



THE  
SUPERIOR

WORD

COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP

Sharing God's Word Encouraging His People

# Colossians

*A Verse-By-Verse Commentary*

*(Originally written one verse per day)*

By Pastor Charlie Garrett

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# CONTENTS

*(Hyperlinked- Clicking the title will take you to that location)*

Chapter 1 .....	3
Chapter 2 .....	50
Chapter 3 .....	90
Chapter 4 .....	124

## CHAPTER 1

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

Welcome to the book of Colossians! It is comprised of 95 verses, and so it will take us (one day at a time, just as you rise in the morning) about three months to analyze it. I hope you will be blessed as each day unfolds with new insights into this beautiful epistle from the mind of God and through the hand of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.

He begins by introducing himself right off the bat. The letter bears his name, and though the authenticity of his authorship has been challenged in this, and as in almost all of his letters, there is no valid reason to suggest that he is not the true author. He is the Apostle to the Gentiles, and the letter is written to a Gentile-led church.

He next identifies his apostleship with the words, “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” He is a messenger of the Lord, having been called by Him personally to perform this weighty duty which has been so amazingly fruitful for the past two thousand years. This is his one claim to the authority of writing a letter of doctrine to them, and it is with this authority that he thus writes.

After this, he notes that his apostleship is “by the will of God.” This is the same phrase as is seen in 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and 2 Timothy. It is what further defines his calling, and which affirms his authority. It also is a note of humility in that he was selected, and therefore it was not of his own merits. Instead, it was by the sovereign decision of God that he is so designated an apostle.

In his letter to the Romans, he gave a more formal declaration of his commission, and in Galatians the opening statement was considerably more direct and even abrupt. In other letters, the opening varies as well. The opening statement is given in each epistle to set the tone for the rest of the letter.

Finally, he adds in the words, “...and Timothy our brother.” This does not mean that Timothy is participating in the writing of the epistle, but that Timothy is with Paul and sending on his greetings to those in Colossae as will be noted in verse 2. Timothy referred to here is certainly the same Timothy to whom two epistles which bear his name are written.

Timothy is highlighted here and elsewhere, giving him much credence within the church, and setting the stage for him to be recognized as an authority within the church in the future. However, Paul is careful to make him out as a “brother,” and not as an “apostle.”

The term is never applied to Timothy, because he did not meet the necessary requirements of being an apostle of Jesus Christ. Only a select group of people were called Christ’s apostles. After their deaths, the apostolic age ended, taking the title of “Apostle of Jesus Christ” with them.

Life application: As Paul wrote, he probably didn’t think that we would be reading his words two thousand years later, but the glorious words in the epistle still resound to this day. It is a letter directed to each person as an individual who is willing to pick it up and read it. Consider the magnitude of this as you read it, or truly any portion of Scripture.

*Heavenly Father, it is so welcoming to know that Your word was written through the hands of the prophets and apostles, speaking to people thousands of years ago, and yet it was also written to each one of us who is willing to pick it up, read it, and cherish the content which comes directly from Your heart into our minds. Help us to hold it in reverence, to refer to it often, and to cherish the precepts that it contains – applying them to our lives properly and faithfully. Help us in this, O God! Amen.*

**To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colosse:**

**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:2**

Paul states that the letter is written specifically “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, *who are* in Colosse.” They are then the initial recipients of this majestic letter of doctrine, and they are to be blessed with having been the first to read the subject matter which Paul deemed necessary to put into writing for the instruction and edification of those in the church.

However, the intent of Paul’s letter is certainly not that it would only be read by the Colossians and then secreted away. Rather, the anticipation is that it would be circulated among the churches, having copies made and having sessions where the content could be repeated and analyzed. This is certain, because the letter was copied and analyzed until the time it was finally incorporated into the final canon of Scripture.

This letter became well known enough to be considered for inclusion in the Bible, and its contents made it rightly selected for that same purpose. Each step of the process was

guided by the Holy Spirit to ensure that we have the sure and perfect word of God to refer to.

After his words of verse 1 and the initial words of this verse, Paul now gives the standard greeting which is found in most of his epistles, “Grace to you and peace...”

Grace is unmerited favor; it cannot be earned. This was the common greeting among the Greek people. Peace however was and still is the common greeting among the Hebrew people. In their language, the word is *shalom*.

This is more than a greeting for calm or quiet but is a state of wholeness and completion in all ways. Paul unites the two terms just as the church is being united between Jew and Gentile during his time. This grace precedes the peace because only after receiving the grace of God can a person experience the peace of God.

Paul extends this wonderful blessing to them “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is a greeting from the eternal God – both the unseen Father and His Son who reveals the Father to us. Rather than being an argument against the divinity of Jesus Christ, it is an argument for it. He is tying the two in as one - Jesus being a member of the Godhead. He is not making some type of great division, but a harmonious blending of the two.

Throughout Paul’s letters, as with the entire Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ is a concept and a precept which is on evident display. It is the very heart of what God has done for the reconciliation of the people of the world. As a side note, some translations leave off “and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Which is the true original is hard to say.

Scholars argue over this, but either way, Christ Jesus is on prominent display throughout the book. His deity is so evident in the book of Colossians that only a person with a presupposition that He cannot be God could find any other interpretation of who He is.

Life application: In order to understand God, one must know Jesus Christ, and one cannot understand Jesus Christ unless he knows his Bible. Know your Bible.

*Lord God Almighty, how grateful we are that we can fellowship with You personally. We can read Your word, discover Christ Jesus, and know who You are. We can have personal talks with You as we pray in a quiet place or on a hectic city street. And we can feel Your presence as we attend church and fellowship with others, praising You and giving thanks*

*to You for Your wonderful care of us. Thank You for allowing us to fellowship with You, O God, in such intimate ways – all because of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

This is a greeting which, even if slightly amended for the occasion, is common to Paul's letters. In some letters, the stress is on the thanks, in others it is on the prayers. However, when he wrote his letter to the Galatians, he noticeably skipped over such a general sentiment. He had greater concerns with them that he had to deal with.

Here he notes that he and Timothy "give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." His prayers are lifted to God, who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. As always, this in no way diminishes the deity of Christ, but rather highlights it. There is the human Jesus, and there is the Christ of God. He is the Lord Jesus Christ who issues from God the Father.

It is to God the Father that their thanks are directed at this point. The reason for this specific wording will be realized as he continues on with the epistle. It is a letter which highlights the deity of Christ in a most unique way.

In their thanks, he then notes that they are "praying always for you." Paul's idea of "praying without ceasing," which he penned to those in Thessalonica, is evident in words such as these to the Colossians. Whenever the thought of one of his beloved churches came to mind, he and Timothy would utter forth a prayer to God on its behalf.

When they talked about one of the churches, they would probably issue forth a quick prayer of both thanks and petition for it. To them, praying was certainly a normal extension of their regular lives and conversations.

Life application: God already knows the end from the beginning. His plan is also complete in His mind. Despite this, we should not have a fatalistic view of life where we ignore prayers. Instead, God figures our prayers into the plan, just as our free-will calling on Jesus is figured into the plan.

If we don't receive Jesus, we will not be saved. Likewise, prayers that are not uttered are not heard. God's foreknowledge of all things outside of time factors in our actions within the stream of time. Pray!

*Heavenly Father, one of the beautiful things You have granted to us is the opportunity to pray. When we open our hearts to You, You hear and respond according to Your grace and mercy. And because we have Jesus as our Mediator between our prayers and Your ears, we can know that those prayers which are offered through Him are acceptable to You. And so, as we offer them to You in His name, hear and respond according to Your wisdom. Thank You that our prayers are heard because of Him. Amen.*

**...since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;**  
Colossians 1:4

It is claimed from this verse that Paul had not been to Colossae before writing this epistle because of the words, "...since we heard of your faith." There is nothing to suggest that he had not been there, and such words are not intended to mean that. In fact, he uses the same term in writing to the Ephesians that he uses here. And there is no doubt that he was the founder of the church at Ephesus -

"Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints..." Ephesians 1:15

He is merely writing now about the faith that they held at the present time. They had faith in the past, and he is thanking God for the faith which still continues to the present. And this faith is "in Christ Jesus." It is a saving faith, and an enduring faith. They not only heard the gospel and received it unto salvation, but they also continued in that faith, walking in it unto rewards.

And even more, he says that they (meaning he and Timothy of verse 1) were thankful for their "love for all the saints." The joy of the saints is that their love extends beyond just faith in Christ Jesus, but it extends to all who are in Christ Jesus.

It is the bond of unity, which is hoped for in the Christian walk, but one which too often breaks down into division, as is seen in his other epistles. At this point, such divisions were not a part of their walk in Christ and in their fellowship with other believers.

In his words ahead, Paul will give sound advice in order to avoid such future divisions. He will warn against heresies, and he will exhort those in Colossae in how to properly conduct their walk. If his words are adhered to, many troubling pitfalls will be avoided, both for the Colossians and for those of us who are willing to receive them.

Life application: How willing are we to spend time in the word each day in order to be sound in our theology and faithful in our walk? Let us endeavor to read the word, and to study in order to show ourselves approved. Great rewards lie ahead for those who are willing to look to the eternal, and not just to the here and now.

*Heavenly Father, the longer we live, the shorter we realize that our lives truly are. The brevity of our days is a sobering wake-up call to use our time now wisely, and to adhere to what You have instructed us in Your precious word. Help us to be wise and discerning about the few moments we have been granted in this earthly walk. Help us to be pleasing in Your sight through the study and application of Your superior word to our lives. Amen.*

**...because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, Colossians 1:5**

Paul's words now are a continuation of the previous verses. Taken together, the intent becomes much more evident -

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, <sup>4</sup>since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; <sup>5</sup>because of the hope, which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel...”

They had given thanks for the faith of those in Colossae in Christ Jesus, and in their love for the saints. Now explaining that further, he says, “because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” The faith in Christ Jesus is what gives them this hope and which resulted in their love for all the saints. This sentiment then is comparable to what he says to those in Thessalonica -

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

-1 Thessalonians 1:3

The three tenets of faith, hope, and love work together and complement one another. Hope is the object which is to be attained. In this case, Paul notes that the object is our heavenly home which awaits us. Because of this hope, faith and love grow in us. It is as if the hope is a fire which kindles the resulting faith and love. This is how it should be with all believers. We have a hope, and therefore we should exercise faith in Christ Jesus and love towards others.

The hope which lies ahead is then explained by Paul with the words, “of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.” His words, “the truth of the gospel” are in the emphatic position. As Charles Ellicott notes, “It refers to the gospel, not chiefly as a message of graciousness and mercy, but rather as a revelation of eternal truths, itself changeless as the truth it reveals.”

The gospel was and is God’s plan for the salvation of man. In receiving the gospel, we are granted a heavenly hope; a return to Eden and God’s paradise which was lost so long ago. But with our return, we will have something more than Adam had. We will have the understanding that God has done everything needed to grant us access, and to keep us in His presence for all eternity.

We will be able to appreciate what was unknown to Adam because of the conscience we possess, having acquired the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, we will always be able to look with awe and wonder at the majesty of Christ’s work for us.

Life application: We may think of what Adam had as the epitome of all that we could ever wish for, but we will have even more. When we are in our heavenly dwelling, we will have the appreciation for all of what God was willing to do for us in order to bring us back to Himself. We will have Jesus, radiant in splendor and majesty, to see and to worship for all eternity. Today, take time to thank God for Jesus Christ – our hope of eternity in God’s presence.

*Lord God Almighty, what Adam had and lost is only a portion of what lies ahead for Your redeemed. We will have an understanding of what You were willing to do in order to bring man back to Yourself. We will carry with us the knowledge that You would even send Your own Son to die so that we might live. And so, for all the ages of ages we will praise You because of the Lamb who was slain, and yet who lives forever. We will be in the presence of Christ Jesus our Lord! Amen.*

**...which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;**  
Colossians 1:6

Paul now refers to “the truth of the gospel” from the previous verse with the word “which.” It is this message, as he says, “which has come to you.” The gospel is that which established their faith (see Romans 10:17) as Paul noted in verse 4, and which has laid up the hope for them as he noted in verse 5.

Next, he uses hyperbole by saying that this same gospel message which has come to them has also come “in all the world.” It is important to understand that he is using hyperbole because replacement theology wrongly uses this verse to show that Jesus’ words of Matthew 24:14 are fulfilled in Paul’s words of this verse. Such is not the case.

Paul uses a different word for “world” than Jesus does. It is true that he uses the same word as Jesus in other verses (such as Romans 10:18), but the context indicates there that he is not speaking of the gospel itself having gone out to the entire world. The context of his words in Romans is based on an Old Testament reference concerning the general revelation of God to the whole world.

From there, Israel is rebuked for rejecting His special revelation, meaning the gospel of Jesus Christ. Further, Paul uses the same word and in the same way in Romans 1:8 by saying –

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”

It is clear that Paul is using hyperbole there to show that the faith of those in Rome seems to shout out to all the world. Rome was the center of the Roman Empire, and therefore the faith of those in Rome extended out in a unique way. Clearly not all in the Roman Empire, much less the entire inhabited world, had heard of the faith of those in Rome.

It is an inappropriate stretch to take Jesus’ words of the gospel going out to the entire world and then to apply them in an absolute way to what occurred in the first century. However, concerning the gospel which had come to those in Colossae, he next says that it “is bringing forth fruit.”

Fruit is the result of something else. The gospel had been preached, and there was a result because of it. People were coming to Christ, they were being obedient to the message, and they were continuing to share the message with others. These things are evident from Paul’s coming words.

However, he is writing the letter now to correct misconceptions or misrepresentations of Christ which were already coming about. He is writing to ensure that the fruit which is brought forth will be good fruit. This is why he continues with, “as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.”

They had heard the message, they had received the grace of God, and it was received “in truth.” In order to ensure that this same message would continue on unstained by bad doctrine, or even heresy, he will continue with the words of this letter.

Life application: Context always needs to be considered when looking at statements which use the same terminology in the Bible. It is true that the use of identical words often is intended to show a pattern, or the fulfillment of something else, but the surrounding context cannot be tossed out in order to make unfounded conclusions. Always consider what the writer’s reference is before making a final determination about how his words are intended to be taken.

*Lord God, Your word is big, and it is often complicated. Help us to read it carefully, and to always consider the context of what is being said. Without following this most basic guideline, we sure can get misdirected down unnecessary paths which have nothing to do with what You intend for us to see. Give us wisdom in this, as it is our desire to stick to Your intent for us as we read and study this marvelous gift which You have given to us. Amen.*

**...as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, Colossians 1:7**

Paul now introduces Epaphras whom he calls “our dear fellow servant.” This may or may not be the same as Epaphroditus who was seen in the letter to the Philippians. Epaphras is merely a shortened form of the same name, and so it is possible. However, in verse 4:12, Paul says that he “is *one* of you.”

For this reason, it does appear he is not the same person. Either way, this individual was an evangelist, having taught the word of the Lord to those at Colossae. This is seen in the words, “as you also learned from Epaphras.” This is based on the previous verse which said, “since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.”

Thus, the “bringing forth fruit” which Paul mentioned in verse 6 is realized in the evangelism of Epaphras. He was not just an evangelist, but one who was successful in his duties. In calling him “our dear fellow servant,” Paul uses a term that is seen 10 times in the New Testament, but his use of it will only be in this book.

He uses the term here, and then he will use it once again when speaking of Tychicus in verse 4:7. It is a term which indicates “belonging to the same master,” and thus it is a

term of endearment towards these two men. As Paul notes of Epaphras here, he is “a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf.”

There is a dispute as to whether the true reading is “on our behalf” or “on your behalf.” Either way, whether ministering for Paul and Timothy, or whether ministering for the good of those in Colossae, he was faithful in his ministry, and he is so recognized for it by Paul.

Life application: How are you perceived by the leaders of your church? Do they know you as a seat-warmer, a fair-weather attendee, or as a fellow servant who faithfully ministers in the church and towards others? The record is being compiled, and it will all be laid before the Lord on the day when we stand before Him for rewards or losses. Don't waste right now... it counts forever.

*Lord God, our record is being compiled concerning our faithfulness in ministering according to our calling. As the Lord has called us, so we have been given abilities to meet that calling. However, it is up to us to do something with them. Are we fair-weather Christians? Are we faithful seat-warmers? Are we willing to give 50% of our effort? Or are we going to go full-out and give heartily of ourselves now, knowing that what we do in this extremely short life counts for the ages of ages. Help us to think clearly on this, and to act wisely with the few hours we have been given. Amen.*

**...who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.** Colossians 1:8

This is referring to Epaphras of the previous verse. He had come to Paul with word a concerning those at Colossae. When he came, he had “declared to us your love.” The word “declared” gives the sense of “made manifest.” He had brought the love of the body to light for Paul and Timothy to understand the wonderful fellowship which had developed there. This love is, as Paul notes, “in the Spirit.”

The love among them was more than a sense of general, natural affection, but rather it was a love deeply rooted in what Christ had done for them, bringing them into the family of God and the body of believers. The Spirit had confirmed this to them, and this is the good news that was brought to the ears of Paul and Timothy. Certainly it was a point of great rejoicing to them.

