truly saved will “hold fast...unto the end” (Hebrews 10:38-39) because “*he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 1:6). The eternal security of the believer is assured. Nevertheless, human responsibility demands a faith which is grounded and settled in the hope of the gospel.

1:23. preached to every creature. There is not one gospel for America and another gospel for those in Russia, China, India, or Israel. There is but one gospel that must be proclaimed, without distinction, to every creature which is under heaven. When Jesus is proclaimed as the Saviour of the world, souls will respond to His invitation, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28).

The Ministry of Paul

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:

1:24. rejoice. Paul does not say that he enjoyed the sufferings he endured, but he was able to rejoice in them, so great was his love for Christ and for the church. His joy arose from seeing the fruit that sprang from his sufferings. In this matter, Paul was like the Lord. *Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

1:24. in my sufferings for you. The sufferings of Paul were significant. “*Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches*” (2 Corinthians 11:24).

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;

1:25. dispensation. The Greek word that is translated "dispensation" here can also be rendered "stewardship." God made Paul a steward of "the mystery" mentioned in verse 26.

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

1:26. the mystery. God has some secrets that He alone knows. *Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.* God has some secrets He reveals to special individuals. *Psalms 25:14 The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant. Proverbs 3:32 His secret is with the righteous.* God has some secrets which He has hid from people in the past but revealed to the saints in the New Testament such as the revelation of Christ incarnate, and the gathering of Jews and Gentiles into one body.

1:26. the mystery. The mysteries of the New Testament are not truths that are mysterious or abstruse. Rather, a mystery was a sacred secret made known to the initiated. The secrets of God could not have been discerned by human reason apart from a special revelation.

1:26. which hath been hid. In a general sense the mystery of Gentiles being included in the body of Christ was not fully known, but in a special sense it had been anticipated. What had not been anticipated is the mystery that Paul points out in v. 27, "Christ in you."

1:26. from ages and from generations. Ages means "times" and generations' means "people".

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:

1:27. the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. The Jews understood how the Messiah related to Israel, but they never comprehended the relationship of an indwelling Messiah to the Gentiles. If anything, the Old Testament Scriptures clearly predicted the calling of the Gentiles, but always with the thought that they would be in subjection to Israel. The idea of Gentile equality with Israel was a mystery. Herein is the richness of the church, consisting of Jew and Gentile: "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*"

The Riches of the Glory of God

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| • The gift of eternal life | John 10:28 |
| • God's goodness | Romans 2:4 |
| • God's forbearance | Romans 2:4 |
| • God's long-suffering | Romans 2:4 |
| • The gift of repentance | Romans 2:4 |
| • Being a vessel of mercy | Romans 9:23 |
| • The wisdom of God | Romans 11:33 |
| • The knowledge of God | Romans 11:33 |
| • The grace of God | Romans 5:15 |

• The gift of the grace of God	Romans 5:15
• Grace giving	2 Corinthians 8:2
• Redemption through Christ's blood	Ephesians 1:7
• The forgiveness of sin	Ephesians 1:7
• A divine inheritance	Ephesians 1:8
• Divine kindness through Christ Jesus	Ephesians 2:7
• The ministry of the Holy Spirit	Ephesians 3:16
• The meeting of the saint's needs	Philippians 4:19
• The mystery of Christ in the believer	Colossians 1:27
• Assurance of spiritual understanding	Colossians 2:2

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

1:28. warning every man. admonishing every man.

The Command to Admonish One Another

- Romans 15:14
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12
- 2 Thessalonians 3:14,15
- Colossians 3:16

1:28. perfect in Christ Jesus. "Listen, let the Spirit do His work and He'll make you perfect" (John MacArthur).

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

1:24-29.

Eight General Features of an Authentic Spirit Filled Ministry

Dr. John MacArthur

- The source of the ministry is outside of man. God must authorize the ministry (v. 25).
- The spirit of the ministry is joy (v. 24). The root cause of joy is humility. When a person realizes they deserve nothing and God gives them a ministry, there is joy.
- The suffering of the ministry is self-sacrifice (v. 24). Self-sacrifice brings beauty to the ministry and distinguishes it from the commonplace.
- The scope of the ministry is to fulfill the Word of God (v. 25).

- The subject of the ministry is the mystery of the gospel or the fullness of New Testament revelation (v. 26). Specifically, let the church tell individuals that God wants to dwell in you.
- The style of ministry is to proclaim the gospel and to warn every man and teach every man in all wisdom (v. 28).
- The sum of the ministry is to present every man perfect or mature in Christ (v. 28).
- The strength of the ministry is to engage in hard labor (v. 29).

COLOSSIANS 2

Christ the True Wisdom Colossians 2:1-23

The Mystery of God Colossians 2:1-7

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;

2:1. great conflict. The apostle Paul was a man of deep emotion. The ungodly zeal he once had against the church has been transformed by grace into a profound love for the church. Paul was concerned that people in Colossae and Laodicea were in danger of being corrupted by false doctrine and turned aside from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. With heartfelt agony, Paul was compelled to speak through Epaphras to the Colossians even though they had never seen him face to face. "Paul was not one who could play fast and loose with revealed truth. His very soul was tortured when Christ was dishonored by those who professed His name. He was not a self-complacent liberal theologian, carelessly tolerant of any teaching, no matter how pernicious, as long as it did not disrupt outward unity" (H. A. Ironside).

2:1. Laodicea. Unfortunately, the false teachers, the Gnostics and the Judaizers, did have some success in spiritually hurting the church of Laodicea. The resurrected Lord charged the Laodiceans with being "neither cold nor hot" (Revelation 3:15).

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;

2:2. knit together in love. It has been foolishly said that "doctrine divides", with the implication being that men should not discuss Bible doctrine. Paul teaches that truth unites hearts when there is an understanding of the mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ. It is error that divides.

2:2. full assurance.

Three Assurances

- Full assurance of understanding. *Colossians 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;*
- Full assurance of hope. *Hebrews 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:*

- Full assurance of faith. *Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

2:2. the mystery of God. Paul was referring to the divine mystery of individuals being born again and made new in Christ Jesus.

- *1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is [the]Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

2:3. wisdom and knowledge. “It is not necessary to go elsewhere—that is, to investigate human systems and philosophies—to find an explanation of the mystery of the universe and the relationship of the Creator to His creatures. As we learn to know Christ better and understand the truth concerning Him, every question is answered, every perplexity made clear, and every doubt dissolved. Why turn aside to idle speculations, no matter how pretentious, when God has spoken in His Son and given His holy Word to lead us by the Spirit into all truth?” (H. A. Ironside).
Colossians 2:1-3

“The treasures of wisdom are hidden not from us, but for us, in Christ. Those who would be wise and knowing must make application to Christ. We must spend from the stock which is laid up for us in him, and draw from the treasures which are hidden in him. He is the wisdom of God, and is of God made unto us wisdom” (Matthew Henry's Commentary).

2:3. wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom refers to the right application of Bible doctrine to a given situation based on understanding. Knowledge refers to a theoretical and intellectual comprehension of truth which results in “the full assurance of understanding.” Jesus spoke with authority and confidence because He embodies all wisdom and knowledge.

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

2:4. enticing words. Christians have always been subject to “enticing words.” There are many religious teachings, and many speculative philosophies that are attractive to the mind and to the flesh. Eve was the first human to succumb to the “enticing words” of the Devil, but she was not the last. The Colossians, having been nurtured through the ministry of Epaphras (charming), were in danger of succumbing to enticing words and turning away from the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. In particular the church faced a threat from Gnostic-Judaism, which was characterized by a religious exclusionism.

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

Walk in the Sphere of Saving Faith

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

2:6. As. This word may refer to the believer's entrance into the Christian life. The Christian's life is entered by faith. Therefore, Paul is saying to the church, "As ye have therefore by faith received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* by faith walk ye in him." But the apostle may have something else in mind. He may be referring to the truths they embraced when they entered into spiritual life. What truths did the Colossians receive? They received and believed that Jesus was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. They believed that He had been born of a virgin and had lived a holy life without sin. They believed Christ died a substitutionary death at Calvary. They believed that the sins of the ungodly are imputed to Him and the righteousness of Christ is imparted to the sinner. These are the truths the Colossians "have been taught" (v. 7). Christ is the architect of the universe. He is the creator. He is the sustainer. He is the one to whom all power has been given.

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

2:7. Rooted and built up in him. Ministers and religious leaders are often guilty of spiritual child abuse. They do not teach the Word of God, they do not proclaim the doctrines of grace, they do not give their people the "meat" of the gospel. Because people are not rooted in the faith, they do not know what the Bible says about abortion, homosexuality, work, welfare, equal rights, feminism, segregation, and many other contemporary topics. Because of ignorance of God's Word and ways, women are ordained to the ministry as pastors, practicing homosexuals are allowed to attend services, and the Lord's Supper is served without any words of exhortation or self-examination.