Life application: It is not unusual for us to get a bit jaded in the church as we show up and are just one of many faces in the congregation. However, each person there who has called on Christ is a child of God through adoption. If we can remember this as we

interact with our brothers and sisters, it would be a great help in putting aside petty differences and thus working together for the common good within the church.

*Heavenly Father, help each of us to remember that when we enter our respective churches to worship, we are joining together with others who have been purchased through the shed blood of Christ. Because of this, they too are members of Your family through adoption. Understanding this, may we put aside our petty differences, and strive together for Your glory and for the good of the body. Amen.*

**For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;** Colossians 1:9

This takes us right back to verses 3-8. Paul had said in verse 3, “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.” After that, he gave his reasons for these thanks. Now, using that same list, he says, “For this reason we also...” The same thing that brought thanks to the hearts of Paul and Timothy is the thing which now brings something else along with it.

Before he tells what it is that he is referring to, he says, “since the day we heard it.” As soon as the news came to their ears, and even until the present moment, this has held true. And that thing is that they “do not cease to pray for you.”

They weren’t just thankful for the good news that they heard, but they began to pray for those who they were thankful for. Although this isn’t necessary in all situations, Paul next explains what the prayers are for. He says it is “to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

These words set up the train of thought for the rest of his epistle. The question must be, “How can someone be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding without being properly instructed in it?”

Paul’s words ahead will help lead them on this path. They may have had a copy of the Old Testament writings available to them if there were Jews among them who had converted to Christ, but they probably had no instruction on the doctrines of Christ outside of their instruction from Epaphras.

Now they would need that instruction, lest they fall into the heresies which were already coming into being at the time. To have “the knowledge of His will” means that of His will

for us in Christ. This is certain, because Christ is God's will for all humanity. To have a faulty view of Christ would then lead to a faulty view of God's will.

This knowledge is to be "in all wisdom." The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. To have that, and then to grow in that fear of the Lord is the proper path. The book of Ecclesiastes shows the contrast between earthly wisdom and that which is heavenly. The prayers of Paul and Timothy were for those in Colossae to have this heavenly wisdom.

But their prayers were not only for wisdom, but also "spiritual understanding." This is the ability to "put things together." Not only should the Christian have wisdom, but also the ability to take that wisdom and to be discerning in it. Though the word "Trinity" is not in the Bible, Christians should be able to discern that it is a truth which is clearly presented there, and which can be logically deduced from various passages.

The same is true with other major doctrines as well. Spiritual understanding is also speaking of that which is not correct. That Jesus Christ is God is plainly evident from even a cursory reading of the Bible. Therefore, to say that He is a created being is false. Spiritual understanding will reveal this.

Life application: It is good to give thanks for the salvation of others, but it should also be our heart's desire that they grow in wisdom and knowledge concerning God and His word. Therefore, in addition to the thanks we give for the salvation of others, let us remember to pray for their development into mature followers of the Lord.

*Heavenly Father, it is always a wonderful thing to see people come to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus, but it should also be our desire to see them mature in their walk with Him. Help us to remember to give thanks for what You have done in them, and also to give prayers in hopes of what You will continue to do in them. May this be so in order that they will be mature, doctrinally sound believers. Amen.*

**that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; Colossians 1:10**

This is a continuation of the previous verse in which Paul explains why he and Timothy were giving thanks to God and praying for those at Colossae. He says that their prayers were also "that you may walk worthy of the Lord."

He had just mentioned the desire that they “be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” This then logically follows that. With knowledge, one needs to then apply what they know, living out the life that one’s knowledge has told them is appropriate. In this, their walk will be worthy of the Lord.

In this state, their conduct will be “fully pleasing” to Him. The word Paul uses here is found only this once in the New Testament. It is *areskia*, and it indicates making an effort to fully and satisfactorily please. He is making a logical sequence of events in the believers’ lives that demonstrates the process of growing unto maturity. In such a state, the believer will be “fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

This thought goes backward now in order to reexplain what is “fully pleasing” to the Lord. Being fruitful indicates the positive results of a walk worthy of the Lord which is seen in every good work. Increasing in the knowledge of God is what leads to that state of fruitfulness. His thoughts form a mini chiasm as they first move forward to “fully pleasing *Him*,” and then moving backwards after that thought.

Paul’s desire for this to occur in the Colossians was so strong that he purposefully repeats the thought in order to solidify it in their (and thus our!) minds. Albert Barnes’ commentary on this verse is well worth citing –

“God is pleased with those who desire to understand what he is; what he does; what he purposes; what he commands. Hence he not only commands us to study his works..., but he has made a world so beautiful as to invite us to contemplate his perfections as reflected in that world.

All good beings desire that others should understand their character, and God delights in those who are sincerely desirous of knowing what he is, and who inquire with humility and reverence into his counsels and his will.

People are often displeased when others attempt to look into their plans, for they are sensible they will not bear the light of investigation. God has no plans which would not be seen to be, in the highest degree, glorious to him.”

Life application: If you are not growing in the knowledge of God through Bible studies, you cannot be pleasing to Him. Only when one takes the knowledge of God and His expectations, and then unites it with a walk in accord with that knowledge, can he be truly pleasing to Him. As always, it comes down to knowing the word. Study your Bible.

*Lord God, thank You that we have not been left without instructions for how to conduct our lives in a way which is pleasing to You. They are there in black and white in the pages of the Bible, waiting for us to pick it up, grow in knowledge, and then walk according to that knowledge. As there is a Bible in almost every house, and 100 versions at the tip of our fingers on-line, we really have no excuse for not doing this, do we? Give us wisdom to think this through and to strive to know You, walk closely with You, and revel in who You are. Amen.*

**...strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; Colossians 1:11**

Again, as with the previous verse, this continues the thought in which Paul explains why he and Timothy were giving thanks to God and praying for those at Colossae. He says that they may be “strengthened with all might.”

Paul uses the same word, first in the noun form, then in the verb form. Thus, it is essentially a Hebraism where the repetition of a word is given for stress. In the Greek, it says *dunamei dunamoumenoi* – “being empowered with all power.”

This is not intended as meaning an outward display of apostolic gifts. Rather, his prayer for this is so that they will be able to meet and overcome any temptations, perform their duties as Christians by the power of Christ’s strength, and to be able to endure any trials which they were destined to face.

His prayer is that they will be so strengthened “according to His glorious power.” The Greek here reads, “according to the power of His glory.” As God’s power is one of His perfections (He being all-powerful), Paul is praying that those in Colossae (and thus us!) will be likewise strengthened by that all-powerful hand so that they will be able to meet and overcome every obstacle, and press forward in all ways which are good and true. He expresses two of those ways with the words, “for all patience and longsuffering.”

The idea of patience is putting up with those that one could otherwise dismiss. The idea of endurance is putting up with that which one cannot dismiss. He is asking for strength for both categories. For those that could be walked away from, his prayer is that we would stick it out and endure their failings or irksome ways. For that which cannot be walked away from, like it or not, his prayer is that we would be able to continue and not be overcome by the pressure of the situation.

But, Paul goes even further when he adds in the final words of the thought as a point of true grace from God – “with joy.” His hope is not just that there will be patience and longsuffering, but that there will actually be joy in the process.

In understanding that being “in Christ” is the state of the believer, then whatever we experience is what God intends for us, even if it seems terrifying, overwhelming, etc. He has ordained our steps, and so we should walk in them with a sense of joy that whatever we are facing is not being faced alone. Rather, He is there with us, and has placed us there for His sovereign purposes.

In these words, we have the mode of meeting the challenge – with all might; we have the measure – according to His glorious power; we have the anticipated result – all patience and longsuffering; and we have the state in which this process should take place – all joy.

Life application: Life sends us many difficult things that we need to deal with. Some, we could just walk away from, but that may not be the proper path to take. Some, we must endure despite it being a real headache for us.

It is important for us to consider our position in Christ as we face these things. In so doing, we will be more likely to respond to them in an appropriate way. Let us pray for strength in order to meet them, and deal with them according to God’s glorious power.

*Heavenly Father, life sure throws us some difficult curve balls. Even on a good day, there are things we must endure that are unpleasant. And there are those who come into our lives which can sure test our patience as well. It is so much easier to walk away from them than to put up with their nonsense. But in both cases, help us to remember Your glory and to act as lights in the dark places. Be with us in this, strengthen us according to Your power, and grant us the joy of Your fellowship as we continue to swing our bat at those difficult pitches, meeting each with a home-run according to Your wisdom. Amen.*

**...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. Colossians 1:12**

This verse continues on the same train of thought that has been going on since verse 9. The words, “giving thanks to the Father” explain another way in which the saints may walk worthy of the Lord, as Paul previously noted. The reason for this is that He “has qualified us to be partakers of the saints in the light.”

Paul's choice of the word "Father" here is referring to His relationship to the Son, through whom has come the execution of His plan of redemption. He determined the plan, and it was set in motion through the giving of His Son. In turn, for those who have received Christ Jesus, we have been qualified "to be partakers of the inheritance."

The kingdom which lies yet ahead belongs to the Son. It is His inheritance, just as any son inherits from a father. In this case, Christ is the inheritor of all things. This is seen, for example, in Hebrews 1 –

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; <sup>3</sup> who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Hebrews 1:1-4

From this, those who call on Christ likewise become "partakers of the inheritance of the saints." What this is saying, is that the promises to the Old Testament saints continue on in the new dispensation. That which was promised to the saints of old now applies to the saints of the church. The New Covenant issued from the Old Covenant when Christ fulfilled the Old in His death.

In this establishment of the New Covenant, the promises which were given to those under the Old are now realized in the new. This does not mean that the church replaces Israel, but that which is offered pertains to those who are established through the work of Christ. To understand this, we can look at the words to Daniel concerning the inheritance of the saints as was promised to him -

"Those who are wise shall shine  
Like the brightness of the firmament,  
And those who turn many to righteousness  
Like the stars forever and ever." Daniel 12:3

An inheritance was promised then, and the same inheritance is promised now. Those who are contained within the active covenant are those who are partakers; from Old to New Covenant. Completing the thought, he says this covenant of the saints is "in the light."

The idea of light here is the kingdom over which God presides. There is no darkness, as there is in the current world. This is the kingdom which God offers through Christ who is the true Light.

The concepts of light and kingdom permeate the Bible, but John deals with them in great measure in his gospel and epistles. What lies ahead will be marvelous. The powers of darkness will be utterly removed, and only holiness, happiness, and the glory of God will remain.

Life application: Our hope is in a world which is so wonderfully greater than anything we can actually imagine. The world around us is hemmed in with evil, and the powers of darkness are everywhere. But for those who are in Christ, a glory lies ahead which will literally radiate out in majestic splendor for all eternity. Hold fast to your faith, and be of good cheer, even when the world seems to overwhelm you. Great things lie ahead.

*Heavenly Father, it is wonderful to know that something more glorious than we can imagine lies ahead. This world, even at its best, is one of death and corruption. But You have promised one which is light, life, and glory. Thank You for having sent Christ Jesus to make all things new. Through Him, we become partakers of the promised restoration which You have purposed for the saints in the light. We await that glorious day! Amen.*

**He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, Colossians 1:13**

In the previous verse, we were instructed by Paul that we have been qualified to be “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” As this is the case, we must not have possessed that right before. Paul now makes that explicit with the words, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

Being delivered means that we were in a state from which we needed delivery. The word used is found in the Lord’s Prayer – “...deliver us from evil.” It is a word which indicates being rescued as if being snatched up. Therefore, we can see that in receiving Christ, we were drawn from that state to another one. It is a clear indication that all are already on the path to destruction.

Only through Christ does that change. It is another validation of Jesus’ words in John 3:18 which state that we are “condemned already.”

“The power of darkness” is the dominion of Satan. This isn’t just an external force which comes against us, but rather it is a legal rule over us. Satan has authority over this world (as is seen elsewhere in Scripture), and man must be brought out of this rule. This is what Christ came to do. John explains this purpose very clearly in his first epistle –

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8

It is this dominion, or power, of darkness which we are snatched out of. We are then conveyed “into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” The word “conveyed” is used in the manner of taking a people group from one country to another.

In the writings of Josephus, he uses the word when speaking of the deporting of the Israelites by the Assyrians. They were conveyed from one kingdom to another. This is what happens to the believer in Christ. He is conveyed from the power and kingdom of Satan to that of the Lord Jesus.

Again, it shows that there can be no other path to God than Jesus Christ. If there were, then it would have been pointless for Christ to come. But only He can bring us out of that realm of darkness and into this kingdom. It is a kingdom of “the Son of His love.” This means that Christ Jesus is the object of His love. It is to Him that the kingdom is given. All rights to authority belong to Him. He is the ruler of God’s kingdom for the redeemed of the world.

Life application: If you have been led to believe that there are many paths to God, then you are a foe of God in Christ. You are indicating that Jesus’ death was not necessary in order for men to be redeemed, and that redemption can be realized in other ways.

What you are espousing is a fickle God who purposely sent His Son to die for no satisfactory reason. But it is you who are being unreasonable. Think the issue through clearly, and then receive God’s wonderful gift of salvation which came at such a high cost.

*Lord God, Your word teaches that there is but one way to be reconciled to You, and that is by faith in what You have done through Your Son Jesus. Old Testament and New, He is there on every page, waiting to be discovered if we will but just look. Grant us wisdom to understand that You are not a fickle God who says one thing and then does another.*

*Rather, You have given Your word, You have sent Your Son, and You have opened a path, one path, back to You. Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

**...in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**

Colossians 1:14

This verse corresponds closely to Ephesians 1:7. “In whom” is speaking of Christ who is “the Son of His love” of the previous verse. It is through God’s Beloved Son that “we have redemption through His blood.”

In the Greek, there is an article before redemption.” It states, “the redemption” and thus it sets the thought apart as the great act of redemption to which any other act (such as the redemption of Israel from Egypt) was a lesser redemption, or merely a type and shadow.

In other words, the promised Redeemer of Genesis 3:15 is realized in Christ Jesus. From that proclamation, every idea of redemption which is found in Scripture pointed to what Christ would do for us. This true redemption was realized “through His blood.” We now stand justified and free from sin’s penalty through the redemption that came by His work, and which culminated in the shedding of His blood (meaning His death) on the cross.

The term “redemption” comes from a root word which indicates the price paid to redeem a person, such as a prisoner of war. It signifies liberty from captivity, bondage, or imprisonment. We are born into sin, and we are prisoners of sin, held in bondage by its power and are kept by the master of sin, the devil.

This is confirmed by the devil’s words to Jesus in Luke 4 where he stated that “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.” Sin is a firm bond, and the devil is a cruel taskmaster. However, Jesus’ mission was to destroy this power. John notes this as the principal reason for His coming-

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8

Jesus prevailed where Adam failed. What the devil gained through Adam’s disobedience; Jesus regained through His obedience. What God asks is that we simply believe this

message, receive His gift, and place our trust in what Jesus has done for us. This is the “redemption through His blood.” This is the marvel of what God has done for us. In Him there is absolute victory and complete reconciliation with God the Father.

As a means of highlighting this thought, Paul next says that in Him we also have “forgiveness of sins.” This is a complementary thought to the previous clause. The word for “forgiveness” signifies the complete release of someone from an obligation or debt. Sin’s penalty is ended through the work of Christ for all who believe.

The “redemption through His blood” looks at the work of atonement from God’s perspective. “The forgiveness of sins” looks at it from our side. One can see the work of the God/Man in this; He completed both. There is the heavenly side, and there is the earthly side. Together they unite in Him for reconciliation between the two.

Charles Ellicott notes that in order from the previous verse we see the First Cause of our salvation, which is the Father’s love. Here in verse 14, we see the Efficient Cause which is “the redemption and propitiation of the Son.”

Life application: Think soberly on what you have received from God in the giving of His Son. His blood was shed so that we could be redeemed. When one puts Jesus’ cross at the front of his thoughts, it puts all things into their proper perspective. There is an eternity of fellowship with God that lies ahead of us because of the cross of Jesus Christ.

*Heavenly Father, because of Your love, You sent Christ on a mission to redeem us from the world of sin, and the power of the devil. In the cross and shed blood of Christ Jesus, we have that redemption, and we have peace with You once again. What more can we add to that? Help us to be faithfully obedient to You, living lives of honor for what You have done for us. Thank You for Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.** Colossians 1:15

Words have meaning, and those words cannot be disassociated from the context of what is being said without destroying the intent of the author. Paul’s words in this verse, and in the verses to come, are precise. They are intended to cut through heresies which were already being introduced concerning Christ Jesus at that early date. In order for those at Colossae, and all believers in all ages since then, to understand proper Christological doctrine, he now writes these words about Jesus Christ.

He says that “He is the image of the invisible God.” The word is *eikon*. It is a word which “assumes a prototype, of which it not merely resembles, but from which it is drawn.” It is then “More than a ‘shadow,’ rather it is a replication” (HELPS Word Studies).

This replication reflects what it is replicating for us to understand. There is a stress on the words “the invisible God” to lead us to grasp that Jesus Christ is revealing that which would otherwise be unknown.