2:7. with thanksgiving. There are two basic ways to give thanks. One way is emotional, and the other is rational thanksgiving. Emotional thanksgiving emphasizes the gift that is received, while rational thanksgiving emphasizes the giver. Behind every gift is a giver.

Now specifically, the believer is to be thankful for the root of righteousness which is Christ. The believer is to be thankful for being allowed to be established in the sphere of saving faith. The believer is to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior giving thanks to be able to do so. Multitudes are born in violent societies, godless societies, heathen societies. Blessed is the person born into the nation whose God is the LORD (Psalm 33:12).

2:7. established in the faith. There is only one way to be established in the faith and that is to know Christ. Therefore, answer this question: "What think ye of Christ?"

"What think ye of Christ?" is the test,
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him:

As Jesus appears in your view
 As He is beloved or not,
 So God is disposed to you,
 And mercy or wrath is your lot.

Some take Him a creature to be
 A man, or an angel at most;
 But they have not feelings like me,
 Nor know themselves wretched and lost.

So guilty, so helpless am I,
 I durst not confide in His blood,
 Nor on His protection rely,
 Unless I were sure He is God.

Some call Him a Saviour, in word,
 But mix their own works with His plan;
 And hope He His help will afford,
 When they have done all that they can:

If doings prove rather too light
 (A little they own they may fail),
 They purpose to make up full weight,
 By casting His name in the scale.

Some style Him "the Pearl of great price,"
 And say, He's the fountain of joys;
 Yet feed upon folly and vice,
 And cleave to the world and its toys.

Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
 And while they salute Him, betray:
 Oh! What will profession like this
 Avail in His terrible day?

If asked what of Jesus I think,
 Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
 I say,

He's my meat and my drink,
 My life, and my strength, and my store;
 My Shepherd, my trust, and my Friend,
 My Saviour from sin and from thrall;
 My Hope from beginning to end,
 My Portion, my Lord and my All."

John Newton

**Christ is the Anti-dote to Heresy
The Antidote for Agnostic Philosophy
Colossians 2:8-10**

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.

2:8. Beware lest any man spoil you. Philosophy, such as that of the Gnostic heretics, is contrary to faith. Faith and dependence go together, while human philosophy and rationalism go together. Paul is not opposed to logical discourse. He is opposed to systems that have no place for Christ, no place for human sin, no place for divine revelation, and no place for a Saviour. "Christ is the antidote for human philosophy, Jewish legality, oriental mysticism, and carnal asceticism. These have no place in Christianity. Christ supersedes them all" (H. A. Ironside).

2:8. through philosophy (lit. love of wisdom) and vain deceit. Cicero said, "There is nothing so absurd but some philosopher has said it."

2:8. through philosophy. The philosophy of the heretics such as the Gnostics, the philosophy of the agnostic, and the philosophy of the atheist is contrary to faith.

2:8. after the tradition of men. Philosophy has its origin in human truths, not divine revelation.

2:8. after the rudiments of the world. The Greek word translated rudiments is "stoicheion" (stoy-khi'-on) and refers to something orderly in arrangement, i.e., a proposition. Paul says that the philosophy of the world is inferior to that of Christ.

**Five Pillars of the Worldly Philosophy of
Secular Humanism**

- Scientific Naturalism (which is a clever cloak for atheism). It is argued that the universe is self-existing, and not created. It is believed that effects can be achieved without causes, and that design emerges without a Designer.
- Evolution. The Secular Humanist wants people to believe man evolved from a lower species to what he is now. But that would require a miracle. It would require several miracles. "The miracles required to make evolution feasible are far greater in number and far harder to believe than the miracle of creation" (Dr. Richard Bliss, Professor of Biology).
- Amoral. The Secular Humanist demands there are no moral judgments made, and then the Secular Humanist will make moral judgments. The amoral person denies a Bible-based morality and is completely without a conscience awareness of God. Because the conscience is seared, it is easy to be inhuman to others. Euthanasia and genocide is acceptable behavior, and so are abortions, sexual immorality, and homosexuality. What does it matter that the hallmarks of amorality is disease, discouragement, and death?

- Autonomous man. Man longs to be independent of God in order to govern himself. Men think of themselves as god-like with unlimited goodness and potential. In reality, man is a depraved creature, selfish and cruel and in desperate need of regeneration. If man is really good, then it ought to be reflected in daily life. But pick up a newspaper in any country in the world and see if the goodness of man is on display, or his total depravity.
- Global socialism. Since the Tower of Babel, man has been trying to unite in rebellion against God. Secular Humanist love big government which they call world government. Little do they realize they are merely pawns in the grip of their father the devil, who is in revolt against God and wants to be like Him. The assumption is that government is good, and the more there is of government, the better everyone will be. History shows us that excessive government destroys the individuals initiative and God given right to pursue life, liberty, and personal happiness. Freedom has always been enjoyed in reverse proportion to the size and scope of government dominating the individual's life. When there is less government, there are more personal freedoms. The failures of global socialism are documented in the evil empires of Russia, China, and in the failed nations in Eastern Europe, Africa, Cuba, and the Welfare State in America.

How to Spoil Christians

- A Christian can be spoiled through worldly philosophy.
- A Christian can be spoiled through vain deceit.
- A Christian can be spoiled through the traditions of men.
- A Christian can be spoiled through the rudiments (principles) of the world.
- A Christian can be spoiled through rebellion against the known will of Christ.

The Basis for Belief in Christ and a Walk of Faith The Fullness of Christ

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

2:9. For. Paul explains why the Christian should not be spoiled by worldly philosophies, but walk in faith.

2:9. in him. Christ is set in contrast to the philosophy of the world, vain deceit, the traditions of men, and the rudiments of the world. He is infinitely superior.

2:9. dwelleth. This refers to a permanent dwelling, a fixed abode.

2:9. all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Residing in Christ are all the attributes of God the Father. Consider a few illustrations.

The Essence of God

• Omnipotent	Father	Mark 14:36	Son	Hebrews 1:3
• Omnipresence	Father	2 Chronicles 2:6	Son	Matthew 28:20
• Omniscience	Father	Psalms 138	Son	Hebrews 13:5
• Immutability	Father	Hebrews 6:17	Son	Hebrews 13:8
• Veracity	Father	Titus 1:2	Son	1 John 5:6
• Sovereignty	Father	Isaiah 46:10	Son	Matthew 28:18
• Righteousness	Father	Romans 1:17	Son	1 Corinthians 1:30
• Love	Father	John 3:16	Son	John 15:13
• Eternal	Father	Deuteronomy 33:27	Son	John 8:56
• Holiness	Father	Psalms 22:3	Son	Luke 1:36; Mark 1:23

“Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.
 Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.
 Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,
 And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.”

Matthew Bridges, 1852

The Fullness of Christians

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

2:10. And ye are complete in him. And ye are filled full in him. We are filled full out of His fullness. *John 1:16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.* The believer does not need a co-Redemptrix in Mary. The Christian does not need special saints to pray for them. In Christ the believer is complete.

“Thou, O Christ, art all I want; more than all in thee I find;
 Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, Heal the sick, and lead the blind
 Just and holy is Thy name; I am all unrighteousness,
 False and full of sin I am; Thou art full of truth and grace.”

Charles Wesley

- The believer has a complete salvation.
- The believer has a complete sanctification.
- The believer has a complete glorification.
- The believer has a complete hope of resurrection.

“I hear the Savior say,
 ‘Thy strength indeed is small;
 Child of weakness, watch and pray,
 Find in Me thine all in all.

Jesus paid it all,

All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

For nothing good have I
Whereby Thy grace to claim,
I'll wash my garments white
In the blood of Calv'ry's Lamb.

And now complete in Him
My robe His righteousness,
Close sheltered 'neath His side,
I am divinely blest.

Lord, now indeed I find
Thy power and Thine alone,
Can change the leper's spots
And melt the heart of stone.

When from my dying bed
My ransomed soul shall rise,
"Jesus died my soul to save,"
Shall rend the vaulted skies.

And when before the throne
I stand in Him complete,
I'll lay my trophies down
All down at Jesus' feet.'

Elvina M. Hall, 1865

2:10. which is the head of all principality and power.

Practical Application

- The believer has the power of Christ to keep and protect him.
- The believer has the presence of Christ for fellowship.
- The believer has the promised assurance of being complete in Christ so he can live on the Fountain of Majesty while enjoying the streams of mercy.

Christ our Representative
The Antidote for Jewish Legalism
Colossians 2:11-17

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:

2:11. ye are circumcised. Speaking to the church comprised of both Jew and Gentile, Paul states there is a circumcision, not of the flesh, but of the spirit, a circumcision made without hands. This spiritual circumcision consists in the cutting away, or the putting away, the body of the sins of the flesh. The sins of the flesh are listed in Scripture. *Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* These sins of the flesh are put off by the circumcision of [undergone by] Christ.

The meaning here is that spiritual circumcision is realized in union with Christ, whose “circumcision” or “death” speaks of His having undertaken for us to keep the whole law. The believer who is identified with Christ, in all of His obedience finds in Christ the source of justification and sanctification.

Special Note.

Originally, circumcision of the flesh represented identification with the covenant of Abraham. On the eighth day after birth, the male child was circumcised and became a covenant member of the nation of Israel. Circumcision of the flesh also signified separation and consecration to God. In the New Testament spiritual circumcision signified the righteousness of faith. It is faith that is paramount. Prior to circumcision of the flesh, which the Jews and Gnostics gloried in, there was to be faith and therefore a spiritual circumcision. Because of faith, Abraham accepted a physical circumcision. *Romans 4:9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*

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.

2:12. Buried with him in baptism. The time and place of a person’s spiritual circumcision is at baptism, which speaks of burial and resurrection. The larger teaching here is that every believer is identified with Christ in His death (“circumcision”), burial, and resurrection.

2:12. in baptism. It is not water baptism that Paul has in view here, for he speaks of the circumcision made without hands (v. 11). The baptism before us is also a baptism made without hands. It is a baptism being accomplished by God the Holy Spirit's identification of believer's with Christ in His redemptive work. This baptism is the operation of God.

2:12. through the faith of the operation of God. There is no magic in the act of water baptism, but there is a great mystery of grace when God regenerates the soul. Faith is the means of appropriating all of the benefits of Christ's saving work.

Union with Christ in His Resurrection

- Life with forgiveness of sins Colossians 2:12-13
- Life in freedom from the Law Colossians 2:14
- Life in victory over the Satanic host Colossians 2:15

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;

2:13. And you, being dead. The death of which Paul speaks is not physical death, but spiritual death. It is separation from God. The Colossians, once dead in sins, have been quickened, or made alive, by God.

2:13. having forgiven. See Luke 7:42-43. *“And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.”*

“Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
 grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
 Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
 there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Grace, grace, God's grace,
 grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
 grace, grace, God's grace,
 grace that is greater than all our sin!

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
 threaten the soul with infinite loss;
 grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
 points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide.
 What can avail to wash it away?
 Look! There is flowing a crimson tide,
 brighter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
 freely bestowed on all who believe!
 You that are longing to see his face,
 will you this moment his grace receive?"

Julia H. Johnston

What God Has Done for the Believer

- God has quickened us
- God has forgiven all sins
- God has blotted out the handwriting of ordinance that was against us
- God has nailed it to the cross
- God has spoiled principalities and powers (Satanic host)
- God has made a show of them openly
- God has triumphed over them

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;

2:14. Blotting out the handwriting of ordinance that was against us. The condemnation of the Law has been removed by Christ. *Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* God has not only erased the condemnation that has been incurred by failure to keep the Law (Exodus 19:8), He has nailed it to the Cross so that the believer is identified with the saving work of Christ at Calvary (Luke 23:38). Here is the image of cancelation.

'Tis the grandest theme through the ages rung;
 'Tis the grandest theme for a mortal tongue;
 'Tis the grandest theme that the world e'er sung,
 "Our God is able to deliver thee."

He is able to deliver thee,
 He is able to deliver thee;
 Though by sin oppressed, go to Him for rest;
 "Our God is able to deliver thee."

'Tis the grandest theme in the earth or main;
 'Tis the grandest theme for a mortal strain;
 'Tis the grandest theme, tell the world again,
 "Our God is able to deliver thee."

'Tis the grandest theme, let the tidings roll,
 To the guilty heart, to the sinful soul;
 Look to God in faith, He will make thee whole,
 "Our God is able to deliver thee."

William A. Ogden

The Triumph of Christ Over the Forces of Darkness

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

2:15. triumphing. The word here means to make an acclamatory procession, i.e. (figuratively) to conquer or (by Hebraism) to give victory. Certain conditions had to be met before a Roman general could have such a display. First, He must have been the actual commander on the field of battle. Second, the campaign must have been completely and successfully concluded. Third, a large number of the enemy must have fallen in battle. Fourth, there must have been a positive extension of territory gained. This figure is applicable in the triumph of Christ over the powers of evil.

"Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior,
 Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose,
 With a mighty triumph o'er His foes,
 He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
 And He lives forever, with His saints to reign.
 He arose! He arose!
 Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Savior;
 Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!
 Death cannot keep its Prey, Jesus my Savior;
 He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!"

Robert Lowry, 1874

This word is used again by Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:14. "*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*"

2:15. triumphing over them. The force of this declaration was not lost on the Colossians or the Gnostic teachers among them. Paul presents Christ, not as a demi-urge, but a Conquering Hero. Christ did not divorce Himself from humanity, but embraced it to redeem His creation.

The Christian theories of the atonement, and the message they convey, is superior to the heretical teaching of the Gnostics.

Three Major Theories of the Atonement

- **Cosmocentric.** The Ransom View of the Atonement was first suggested by Ignatius (98 - 117) who saw the atonement as a conflict between God and man with man in the middle. Though Adam sold man into the slavery of sin, Christ defeated Satan on the Cross by dying for man's sin, thus freeing man from Satan's bondage. Jesus' death was offered as payment for the captives, an offer Satan accepted ensuring justice was done. The resurrection occurred because death could not hold a sinless person, and having given up his "rights" over sinners, Satan was left empty-handed.
- **Christocentric.** The Satisfaction Theory of the Atonement was advanced by Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-21 April 1109). The idea is that Christ made a sacrifice of himself to satisfy the honor of God. Anselm rightly argued against the Ransom View, and pointed out that Satan was an outlaw and could never have a just claim on sinners, and that Satan's subjugation of us was illegal, therefore God was under no obligation to pay a ransom.
- **Androcentric.** Peter Abelard (1079 – 1142), a medieval French scholastic philosopher and theologian, presented the Moral Influence theory of the Atonement. The Cross reveals the love of God that produces faith and love in believers, which is the basis for the forgiveness of sin. This is largely the view of liberal contemporary theologians who teach Universalism. Universalism is a view which cannot be supported by Scripture.

Special Note.

The Biblical view of the atonement is primarily one of substitution. Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3). It is true Christ did pay a ransom for many to be testified in due time (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:6). It is also true that Christ propitiated, or satisfied the wrath of God (Romans 3:24-25; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10). Moreover, the death of Christ does serve as a moral influence for others to follow, as the Christian takes up his cross to follow Christ (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 1 Peter 2:21). The conclusion is that each theory of the atonement has a valid perspective.

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*:

2:16. Let no man therefore judge you. Legalism has no place in the Christian's life, though holy standards are important to maintain. Simply defined, "legalism is the result of the attempt to use a divinely given code (to which precepts of men may have been added) as a means of salvation or as a means of growth in grace" (H. A. Ironside).

Three Non-judgmental Areas

- A holyday.
- The new moon.
- The Sabbath.

Special Note.

Legalism is not Scriptural. Legal works will never procure salvation.

- *Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*
- *Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*
- *1 Corinthians 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*

The Person and Work of God the Holy Spirit

The Law is not the strength of holiness or the basis of power for righteousness. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the true source of spirituality for the Christian.

- The sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. *Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*
- It is the Spirit of our God who washes the believers, sanctifies them, and justifies them in the name of the Lord Jesus. *1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*
- Jesus is called Lord, by the Holy Spirit. *1 Corinthians 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*
- It is the Holy Spirit who sovereignly bestows a believer's spiritual gift. *1 Corinthians 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;*
- The Holy Spirit changes the believer's image from glory to glory. *2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

- The Holy Spirit reveals spiritual truths. *Ephesians 3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*
- A soul is made alive by the Holy Spirit. *1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*
- The Holy Spirit is the believer's assurance of the abiding presence of Christ. *1 John 3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

“No one needs to fear that the result of being in subjection to Christ rather than being under the law as a rule of life will be a lower standard of piety. Christ's standard is far higher. The person whose one thought and desire is to display the risen life of Christ in all his ways will lead a holier life than he who is seeking to subject the flesh to rules and regulations—even though the rules were given from Heaven in a past dispensation” (H. A. Ironside).

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

2:17. Which are a shadow of things to come. Legalism, mysticism, and every other cult and ism are only a poor imitation of true Christian doctrine. Following the death of the apostle John, Justin Martyr wrote, "Many spirits are abroad in the world and the credentials they display are splendid gifts of mind, eloquence and logic. Christian, look carefully, and ask for the print of the nails."

The Antidote for Gnostic Mysticism Colossians 2:18-19

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,

2:18. voluntary humility. It may sound humble to say, "I am not worthy to go to God directly. I will ask Mary or a saint to pray for me." The Bible says there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

2:18. worshipping of angels. The whole Mormon cult is built upon honoring the angel Moroni who allegedly visited Joseph Smith, Jr. on several occasions, beginning on September 21, 1823. But what saith the Scripture? *Galatians 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

2:18. intruding into those things which he hath not seen. "Ordinances, philosophy, traditions of men, intruding into mysterious things, and angel worship cannot add anything to the believer's knowledge or perfection" (Harry Ironside).