God’s perfections and His very Being are seen in Christ, being completely and accurately displayed in Him. This is explained in several different ways in the Bible. A few examples are –

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.” John 1:18

“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” John 14:9

“I and My Father are one.” John 10:30

What is being conveyed to us is that God is, but we cannot see Him. In order for us to understand Him in an intimate and personal way, He united with His creation in the womb of Mary, coming as Christ Jesus.

Therefore, He is the image, or replication, of what we could otherwise not see. He explains the Father to us because He is one with the Father, having come from the Father. The choice of wording Paul gives here, and the many references elsewhere in Scripture, are calling out for us to believe that Jesus Christ is God, nothing less.

When referring to God, Hebrews 1:3 calls the Son “the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person.” Paul repeats this in 2 Corinthians 4:4. God is, and Jesus is God.

Paul next notes that He is “the firstborn over all creation.” The term is *prototokos*, coming from two words, *prótos* – “first” or “preeminent,” and *tiktó* – “bring forth.” As the scholar Bengel notes, “The *pro*, which is contained in *prototokos*, governs the genitive *ktiseos*. Time is an accident of the creature.

Therefore the origin of the Son of God precedes all time.” In other words, Paul is not saying that Jesus is the Firstborn of all that is created, but He is the Firstborn prior to all

that is created; He is eternal, having issued from the Father, and having preceded time itself.

Vincent's Word Studies notes that, "As image points to revelation, so first-born points to eternal preexistence." This is logically supported by the words coming in the next verse. If this were not true, then Paul could not continue on with what he will next say, and yet he will. Further, the pattern used here in Colossians 1 is repeated in Hebrews 1 and John 1, showing that it is not a mistake by Paul, but it is rather logical and proper.

There is Christ, and then there is creation which follows. Logically, Christ then is God, having issued from the Father prior to the creation of time itself.

Life application: To rob Jesus Christ of His deity is to rob God of His glory. All of the work of Jesus Christ would be ascribed to a created being, but Scripture clearly shows that salvation is of the Lord, not of a creature created by Him. If you do not accept the deity of Jesus Christ, you call God a liar. The word is clear and unambiguous concerning Jesus' deity. If you disbelieve, the error is not with the word, but with you. Stop listening to whatever cult you have been trained by, and accept the Word of God alone.

*I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen.*

**For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. Colossians 1:16**

The word "For" here is given as an explanation of the previous verse. There it said, "He is the image of the invisible God." In order to explain what that means, these words are now given. It is not that Jesus Christ is merely a knock-off copy of God, but that He is God, wholly and completely. This is now substantiated by the words, "For by Him all things were created."

This takes us right back to Genesis 1:1 – "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In that verse, the term "the heavens and the earth" is meant to be taken as an all-encompassing statement. Elohim created all things.

Elohim is the Creator; Jesus is the Creator... not hard to figure out what Paul is telling us. Further, the words "all things" (in Greek *ta panta*) give a collective sense – "the all." This then signifies the entire universe which includes all things. From the atoms to the galaxies, all things were created by Him. Without the article in Greek, it would mean all

things individually, but the article shows that it is all things collectively. He created, and all things came to be.

It is the same message written by John at the very beginning of his gospel, and it is the same message which is repeated in various ways and by various writers in both Testaments of the Bible. Logically, there can be only one Creator. Anything created by Him is then a contingent being.

A contingent being cannot create anything. And yet, man has done everything possible to deny the deity of Jesus Christ in order to separate Him from what is said about Him. They have even added words into this verse in order to change the meaning of it in order to obscure what God has done in and through Jesus Christ (see below).

The words “were created” are in the aorist tense. This then denotes a specific, definite event which occurred in history. It wasn’t that there was a creation, and then a re-creation. Nor were there things created, and then later other things were created. Rather all things were created, and they remain as the creation to this day.

Going on, and as if what Paul said in his opening words was not enough, he continues with “that are in heaven and that are on the earth.” Again, this is an all-encompassing statement concerning the totality of creation. Paul’s words take us right back to Genesis 1:1, showing us that everything created by Elohim was created by Jesus. Elohim is God; Jesus is God... not hard to figure out what Paul is telling us. But to ensure that even the dull of mind can figure this out, he adds in the words, “visible and invisible.”

We are to understand that “all things in heaven and that are on the earth” also includes those things which cannot be seen, such as spirits. Everything which is in the material world, and everything which is in the spiritual world, is included in Jesus’ creative efforts. No angel exists apart from His work of creation.

This is further defined by the term, “whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.” Within both the spiritual and the earthly realms, there are levels of authority which govern the affairs of sentient beings. These were all created by Christ Jesus, and none exists apart from His authority in creation.

All things, and all levels of authority, are subordinate to Christ Jesus. As a qualifier to this statement though, Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 15 –

For “He has put all things under His feet.” But when He says “all things are put under *Him*,” it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.<sup>28</sup> Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

-1 Corinthians 15:27, 28

It may be worth your time to refer to the commentary on those verses to understand what is being relayed there. Jesus Christ is not above the Godhead, but is a member of it.

To finish up this verse, Paul gives the thought, “All things were created through Him and for Him.” He repeats the words *ta panta* or “all things” in order to recapitulate what he has just said. They are to be taken collectively once again – “All things, collectively, were created through Him and for Him.”

However, Paul changes the tense of the words “were created” from the aorist to the perfect tense. In so doing, it reads more literally, “All things have been created through Him and for Him.” Nothing is left undone, and His creative efforts are all-inclusive. The scholar Lightfoot says, “The latter describes the definite, historical act of creation; the former the continuous and present relations of creation to the Creator.”

Paul’s words of this verse are so clear, so meticulously presented, and so obvious as to what they are relaying that even a dolt, nay – a sub-dolt – can figure out what he is saying. Paul is not merely implying that Jesus is God, rather his words make the claim explicit. But this doesn’t fit with the theology of heretics, and so they must actually change the word of God in order to deny what Paul is saying.

And so, to understand the depths of hatred towards God that some are willing to go to in order to deny Jesus Christ His rightful position within the Godhead, this verse is translated by the aberrant cult, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, as –

“because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All other things have been created through him and for him.”

The word “other” is inserted twice by them in an attempt to obscure the truth of who Jesus Christ is. Without any Scriptural support at all, they have changed God’s word, thus bringing upon themselves eternal condemnation for their deceit.

This is not an argument concerning a variation in a Greek manuscript, but rather a purposeful act intended to deceive the world about the truth of God in Jesus Christ. Do not allow yourself to be sucked into their web of deceit, but stand on the truth of Scripture which teaches that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man.

Life application: Stand on the truth of the Word of God. Jesus Christ is God, and it is to Him that we are accountable for our life and doctrine. Should someone come to you with any other teaching, do not even greet them, lest you share in his wicked work.

*Heavenly Father, Your word confirms the deity of Jesus Christ, and also that of the Holy Spirit, as clearly and completely as any other doctrine to be found in it. Both testaments attest to this fact, and yet people argue against it, thus railing against You. Help us to be people of faith, and to accept Your word at face value. The Trinity is what Your word proclaims. And so, we praise You, O God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.** Colossians 1:17

Again, words concerning the deity of Christ issue from Paul's pen. There are two clauses in this verse, both of which have the word "He" in the emphatic position. In English, we might say "He and only He."

As "He is before all things," then nothing in time is before Him. As only God existed before all things, then Jesus Christ is God. He is the great I AM of Exodus 3:14, meaning the Lord, Yehovah, who is referred to throughout the Old Testament. He is self-existent and dependent on no other thing. Thus, His claim of John 8:58 is more fully understood -

"Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

Paul's words here also confirm the words of the previous verse as well which said, "All things were created through Him and for Him." If He alone is before all things, then He must be the Creator of all things. Only He is a necessary Being; all other things are contingent beings, dependent on Him for their existence and continuation.

As only God is a Necessary Being, then Jesus must be God. This is then realized in the words, "and in Him all things consist." The BLB translates this as, "in Him all things hold together." Darby translates it as, "all things subsist together by him."

The words here are restated by the author of Hebrews using the words, "...and upholding all things by the word of His power." The universe, being contingent, was

created by Him. However, it is also dependent on Him at all times for its continued existence. This shows us that He is God, who alone is absolutely necessary; He cannot not exist. All other things could simply not be. But God alone must exist. This is the Being that Paul says that Jesus Christ is.

As the Bible teaches that God is also Father and Holy Spirit, then we are again being instructed in the doctrine of the Trinity. This is the inescapable result of accepting the words of Scripture when taken at face value.

Life application: One argument used by cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses is that the Bible never uses the word "Trinity." That is as stupid as a football bat. The Bible also never uses the term "original sin," and yet it is a doctrine which permeates Scripture.

The Bible never uses the term "rapture," but it is a doctrine which is found in several passages. Just because we use terms not specifically stated in Scripture, it does not mean that those terms are not taught in Scripture.

Don't be led astray by nutty arguments that have no basis in reality. Core doctrines can be explicitly stated or implicitly stated, but they remain core doctrines because they describe and explain what the Bible clearly teaches.

*Lord God, to You alone be the glory. Your hands have fashioned the cosmos. The stars shine because of the magnificence of Your power. The galaxies spin and gleam throughout the vast recesses of space because You have ordained them to do so. The spider weaves its web because of the wisdom You have instilled in it, and the creatures of the ocean swim about because You have placed them there. Everything is as it should be – all because of Your wisdom. To You alone be the glory! Amen.*

**And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.** Colossians 1:18

Paul continues on with his description of Christ. In the previous verse, He was seen in relation to the creation, He being before it and above it in all ways. Now He is shown in relation to the church, a body which came forth out of the creation, and which is based on what He has done in creation. Paul shows that "He is the head of the body, the church."

The word “He” is once again emphatic, just as it was when speaking of Him as being the image of God. The One who is the image of God, it is He who is the head of the body. There is parallelism running between the two thoughts which will be built on by Paul.

The people of the world are all a part of the creation, but because of the fall, and because of free-will within man, not all of those in creation have acknowledged God. However, within the stream of humanity, God has called out a group who do acknowledge Him, those in this group have become members of His body.

Paul deals with this in the book of Ephesians, but there the stress is placed upon the unity of the body. Now he places the stress on the preeminent position of Christ within the body. Jesus Christ is the Head of this called-out group, the church.

While speaking of Him, he says, “who is the beginning.” As He is the One who created all things, so He is the beginning of the new thing which God has done within the creation. In this body, which is called out of the world, Christ is the beginning of it, being “the firstborn from the dead.”

This is where the parallelism finds its true anchor. It is between Christ’s position in relation to creation, and His position in relation to the church. He is “the firstborn over all creation” as was seen in verse 15, and He is “the firstborn from the dead.” The two thoughts place Christ Jesus in the preeminent position in all things.

However, there is a point which must be considered. Though Christ is the firstborn of both, His status in relation to the church differs from His status in relation to creation. He is the firstborn from the dead, having been One who was dead, just as those who come after Him also die; but though He is the firstborn over all creation, He is not a part of the creation.

In other words, it shows the magnitude of what Christ, the Creator, was willing to do in order to identify with those He has called. He was willing to participate in the most humiliating aspect of all in order to fellowship with us.

As death is the result of sin, He was willing to take our sin upon Himself and die. Having no sin of His own, He naturally had to resurrect. In His resurrection, He carried our sin away through His death, leaving it in death so that we might follow Him in life.

Because of this, He is the firstfruits from the dead, and the pattern for all who will afterwards arise from the dead. This is speaking of the resurrection, not a reanimation.

Others have been reanimated to life – Lazarus for example, but Christ is the first of the resurrection, coming forth to eternal life. Death is conquered in Him, and so will be the case for all who are in Him.

Thus, whether in relation to creation, or in relation to the church, Christ is first so “that in all things He may have the preeminence.” The words in Greek read, “might become being first.”

As Vincent’s Word Studies states concerning this, “He became head of the Church through His incarnation and passion, as He is head of the universe in virtue of His absolute and eternal being.” In all things, and in all ways, Jesus Christ is the first. He holds the position of absolute preeminence.

Life application: When we consider what God has done through Jesus Christ, we should be humbled to the very core of our being. It is impossible for us to truly imagine the value God has placed upon humanity when we consider the lengths He was willing to go through in order to bring us back to Himself. And He has done it in such a way that His glory radiates out in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, our Creator, our Savior, our Redeemer, and our matchless King.

*Lord God, it’s impossible for us to grasp the measure of Your love, but we have a way to consider it in relation to ourselves. We can see what You were willing to do by looking to the story of Jesus. That You would condescend to come into Your creation in order to bring us back to Yourself shows us the highest and most unimaginable cost that You were willing to bear. The cross of Calvary truly says it all. May our lives be lived in response to that most august of all events, never forgetting what You did in order to redeem us. Great and marvelous are You, O God. Amen.*

**For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell, Colossians 1:19**

The construction of the words of this verse leave it open as to the identification of the subject. The words, “the Father” are inserted here. Some translations state, “God,” or even “the Godhead.”

Others leave any insert out. The Father is referred to in verse 12 where Paul acknowledges “giving thanks to the Father.” However, the term “God” is used in verse 15 where it says, “He is the image of the invisible God.” As this is the nearest antecedent, and as “God” is at other times referring to the Father, it appears to be a better choice to fully define what is on Paul’s mind.

Further, Colossians 2:9 states, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily...” This is speaking specifically of Christ as well, and so Paul was probably thinking of the Godhead, or Deity, here in 1:19 as well. With this understanding, the verse can be logically evaluated.

“For it pleased” shows that what has come about in Christ was something satisfying to God. Everything about the exaltation of Christ which has been seen in the preceding verses was by the design, and with the approval, of God. Christ Jesus’ preeminence in all things was God’s intent all along. This is revealed through the words that “in Him all the fullness should dwell.”

The *pleroma*, or “fullness,” refers to all of the divine attributes and the essential nature of the Godhead. Everything about God that can be revealed to us is done so through Christ Jesus. He is the focal point for us to understand God, fully and completely. It is through Him that God will ceaselessly and endlessly reveal Himself to us. This is fully supported by the words of Revelation 21 –

“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.  
23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.” Revelation 21:22, 23

What God reveals of Himself is done through the Lamb. Thus, God’s light of revelation is fully expressed to us through Christ Jesus. This was what Jesus was telling the apostles in John 14:9, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

The fullness of the Godhead is seen and expressed to us through Jesus Christ because it dwells in Him. The word Paul uses for “dwell” is one which indicates settling down as a permanent resident. Jesus didn’t temporarily receive the fullness of the Godhead, but He possesses it completely and eternally. He is God’s permanent focal point for revealing Himself to us.

Life application: God has chosen to reveal Himself in His fullness through Jesus Christ. To deny the deity of Christ is to deny the truth of God. One either has the Son, which includes the fullness of God, or they do not have God. It is that plain and that simple. Don’t resist God any longer, but rather yield yourself to the Son and, in turn, be pleasing to God the Father.

*Heavenly Father, we can buck against Your word, denying what You have done through Jesus Christ, but only we will suffer. You are pleased to reveal Yourself through Him. We*

*can either accept that revelation of Yourself, or we can walk away from You and remain apart from You. But in Christ, there is fellowship; in Christ, there is hope; and in Christ, there is full and eternal reconciliation with You. May we yield our hearts and bow our knees before the matchless King of Glory! Praise You, O God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. Colossians 1:20**

For context, the previous verse needs to be cited with this one -

“For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell,<sup>20</sup> and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

The words, “and by Him” are thus speaking of Christ Jesus while the words, “to Himself” are speaking of God of the previous verse (remembering that the words “the Father” are inserted, but are speaking of God as the Father). The means by which God is reconciling all things to Himself is through Christ Jesus.

Here the term *ta panta*, or “all things,” is brought in again. All things which are to be reconciled are done so through Christ Jesus. Paul then follows this up with the words, “whether things on earth or things in heaven.”

The intent here is that there is a need for reconciliation between the earthly and the heavenly things. As Albert Barnes notes, “The meaning is not, that ‘the things in heaven’ were alienated from God, but that there was alienation in the universe which affected heaven, and the object was to produce again universal concord and love.” This sentiment is found elsewhere, such as in Ephesians 1:10 –

“...that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.”

Through Christ, there is this gathering together of all things. In Him the fracture is healed, and peace is restored. God has done this, “having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

The words “the blood of His cross” are given to mean the blood that He shed on the cross. The blood and the instrument which caused it to be shed are almost tied together as one in Paul’s mind. God chose the cross to be the means by which Christ’s blood would be shed, thus the cross stands as the symbol of what occurred. When we look to the cross, we look to the symbol of our faith which represents the blood that was shed.

It is through this instrument of death that life and reconciliation come about. It is through the cross that peace is realized. The blood of His cross then is a term which is linked to the thought of atonement, redemption, and propitiation as is spoken of in Romans 3 -

“...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup> to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:24-26

One thing that must be understood from this verse is that “all things” must mean “all things” just as it did before. Paul uses the same Greek term, *ta panta*, in verses 16, 17, and 18. It would not be logical to think that he suddenly means something different here than he did in those verses, because they are all connected to the same overall thought concerning Christ.

Understanding this, while at the same time taking in the whole counsel of Scripture, the idea of reconciling all things through Christ must include the thought of condemnation, not merely salvation.