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.

2:19. And not holding the Head. The dogma of the Catholic Church leads souls from Christ into false humility and the worship of Mary, the saints, and angels. While appearing to be humble, false dogma is really pride, the product of a puffed up mind that believes personal insight into a spiritual matter is superior to divine revelation. There is another sin and that is a failure to honor the true Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. “The exalted One at God's right hand is the source of blessing for all His people on earth. Just as the holy oil poured on Aaron's head went down to the skirts of his garment (Psalm 133:2), so now from the Head in Heaven blessing comes down in the Spirit's power to every member of His body on earth” (H. A. Ironside).

2:19. the Head. The church is not merely a society or an organization. It is a living organism, a spiritual body with purpose, definition, and meaning. When a person is out of touch with the Head, or places someone or something between self and the Savior, they are not “holding the Head.”

2:19. bands. ligaments. David said, “*I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well*” (Psalm 139:14). Because of the Head, because of Christ, every part of His body is nourished, united, and able to increase, or grow stronger, in spiritual matters (study 1 Corinthians 6:15; Romans 12:5).

The Antidote for Carnal Asceticism Colossians 2:20-23

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,

2:20. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ. The idea of a spiritual death for the believer is a large theme in the New Testament. Consider the teaching of Romans 6:4-8. “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.*” There is a sense in which every Christian has died with Christ. Therefore,

- the believer is dead to sin. *Romans 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*
- the believer is dead to the law. *Galatians 2:19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*

- the believer should be dead to illegitimate ordinances, commandments, and doctrines of men. *Romans 6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

22 Which all are to perish with the using ;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

2:20-22. why, as though living in the world. There are many profound questions asked in Scripture, of which this is one. "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... which all are to perish with the using ;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?" Why would a Christian want to be associated with something which God has judged, condemned, and abolished? Specifically, God has judged and condemned the Law. He has judged and condemned legalism. God has judged and condemned stoicism and Epicureanism. God has judged and condemned every false doctrine of men. "Why, Christian, do you submit to the ordinances, the teachings of men?"

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.

2:23. a shew of wisdom. Spirituality, holiness of life, moral reformation, will never be found in acts of asceticism, despite the constant attempts of man. The good life can only be wrought by faith in Christ, and the power of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit guiding the heart not to yield to sinful impulses. *1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

A story is told of a man who was anxious to make himself fit to enter the presence of God. Awakened to a sense of the emptiness of a life of worldly pleasure, he fled from the city to the desert and made his home in a cave in the rocks. There he practiced the greatest austerities and hoped through prayer and penance to reach the place where he would be acceptable to God.

Hearing of another hermit who was reputed to be very holy and devout, the man took his staff and made a long, wearisome journey across the desert in order to interview him and learn from him how to find peace with God. In answer to the man's agonized questions the aged hermit said,

"Take that staff, that dry rod which is in your hand, and plant it in the desert soil. Water it daily, offering fervent prayers as you do so, and when it bursts into leaf and bloom, you will know that you have made your peace with God."

Rejoicing that at last he had what seemed like authoritative instruction in regard to this greatest of all ventures, the man hastened back to his cave and planted his rod as he had been told to do. For long weary days, weeks, and months, he faithfully watered the dry stick and prayed for the hour when the token of his acceptance would be given.

He continued this routine until at last one day in utter despair and brokenness of spirit, weakened by fasting and sick with longing for the apparently unattainable, he exclaimed bitterly, "It is all no use; I am no better today than I was when I first came to the desert. The fact is, I am just like this dry stick myself. It needs life before there can be leaves and fruit; and I need life, for I am dead in my sins and cannot produce fruit for God."

And then it seemed as though a voice within said, "At last you have learned the lesson that the old hermit meant to teach you. It is because you are dead and have no strength or power in yourself that you must turn to Christ alone and find life and peace in Him."

And leaving his desert cave, the man went back to the city to find the Word of God and in its sacred pages learn the way of peace.

"Let us remember that it is as impossible to obtain holiness by ascetic practices as it is to buy salvation by physical suffering. We are saved in the first place, not through anything we undergo, but through that which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ underwent for us on Calvary's cross. He who died for our justification now lives for us at God's right hand, and He is the power that produces holiness in us. By the Holy Spirit He dwells within us and as we yield ourselves to God, He is enabled to live out His wondrous life in us.

"Does your heart sometimes cry:
Tell me what to do to be pure
In the sight of the all-seeing eyes;
Tell me, is there no thorough cure,
No escape from the sin I despise?"

Will my Saviour only pass by,
Only show me how faulty I've been?
Will he not attend to my cry?
Can I not at this moment be clean?"

Samuel Horatio Hodges

Oh, believe me, dear anxious, seeking Christian, you will find holiness in the same Christ in whom you found salvation. As you cease from introspection and look up in faith to Him, you will be transformed into His own glorious image; you will become like Him as you gaze on His wonderful face. There is no other way by which the flesh can be subdued and your life can become one of triumph over the power of sin. Asceticism is but a vain will-o'-the-wisp that, while it promises you victory, will plunge you into the morass of disappointment and defeat. But preoccupation with the risen Christ is the sure way to overcome the lusts of the flesh and to become like Him who said, "*For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth*" (John 17:19) (H. A. Ironside).

Special Note.

The struggle is constant between the Old Sin Nature that dwells in man and the New Nature wrought by faith in Jesus Christ. Someone has illustrated the dilemma this way. "It seems to me as though two dogs are fighting within me. One is a black dog and he is very savage and very bad. The other is a white dog and he is very gentle and very good, but the black dog fights with him all the time." "And which dog wins?" someone else asked. "Whichever one I say '*sic him*' to" (Source Unknown).

COLOSSIANS 3

Christ the Believer's Life Colossians 3:1-4

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

3:1. If ye then be risen with Christ. The force of Paul's thought is that "*since ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.*" It is because the believer has shared in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ he can turn his thoughts from time to eternity and from the temporal to the eternal. By faith the believer has laid his hand upon Christ as surely as the Old Testament saints laid their hand on a sin offering and received forgiveness of sin (Leviticus 3:2-13).

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly trust in Jesus' Name."

Edward Mote, 1834

3:1. seek. As individuals are to seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), so they are to go on seeking *those things which are above*. This is to be the constant attitude of the Christian.

3:1. seek those things which are above. Christ is above, the angels are above, God is above, and heaven is above. If the Colossians would seek those things they would avoid the legalism which the Gnostic Judaizers were placing on people (Colossians 2:16-23). The Colossians would also avoid the earthly lusts which are harmful to the soul. Fleshly humanistic and materialistic passions can divert the heart from loving God (Colossians 3:5-17). Paul wanted the Colossians to pursue the important things, the paramount things of life and say with the Psalmist, "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God*" (Psalm 42:1).

3:1. where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. The Christian faith teaches there is a Man in the heavens, Jesus Christ the Lord.

Jesus Christ and the Right Hand of God

- John Mark records that Jesus was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).
- Peter preached on the day of Pentecost that Christ was exalted to sit on the right hand of God (Acts 2:33).
- Stephen said he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56).

- Paul asserted that Christ is risen and is even at the right hand of God (Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1).
- The author of Hebrews speaks of Christ as High Priest, who, after offering one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down on the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:12).
- Peter declares that Christ has gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God (1 Peter 3:22).

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3:2. set your affection. Augustine said, *“The soul is not where it lives but where it loves.”* The act of love is a conscious decision of the will. The renewed will, the redeemed will of a Christian can comply with this biblical mandate. The heart can be directed to love what God loves.

Loving what God Loves

- God loves the world. John 3:16
- God loves the Son. John 15:9
- God loves sinners. Luke 15:21-24

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

3:3. For ye are dead. Here is the foundation for Paul’s exhortation. The death of the believer is past by virtue of a relationship with Christ. With Christ, we have died (Colossians 2:20). A Christian could have on his tombstone the following words.

“Born twice,
Died once.”

In contrast the unbeliever could have inscribed on a tombstone the following.

“Born once,
Died twice.”

The death of a Christian can become marvelous as he anticipate the means by which he shall pass into the presence of Christ.

“O death, where is thy sting?
O grave, where is thy victory?”

1 Corinthians 15:55

3:3. your life is hid. The hidden life speaks of secrecy, for the secret springs of our life are hidden in God from whom come all of our aspirations, our hopes, our enabling. The clause also suggests identity for our ultimate relationship to God is known only by God, being hidden even from the view of the saints themselves. But preeminently the clause suggests safety. If our life is hid in Christ by God, how safe we are (S. Lewis Johnson).

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

3:4. When Christ, *who is our life*. The position of the believer in Christ is set forth as being alive. Buried with him in the likeness of His death, the believer is raised in the likeness of His resurrection. Because Christ lives, the believer can say, "He is my life."

Three Facets of Life

- Physical life. The physical, mental, and spiritual experiences that constitute existence.
- Eternal life. This is the gift of God as a result of faith in Jesus Christ.
- Absolute life. God in Christ, as self-existent or absolute life, is the source of all life.

3:4. When Christ. The word "when" does not fix a time for the second coming of Christ, but reaffirms that Christ shall one day appear according to promise.

- *Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*
- *Hebrews 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

"Some glorious morning sorrow will cease,
Some glorious morning all will be peace;
Heartaches all ended, schooldays all done,
Heaven will open Jesus will come.

Some golden daybreak, Jesus will come;
Some golden daybreak, battles all won,
He'll shout the vict'ry, break through the blue,
Some golden daybreak, for me, for you.

Sad hearts will gladden, all shall be bright,
Goodbye forever to earth's dark night;
Changed in a moment, like Him to be,
Oh, glorious daybreak, Jesus I'll see.

Some golden daybreak, Jesus will come;
 Some golden daybreak, battles all won,
 He'll shout the vict'ry, break through the blue,
 Some golden daybreak, for me, for you.

Oh, what a meeting, there in the skies,
 No tears nor crying shall dim our eyes;
 Loved ones united eternally,
 Oh, what a daybreak, that morn will be.

Some golden daybreak, Jesus will come;
 Some golden daybreak, battles all won,
 He'll shout the vict'ry, break through the blue,
 Some golden daybreak, for me, for you.”

Carla Blackmore, 1934

3:4. then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Because of the believer's position in Christ, the future is assured.

“For God has fixed the happy day,
 When the last tear shall dim our eyes,
 When He will wipe these tears away,
 And fill our hearts with glad surprise.
 To hear His voice, and see His face,
 And know the fullness of His grace.”

3:4. with him in glory. Here is a glimpse of heaven for here is the promise of seeing Christ. The believer is “*with Him, in glory.*”

**Practical
Part II
Colossians 3:5-4:18**

**Holiness by Conformity to Christ
Colossians 3:5-17**

**Putting off the Old
Colossians 3:5-11**

Mortification of Sin

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

3:5. Mortify. Put to death. The believer is to deal unsparingly with sin, remembering “the body is...for the Lord; and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13).

How to Mortify the Flesh

- Accept fully one’s personal responsibility that mortification of the flesh be done.
- Remember the believer’s position in Christ and the power of His resurrection. *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*
- Rely upon the indwelling Holy Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body. *Romans 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*
- Make no excuse for sin as Adam did. *Genesis 3:12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*
- Make no provision for the flesh. *Romans 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.*
- Fear God and believe in the severity of judgment upon sin. *Colossians 3:6 For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:* “As we read this verse we remember that God destroyed the antediluvian world because of corruption and violence, and rained fire from heaven on the cities of the plain because of unbridled lust and passion” (H. A. Ironside).
- Appropriate the grace provision of God’s forgiveness when there is failure. *1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

- Become accountable to someone. *Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

3:5. therefore. There is a well-known cliché that says, “Whenever you see the word, ‘therefore’, in Scripture, the reader should pause and consider what it is there for.” In context, Paul has been speaking of being in Christ and all the glory that means. Based on the believer’s life in Christ every Christian should seek to mortify or “put to death” every impulse and practice which is contrary to the known will of God. *Proverbs 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

6 For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

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

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

3:9. the old man. This is a reference to what a person is in Adam by nature. The Old Man stands in contrast to the New Man who is made after the image of Christ (v. 10).

Eleven Sins of the Saints to be Mortified Colossians 3:5-9

- Fornication (porneia, harlotry [including adultery and incest]).
- Uncleaness (akatharsia, impurity [the quality], physically or morally).
- Inordinate affection (pathos, suffering, i.e. [subjectively], a passion [especially concupiscence]).
- Evil concupiscence (epithumia, a longing [especially for what is forbidden; unlawful lusts]).
- Covetousness, which is Idolatry (pleonexia, avarice, i.e. [by implication] fraudulency, extortion).
- Anger (orge, violent passion). James 1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God
- Wrath (thumos, passion [as if breathing hard]; a settled mindset of ill-feeling).

- Malice (*kakia*, badness, i.e. depravity, or malignity, or trouble; a desire for revenge and a willingness to seek to harm the object of one's wrath).
- Blasphemy (*blasphemia*, vilification [especially against God]; this sin is committed by imputing evil to God, or by misrepresenting Him, or by perverting the truth).
- Filthy communication (*aischrologia*, vile conversation; speaking injuriously of one another, reviling those in authority). "Once I heard someone begin a story with the remark, 'As there are no ladies here, I want to tell you something I heard the other day.' Another gentleman in the group checked him with a wise answer: 'Brother, though there are no ladies present, the Holy Ghost is here. Is your story fit for Him?' The first man blushed in confusion and accepted the rebuke. We did not hear the story" (H. A. Ironside).
- Lying (*pseduomia*, to utter an untruth or attempt to deceive by falsehood; circulating an evil report or something that is untruthful). *Psalms 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*

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

3:10. which is renewed in knowledge. "The new man is said to be renewed in knowledge, because an ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. Without knowledge the heart cannot be good, *Proverbs 19:2 Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.* The grace of God works upon the will and affections by renewing the understanding. Light is the first thing in the new creation, as it was in the first: after the image of him who created him. It was the honour of man in innocence that he was made after the image of God; but that image was defaced and lost by sin, and is renewed by sanctifying grace: so that a renewed soul is something like what Adam was in the day he was created" (Matthew Henry).

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

3:11.

Surprising Individuals Who Are In Christ

- Cultured Greeks
- Religious Jews
- Vulgar barbarians outside of the Greco-Roman world
- Notoriously cruel Scythians (a tribe of nomadic raiders)

3:11. but Christ is all.

"Joyful now the new creation
Rests in undisturbed repose;
Blest in Jesus' full salvation
Sorrow now nor thralldom knows."

*thralldom. bondage, slavery.

**Putting on the New
Colossians 3:12-17**

Garments of Christian Glory

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

3:12. Put on. Spiritually, the Christian can wear garments of glory.

The Garments of Scripture

- Garments of white are garments which speak of a Christian's habits being pure and righteous. *Ecclesiastes 9:8 Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.*
- Filthy garments characterize the defiled. *Zechariah 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.*
- Filthy rags are the covering of the self-righteous. *Isaiah 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*
- The robe of righteousness is the garment of salvation. *Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*
- Garments of beauty and glory characterize those who have "put on" the New Man.

3:12. Put on therefore. As a logical thinker, the apostle develops one thought from another. Because of Christ, believers are to mortify sin (v. 4-5). Having put on the New Man, the believer is to put on Christian virtues (v. 11-12). Paul lists fourteen characteristics of the New Man (v. 12-17).

3:12. the elect of God. While men may hate the doctrine of divine election, while many religious people rail against the concept of an elect people, the Word of God is plain and simple. "The elect of God are those whom He has foreknown from all eternity and who are shown in time to be believers in His Son" (H. A. Ironside). John Calvin notes, "We cannot by our own faculties examine the secrets of God, but we are admitted into a certain and clear knowledge of them by the grace of the Holy Spirit." By the grace of God the church has been taught that there is an elect people who have been chosen to be the heirs of salvation.

Special Note.

You can test yourself to see if you are numbered among the elect of God. The test is found in Acts 16:31. *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Have you called upon the name of the Lord? *Romans 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* If you have never called upon the name of the Lord and asked Him to be your Savior, will you do that right now? D. L. Moody noted, “The elect are the whosoever wills, the non-elect are the whosoever won'ts.”

3:12. bowels. Greek, *splagchnon* (*splangkh'-non*); probably strengthened from *splen* (the "spleen"); an intestine (plural); figuratively, pity or sympathy. Figuratively, in the modern world the seat of emotion and affection is the heart. In the ancient world the seat of affection was the spleen translated “bowels.” In context, the apostle exhorts believers to have “bowels of mercies” or deep seated, and authentic, pity for others. *Jude 22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:*

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

3:12-17.