All things are potentially reconciled through Christ’s cross. Not all things are actually reconciled though, at least not in the same way. God reconciles His faithful through salvation; God reconciles those who are at enmity with Him through condemnation.

God has set forth the cross of Christ as the means of reconciliation, while faith in that cross is the mode by which it comes. Without faith, the potential reconciliation is not realized, and thus only condemnation is left.

Life application: When we look to the cross, we are looking to the instrument by which God has brought us back to Himself. When we boast in the cross, we are not boasting in an idol, rather, we are boasting in the highest act of God’s love for mankind.

The cross stands as a symbol and a banner for the work of Jesus Christ. Let us not be confused about the meaning of the cross. Rather, let us boast in it because in so boasting, we are exalting the work of God in Christ.

*Lord God, thank You for the peace and restoration which has come about through the cross of Calvary. There Christ our Lord shed His blood, thus allowing peace and reconciliation with You once again. Help us to never shy back from speaking boldly about the great thing You have done for us in that act. May our boast be in Christ and in His cross, knowing that without them, we would be forever separated from You. But in Him, there is peace. Thank You, O God, for the precious blood of Calvary. Amen.*

**And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled...** Colossians 1:21

Paul just wrote about the reconciliation and peace which is found through the blood of Christ's cross. Now equating that to what occurred in the lives of those at Colossae (and thus us!), he says, "And you." He uses this phrase to demonstrate that what he just said applies directly to them and what occurred between God and them because of Christ. They "once were alienated."

This thought is similar to that of Ephesians 2:12 where he wrote that they "were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise."

Those in Colossae, and indeed all who have not yet come to Christ, are in this state. They are alienated from the good that God offers through Christ Jesus. And not only alienated, but "enemies in your mind by wicked works."

The Greek reads "in wicked works." In the performing of wicked works, alienation from God, and the state of enmity, is realized. This is the "power of darkness" which he spoke of in verse 13. The devil holds sway over the world, and all who are not in Christ are bound under his power. However, through the blood of Christ's cross, these things are defeated. As he says, "...yet now He has reconciled."

The enmity between God and man is ended, the alienation no longer exists, and a state of reconciliation is realized. This is the power of the blood of Christ. All things are made new for those who reach out in faith and receive the gift of God which is found in the work of the Lord Jesus.

Life application: Paul takes it as an axiom that all people are alienated from God until they come to Him through Christ. This is something we need to consider as we interact with others. They are either in Christ, and thus reconciled to God, or they are alienated from Him.

If we can just remember this simple truth, and then gear our hearts towards the fact that Christ died on a cross to end this alienation, then maybe we will make evangelizing others a greater priority. What prompted God to do what He did through Jesus should be what prompts us to act in the same manner.

Let us display the love of God towards the lost, endeavoring to change hearts and minds for the purpose of reconciliation and salvation.

*Heavenly Father, the fact that You sent Christ Jesus to walk among us, share in our troubles, and to die in order to reconcile us to Yourself should motivate us to have a like-attitude towards the lost. If You went to such great lengths to reach out and bring reconciliation, shouldn't we be willing to explain that to those who so desperately need it? Help us to share in Your heart for the lost, and help us to be willing to speak up about the shed blood which covers all sins, and which reconciles us to You. Amen.*

**...in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— Colossians 1:22**

Paul's words of this verse place a stress on the literal, human body of Christ Jesus. His words here expand on the thought of being reconciled from the previous verse. This was accomplished "in the body of His flesh."

Atonement could not come through God who is Spirit, nor could it come through an angelic being which also has no physical body. Rather, it had to come through a human. However, not just any human would do. As humanity is infected with sin, this needed to be a sinless human, or no atonement could have taken place.

It is for this reason that Paul has already carefully and precisely described the deity of Christ. In so doing, the humanity is clearly revealed as pure, holy, and capable of redeeming man.

As He is fully God, He inherited no sin from a human father. As He is fully man, He is capable and qualified to atone for man's sin. It is through this unique "body of His flesh" that the necessary atonement can be obtained, but still it had to come "through death."

The Bible instructs us that without the shedding of blood, there can be no atonement for sin. In the Greek, there is an article before “death,” and so it reads, “through the death,” or “through His death” (the article is masculine).

Again, Paul stresses the humanity of Jesus with the article. He really lived, and He really died, proving that He was Man with a human body. It is through this part of His nature, His humanity, that atonement was realized. Paul then shows that this was done in order “to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.”

The “His” of these words is speaking of God. The human aspect of Christ died in order for man to be acceptable before the divine aspect of Christ in God. And thus, the work is sufficient to please the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In Christ, we are deemed as “holy,” and thus we are positively set apart as acceptable to God because of Christ. In Christ, we are deemed as “blameless.”

The word indicates “without blemish.” Because of Christ, we will be presented to God as bearing no sin. Sin comes through law, and in Christ the law is annulled. Sin cannot be imputed where law is ended. Therefore, we will be without spot or blemish, and considered pure and undefiled by sin because of Christ. And in Christ, we will be considered “above reproach.”

The word speaks of legal charges used against someone in a court of law. No charges will stand against us as we are brought into the presence of God. The decree “not guilty” will be proclaimed over us because of our standing in Christ who is “not guilty” before His Father.

Life application: Because of the work of Christ, we are free from guilt, and we are reckoned as righteous before God. Paul asks in Romans, “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is God who justifies.*” Take time today to ponder your standing in Christ, and show your gratefulness to God for what He has done. Give praise, glory, and honor to Him for freeing us from what would otherwise be eternal condemnation.

*Heavenly Father, when we contemplate what You have done to restore us to Yourself, it is beyond imagination. You prepared a body for Christ in order to redeem us. Without His humanity, we would have been forever lost, condemned and unforgiven. But in Him, the law is fulfilled, the charges are dropped, and we can stand before You blameless. Thank You, O God, for the life and the work of Jesus Christ who cleanses us from all unrighteousness! Amen.*

**...if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. Colossians 1:23**

There is a lot going on in the first two words of this verse. It says, “If indeed...”

On the surface, it seems as if what he has said in the previous verse about being reconciled, and thus presented “holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” is conditional. However, the word “if” “conveys a supposition hardly hypothetical – ‘If as I presume;’ ‘if, as I trust.’ St. Paul cannot refrain from needful warning, be he refuses to anticipate failure” (Charles Ellicott).

The word translated as “if” is noted as a word where “the assumption may only be *portrayed* as valid” (HELPS Word Studies). Stated even more directly, the Expositor’s New Testament says that it “expresses the Apostle’s confidence that the condition will be fulfilled.

This abiding in faith is the only, as it is the sure way, to this presentation of themselves. This is directed against the false teachers’ assurance that the gospel they had heard needed to be supplemented if they wished to attain salvation.”

In other words, what appears doubtful in the English is actually a statement of certainty in Paul’s mind. The same construction of “if indeed” is found in Ephesians 3:2, and 4:21. In both instances, Paul is stating a fact, not something to be doubted. He would not use the grammatical construction as he has unless he was making a point of certainty. Taking the words now in this light, they can continue to be properly evaluated. He says, “...if indeed you continue in the faith.”

Many translations say, “in your faith,” and this is what Vincent’s word Studies argues for. He says, “The faith is not the gospel system, but the Colossians’ faith in Christ. Your faith would be better.”

And so, Paul is arguing that the Colossians have a hope which is grounded in their faith, not in some external thing that must be applied to, or added to, their faith. He next speaks of this faith as being “grounded and settled.”

The grounding is in what the faith is directed to, which is “the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*” (Ephesians 2:20). That which is settled is based on the grounding. The Greek word comes from a root which

means “a seat.” The idea is that we are seated on the foundation and are thus immovable. Our faith is what sets us firmly and fixedly in this manner.

In this position, he then says, “and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.” Because of our faith which is grounded and fixed, we will not be so moved away. His words, again, are not words of doubt, but of reassurance. The words went out, they were received, and it is these words which have grounded us. Nothing needs to be added to them in order for our hope to be realized. Paul then says that the gospel “was preached to every creature under heaven.”

His words are given with the time-reference of “was” to indicate that which is ideal, not actual. In other words, the gospel was effectively proclaimed “when the Saviour, in His accomplished victory, bade it be done (Mark 16:15)” (Cambridge). In other words, when Christ said that the gospel was to be preached to every creature, it was effectively done at that time.

The commission was given, and it will meet its intended goals; nothing can thwart the purposes for which it is intended. This is certain because the words “every creature” are not limited to humans, but to all of the scope of creation. Through the gospel, all things will be reconciled, even those things to which the gospel was not actually preached. But the proclamation that it is to be done is itself sufficient to ensure that it will be accomplished.

Finally, he concludes with, “...of which I, Paul, became a minister.” This phrase is used by him in Ephesians 3:7 also. He has made an emphasis of the gospel being the true and reliable message of God which comes through the work of Christ.

It is the only true message of reconciliation among all of the countless false gospels which have been proclaimed. In stating that he has become a minister of this gospel, he is asserting that his commission is valid and authentic. Any message by an evangelist or apostle that contradicts his words is thus a false message.

Life application: There are nuances in the Bible which are intended to keep us from error. If we simply assume that the English translation we are reading is correct, we can easily fall into error. This is especially so because even in the English, there may be several ways of interpreting what is being said. However, the same is true with the original languages.

Therefore, a careful study of Scripture with other passages in Scripture is often needed to fully understand what is being conveyed. If one verse assures the believer of eternal salvation, and another seems to imply this is not so, then one or the other must be misunderstood.

Study and contemplate the words of Scripture carefully, don't get stuck on a single translation of the word, and don't trust only one commentator's views on what is being said. Be well-rounded in your study of this precious word.

*Lord God, thank You for the many blessings of this life. You have given us so much, and we often fail to show our gratitude for what You have blessed us with. Help us to make gratitude an on-going and constant habit. Help us to be thankful at all times, but especially for the Gift of Christ Jesus our Lord. In showing thankfulness for Him, we will then never have a time when we are ungrateful! How good You are to us, O God. Amen.*

**I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, Colossians 1:24**

The words of this verse have been misused by the Roman Catholic Church to indicate that the sufferings of Christ were not all sufficient for our redemption and atonement, and that Christ's people must continue to earn their way into glory. This has nothing to do with what Paul is speaking about here.

He begins with "I now rejoice." The Greek is more abrupt, beginning with the word "now." The word "now" is temporal. He is saying, "I am bound with a chain, and in the midst of this captivity and suffering, I rejoice."

This was the case even though he was appointed as an apostle by Christ and was doing that work as an apostle. The sufferings then are a part of that apostleship which is "for you," meaning those in Colossae (and thus us!).

In these sufferings, he states, "and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ." The term, "the afflictions of Christ" is unique to this passage of Scripture and the intent is a fuller explanation of 2 Corinthians 1:5 which said -

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ."

The church is destined for suffering, just as it is destined for glory. Paul understood this, and he felt that as much as he suffered there was an abounding of consolation to be found at the same time. Nothing was lacking in the process of suffering. And the consolation which he felt was surety that he possessed the Spirit of God.

In knowing this, he was thus comforted because the Spirit is a guarantee of future glory for the believer. Hence, he notes exactly this in Philippians 3:10 -

"...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

In "being conformed to His death," we shall also be raised as He was to eternal life through "the power of the resurrection." There could be no shame in the suffering if there is the coming glory which that suffering leads to.

Understanding this, believers are not to be ashamed of suffering, but instead are instructed to be willing to bear His reproach, knowing that we bear all of the honor and future glory that comes with it.

With this understanding, we can then see that the words, "and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ" mean that suffering is a part of the human experience in a world filled with sin. Paul's sufferings don't add to the atonement which Christ alone provided, but they rather are a natural result of what is expected in the church as it takes on the challenge of bringing the gospel to the world.

Missionaries have died, or have been tortured, for bringing the message of Christ to pagan lands. In this, they are filling up what is lacking. There is a need to be met (a lack), and they are the ones who are filling that need. This is, as he says, "for the sake of His body, which is the church." If the message is going to go out as Christ commanded, there will be afflictions associated with it.

Were it not so, He would not have told His followers to take up their cross. This continues even now as the message continuously finds those who wish to crush it and persecute those who proclaim it.

The physical body of Christ Jesus suffered for our sake so that we could become a part of the mystical body of Christ, the church. This body continues to suffer until the church is complete. This has nothing to do with atonement or earning our way into glory, but it is

the natural result of carrying the message in a world which needs to hear the good news of Christ Jesus.

Life application: Not all will suffer as Paul speaks of here, but for those who do, they are filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of the church. This is not something to be ashamed of, but to glory in. Let us rejoice if we do suffer in the process of sharing the gospel. It means we are a step closer to the day when the church is complete.

*Heavenly Father, thank You that everything necessary to bring us back to You has been accomplished by Christ Jesus. What He did on the cross has completed that need, once and for all. Now, it is our turn to continue on with the work of Christ in sharing what He has done for us. Should we suffer in the process, let us rejoice that we have shared in a small way in bringing the message to those in darkness. Any suffering is temporary, but the glory of what lies ahead is eternal. Help us to remember this as we head out to share this precious message. Amen.*

**...of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, Colossians 1:25**

The words, “of which,” are speaking of the church as referred to in the previous verse. Paul states that he has become “a minister according to the stewardship.”

In verse 23, he had stated that he was a minister of the gospel. At other times, he states he is a minister of God and of Christ. The gospel is the message of God, whom Paul serves, it is the story of Christ, who is his Lord, and the church is His body which receives that message of Christ from God. All are intricately tied together.

Paul’s ministering to the church is, as he says, “according to the stewardship.” The word is *oikonomia*, and it indicates an administration of affairs, such as the stewardship of a household. Paul was selected to be the particular minister according to the administration of God’s dealings in the world through the church, the body of Christ. As noted, this stewardship is “from God.”

God has laid out the plan of the ages, and it is slowly unfolding in the stream of time. At this time, the church is how God is dealing with the affairs of His household. Thus, the church-age is called, “the dispensation of grace.”

Paul's duties as a minister in this capacity are, as he says, "given to me for you." He is writing to those at Colossae, a Gentile church. This letter, along with his other signed letters – all to Gentiles – are authoritative for the Gentile-led church-age because he is the Apostle to the Gentiles. His commission is noted in Acts 9, and it is a duty which he faithfully executed in order "to fulfill the word of God."

The Greek here indicates "to fill up the word of God." His duties as a minister of God were to teach and to make fully known the word of God to the Gentile world. The salvation, instruction, and growth of the Gentile-led church is the object of his calling and ministry.

Further, in his actions, he is also filling up the word of God in the sense that this was prophesied in the Hebrew scriptures. The Gentiles would come to God through the work of Christ, and Paul's efforts are what was now accomplishing that. Those efforts continue on to this day as his letters set the authoritative standard for this dispensation.

Life application: To understand what God is doing in the world through the church, one must refer to Paul's letters. The Lord selected him to give us the authoritative letters of instruction for this dispensation. To ignore Paul will lead one to have a vast gap in proper theology.

A complete misunderstanding of what God intends for His church will be the result. Take time each week to read one of Paul's letters. Any can be read in a single day. If one is read each week, they can all be read in 3 months. If you do this always, you will have read them four times in a single year. And that is just one letter a week.

Lord God, help each of us to not look back on our lives and say, "Gee, I should have spent more time getting to know the Lord through His word."

Instead, when we come before You for our moment of inspection, may we do so knowing that our time was well spent, reading Your word and searching You out. We have time for TV, sports, and all kinds of temporary, useless stuff. But have we made time for You? Help us to think this through clearly, and then to act accordingly. Amen.

**...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. Colossians 1:26**

Paul continues with words concerning his ministry. The previous verse, taken together with this one, says -

“...of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, <sup>26</sup>the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.”

In fulfilling the word of God, “the mystery” that he now writes about becomes the subject. The explanation of what this mystery is comes in the next verse, it being the idea that salvation has come not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles as well. Paul describes this as a “mystery.”

In the Bible, a mystery is something which has been hidden in God’s wise counsel until a time when He determines to reveal it. It is something that could not be known apart from His special revelation.

Types, shadows, and pictures of it may be seen in the Old Testament, but until those were explained through the word of Christ, they remained hidden as mystery. The book of Jonah, for example, gives a picture of what Paul is referring to, but only by looking at the story through the lens of Christ Jesus can it be properly understood. Thus, Paul says that the mystery “has been hidden from ages and generations.”

Vincent’s Word Studies notes that this term includes, “The unit and the factors: the *aeon* or age being made up of generations.” He goes on to say that “Before the beginning of the ages of the world the counsel of God was ordained, but not concealed, because there were no human beings from whom to conceal it. The concealment began from the beginning of the world, with the entrance of subjects to whom it could be a fact.”

In other words, God determined from eternity past what He would do, and the plan was fixed. However, it is a plan which He has kept unknown to His creatures until a set point when it would be revealed. This plan is now explained in the coming of Christ, and in the forgiveness of sins even to the Gentiles. Even those who walked with Jesus didn’t grasp it at first. This is seen, for example, in Acts 11 –

“When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’” Acts 11:18

The mystery was hidden until a certain point. It was concealed, but it “now has been revealed to His saints.” Those in Acts 11 began to understand what was happening, but Christ selected Paul to be the one to fully reveal the mystery to the world through his writings.