Fourteen Characteristics of the New Man

- Merciful. As Christ was merciful to the Samaritan woman, let every Christian show infinite mercy to others. *Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*
- Kind. Despite denying the Lord three times, Christ showed kindness to Peter and restored him to fellowship. *Mark 16:7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*
- Humble. Coming from the glories of heaven, Christ humbled Himself and became obedient, even to the death of the Cross. *Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

- Meek. It was said of the Messiah that He was meek and lowly. *Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* Moses was said to be a meek man. *Numbers 12:3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)*
 - Longsuffering. As God suffers long with sinners, so the believer must suffer long with those who oppose them. *Psalms 86:15 But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.*
 - Having forbearance (anechomai, to hold oneself up against, i.e. (figuratively) put up with.
 - Forgiving. The importance of forgiving others is emphasized by the Lord when He taught the disciples to pray. *Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors....15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Remembering how much self has been forgiven will help the heart forgive others. *Isaiah 38:17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*
 - Loving (which is the bond of perfectness). “Here we have the belt that holds all our new garments in place. The verse might be rendered, ‘Over all these things put on love, which is the girdle of perfection.’ Just as the oriental binds his flowing robes about him with a sash, so the new man binds his new habits with the controlling power of love. Whatever is contrary to love is contrary to Christ. No amount of sophistry can make something pleasing to God if it is opposed to the divine love that He Himself sheds abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us (Romans 5:5, H.A. Ironside).
 - Peaceful. The life of a Christian should be ruled by the peace of God which dwells in the heart. Personal peace will be enhanced by being occupied with the person of Christ on a daily basis through prayer, meditation, and the study of His Word.
 - Thankful. Christians are called upon to give thanks in every situation. *Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*
 - Knowledgeable of God’s Word. This will happen when the believer gives himself to a study of Holy Scriptures and remembers the words of Jesus. *2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*
 - Able to teach and admonish others. The Christian will be able to bless and help others when the Word of God dwells richly in the soul.
-
- A singer of songs. When a Christian is in fellowship with the Lord and has put on the New Man, life will be lyrical and the heart will be filled with melody. Jesus was a singer of songs, and so must His disciple be. *Revelation 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art*

worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

- A willingness to do all things as unto the Lord. *Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

Earthly Relationships Sanctified Colossians 3:18-4:1

The Word of the Lord to Wives

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

3:18. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands. While it is true that, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28), it is also true that there is a divinely given order pertaining to the respective of men and women in the plan of God. God has ordained that man should lead and women should follow. The political correctness and the feminization of men in America is a direct assault on the plan of God.

Special Note.

“1 Corinthians 7:11 implies that there may be circumstances in which no self-respecting woman could continue to live in her husband's home—if he is inflicting unspeakable cruelty, for example, or if there are abominable conditions that would be ruinous to soul and body alike—but if she departs, she is to remain unmarried, and if conditions change, she may be reconciled to her husband. As long as the woman remains with her husband, however, she is responsible to recognize his headship, for he is the one appointed by God to provide for the family. Even though conditions may sometimes be very distressing, she is to seek to win her wayward spouse by showing him the grace of Christ” (H. A. Ironside).

The Word of the Lord to Husbands

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

3:19. Husbands, love *your* wives. Men need to be taught to love their wives. They must be commanded to love them lest the heart turn bitter against them for petty and irritating ways. “The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved” (Matthew Henry). The man who tenderly loves his wife will remove the woman's natural fear of being dominated. Love will make it easier for a woman to willingly submit to godly leadership.

The Word of the Lord to Children

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

3:19. Children, obey your parents in all things. Children who do not learn to obey their parents, both mom and dad, will not obey God in the years to come. Because the heart is naturally rebellious against authority, it is imperative that the will of a child be subdued and trained to obey in all things at an early age. The divine incentive for young people to obey their parents in all things is provided: “for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”

Christian parents should teach young people the wisdom of Thomas a Kempis who wrote, “Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience. Whoever strives to withdraw from obedience, withdraws from Grace.” Christian young person, do not withdraw from grace. Obey your parents “in all things for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”

The Word of the Lord to Fathers

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

3:21. Fathers, provoke not your children. It is so easy for a father to be demanding and controlling. It is also wrong. Young people have a sense of right and wrong and they become angry at injustice. Fathers are specifically commanded not to provoke children to anger lest the child be disheartened, spiritless. Individuals are motivated by the will to succeed. If this will is destroyed, life is taken out of a person.

The Word of the Lord to Servants

22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

3:22. Servants. When Paul wrote this epistle, servants were slaves. While slavery is a terrible institution, the principles provided for them are applicable for those who have the privilege of selling their services or terminating their employment at will.

- First Principle. Obey those who are in authority.
- Second Principle. Do not perform your job only when someone is looking. There is no place in the life of a Christian for dishonest labor.
- Third Principle. Labor because God is feared.
- Fourth Principle. Whatever is done, do it as unto the Lord and not as unto men.

23 And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

“When I was a boy, I felt it was both a duty and a privilege to help my widowed mother make ends meet by finding employment in vacation time, on Saturdays and other times when I did not have to be in school. For quite a while I worked for a Scottish shoemaker, or "cobbler," as he preferred to be called, an Orkney man, named Dan Mackay. He was a forthright Christian and his little shop was a real testimony for Christ in the neighborhood. The walls were literally covered with Bible texts and pictures, generally taken from old-fashioned Scripture Sheet Almanacs, so that look where one would, he found the Word of God staring him in the face. There was John 3:16 and John 5:24, Romans 10:9, and many more.

On the little counter in front of the bench on which the owner of the shop sat, was a Bible, generally open, and a pile of gospel tracts. No package went out of that shop without a printed message wrapped inside. And whenever opportunity offered, the customers were spoken to kindly and tactfully about the importance of being born again and the blessedness of knowing that the soul is saved through faith in Christ. Many came back to ask for more literature or to inquire more particularly as to how they might find peace with God, with the blessed results that men and women were saved, frequently right in the shoe shop.

It was my chief responsibility to pound leather for shoe soles. A piece of cowhide would be cut to suite, then soaked in water. I had a flat piece of iron over my knees and, with a flat-headed hammer, I pounded these soles until they were hard and dry. It seemed an endless operation to me, and I wearied of it many times.

What made my task worse was the fact that, a block away, there was another shop that I passed going and coming to or from my home, and in it sat a jolly, godless cobbler who gathered the boys of the neighborhood about him and regaled them with lewd tales that made him dreaded by respectable parents as a menace to the community. Yet, somehow, he seemed to thrive and that perhaps to a greater extent than my employer, Mackay. As I looked in his window, I often noticed that he never pounded the soles at all, but took them from the water, nailed them on, damp as they were, and with the water splashing from them as he drove each nail in.

One day I ventured inside, something I had been warned never to do. Timidly, I said, "I notice you put the soles on while still wet. Are they just as good as if they were pounded?" He gave me a wicked leer as he answered, "They come back all the quicker this way, my boy!"

Feeling I had learned something, I related the instance to my boss and suggested that I was perhaps wasting time in drying out the leather so carefully. Mr. Mackay stopped his work and opened his Bible to the passage that reads, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of god."

"Harry," he said, "I do not cobble shoes just for the four bits and six bits (50c or 75c) that I get from my customers. I am doing this for the glory of God. I expect to see every shoe I have ever repaired in a big pile at the judgment seat of Christ, and I do not want the Lord to say to me in that day, 'Dan, this was a poor job. You did not do your best here.' I want Him to be able to say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"

Then he went on to explain that just as some men are called to preach, so he was called to fix shoes, and that only as he did this well would his testimony count for God. It was a lesson I have never been able to forget. Often when I have been tempted to carelessness, and to slipshod effort, I have thought of dear, devoted Dan Mackay, and it has stirred me up to seek to do all as for Him who died to redeem me” (H. A. Ironside).

Three Divine Motives for Christian Living

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

3:24. Knowing that. Three divine motives are given to encourage the slave, or modern day laborer in their sphere of labor. The first motive is that every Christian shall receive “the reward of the inheritance” which is eternal life through Jesus. Whatever efforts are demanded in life from a “master”, they are nothing compared to the reward of the inheritance the Christian has in Christ. The second motive for faithful service is that every Christian can remember they are really serving the Lord Christ. Finally, there is the assurance that God will one day judge every heart. Those that do evil without repenting shall receive a just compensation (v. 25).

Special Note.

During his second inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln alluded to the principle of a just compensation when he spoke of the Conflict between the States. “It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. ‘Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!’ If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope – fervently do we pray – that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said ‘the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether’” (Saturday, March 4, 1865).

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

COLOSSIANS 4

Exhortations and Salutations

Colossians 4:2-18

The Word of the Lord to Masters

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

4:1. Masters, give unto *your* servants. This whole verse is more suitable to end chapter three so that chapter four would begin in verse 2. It must be remembered that the chapter divisions and verses were not part of the inspired revelation. "The numerical division of the Old and New Testament is ascribed to a number of individuals. Some scholars believe that the chapter divisions should be attributed to the students of Cardinal Hugo of Saint Cher in 1240 AD. Cardinal Hugo was organizing a concordance of the Bible and utilized the help of his eager students to reference the verses in the Bible in a way to locate individual words quickly. Others believe that Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury (1228 AD) is responsible for the chapter divisions" (Mike Scott).

4:1. Masters, give unto *your* servants. Paul was speaking to those in authority who were Christians. They were to give to those who worked for them that which is just and equal and for a specific reason. "Knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." Every person has a "master" be it the world, the flesh, the devil, or Christ. One day, the Master will have everyone give an account for the things done in their body, whether it be good or evil (2 Corinthians 5:10). Given the condition of people in slavery in the Roman Empire, Paul's admonition was revolutionary.

Special Note.

"A story is told about one of the dauphins of France who had an English tutor. This teacher found his royal pupil very difficult to handle. Proud, haughty, and impatient with restraint, the young man submitted unwillingly to schoolroom restrictions, and his foreign instructor was often at his wits' end about how to deal with him. One morning the tutor placed a purple rosette on the lapel of his pupil's jacket and said to him, "This is the royal color. As you wear it I want you to remember that you are the crown prince of France and that it is always incumbent on you to behave in a princely way. If you are willful or disobedient I will of course not attempt to punish you, as that is not in my province. I will simply point to the purple and you will understand what I mean: that I do not feel your behavior is worthy of a princely lad." The appeal to the purple!" (H. A. Ironside).

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

4:2. Continue in prayer. One area of the Christian life that is often neglected is the prayer life. Prayer is neglected, in part, because individuals forget its power. But here is spiritual truth. "...Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons -- but they are helpless against our prayers" (J. Sidlow Baxter). Therefore, continue in prayer.

“Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
 That calls me from a world of care,
 And bids me at my Father's throne
 Make all my wants and wishes known.

In seasons of distress and grief,
 My soul has often found relief,
 And oft escaped the tempter's snare
 By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
 The joys I feel, the bliss I share
 Of those whose anxious spirits burn
 With strong desires for thy return!

With such I hasten to the place
 Where God my Savior shows his face,
 And gladly take my station there,
 And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
 Thy wings shall my petition bear
 To him whose truth and faithfulness
 Engage the waiting soul to bless.
 And since he bids me seek his face,

Believe his word, and trust his grace,
 I'll cast on him my every care,
 And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
 May I thy consolation share,
 Till from Mount Pisgah's lofty height
 I view my home and take my flight.

This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise
 To seize the everlasting prize,
 And shout, while passing thru the air,
 "Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer!"

William W. Walford, 1772-1850

*Mt. Pisgah was part of the mountain range of Abarim, of which the highest summit is Nebo, where Moses took his survey of the Promised Land.

4:2. and watch in the same with thanksgiving. While engaged in prayer, the believer is to give thanks to the Lord. This will readily be done when the heart develops an attitude of gratitude. Sometimes, looking at others will help to develop an attitude of gratitude. "Today upon a bus, I saw a lovely maid with golden hair; I envied her – she seemed so gay, and how, I wished I were so fair; When suddenly she rose to leave, I saw her hobble down the aisle; she had one foot and wore a crutch, but as she passed, a smile. Oh God, forgive me when I whine, I have two feet – the world is mine.

And when I stopped to buy some sweets, the lad who served me had such charm; he seemed to radiate good cheer, his manner was so kind and warm; I said, "It's nice to deal with you, such courtesy I seldom find"; he turned and said, "Oh, thank you sir." And then I saw that he was blind. Oh, God, forgive me when I whine, I have two eyes, the world is mine.

Then, when walking down the street, I saw a child with eyes of blue; he stood and watched the others play, it seemed he knew not what to do; I stopped a moment, then I said, "Why don't you join the others, dear?" He looked ahead without a word, and then I knew he could not hear. Oh God, forgive me when I whine, I have two ears, the world is mine.

With feet to take me where I'd go; with eyes to see the sunsets glow, with ears to hear what I would know. I am blessed indeed. The world is mine; oh, God, forgive me when I whine" (Source Unknown).

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:

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

4:3-4. Withal praying for us. In great humility Paul asks the believers at Colossae, including those in slavery, to pray for him. Specifically, Paul was longing for a door of opportunity to be opened that he might be able to speak appropriately about the mystery of Christ. Here was a bold prayer request for Paul was still in chains, he was in prison for his faith. Nevertheless, Paul still wanted to preach more. The great passion on the heart of the apostle was to see souls saved. The American missionary to the Native Americans, David Brainerd, said, "I care not where I go or how I live or what I endure so that I may save souls. When I sleep, I dream of them; when I awake, they are first in my thoughts."

How to Pray

- Pray without fainting or growing discouraged. *Luke 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*
- Pray often. *1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.*
- Pray in the Spirit with definite requests in mind. *Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

- Pray in the power of the Holy Spirit. *Jude 20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.*

Special Note.

The reason why men are to pray is because God has ordained not only what will come to pass, but the means by which things will come to pass. Prayer will change that which God has ordained will happen through prayer. *1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

Moreover, prayer is communion with God. Jesus often bowed in prayer alone with the Father. He is our Great Example and Teacher.

- When we pray we are not to use vain repetitions. *Matthew 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*
- When we pray we are to express our desires. *Mark 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*
- When we pray we are to say, *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3 Give us day by day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil (Luke 11:2-4).*

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

4:5. Walk in wisdom. The Christian must bear in mind at all times that he is a witness to the world. Therefore, there must be a proper code of conduct with the unbeliever in mind. Time is redeemed through proper walking and witnessing.

4:5. redeeming the time. Though in prison Paul redeemed the time by praying for others, by writing his prison epistles, and by witnessing to the prison guards, who took the gospel message and shared it with others until the good news of God's redeeming love permeated Caesar's palace.

Special Note.

There are various ways to witness. Wisdom will dictate which style of witnessing to use in any given situation.

Various Styles of Witnessing

- Confrontational. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*
- Intellectual. *Acts 17:1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.*
- Testimonial. *John 9:25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*
- Relational. *Mark 5:18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*
- Invitational. *John 4:29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*
- Serving. *Acts 9:36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.*

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

4:6. Let your speech *be* always with grace. Gracious speech flows from a heart established in the grace of God. The psalmist wrote of Jesus, "*Grace is poured into thy lips*" (*Psalms 45:2*). And *Psalms 18:35* says, "*Thy gentleness hath made me great.*" Grace was extended to the woman taken in sin when Jesus said, "*Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more*" (*John 8:10-11*). Grace was spoken to the thief on the Cross when Jesus promised, "*Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise*" (*Luke 23:43*).

4:6. seasoned with salt. Salt is a preservative. The gentleness of Jesus did not stop Him from preserving a soul from destruction by a stern rebuke and thereby uphold the Law. *Leviticus 19:17 ... thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*

4:6. that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. "Our Lord had no stereotyped method of dealing with souls" (F. W. Grant). "He did not talk to the woman at the well the same way He addressed Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. Christ probed the depths of each heart and ministered according to its need" (H. A. Ironside). The apostle Paul said, "*I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Special Note.

John Wesley and a preacher-friend of plain habits were once invited to dinner where the host's daughter, noted for her beauty, had been profoundly impressed by Wesley's preaching. During a pause in the meal, Wesley's friend took the young woman's hand and called attention to the sparkling rings she wore. "What do you think of this, sir, for a Methodist hand?"

The girl turned crimson. Mr. Wesley likewise was embarrassed, for his aversion to jewelry was only too well known. But with a benevolent smile, he simply said, "The hand is very beautiful." Wesley's remark both cooled the too-hot water poured by his friend, and made the foot-washing gentle. The young woman appeared at the evening service without her jewels, and became a strong Christian.

Source Unknown

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord:

4:7. Tychicus (fortuitous) is first mentioned as a travelling companion to Paul during the apostle's return journey from his third missionary tour (Acts 20:4). He is called a "*beloved brother, and faithful minister*" who was able to communicate clearly the gospel. *Ephesians 6:21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: 22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.*

The Three Noble Virtues of Tychicus

- A beloved brother.
- A faithful minister.
- A fellow servant in the Lord.

8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

4:8. Whom I have sent unto you. Because he was a man to be trusted, Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to deliver and perhaps to read his epistle to the Christians in that city. *Ephesians 6:21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Having proven himself faithful,*

Tychicus was also sent to Colossae to read the Epistle to the Colossians (Colossians 4:7). Still later, Paul sent Tychicus to serve as a messenger to Titus in Crete (Titus 3:12), before returning to Ephesus (*2 Timothy 4:12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus*).

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.

4:9. Onesimus. Like Tychicus, Onesimus was called by Paul, "*a faithful and beloved brother.*" Onesimus was faithful to hold firm to the gospel message while remaining a beloved friend. At one time, Onesimus had been a dishonest and runaway slave. But grace was shown to Onesimus by God and he was thoroughly transformed. "We are all God's Onesimuses", said Martin Luther. "Christ paid our debt that we might be accepted in Him by God.

‘He bore on the tree, the sentence for me,
And now both the Surety and sinner are free.’

Thus redeemed, we have the happy privilege of serving Him in glorious liberty and saying with the psalmist, '*Truly I am thy servant....Thou hast loosed my bonds*'" (Psalm 116:16) (H. A. Ironside).