The saints, meaning the believers in Christ, can refer to his writings in order to fully grasp what has occurred and to look for proper doctrine in how to conduct themselves in the age of the revealed mystery.

Life application: Whether a Jew or a Gentile, you are a saint of God if you have called on Christ Jesus. Rejoice in what He has done for you. If a Jew, you are brought out from being under a heavy burden and are granted complete restoration with God through Christ. If a Gentile, without ever having been under the yoke of the law, you are brought directly into the people of God by simple faith in what He has done. Rejoice in this and give God the glory!

*Heavenly Father, You have worked in history to restore all peoples to Yourself. In the giving of Your Son, we become saints through faith in what He has done. What a simple thing to receive, and yet it is an offer which is mocked and scorned by so many. Help us to be bold and proclaim the truth of Your word, never waffling in what it says. There is one way to reconciliation with You and that is through the work of Christ. Let us not set aside this grace, but to trust in it wholly and completely. To Your glory alone we pray. Amen.*

**To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27**

The words “To them” are referring to the saints as stated in the previous verse. It is to the saints that “God willed.” The words are emphatic in the Greek. Thus, it reads, “To whom has willed God...” It was God’s sovereign choice alone “to make known what are the riches.”

The “riches” of God are many. The word indicates a great amount in number or quantity, and thus abundance. These riches are described by Paul in Romans 2 and include His 1) “goodness” – this is His benign nature.

He is a compassionate God who is in no way arbitrary or vindictive; 2) His “forbearance” – this reflects God’s restraint. When judgment would be expected under almost any conceivable circumstance, He still withholds His wrath, understanding that we are prone to sin from birth; and 3) because of His forbearance, He is also “long-suffering.” This concept shows that not only does He withhold His wrath, but He is also “slow to anger” as is noted in Exodus 34:6, 7 –

“And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.’”

Such riches as these are included in “the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles.” The Old Testament deals almost exclusively with a single line of people who became Israel. God revealed Himself to them, and they were considered the people of God.

However, in Christ, that honorable title now extends to any and all. This is the “mystery” that Paul speaks of. He, the apostle to the Gentiles, is making it fully known to the Gentile people of the world who now can share in these riches of God.

He makes this explicitly known by finishing with, “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The words, “Christ in you” indicate what has occurred when a person (Jew or Gentile) believes in the finished work of Jesus.

The moment that belief is exercised, he is sealed with the Holy Spirit, and is thus saved. He moves from Adam to Jesus and has a new and glorious hope. There is a slight variation in some manuscripts concerning the words, “which is Christ in you.”

Some have it as masculine, and thus it would be referring to the riches. Others have it as neuter, and thus it would be referring to the mystery. Either way, the fact that Christ is now in those who believe, this has become our “hope of glory.”

There is an article in front of glory, and so it more accurately reads, “the glory.” Those who have received Christ have not yet obtained the full measure of the glory of Christ. Rather, it indicates a future hope which will be realized when He returns for us, and we are glorified.

It is a glory for which we have been destined, and nothing will thwart its coming and consummation in us. Such is the hope of the believer in Christ. It is a grounded hope in the sure promises of God.

Life application: When we stand at the graveside of a believer in Christ, we have the absolute guarantee that death cannot hold that person. There is a time for mourning because we will miss the presence of the one that we have cherished and shared in life

with, but there should also be a sense of joy that the great and eternal promises of God cannot be overcome by the death which we have faced.

It is but a temporary separation which will be ended with the blast of the trumpet and the gathering together of the saints of God.

*Most gracious heavenly Father, thank You for the sure and eternal promises we possess because of what You have done for us in Christ Jesus. We have a certain hope that the troubles of this life are temporary. They will pass away, and all the sadness and loss of this life will be forgotten. Your saints will rise to eternal life, and the riches which lie ahead are far greater than anything we now possess. And best of all, we will be in Your glorious presence for all eternity. Thank You for what You have done for us in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

**Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28**

“Him” is speaking of “Christ” as referred to throughout the passage, and also in the preceding verse. In the words “Him we preach,” the “we” is in the emphatic position. Thus, he is including Epaphras of verse 7, and Timothy who was included in verse 1. He is probably also referring to true apostles who would come and preach Jesus Christ in the manner of himself and these others. In other words, anyone who does not preach Him in the same manner is to be rejected. Next he says, “warning every man.”

The word is *nouthetéō*, and it means “admonish through instruction.” This is particularly when appealing to the mind in order to supply substance in doctrine and spiritual matters. It gives the sense of exerting positive pressure on another person’s logic or reason.

Therefore, the word “warning” which is repeated from the archaic KJV is better translated as “admonish.” What “warning” once meant has taken on a different force in modern English which is not found in Paul’s thoughts. In addition to admonishment, he says, “and teaching.”

Whereas the admonishment is directed to those who have already been taught, and which looks to correctly walking in accord with doctrine, or repenting and turning back to correct doctrine, the teaching looks to those who are uneducated in matters, and who need to learn instruction. This then is directed to their intellect in order for them to obtain the necessary information that they lack.

Paul uses the word “every” in both admonishing and in teaching, and then again in the next clause as well, in order to “emphasize the universality of the Gospel against the intellectual exclusiveness encouraged by the false teachers” (Vincent’s Word Studies).

Whereas false teachers claim exclusive knowledge that they alone possess, the Gospel is open to all and can be understood by all. The only thing exclusive about the words of Scripture are that they are revealed as God determines, and also by study and contemplation by those who would desire deeper knowledge. However, what is revealed is open to all.

His next words, “in all wisdom,” are given to oppose “the esoteric and exoteric wisdom represented by the false teacher; higher knowledge for the few philosophic minds, and blind faith for the masses. In Christian teaching the highest wisdom is freely open to all” (Vincent’s Word Studies).

As you can see, Paul’s letter is not only one of instruction on what is correct concerning Christ, but also a letter warning against what is incorrect. It is a cult-buster if one properly uses it in that manner. Hence education in the book of Colossians, as well as in all Scripture, is vital for sound doctrine.

Finally, Paul says that this admonishment and teaching is done so “that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” This corresponds to his words of verse 22 which said that Christ’s work was intended “to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.”

It is a perfection which finds its source in Christ, not in wisdom of the mind, or a perfection of the body through asceticism. Rather, it is through instruction in the work of Christ, and in the application of that instruction to our lives that we will be perfected until the day He comes to finally and fully perfect us.

Life application: The Bible is given for life’s doctrine and practice. We cannot grow in Christ without it, and we err when we think that mere life-application sermons which tickle our ears will satisfactorily help us to grow spiritually.

If you or a loved one isn’t actively reading the Bible and following through with Bible studies, you are not living in accord with the instructions found in the Bible itself. Turn off the TV and open the Bible. Get to it there, friend.

*What a wonderful word You have given to us, O God. Help us not to neglect reading and studying it. Yes, there are things which take up our time, but how many of them are really that important? How can it be that we have time for 3 or 4 hours of TV a day, but we don't have time for 30 minutes of reading Your word? Help us to get our priorities right, and help us to fill our time with that which is pleasing to You. Amen.*

**To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.**  
Colossians 1:29

Paul completes Chapter 1 by moving from the third person to the first person. After this, in Chapter 2, he will continue speaking in the first person, directly giving them words of council and admonition.

The words, "To this" refer to the previous verse where it said, "...we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The transition to the singular person then occurs. In essence, "It is for this reason we do this, and for this reason I follow through with it."

He then notes that, it is for this goal that "I also labor." The word means to labor with both physical and mental strength to the point of weariness. Paul would exhaust himself in order to bring every man to perfection in Christ Jesus. In further explanation of that, he says that he is "striving according to His working."

The word translated as "striving," *agónizomai*, indicates a struggle as if one is engaged in a wrestling match or in a battle. One can see that this is a root of the modern word for "agony."

The words, "His working" is referring to Christ Jesus. The word is *energeia*, and Paul's use of it is that of God's power being supplied to him and through him. It is as if he was a machine, plugged into a receptacle. In that state, he was receiving energy necessary to move from one task to another because of this external supply coming into him.

One can see that this is where our modern term "energy" is derived from. He was able to meet the challenges set before him because of this power which, as he says, "works in me mightily."

This mighty power is the word *dunamis*. It is God's power, supplied to him, which then results in powerful deeds and successful accomplishments. This is the root of our modern term for "dynamite." Paul was chosen by God to transmit the message of the

gospel to the Gentiles. He both labored with all of his might, and he relied fully on the power of God to continue to meet every challenge that came before him.

Life application: God has fashioned each of us to accomplish certain things, if we are willing to expend ourselves in doing them. But He hasn't left us to simply wear ourselves out in the process. He will supply us with everything we need in order to continue to work effectively for Him. Let us not trust in our own strength, but rely on the Lord who is the One who has set the plan into motion, and who will see it through to its completion.

*Lord God, there are times when we get weary from the labors we are engaged in, but if they are labors for You, and if You intend for them to be completed, You will give us the strength necessary to accomplish them. Help us to trust in You, to rely on You, and to allow You to be our Source of strength as we continue to labor for You. Surely Your power is sufficient in and through us to accomplish all things! Thank You for this assurance. Amen.*

## CHAPTER 2

**For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, Colossians 2:1**

To open Chapter 2 (remember though that chapter divisions didn't exist at this time), Paul says, "For I want you to know..." The words are given to show that what his heart feels is what he is trying to convey, knowing that if they understood these emotions, they would be truly affected concerning his words. More commonly, Paul would say, "I would not have you to be ignorant," such as in 1 Corinthians 12:1. Here he makes it a positive, rather than a negative, statement.

Understanding this, he continues with, "...what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea." The word he uses here is the noun *agon*. It is cognate to the verb "striving" of verse 1:29. It is as if he were in a battle or a wrestling match against the spiritual foes of the church, fighting for the precious saints that he was called to minister to.

It is certainly a spiritual battle which he is speaking of, as the words of the next clause will show. In verse 4:12, he will again use the verb form of the word when speaking of the prayers of Epaphras. This further shows us that Paul's conflict is tied into the striving of Epaphras, and which is spiritual in nature. His desire was that they could know and understand the level of trial and striving he had put forth on the behalf of the churches of Colossae and Laodicea.

But he next shows that this conflict was not limited to them alone. Rather, it extended to "as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." He was, at this point, unknown personally to many, and yet he labored for them in the great conflict of spiritual matters.

He wrote epistles, he studied the Scriptures in order to find answers to questions that had been sent to him, he steadfastly prayed for those who were being led astray, and so on. It was his calling to minister, and minister he did. He put forth great effort in order to bring soundness of doctrine and peace within the fellowship to those he ministered to.

Life application: Are you willing to minister to those you have never actually met? What will you do if someone emails you with questions concerning doctrine? And what if you hear of a church that is struggling and facing great trials?

We have open to us a vast amount of resources for helping in doctrine, and we have the throne of heaven open to us for prayer when such needs are made known to us. Let us use these tools as weapons in the great spiritual battle we are engaged in.

*Lord God, Your word tells us that we are in a spiritual battle. The life we live certainly shows us that this is true. And so why would we think that we can make it safely through this conflict without possessing all the tools necessary to engage the enemy? And yet, we fashion our own weapons which have no ability to overcome the powers of wickedness instead of going to the arsenal You have already provided for us. Your word tells us who the enemy is, what weapons to use, and how to employ them. Help us to get it right, and to enter the battle properly fitted with the things we need to win. Give us wisdom to read Your word and apply it to our lives. Amen.*

**...that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, Colossians 2:2**

In saying “their hearts,” Paul is speaking of those who had not yet seen his face in the flesh from the previous verse. The conflict he had was for them in order that their hearts may be encouraged. As noted in the previous verse, Paul’s conflict was certainly a spiritual one, and in that conflict, he had striven to bring them to a point where they would be content while facing trials and troubles of their own.

This was something that was (and still is to this day) expected. Being in Christ does not mean freedom from troubles. Rather, it often means facing even greater troubles. But Paul desired that they would be encouraged through them. One way for this to happen would be for them to be “knit together in love.”

A unified body is a body which can support one another through times of trial. Add in love, and it is a source of great comfort and even joy. Facing trials alone can be miserable, but when facing them with others, there is strength and resolve which is often otherwise lacking.

Paul prayed for this to be the case among them. However, he desired more. He also wished for them to attain “to all riches of the full assurance of understanding.”

These words look forward to the coming words as the object for which they should be encouraged and knit together. The riches are what are contained in the object to be

mentioned, the “full assurance” is the benefit of having those riches, and the “understanding” is what makes the other two possible.

In understanding what he will mention, there will be full assurance, and the riches will be fully obtained. And so, he next relays what he is referring to with the words, “...to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.”

“The knowledge of the mystery of God” is that which has been revealed. A mystery is something once hidden, but now known. The “mystery of God” which Paul speaks of here is that “both of the Father and of Christ.”

The word “Father” is not included in many manuscripts, and thus is lacking in most translations. Regardless of this, what Paul is speaking of is what will be explained in verses 2:8 and 2:9. The mystery is that Christ Jesus reveals the unseen God to us. He is a member of the Godhead, and in Him the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily.

This is the mystery which Paul is speaking of, and which he desires his readers to know and to understand. In so doing, they will possess the riches and have full assurance of their faith.

Life application: Paul’s words always lead the reader to Christ Jesus. He is the focal point of the Christian faith. Without Him, God is not fully knowable, but in understanding Christ, we can then understand God in a full and intimate way which brings us joy, and which also makes possible a personal relationship with our Creator. Let us follow the admonition of Scripture and fix our eyes and our thoughts on Jesus.

*Heavenly Father, there are true riches in knowing Christ Jesus, and in our pursuing Him, there is full assurance that we know You and are intimately connected to You. There is no longer any separation between us, but rather there is confident hope, complete understanding, and blessed joy as we live in Your marvelous presence. Thank You for Jesus who makes all of this possible. Amen.*

**...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** Colossians 2:3

The order of the Greek is, “...in whom are all the treasures the wisdom and knowledge hidden.” The “in whom” is speaking of Christ, not the mystery, of the preceding verse. Christ is the nearer antecedent, and therefore it is identifying Him as the repository. In Him are “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

The reason for introducing the thought will be seen in the coming verse. Paul is now identifying the true Source of everything which deals with true wisdom and knowledge. "Wisdom" is referring to that which is general in nature, such as the need for salvation. It is from this general body that comes understanding.

And so, understanding is that which is specific, and which deals with the intellect after it has applied wisdom. Hence it embodies doctrinal matters. As the need for salvation is general, the way to be saved is specific. In Christ are also found the specific answers to such general things. In Him are found all things necessary in order to be fully knowledgeable about that which we need in order to be complete in our walk with God.

If we think through what we are being told, then it becomes obvious that if there is a need to be saved, and that God wants us to be saved, then He would provide that knowledge to us through the repository of that knowledge.

This is the purpose of the Bible, which is the word of God, coming from the Word (meaning Christ) of God. There is nothing lacking in what we need in order to be saved, and in order to continue our walk in that state of salvation, so that we can be pleasing to Him.

Life application: We do not need a secret wisdom which only a few enlightened people can impart to us. What we need is to get our noses into the Bible and to discover Christ Jesus. In Him we have all that is necessary to be reconciled to God, and to be pleasing to Him in that state of having been reconciled.

*Heavenly Father, thank You that nothing has been left undone concerning our ability to know if we are fully pleasing to You or not. You have revealed in Your word everything we need in order to be saved, and also in order to walk in a right manner before You. And both are centered on the Person and work of Christ Jesus. Thank You that everything we need is found in Him! Praise You for our Lord Jesus. Amen.*

**Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.** Colossians 2:4

This verse explains the reason why Paul specifically stated these words concerning Christ Jesus in the previous verse – "...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

In Christ, and thus in the word which He has given to us, we find the true and accurate revelation of wisdom and knowledge. Whatever we need to know about Christ, the

Godhead, salvation, our relationship with God, and so forth, will logically be revealed to us by Christ Jesus and not by someone claiming they have a special, insightful knowledge that only he possesses.

In saying that the Bible is revealed by Christ, one understands the Bible to be that necessary revelation, given to us by the Holy Spirit, also known as the “Spirit of Christ” (Romans 8:9).

Therefore, Paul says, “Now this I say.” As an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and as the Apostle to the Gentiles, his words are guided by the Spirit and are thus authoritative. In contrast to that certainty, he continues with, “lest anyone.”

Anyone means anyone. There are the true apostles, and then there are those who will come contradicting them, or claiming extra revelation beyond them. And such has been the case for 2000 years. There has been a stream of false teachers and false prophets since the beginning. This is certain, because Paul’s words are given to refute such people. This means they were there even at the beginning. And they have been steadily making up crazy things ever since.

The words “should deceive” are from a Greek word used only here and in James 1:22. They give the sense of reasoning contrary to the truth in a misleading or erroneous way. These people use words which seem plausible, but will later disappoint. There is no true substance behind them.

The “persuasive words” are from a Greek word found only here in the Bible. They indicate words which beguile. People have the ability to weave words together which sound reasonable and persuasive, but they actually only lead the hearers down paths which oppose a sound walk with Christ.

A perfect modern day example would be a heretic who teaches dual-covenantalism. One of the leading proponents of this false doctrine is an excellent orator, speaking words which are powerful and full of deep emotion over the subject he speaks.

And yet, his words form arguments which are often not grounded in Scripture, and are even contrary to Scripture. However, because of the powerful presentation of his words; and because of them being mixed with occasional truth from Scripture which are combined with conservative emotions of national pride, as well as pride in the people of Israel, his sermons are accepted as wholly truthful. But when analyzed apart from the eloquent oration, what he states often forms unsound non-biblical messages.

The list of people like this, especially in more modern times where their writings are available, is long, and it grows longer by the day. We must be careful never to get caught up in being deceived by persuasive words, but all things must be compared to Scripture.

Life application: Do you truly measure the words of the teachers you listen to against Scripture, or do you just take their instruction at face value because their arguments sound correct? First, never take any commentary concerning God's word at face value, but rather check it out against His word. And secondly, how can you check out an analysis of God's word against what His word actually says unless you know enough of it to make the check? Know your Bible!

*Heavenly Father, grant us sound teachers of Your word who are willing to do the hard work, carefully studying what You have presented to us, so that we are not led astray by persuasive, but deceitful words. And Lord, grant us the common sense to pick up Your word, study it daily, and know it well enough so that we won't get misdirected by Heretic Harold or Apostate Andy. Keep pushing us along to crave after Your precious, superior word. Amen.*

**For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.** Colossians 2:5

Paul had just said to the Colossians, "Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words." Building upon that, he says, "For."

He understands that they will have deceivers come in among them, and attempt to lure them away from the truth which is found in Christ alone. As a note of comfort to them, he next says, "though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit."

The question is, "Is Paul referring to his own spirit, as if his heart is with them; or is he speaking of the Holy Spirit, meaning a spiritual bond exists between the two?" The question is hotly debated, but the wording he uses gives us a clue. In 1 Corinthians, he says something similar -

"For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed." 1 Corinthians 5:3

In these words of 1 Corinthians 5, he uses the term "body." There, he was making an assertion that he is physically absent, but if he was there in person, he would have made the same rendering as he had while absent. In this passage, he says "flesh."

The word is normally given as a contrast to that which is spiritual, not physical. To walk in the flesh is to walk in a carnal manner. To walk in the Spirit is to walk in step with the Lord. Therefore, Paul is making a spiritual connection to those at Colossae which goes beyond “as if I were there with you in the body.”

Rather it is saying, “I am with you in the influence of the Spirit.” This then is revealed in the words, “...rejoicing to see.”

The spiritual connection is realized in that he is filled with joy in the Spirit which is then a result of “your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.”

The word “order” is an ancient military term which describes how a military troop is ordered, going in descending rank. It thus signifies a detailed ordering instead of a general accounting of military troops. The word “steadfastness” is found only here in the New Testament, and it continues the military metaphor.

Thus, the “steadfastness of your faith in Christ” gives the sense of the faith being a military host which is closely drawn together. It is as if they form a stronghold against the deceivers who would attempt to come in among them and confuse them. It is reflective of the words of the 18<sup>th</sup> Psalm –

“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;  
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;  
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” Psalm 18:2

Those in Colossae were a source of joy to Paul, because he knew that they were standing on the truth of the Lord, and allowing Him to be their true leader. They had ordered their troops, and they had drawn together closely in Him. Thus, He was their stronghold.

Life application: No man is an island. There is strength in numbers, and from the words of Paul to the Colossians, we can see the importance of aligning ourselves with other believers so that we can unite in the Lord and stand against the false deceivers who come against us. This is a wise thing to do, and it is what the Bible would direct us to do.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, Colossians 2:6**

Paul now states for the consideration of those at Colossae (and thus us!), “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord...” The Greek literally reads “the Christ Jesus the Lord.”

This is stated based on everything he has said about Christ Jesus to this point. All of the marvelous detail concerning Him in Chapter 1, and then the note in verse 2:3 that “in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” were intended to demonstrate what they had originally believed, that Jesus Christ is the Lord (meaning Yehovah of the Old Testament). As He is, then He is God.

This is what they had received. He then reexplains this to them by saying “Christ Jesus the Lord.” Unfortunately, this article is missing in the translation of almost all versions in this verse. The ISV and the Weymouth correctly inserted it -

“So then, just as you have received the Messiah Jesus the Lord, continue to live dependent on him.” ISV

As you can see, “the article points out **Christ Jesus** in his full style and title as the Person whom the Colossians had received, and received as **the Lord**” (Pulpit Commentary). This then is highlighting the lordship of Christ Jesus, not his messiah-ship. The term “Christ” in Greek is the same in meaning as “Messiah” in Hebrew.

The question of His messiah-ship is resolved by the use of the title, but what does that mean? It means that He is Yehovah; He is God. Having said that, if the Christ Jesus is not the Lord, then He would be a false Messiah. There are many supposed Messiahs, but there is one who is the Lord.

Therefore, though the stress is on Jesus being “the Lord” in this verse, being “the Messiah” necessarily means that it is speaking of “the Lord.”

The true Messiah will be the Lord, and Jesus is that true Messiah. This is what Paul is so carefully and meticulously telling his audience. With that in mind, he then says, “...so walk in Him.”

This is a note of care, caution, and confidence. They had received Christ properly. They had been re-advised of who He is with Paul’s careful explanation of the Person, and thus he asks them to continue to live out their life with this knowledge, and not sway from it.

They were not to be seduced by either the Judaizers who wanted them back under the law, which was fulfilled by the Christ, nor were they to be duped into believing in a false Christ who is not the Lord by the gnostics or other Greek philosophers.

The term “walk” is used to indicate a manner of life. If one follows a false Christ, he will have an aberrant walk. But in knowing the true Christ, who is the Lord, one will be careful to walk in accord with His expectations.

Life application: The Christ Jesus is the Lord. Do you believe this? If so, you are in the sweet spot and on the heavenly highway. If not, you have believed in a false Christ, and you are on the road to the Lake of Fire. To walk in the Christ Jesus who is the Lord will keep you from an eternal swim with any false Christ who is not the Lord.

*Lord God Almighty, You have set the path of salvation before mankind. You have offered Your Son in fulfillment of Scripture, and who fulfilled the law. We can walk in Him, or we can attempt to please You on our own merits... and fail. Why do we strive against You by setting aside the grace which You so lavishly desire to bestow upon us? Help us to be faithful to follow along the narrow path of life and to avoid that wide path to perdition. Amen.*

**...rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 2:7**

In the previous verse, Paul said that we are to “walk” in Christ. Now, he changes the metaphor from walking to being rooted. The idea of being rooted is that of a tree’s roots which bury deep into the soil.

They hold the tree firm, but even more, they draw up the nutrients and water with which the tree may live. This is comparable to our own position in Christ. It is through Him that we may draw up all the riches of what God offers to His redeemed. In this state, we can then be “built up in Him.”

There is a change in the tense of the verb here. The word “rooted” is a perfect participle. In other words, “be rooted.” It is a complete action he is directing for us. The word translated as “built up” is a present participle. In this, it means something more like, “being built up.”

If we are rooted, we can then progress in the state of being built up “in Him.” The words, rather than saying “upon Him” which might be expected, show that Christ is the sphere in which we are being built up, not merely the grounding of something else.

After this, he next notes, “...and be established in the faith.” Again, it is a present participle which gives the sense of “being established.”

If we are rooted in Christ, our faith will be established as we continue our walk in Him. In these words, it needs to be remembered why Paul is saying this. He is attacking gnostic heretics who believed that knowledge was the highest attainment of the elite, normally possessed by a few.

The common and unenlightened merely possessed faith. However, Paul shows that it is just the opposite. We are rooted in knowledge, and this leads to continued establishment of faith. It is faith which is pleasing to God.

Understanding this, he says, “as you have been taught.” In other words, “Hold fast to what you have received, and don’t be duped by charlatans or led astray by heretics.” In this state, he completes the thought with “abounding in it with thanksgiving.”

The word “it” is referring to faith. It is in a sound and continuously established faith that we are to abound in thanksgiving. All the knowledge in the world can be heaped up, and it will not naturally lead to thanksgiving. However, when one is in Christ, and understands by faith that all goodness comes from Him, then thanksgiving will be the natural result.

Life application: Knowledge is a wonderful thing to possess, and the Bible would teach us to pursue knowledge, but it is only a beginning step to wisdom, or the right application of knowledge. When one is truly wise, they will apply their knowledge to the fear and pursuit of the Lord.

*Heavenly Father, I believe that Christ Jesus rose from the dead. My sin is buried, and I am alive with Him. May all the redeemed of the Lord praise Your name forever and ever! Amen.*

**Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. Colossians 2:8**

In verse 3, Paul noted that it is Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. After that, he gave general urgings which were based on that. Now he gives a specific exhortation intended to keep them on the right track by explaining what is to be avoided. This will be followed up with a positive statement concerning Christ in order to contrast what he now says.

He begins with “Beware.” The Greek word gives the idea of being observant, and so it would appropriately read “Watch out!”

He is giving them a strong admonition that dangers are out there, and the enemy has them ready to ensnare any who are not attentive. His next words show that there will be loss if one is not carefully attentive, by saying, “...lest anyone cheat you.”

He uses a word *sulagógeó*, which is only found here in Scripture. It gives the idea of being taken captive, as if plunder in war, or to be made a victim through fraud. If one isn't watching, the result will come surprisingly, and there will be great loss.

From there, what is to be watched for is stated, and also what its characteristics are like. One must watch for possibly being ensnared “through philosophy and empty deceit.”

In the Greek, there is an article before “philosophy,” and thus it says, “the philosophy.” Not all philosophy is bad; Paul cites some reasonable philosophy in Acts 17. However, there is specific philosophy which is then described by Paul as “empty deceit.” These words explain “the philosophy.”

Therefore, it should read, “the philosophy which is empty deceit.” With this, Paul will next go on to describe the characteristics of such philosophy so it can, in fact, be watched out for.

First, such philosophy is “according to the tradition of men.” Jesus continually warned Israel of the traditions of men, such as in Matthew 15:2-6 and Mark 7:3-9. Such traditions derived their authority, not from Scripture or the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as passed on through the Apostles, but rather it came from the authority of men. And these traditions were two-fold.

The first consisted of those which were derived from the Jewish traditions, such as those referred to by Jesus, and then there were those of the Greek philosophers. They often sought after wisdom, but not the wisdom of God. Instead, it was of superstition.

Secondly, he notes philosophy which is “according to the basic principles of the world.” The word translated as “principles” is *stoicheion*. It means “properly, *fundamentals*, like with the *basic components* of a philosophy, structure, etc.; (figuratively) ‘first principles,’ like the basic fundamentals of Christianity” (HELPS Word Studies).

It further refers to “the *rudiments* with which mankind . . . were *indoctrinated* (before the time of Christ), i.e. the elements of religious training or the ceremonial precepts common alike to the worship of Jews and of Gentiles” (J. Thayer).

Both Jew and Gentile had worldly systems in that they did not transcend this world. Each participated in ritual sacrifices. Each had certain feast days. Each had systems which only pointed to spiritual and heavenly things.

Paul uses the term *stoicheion* to speak of these systems in a negative light. They refer to any such worldly system – whether law or Gentile religion. The only difference is that the law actually pointed *to* Christ. Other than that, it was still only a type and a shadow.

He finishes up with the thought that these things are “not according to Christ.” Christ is the fulfillment of the law. Therefore, to mandate observing anything from the law, which is fulfilled, instead of honoring Christ who did the fulfilling, is empty deceit.

Further, there are other Jewish philosophies, such as Kabbalism, which are mere traditions, and which are not even in accord with the law. And beyond that are countless other worldly philosophical systems which are merely idle ramblings of man, and which are intended to draw the believer in Christ away from what is sound. Only when a philosophy is according to Christ, can it be reasonable and worthwhile.

Life application: As noted above, not all philosophy is bad, but one must be extremely careful to pay heed to what is being taught. If any doctrine, philosophy, or teaching draws one’s attention away from Christ, it is empty deceit, and it is to be rejected. Always be sure to prepare yourself mentally for such things by being grounded in Scripture.

*Most gracious heavenly Father, as servants of the Lord Jesus, look after us and keep us from the cunning wiles of those who would have us follow after false philosophies, false doctrines, and heretical teachings. Give us the wisdom to be attentive to reading Your word, and then please open that word up to our minds. With this, we will be prepared when that which is false comes along and attempts to drag our minds away from You. Be with us in this battle, and surely we will prevail. Amen.*

## **For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; Colossians 2:9**

There is an intentional emphasis of the words in Greek which are intended to destroy the claims of heretics concerning who Jesus Christ is, in both role and nature. These emphatic words include, “all the fullness of the Godhead,” then the word “dwells,” and also the word “bodily.” All are emphatic. Each is targeted against some heretical idea concerning Christ.

The words, “For in Him” are speaking of Christ who was noted in the preceding verse. Paul then uses the word, “dwells.” It is a word which indicates to “reside,” or “to settle down as a permanent resident.”

In Christ is this type of permanent dwelling where there is “all the fullness.” This term recalls his earlier words in verse 1:19. There can be only one sound and reasonable explanation for the statement. He is the dwelling place of what will next be named, which is “the Godhead.”

The word for “Godhead,” *theotés*, is found nowhere else in Scripture, but it signifies “God’s essential (personal) deity, as belonging to Christ” (HELPS Word Studies). From this, Paul adds on his final emphatic word, “bodily.” The word is *sómatikós*, and it is also found nowhere else in Scripture. It is an adverb referring to the complete embodiment of the fullness of God.

This then is contrasted to any supposed distribution of the Godhead through any other intermediaries. In other words, it is an argument against any heresy that Jesus Christ is anything other than fully God, and the dwelling place of the Godhead. The word for “dwells” is in the present tense, and therefore, it is denoting “an eternal and essential characteristic of Christ’s being” (Vincent’s Word Studies).

From all ages, and unto all ages, Christ is the place where God dwells. As Christ took on human form, this means that the fullness of God chose to take up residence in this human form from that time on. The Person of Christ is the place from which all the fullness of the Godhead issues forth from. This is now eternally so.

What Paul is doing is refuting heretics on the left and on the right. Those who deny His deity are proven false. Those who deny His humanity are also proven false. He is the God/Man; He is the place where all the fullness of the Godhead dwells; and His body is a real, material body. To believe anything else is to believe the lies of the devil. It is something warned against by John with the words –

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup>Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” 1 John 2:22, 23

Life application: To err in believing the truth of what the Bible teaches about Jesus is an error which has eternal consequences. The words of Scripture concerning both the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ are clear and precise. To twist them away from either precept is to mock God who has given us this word for us to accept. Don't be a denier, put away your biases and presuppositions, and bow your knee to Jesus Christ now, while you have the chance.

*Heavenly Father, Your word says that in Jesus Christ all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. It also says that whoever denies the Son does not have the Father. You have chosen to reveal Yourself through our Lord Jesus. Give us wisdom to look to the words of Scripture, and to understand that what You have done through Jesus is for the sake of all people, if we will but believe. Thank You for what You have revealed of Yourself in this most magnificent of ways. Thank You for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**...and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**

Colossians 2:10

The word “complete” in Greek signifies being made full, and the word “you” is plural. It is speaking to all who are in Christ. The order of the wording in Greek gives us the idea of what is being relayed – “And you are in Him, made full.”

Thus, it is a combination of two statements. “You are in Him,” and “You are filled full in Him.” It is a sentence which takes us back to the previous verse which said, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

Therefore, the thought for us to see is that “In Him dwells all the fullness, and as you are in Him, you are filled. Paul is showing them that our sufficiency is of Christ alone. There is no need for the things that he referred to in verse 8 concerning the philosophy which the Greeks taught and the traditions of man which the Jews taught. Rather, everything necessary for salvation, and continued spiritual growth, is found in Christ alone, “who is the head of all principality and power.”

This is a term that he uses also in Ephesians 1:21. The words which are translated as “principality and power” give the idea of government and the authority committed to that government. Christ's position is above all such things. As there are both earthly and

heavenly hierarchies, it signifies that He is the ultimate authority on earth and in heaven; He is God.

Because of this, it is contrary to what is proper to petition lesser beings, such as angels or popes, in order to seek God's grace and blessings. To do so would deprive Christ of His position within the Godhead, and it would thus diminish what it means for us to be in Him.

Albert Barnes notes four areas in particular in which this thought especially applies. 1) In wisdom needed to guide us; 2) in atonement needed for sin; 3) in merit by which a sinner is justified; and, 4) in grace needed to sustain us. We derive these things from Christ Jesus, not from lesser sources.

Life application: There is no praying to angels, to Mary, to a pope, or to a saint authorized in Scripture. There is no class of person who is initiated in spiritual matters that we need to seek in order to be saved, or to continue to be saved.

There is no tradition of man that can help us in our walk with or to God. In Christ, we have the fullness of what we need in order to meet these and all other spiritual challenges and needs. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.