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

4:10. Aristarchus (the best ruler) was from Thessalonica. During Paul's third missionary journey he became the apostle's travelling companion, accompanying him to Ephesus. In AD 59, in Ephesus, Aristarchus was seized and almost murdered in a tumultuous riot led by the silversmiths under the influence of Demetrius. *Acts 19:29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.* Finally able to escape from Ephesus, Aristarchus went with Paul to Greece, and then on to Asia (Acts 20:4), and finally to Rome (Acts 27:2), where he was imprisoned with the apostle (Philemon 24 cf. Colossians 4:10). According to church tradition, Aristarchus was killed as a martyr during the reign of Nero.

4:10. Marcus was the nephew of Barnabas. In former days, Paul had lost confidence in John Mark because, after evangelistic work in Cyprus, he had deserted the work and returned to his mother in Jerusalem. Barnabas was willing to give him a second chance, but Paul was not. *Acts 15:36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.* In this matter, Barnabas was proven to be right. Time passed and now Paul commends John Mark because he was a good man. In time Mark would write the gospel which bears his name.

4:10. Barnabas (son of encouragement) was an apostle in the early church (Acts 4:36-37; 11:19-26) and a travelling companion of the apostle Paul on the first missionary journey (Acts 13-15). A Levite from the island of Cyprus, Barnabas was converted to Christ. Following his conversion, Barnabas sold his land and gave the money to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36-37). It was Barnabas who was instrumental in introducing Paul to a skeptical church in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27), and later in Antioch (Acts 11:25). Barnabas was not only a man of compassion and good reputation, he had the strength of character to oppose Paul when he was wrong as he did in the case of John Mark (Acts 13:13 cf. 15:36-41).

11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only *are my fellow workers* unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

4:11. Jesus (Justus, “just”) is the equivalent of the Hebrew, Joshua. Jesus, or Justus, was a Jewish Christian mentioned in association with John Mark as being his “only fellow workers” at Rome during the period he wrote the epistle to the Colossians. Paul calls him a comfort. There is another man of integrity called Justus in Acts 18:7. The larger point here is that every Christian is to seek to comfort others and be a blessing.

“Out in the highways and byways of life,
many are weary and sad;
Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife
making the sorrowing glad.

Make me a blessing, Make me a blessing,
Out of my life, May Jesus shine.
Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray,
Make me a blessing to someone today.”

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.

4:12. Epaphras (Epaphroditus; belonging “to Aphrodite,” or Venus) was a gifted teacher in the church of Colossae, c. AD 62. During the writing of this epistle he was with Paul in Rome. Later, Epaphras is mentioned in the epistle to Philemon (v. 23), where Paul calls him “my fellow prisoner.” According to church legend, Epaphras suffered martyrdom as the first bishop of Colossae. As a man of prayer, Epaphras prayed that the believers in Colossae would “*stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*” Paul reassured the believers in Colossae that Epaphras possessed a great zeal for the brethren in that city and also for the churches in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

4:12. stand perfect. stand full grown.

4:12. and complete in all the will of God. and filled full in all the will of God.

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

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

4:13. Luke was a “fellow laborer” of the apostle Paul (Acts 16:10; Philemon 24). He is probably the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. A physician by trade, Luke was beloved by choice. When Paul was placed into prison, Luke went to visit him (2 Timothy 4:11), and for that, Paul was forever grateful. “Luke remained with Paul to the end and possibly saw him martyred” (H. A. Ironside).

4:13. Demas was a friend and co-worker of Paul at Rome (Philemon 24). Unfortunately, he deserted Paul during the apostle’s second imprisonment in Rome and went off to Thessalonica, “*having loved this present world*” (2 Timothy 4:10-11).

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

4:15 Nymphas (nymph-given) was a prominent Christian in the city of Laodicea, whose home was used as a place of worship.

Special Note.

In Greek mythology a nymph was a minor female deity associated with a particular location. Five different types of nymphs were recognized: Celestial Nymphs, Water Nymphs, Land Nymphs, Plant Nymphs, and Underworld Nymphs. These divine spirits animated nature by singing and dancing as beautiful, young nubile maidens. Their amorous freedom distinguished them from wives and the chaste daughters of families found in a Greek city. In Israeli, the name Nymphas means spouse, or, bridegroom. The name Nymphas originated as an Israeli name. The name Nymphas is most often used as a boy name or male name.

House Churches Mentioned in the New Testament

- *Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.*
- *Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*
- *Acts 12:12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.*
- *Acts 20:20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,*

- *Romans 16:5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaphroditus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ.*
- *1 Corinthians 16:19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*
- *Philemon 2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house:*
- *Colossians 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*

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.

4:16. cause that it be read. By reading the epistles of Paul, the early church recognized, found binding, and submitted to the authority of its author. Early Christians received the epistles as divinely inspired. There were five basic tests to determine if a particular writing was to be part of the canon (rule) of Scripture.

Five Tests of Canonicity **Norman L. Geisler and William Nix**

- Is the writing authoritative? Does the document have the element of, “Thus saith the Lord”?
- Is it prophetic? Was the author “a man of God”? *2 Peter 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.* A book in the Bible must have the authority of a spiritual leader of Israel such as an Old Testament prophet, king, judge, scribe or, if an apostle of the church in the New Testament, it must be based on the testimony of an original apostle.

Special Note.

The apostles claimed authority for their writings. *Colossians 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....1 Thessalonians 5:27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren....2 Thessalonians 3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

The apostle’s writings were equated with Old Testament scriptures. *2 Peter 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:...15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;*

16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

- Is it authentic and consistent with other revelations of truth?
- Is it dynamic by demonstrating God’s life-changing power? *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*
- Is it received (accepted and used by believers? *1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe* (A General Introduction to the Bible, pp. 137-144).

Special Note.

The Bible, as we have it today, was formed over a long period of time. However, by the time of Christ, all the Old Testament books were recognized as “scripture” by Jesus Himself. *Matthew 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?* Josephus, the Jewish historian, indicated that the 39 books were recognized as authoritative. The 39 books of the Old Testament were formally recognized at the Council of Jamnia in AD 90. In like manner, the 27 books of the New Testament took time to be recognized but they were, in the Council of Athanasius in AD 367, and again at the Council of Carthage in AD 397.

4:16. likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. The Epistle “from” Laodicea is probably a reference to what is called the Epistle to the Ephesians. As Paul’s letter to Colossae went to Laodicea, so Paul’s letter from Laodicea went to Colossae to be read.

17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it.

4:17. Archippus (chief groom) was a Christian believer at Colossae who ministered in the local church. Paul referred to him as “our fellow soldier” (Philemon 2) and encouraged him to fulfill his ministry in the Lord (Colossians 4:17). Sometimes a word of exhortation is needed, for ministers can become comfortable and complacent if they are not challenged.

Special Note.

“An incident involving two leading generals of the southern confederacy might speak well to every servant of Christ. General Robert E. Lee once sent word to General Stonewall Jackson that he would be glad to talk with him at his convenience on some matter of no great urgency. Even though the weather was most inclement, General Jackson instantly rode to headquarters. When General Lee expressed surprise at seeing him, Jackson exclaimed, "General Lee's slightest wish is a supreme command to me, and I always take pleasure in prompt obedience." It is to be hoped that this same spirit took hold of Archippus and that he profited from the prodding of the aged apostle” (H. A. Ironside).

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

4:18. The salutation by the hand of me Paul. The original documents, called “autographs”, signed by the apostles and other New Testament writers no longer exist. One reason why God might have allowed them to be lost to history is a tendency on the part of people to idolize relics and documents. It is not important that the autographs do not exist, for God the Holy Spirit has preserved His Word to the present hour.

Special Note.

God has faithfully preserved His Word through multitudes of individuals who carefully copied the autographs, quoted, circulated, and translated God’s word through the years. “As a result, we today have volumes of evidence to establish what the original texts said. We have more than 4500 hand-written copies of the Bible in the original languages. Some of these manuscripts are complete, others are partial or fragments. Some of them are dated to within a few centuries of the time of the New Testament writers, and a few are dated to within a few decades of their time. We have many ancient translations of the Bible into other languages. We have thousands of Scripture quotations found in ancient non-inspired writings. In fact, all but a few verses of the New Testament could be reproduced just from these uninspired quotations. Sir Frederic Kenyon, who served 21 years as Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum (which houses many significant ancient manuscripts of the Bible) said: "The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries” (The Gospel Way, David E. Pratte).

4:18. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

“In looking through my tears one day,
I saw Mount Calvary;
Beneath the cross there flowed a stream
Of grace, enough for me.

Grace is flowing from Calvary,
Grace as fathomless as the sea,
Grace for time and eternity,
Grace, enough for me.

While standing there, my trembling heart,
Once full of agony,
Could scarce believe the sight I saw
Of grace, enough for me.

When I beheld my every sin
Nailed to the cruel tree,
I felt a flood go through my soul
Of grace, enough for me.

When I am safe within the veil,
My portion there will be,
To sing through all the years to come
Of grace, enough for me.”

Edwin O. Excell, 1905