*Lord God, how is it that we get so misdirected concerning Your word? We are told in Scripture that in Christ we have everything necessary to fill us completely in our spiritual walk with You. And yet, instead of living in Christ, we devolve to praying to or through angels, saints, Mary, or popes. Where does that type of thinking come from? In Christ, we have the highest authority in heaven and on earth. Why would we presume to step down from that high, exalted, and lofty throne? Help us to think clearly, and to trust the mediation of Christ completely. Amen.*

**In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,**  
Colossians 2:11

Paul seems to suddenly, even abruptly, introduce circumcision. However, one need only go back to verse 8 to see what he is referring to. There he says, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."

Circumcision of the Gentiles, which the church at Colossae was comprised of, would be a tradition of man. It was intended not for Gentiles, but for the people of Israel as a sign to them of their inclusion in that body. As circumcision was a picture which pointed to Christ, then it is fulfilled in Christ.

To expect someone to fall back on a picture, rather than the substance, would make no sense. As Paul continues in verse 10, “and you are complete in Him.” There is nothing lacking which needs to be filled up in the physical body.

Rather, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.” This is referring to Christ. Those who have called on Him receive the true circumcision; the sign which shows that we are included in the body which is His church. The words “made without hands” speaks of a spiritual, rather than a physical, circumcision.

It is a term used several times in the New Testament to indicate something which is not of the material world (see Mark 14:58, 2 Corinthians 5:1, and Hebrews 9:11 & 24). The believer in Christ is so circumcised. As Paul says in Romans 2:29, “...circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter.” In that verse, “not in the letter” is speaking of the Law of Moses; a law which is now obsolete in Christ.

This circumcision made without hands points to our “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” The word translated as “putting off” is found only here in the New Testament. It gives the sense of casting off a garment. It contains two prefixes, making it a strong expression for completely casting something away from oneself. It would be comparable to saying, “I took it off and I cast it away.”

The words “of the sins” are not found in some manuscripts. They may belong there, or they may have been added by some scribe to explain what “the body of the flesh” is speaking of. Either way, it is evident from the rest of Scripture that “the flesh” speaks of that which is morally carnal and earthly, not that which is spiritual. It is the passions and lusts of the earthly person which stand opposed to that which is spiritual and holy.

Paul finishes the thought with, “...by the circumcision of Christ.” The Greek reads “in the circumcision of Christ.” It is a circumcision of the whole corrupt spiritual nature of man. It is cut away because of the work of Christ. This stands in contrast to the mere cutting of a portion of the physical body in the Jewish rite of circumcision.

In our union with Christ, this circumcision occurs. He kept the whole law without erring under it. This work of His is imputed to us, and in that imputation, we are granted His

righteousness. Therefore, our circumcision cuts away the law which stood opposed to us, and which could only highlight our sin-nature, not remove it. In Christ, however, it is removed.

In verse 14, Paul will say that the law is “nailed to the cross,” indicating that it died with Him on the cross.

Life application: Physical circumcision is not required for believers in Christ. As that was the preeminent sign of inclusion into the corporate body of the people of Israel, then any lesser sign or mandate must necessarily be done away with it as well.

Don't let the Judaizers of the world fool you into believing that you must meet this demand of the law or that demand of the law. The Law of Moses is finished and annulled. Why is this so hard to get through the minds of God's people?

*Heavenly Father, the word “annulled” means nullified. Your word says the law is annulled in Christ. So why do so many of us keep going back to a law which is done away with? Help us to understand that in Christ, we are not bound to the law, but are freed from its constraints, without exception. Let us live for You faithfully acknowledging that He has accomplished everything necessary for us to live in Your marvelous presence forever, free from condemnation. Help us to trust in the finished work of Christ. Amen.*

**...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.** Colossians 2:12

This verse partly resembles Romans 6:4 -

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Paul, ensuring that those in Colossae understand this crucial point of doctrine, states it again while giving it more force than that which he wrote in the epistle to Rome. He says, “...buried with Him in baptism.”

There is an article in front of “baptism.” Therefore, it reads either “the baptism,” or “your baptism.” Further, this is in the aorist tense, and so it makes this act of burial contemporary with the circumcision noted in the previous verse. In essence, when you

were circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, you were also buried with Him in baptism.

This then is a spiritual, not a physical, baptism which is being spoken of. It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit – the total immersion of the old man into Christ’s death, being completely covered by His righteousness and thus resulting in us being “in” Christ.

The sealing of the Spirit *is* the baptism of the Spirit; it is a one-time act which moves us from Adam to Christ. Water baptism then is only an outward sign of the inward change which takes place in us. This is another reason why the sprinkling of infants is of no value. It is s show without substance.

Paul continues with, “...in which you were also raised with Him.” Again, this is a spiritual raising, not our final conversion when we shall be made like Him at the resurrection. This raising is a moral conversion.

When we were circumcised (made right in our heart, and acceptable to God), we were buried (where our sin and the old man was covered over), and we were also raised (putting on the new man who is morally covered in Christ’s righteousness, and deemed acceptable to God). The entire process occurs when one receives Jesus Christ through faith. As Paul says, “...through faith in the working of God.”

This faith is speaking of God’s working in Christ on our behalf. Christ died for our sins, and God raised Him to life. It is the constant theme of Paul where the focus is on the resurrection. Faith in this is the heart of the gospel.

If the wages of sin is death, and if death could not hold Christ Jesus, then Christ obviously had no sin of His own. If this is so, then those who die in Him have had their sins removed in His death, and are thus deemed as sinless before God. Therefore, they too will be raised. Nothing can thwart this from taking place.

All of this happens to us spiritually the moment we trust in the gospel message, and therefore the physical aspect of what occurs must logically follow. It is also another, of countless verses, which clearly show us the truth of eternal salvation. If we are deemed as sinless, then we are saved – once and forever.

It is God “who raised Him from the dead.” God looked upon the work of Christ, declared it acceptable, and therefore Christ was raised. When we trust in Christ, God looks upon our faith, and declares it acceptable. His merits are imputed to us, and we are granted

the circumcision, the removing of the old man, and the moral conversion to a new and acceptable being.

It must be remembered why Paul is saying these things. There were those who claimed that something more was necessary to be perfected, even as a follower of Christ. Here is how Paul stated it in verse 8 –

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Paul is showing that the gospel transcends the traditions of men, and is not according to the basic principles of this world. What He offers is so far above those things that they are utterly useless.

It would make no sense at all to fall back on Greek or Jewish practices which could not possibly have any bearing at all on what has occurred in the believer in Christ. Paul will perfectly and clearly explain this in the verses ahead.

Life application: If you have received Jesus Christ, the law is dead to you. Why on earth would you go back and adhere to principles of a law which is obsolete and nullified through the work of Christ? You have died with Him, you have been buried with Him, and you have been raised to newness of life because of Him. Now live for God in the New Covenant; put away the old!

*Thank You, Lord God, for the New Covenant which comes through Christ’s work, and which fulfilled the Old Covenant in His death. Now, that is obsolete. It has been nailed to the cross, and that which stood opposed to us can have no power over us. Sin is defeated in Christ! So why would we willingly choose to return to a covenant which is nullified in Him? Let us put our trust and faith in what He alone has done. All praises to the name of Jesus! Amen.*

**And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, Colossians 2:13**

Paul now expands upon what he said in the previous two verses. “And you” is speaking of those Gentiles at Colossae, and thus to any who receive and read his letter afterwards. Speaking to the Gentiles, he says that you “being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh.”

This deadness is a spiritual state. Of course, those who read his words are physically alive, but he is referring to a spiritual matter. This dead state comes from the power of sin (trespasses) as well as from their state of alienation from God because of their uncircumcised state.

The uncircumcision looks to the carnal state of the flesh, and of the deadness which resulted from original sin. That original sin then is only magnified through continued trespasses which visibly demonstrate the “uncircumcision of the flesh” in the person. But through Christ, God has done something marvelous. Paul continues with, “He has made alive together with Him.”

This is speaking of God the Father who raised Christ Jesus from the dead. The resurrection proved that Jesus was sinless, and it also proved that the sin-debt which was laid upon Him had been removed; He was delivered from it.

In that act, we were “made alive together with Him.” Our sin debt, having been laid upon the Lord Jesus, and now having been removed, thus removed the death which resulted from our sin. In this act, we have been spiritually quickened to life.

As Christ fulfilled the law, then there is no law by which sin can again be imputed to us. Our quickening is thus an eternal one. Spiritual life is restored, once and for all time. This is realized in the words “having forgiven you all trespasses.”

The stain of original sin is removed, and the stain of all sins committed in life are likewise removed. Through Christ’s death, we have died to sin; through Christ’s resurrection, we live to God in Christ.

As a point of theology, Calvinists will use this verse to deny free will in man. They say that if we are dead, then it is impossible for us to raise ourselves to life. Therefore, we must first be “regenerated in order to believe.” When that happens, we are then brought to life. That is both a category mistake, and it is nonsense.

First, we are spiritually dead, not physically dead. Just because we are not morally good beings, it does not mean that we cannot see the good in God and desire it. We see the good in many things before coming to Christ, and we act upon that knowledge, moving toward the good. How much more, when we realize the surpassing goodness of God, will we then want to receive Him?

Secondly, if we were “regenerated in order to believe,” but it is belief that makes us alive, then we would still be dead until we believed. As we would still be dead until we believed, the regeneration would not mean anything. It is a convoluted and unnecessary stretch of what God has done for us in Christ.

Please, don't listen to convoluted theology. The bible teaches free-will in man; you are encouraged to freely believe that what the Bible teaches is correct.

Life application: Take time today to thank God for what He has done in Jesus Christ our Lord. When we were dead in trespasses, He made us alive together with Him. All credit, honor, and glory belongs to God! Be sure to let Him know how you feel.

*Heavenly Father, it's hard to imagine that the penalty we deserve for our sins was transferred to the Lord Jesus. An Innocent stood in our place and died so that we may live. In a simple acknowledgment that we have offended You and wish to have our debt removed through His death, restoration is granted. In believing that He was resurrected, we too shall receive the resurrection of eternal life! How can such love exist that You would do this for us? Help us to never treat this marvelous act with anything but the greatest of thanks. May You forever be praised for the salvation which came at such a high cost. Amen.*

**...having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.**

Colossians 2:14

Where people go to get their theology explains where their theology stands. In the case of the Judaizers of the world, they would rather go anywhere than to Paul to get their theology. God gave the people of Israel a body of law which is termed “The Law of Moses.”

It was written down for the people, and maintained for their instruction and life-practice. It is what is known to us now as the Old Covenant. In the coming of the Messiah, a new covenant was promised. That is found in Jeremiah 31:31. With the introduction of the New, the Old was annulled (Hebrews 7:18), it was made obsolete (Hebrews 8:14), and it was taken away (Hebrews 10:10).

That is what Paul is referring to here. The Law of Moses was, as he says, “wiped out.” The word in Greek is *exaleiphó*. It means to completely remove, obliterate, blot out, erase, wipe away, to cancel (such as when rubbing out a writing or seal impression left

on a tablet). It was used to cancel obligations and/or entitlements to which extended benefits and entitlements.

The explanation of the word is sufficient, but its use elsewhere testifies to the meaning. It is seen five times in the New Testament. Three are found in Revelation 3:5, 7:17, and 21:4. Each has the sense of either blotting out or wiping away.

In Christ, God has “wiped out the handwriting of the requirements that was against us.” The law stood against us by bringing death. Paul explains this in Romans 7, summing up this principle in verses 10 and 11 -

“And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death. <sup>11</sup>For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.”

-Romans 7:10, 11

The law is a body of commandments, both moral and civil, which brings death, not life. It stands opposed to us because we are incapable of meeting its demands. And so, God wiped out this handwriting – both moral and civil – that was against us, and “which was contrary to us.”

The word translated as “contrary” means to set over against, or opposite. It is used one other time in the New Testament. In Hebrews 10:27 it is translated as “adversaries.” Because of our fallen human nature, the law stood against us. It was hostile to us as is an adversary.

But it is God’s law, God’s standard. And so, in order to rescue us from it, He did something marvelous by sending Jesus. Jesus lived the life we could not live, and then He gave that life up in fulfillment of the law which stood opposed to us. In that act, it says that “He has taken it out of the way.”

There is a change in tenses here. The “having wiped out” was in the aorist tense. At a specific moment, the handwriting of the law was wiped out. In having “taken it out” the tense changes to the perfect tense. It is taken out completely and forever. As Christ said on the cross, “It is finished.” The debt is paid, it is paid perfectly, and it is paid forever.

And this was accomplished through the death of Christ, God “having nailed it to the cross.” The verb is found nowhere else in Scripture. It is an explanation of how Christ was affixed to the cross, and it is a metaphor for what also happened to the law.

What Paul is saying is that Jesus' body is metaphorically used as the law itself. As He fulfilled the law, He thus represents the law, embodying it. In His being nailed to the cross, the law was thus nailed to the cross. In His death, the law died. The law which stood opposed to us is done. The verb is again in the aorist tense. At that defining moment when Christ was nailed to the cross, the law was nailed to the cross.

Question: How can it be that you would desire to go back to the law which died with Christ's death? What type of perverse, unholy attitude would you display towards the work of the Lord? Was what He did for you of so little value that you would tread upon His shed blood by reinserting a law which was annulled through His death? May it never be so!

As a point of doctrine: The law remains in effect for those who have not come to Christ. In Christ, we are judged by Christ's perfect fulfillment of the law. For those not in Christ, they will be judged by the revelation God has given them.

For Gentiles without the law, they will be judged by God's general revelation. For those with the law, they will be judged by that specific revelation. In both such instances, only death can be the verdict. In Christ, only life can be the outcome.

Life application: The law is fulfilled and annulled. Get over it.

*Lord God, if I have but one boast in this life, it is in the cross of Jesus Christ my Lord.  
Amen.*

**Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.** Colossians 2:15

This commentary will be a bit long, but it is hoped that you will receive it gladly, despite the length.

The first word of this verse in the Greek has brought about innumerable commentaries of great length and of endless speculation as to its true meaning. It is *apekduomai*. It comes from two separate words, joined together by Paul, to make a new word. *Apo* means "away from," and *ekdyo* means "go down and completely away from."

Thus, it means "to strip oneself." HELPS Word Studies notes that, "The double prefixes (*apo, ek*) strongly emphasize *the depth of the renouncing*. This '*renunciation* (stripping right off) *is very emphatic.*'" Paul uses this word which he coined one more time in the

New Testament, in Colossians 3:9. In that verse, there is little disagreement as to its intended translation –

“Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,”

Because of the context of the words of this verse, scholars and translators alike have tried to come up with words which agree with their presuppositions about what Paul must be saying. As it is in the middle voice, it is to be taken as meaning “from,” not “for.”

In other words, it would not mean, “He stripped for Himself something,” but rather “He stripped from Himself something.” The Pulpit Commentary notes that Paul employs compounds of *dyo* in the middle voice seventeen times elsewhere, and they are always in the sense of “putting off [or ‘on’] from one’s self.”

As noted, there is a long list of ideas as to the meaning of the first clause because of this unusual word. Some see this as having “put off the body of His flesh.” This would mean that He put off His physical body, and in the process, He disarmed the principalities and powers which held sway over the physical body.

This then would closely align with the thought of Colossians 3:9 above where the old man is stripped away. However, Christ did not possess “the old man” in His flesh. He is the new Man. The context cannot be speaking of this.

Others see this as having stripped away the angelic hosts through which the law was given. This would stand against the false teaching of the Judaizers. Others see this as Christ having divested the armor of the “infernal powers of darkness” (Gill).

But this would not suit with the middle voice of the verb. On and on commentators have gone, attempting to translate this verb in order for it to make sense. Charles Ellicott gives one possible translation as, “...having unclothed Himself, He made a show of principalities and powers.”

After saying this, he goes on to say that there is want of a connection to the phrase except to define it as “putting off the flesh” as was noted above. But, as we have shown, this makes no sense. Christ was sinless.

What needs to be done is to take the verb in its obvious, simple form. This is what Ellicott has done, except he then made an incorrect supposition as to what is “stripped.”

It should thus be translated as, “Having stripped Himself, He made a show of principalities and powers.”

With this translation, there is no need to then allegorize the action by saying it must be referring to the flesh of His body. Instead, it should be taken exactly as one would expect – He stripped Himself, and was thus naked. Instead of there being a want of a connection, the connection is perfectly obvious if aligned with the fall of man in the first place –

“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

-Genesis 2:25

This lack of shame was because of their state of innocence in regard to sin. But after the fall, this was no longer the case –

So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

<sup>8</sup>And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

<sup>9</sup>Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where *are* you?”

<sup>10</sup>So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

<sup>11</sup>And He said, “Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” Genesis 3:6-11

Immediately after the giving of the law, these words were spoken by the Lord to Moses –

“Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.” Exodus 20:26

In this verse of Exodus 20, it is not speaking of mere physical nakedness, but of what that nakedness implies, based on what occurred in Genesis 3. Shame of nakedness is how sin first manifested itself. And it was the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life *by which* that sin came about. Man wanted to be like God, rising to His level. The

earthen altar of Exodus 20 was to be without steps because man *cannot* rise to the level of God.

The higher the altar, the greater the sin is revealed, and thus the more nakedness is exposed. God instead made it known that He would condescend to become a Man and meet us on our own level. In Revelation 3, as Jesus speaks to the churches, He says this -

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.” Revelation 3:18

The nakedness of the body only pictures our revealed sin. Christ came to take that away and to cover us with His righteousness. It was He who hung naked on Calvary’s cross so that we could be covered by Him. This is what Paul is referring to here. It is a literal stripping of Himself, exposing the innocence of the Lamb of God who bore no sin. In this He did make a show of “principalities and powers.”

Christ’s sinless nature, seen in His exposed flesh, thus exposed the darkness of these forces for what they truly are. In so doing, “He made a public spectacle of them.” What Adam and Eve had attempted to hide, and what the priests of Israel were commanded to keep hidden from the presence of an infinitely holy God, is the sin-nature of man.

What Christ demonstrated was a sinless nature, proving He is God. His naked body, there on the cross, demonstrated this to them. He publicly shamed those powers and thus in stripping Himself, He stripped them, “triumphing over them in it.”

The final words of this verse in Greek are *en auto*. They are translated one of two ways, “in it,” or “in Him.” “It” would refer to the cross itself; “Him” would refer to Christ. As God is the subject throughout the passage, it is certainly referring to Christ, and it should be translated as “in Him.”

God made a public spectacle of the principalities and powers, triumphing over them in Christ. The Seed of the woman, promised just a few verses after the account of the hiding of the nakedness of Adam and Eve, had done exactly what the Lord had promised. The head of the serpent was crushed, sin was defeated, Christ had prevailed. This then is the correct translation and interpretation of what is otherwise a wholly misunderstood verse –

“Having stripped Himself, He made a show of principalities and powers; He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in Him.”

Life application: Isn't the word great! It tells us of the marvelous work of Jesus, promised since the beginning of time. And He came right on time to do what was promised. Take time today to thank the Lord for this marvelous gift we call the Bible which in turn tells us of the most marvelous gift of all – our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Lord God, at the very fall of man, You promised that You would send the Messiah to come and restore all that we had so terribly fouled up. It was our disobedience which brought about all of the pain and suffering since then. But in Christ, that is now over. We have an eternal hope of dwelling with You in a paradise once again. Hallelujah for what You have done. Great things lie ahead for Your redeemed. Thank You, O God, for our Lord Jesus Christ who makes all things new! Amen.*

**So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, Colossians 2:16**

Colossians 2:16-19 are instructional, and they are so plain and simple to understand that it is almost impossible to believe that some can't get them right. This is especially so with verses 16 & 17. But the modern Hebrew Roots movement, along with countless theologians, and even whole denominations from the past and present, simply ignore what Paul says, and they go about mandating things which are as clearly set aside in Christ as anything else He came to accomplish.

Having just shown in the preceding verses that the Law of Moses is annulled, completely and entirely, he now explains what that means in regard to observances mandated under that same law. This list is not speaking of Gentile observance, but of those things found in the Law of Moses itself.

They are complete, they are fulfilled, and they are no longer required. To say otherwise is a heresy because it is then saying that Christ did not fulfill the law, which He did – in fact – fulfill. Don't be a heretic; instead pay attention to Paul's words.

“So let no one...” This is referring to each individual's personal standard of life and practice in Christ. What Paul is warning against is that each person is to not be swayed by the false judgments of anyone else in relation to himself. He wants no one to “judge you.”

One stands or falls based on where he put his hope. If one places his hope in the work of Christ Jesus alone, then that person is to not let another person judge him based on anything else but that finished work of Christ.

The words, “in food or drink” refer solely to the dietary restrictions of the Jews as mandated under the Law of Moses. There is now no such dietary restriction in relation to this law because the law is annulled in Christ.

Because it is annulled, the command to not eat pork died with the annulling of the law. The command to not eat shellfish died with that same annulment. This is true for every single dietary restriction found in the Law of Moses. They no longer exist because the Law of Moses is superseded by the New Covenant. A Christian is to not let anyone judge them for eating whatever they wish. This is plain, clear, and not difficult to understand.

He next says, “or regarding a festival.” The Greek word is *heorté*, and it refers to a feast day, such as the feasts of the Lord found in Leviticus 23. Any mandated feast day of the Law of Moses is done; it is completed in Christ; and it is obsolete. A Christian is to not let anyone judge hi, for not observing such a feast day. This is plain, clear, and not difficult to understand.

Paul next says, “or a new moon.” The New Moon is the first day of each month of the Hebrew calendar. This note from Paul is referring to observing this day as a type of celebratory feast under the Law of Moses. It is referred to over 20 times in the Old Testament, and it is an observance which the Jewish people faithfully adhered to. A Christian is to not let anyone judge him for not observing a New Moon. This is plain, clear, and not difficult to understand.

Finally for verse 16, Paul mentions “sabbaths.” The word in Greek is plural, and it is referring specifically to the weekly Sabbath Day requirement of the Old Testament. The plural is noted because it was a weekly feast day, and thus there were many sabbaths each year. It is also inclusive of any special Sabbaths which were mandated under the law.

The same plural terminology is found in the Old Testament concerning the weekly Sabbath over 100 times. Exodus 31:31 for example, while speaking of the weekly Sabbaths, refers to them in the plural. The Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ. Hebrews 4:3 says that we rest in Him now. Therefore, a Christian is to not let anyone judge him for not observing a Sabbath Day. This is plain, clear, and not difficult to understand.

As a point of doctrine: There is no such thing as a Sunday Sabbath. The Sabbath is a Saturday, and only a Saturday. Christian tradition eventually started to claim that worshiping on the Lord's Day (Sunday) had replaced the Saturday Sabbath. The claim is that this day of worship was now the "Sunday Sabbath." This is incorrect. There is one Sabbath, and it is a Saturday. It is fulfilled in Christ. He is our Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:3).

In support of what is stated here, the following verses are given -

"But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? <sup>10</sup> You observe days and months and seasons and years. <sup>11</sup> I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain." Galatians 4:9-11

Paul calls such observances, "weak and beggarly elements," and he calls them "bondage." Don't pursue that which is weak and beggarly, and do not be brought into another's bondage.

"One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks." Romans 14:5-6

Paul is clear that whatever day a person observes or does not observe is totally up to the individual. Whatever a person eats or does not eat is also completely up to that individual. There are no such requirements levied on the follower of Christ.

"I will also cause all her mirth to cease,  
Her feast days,  
Her New Moons,  
Her Sabbaths—  
All her appointed feasts." Hosea 2:11

Here in Colossians, Paul uses the same form as that of Hosea 2:11. It shows us that the things he is talking about in this verse – "feast days, New Moons, and Sabbaths" – are the same as which were required under the Law of Moses. They are now fulfilled in Christ; their being mandated for God's people is annulled, and a new dispensation has been introduced which has set aside the previous one.

To reintroduce these as requirements is to say that what Christ did was insufficient to save. It is to set aside His grace and attempt to merit God's favor on one's own merits. It is a self-condemning act. It is heresy. Do not be a heretic.

Life application: Either Paul's words (which are plain and clear) are our doctrine for the Gentile-led church age, or they are not. If they are not, then Christ's fulfillment of the law is useless to you. Go back and observe those rites which you feel will make God happy with you. But be advised that all you are actually doing is building a diving board for an eternal swim in the Lake of Fire.

*Lord God, thank You ever so much for those faithful believers in Christ who we can stand with. Together we can ward off the forces of deceit and wickedness which come against us. And thank You for Your word which allows us to unite in this way. We have sure directions concerning what You would desire of us. In using them, and in doing so together as a unified body, we are ready to face those who would challenge us to depart from what is right, holy, and decent. Thank You for this source of encouragement and strength which is there for us. Amen.*

**...which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.** Colossians 2:17

This verse clearly explains what the items mentioned in verse 16 were... mere shadows. Each looked forward to Christ in a unique way, and each found its fulfillment in Christ. The word *skia*, or shadow, means "the shadow of a looming presence."

Figuratively, it looks to a spiritual reality relating to God's light or spiritual darkness. The foods prescribed or forbidden under the law, the feast days of the Lord, the New Moon celebrations, and the Sabbath days all only looked forward as shadows, "but the substance is of Christ."

The word substance, or *soma*, means a physical body. Christ embodies what these things only looked forward to. Paul is saying that if we have the reality of what these things only pictured, then why would we fall back on the pictures? Why would anyone mandate Sabbath observance, when Christ is our Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:3)?

The author of Hebrews repeats this idea of shadow versus substance as well –

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer. <sup>4</sup> For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the

law;<sup>5</sup> who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”<sup>6</sup> But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

-Hebrews 8:3-6

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. Hebrews 10:1

We are being told time and again that we are to put our trust in Christ, and to not fall back on the law, a law which could save no one. It is plain, it is clear, and it is not complicated.

Life application: If you are following a teacher or preacher who reintroduces things from the law as necessary requirements for being saved, you are following a heretic. The law is fulfilled in Christ. Get away from that guy. Run, don't walk.

*Heavenly Father, gracious God, thank You for our ability to pursue knowledge, and to seek out understanding of things. It is always a delight to learn more. And yet, help us to apply our knowledge rightly by seeking out how to correctly apply it towards a proper fear of You, pursuing You because of what we know. Help us to be people of faith, growing in faith, and drawing nearer to You moment by moment. Amen.*

**Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, Colossians 2:18**

Paul begins verse 18 in a manner similar to verse 16 – “So let no one judge you...” / “Let no one cheat you...”

The two thoughts combine as stern warnings against troublemakers whose only intent is holding sway over others. The word “cheat” used by Paul is found only here in the New Testament. It refers to the act of discouraging or misleading believers by diverting them from their full potential in Christ. It is a word which would be used of a judge who makes a wrong call, and which in turn would deprive a person of their rightful prize.

Paul then explains how someone could so deprive a believer. He first says that it would be through “taking delight in false humility.” The word “false” is inserted here, but it gives the correct sense. Humility is thought of as a strong Christian trait, but false humility is something which is loathsome. The way that this false humility is made manifest is through “the worship of angels.”

The two thoughts are tied together in a person who would claim that they were so humble that they would never approach God directly but would rather come through a mediator. Such false humility would then deprive the believer of his true right, which is to approach the throne of grace boldly (see Hebrews 4:16).

Because of Christ Jesus, we have full right to the throne of God, and we have full access to Him in our time of need. But those who would take delight in false humility would petition dead saints, Mary, or angels such as Michael or Gabriel, claiming that their prayers to such beings would be properly handled by them.

It is the trap which Roman Catholicism teaches quite clearly, and those who follow in such teachings are deprived of their rightful use of God’s throne of grace. Jesus Christ is clearly shown to be greater than all angels in the book of Hebrews, and He is noted as the One and only Mediator between God and man in the book of 1 Timothy.

Paul continues to speak of such a person by saying that he is “intruding into those things which he has not seen.” The word “intruding” is another word unique to the New Testament. Paul’s use of it is probably referring to someone who claims to see heavenly visions, and then goes on to explain what their heavenly vision means.

In turn, others will then be willing to follow them in their supposedly superior access to divine mysteries. This would cover countless supposed visions of the church age. The RCC is caught up in the visions of Fatima. The Seventh Day Adventists hold fast to the visions of Ellen G. White. The list of such people goes on and on.

They have, and continue to make to this day, claims of divine visions. Some claim to have been to heaven; some to hell; some have had angels stop by their office for coffee. Type in a search on YouTube, and a thousand false claims will come up. Charismatic churches make a million claims a year about divine dreams, visions, and prophecies. Countless books have been written about such things, and yet the Bible tells us that these things are false.

All such claims are without merit. With the completion of Scripture, these things have passed away, and the Bible is our sole source of divine inspiration. The book is complete. What more could we use for our life's doctrine and practice?

Paul warns that anyone who says he has had such a vision is "vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." The idea of true humility is to make less of oneself. In essence, it is to shrink in size before another. But such a person is actually making himself larger. He is puffed up like a kernel of corn which pops from heat. The vanity of the person characterizes his false humility.

It shows that he has been negatively affected in his mind. They are quacks who speak without any true substance. This is why Paul finishes by noting such a person's "fleshly mind." The flesh is that which is carnal, not spiritual. They claim that which is divine, but their claims are actually earthly and sensual. They are to be rejected.

Life application: No matter how true a claim sounds about a heavenly vision, an angelic vision, a trip to hell and back, or whatever else someone claims he has seen, it is always better to keep your money in your wallet, and to not listen to such a person.

If his claim is true (which it is not) you haven't lost anything by ignoring him. If his claim is not true, you have saved yourself from getting sucked in by someone the Bible has warned you about in the first place. Instead of watching their stupid hour-long video, try reading your Bible for an hour. Instead of buying and reading their book, try going to a decent Bible study. In the end, it all comes down to priorities.

Don't waste yours on such nonsense.

*Lord God, we have Your word for our life's doctrine and practice. Why would we need anything else to instruct us? Help us to stay away from people who make false claims about heavenly visions, meetings with angels, trips to hell and back, or any other extra-biblical stuff. Your word is complete, and it is all we need to know what You expect of us. May that be sufficient to us. Amen.*

**...and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.**

Colossians 2:19

This verse is rather similar to what he said to the Ephesians –

“ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

-Ephesians 4:15, 16

Paul is now bringing an indictment against such a person as mentioned in the preceding verse. It is the one who, as he stated, “is puffed up by his fleshly mind.” This person, as already described, is “not holding fast to the Head.”

Christ is the Head, and this person intentionally severs himself from Him by observing things from an obsolete law, and then claiming that his directions came from angelic visions or some other sort of supposed authority. But Paul notes that it is Christ “from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is from God.*”

There is one body which is attached to Christ, and that body is wholly interconnected. It is “nourished and knit together,” and everything works seamlessly because the Head directs it. If someone does not hold fast to Christ, then there is no interconnection, and thus there is no nourishment. And as there is no nourishment, there can be no “growth with the increase *that is from God.*”

Paul doesn't say there is no growth at all, but the growth of someone who is not connected to Christ does not come from God. Anything not of God is of the devil. This is the warning that Paul makes in following such a person. He claims spiritual enlightenment, but there is rather spiritual darkness. He claims life and viability, but there is instead only a path which leads to sickness and death.

As a logical connection to what Paul is saying, we need to realize that Christ Jesus is not physically here with us, and neither are the apostles (meaning those who saw and learned directly from Jesus).

As this is so, then the Bible – by default – must be our one source of staying connected to the Head. This is why there are no true visions today. This is why we don't “have a word from the Lord” today. The word from the Lord is the word of the Lord, meaning the Bible. Instead of believing people who make claims about extra-biblical revelation, just think the matter through. What more do we need than what God has supplied us in Scripture?

As the wording used by Paul here is very close to that of Ephesians 4:15, 16, referring to that commentary will provide additional insights into his thoughts of this verse. In the end, the result of not being properly connected to the Head is to follow a sad path which leads to loss.

Life application: How many times, and in how many different ways, does the Bible need to warn us about following false teachers? And yet, countless numbers of people do just that. They may or may not be saved, but even if they are, their doctrine has them in bondage, and the people they follow will only continue to lead them down unhappy trails without any true connection to the Head of the faith.

*Lord God, You have set before us a path which You ask us to follow. It is a path of trusting in the completed work of Christ. Anytime we divert from it, we quickly get swept up into crazy teachings which are completely disconnected from Him. We lose the proper nourishment we need, and our spiritual lives lose their true vigor. Help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, and may we never attempt to earn what has already been freely offered through His work. Surely with this You will be pleased. Amen.*

**Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—** Colossians 2:20

The word “Therefore” is given to sum up his thoughts of the previous verses. However, it is lacking in many ancient manuscripts. Whether it belongs or not, the question he will ask still stands. And so, he asks, “...if you died with Christ.” This is a rhetorical question which carries the intent of, “Because you died with Christ.” The idea of dying with Christ was explained in verses 11 and 12, but it finds a full explanation in Romans 6 (see verses 1-11). Paul then notes that they have “died with Christ from the basic principles of the world.”

This is speaking of the traditions and doctrines of men. It speaks of such principles which are earthly and not of Christ. Christ has fulfilled the law, therefore any ordinance of the law which He fulfilled would be included in this. And those things which were not even of the law, taught by supposed wise men of other cultures, don’t even have a starting point like the law did.

If the law, which was once binding but is now annulled in Christ, is a part of what Paul is speaking of, how much more the things which were never even a part of the law! Because of this, he asks, “Why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—?”

The single word translated as “submit yourselves to regulations” is unique to the Bible. It is more appropriately to be translated in the passive voice, and so it should read, “Why do you submit yourself to being dictated to?” In other words, these people are allowing someone else to come in among them and tell them what they should be doing when they are already freed from the very things they are being told to do because they are in Christ.

It would be like a person who had served his time in the military and had been honorably discharged, but then whenever an old superior that he served under comes to visit, he allows himself to get bullied around by that person. He has served, he has been discharged, and he is free from the constraints of his service, but he allows himself to be brought back under unauthorized authority.

In this, he allows this person, without any true authority over him, to affect his relationship with his current employer. Who is being neglected then? The rightful, current employer! This is what happens when one places a principle of this world over the freedom found in Christ. Paul will give examples of this in the coming verse.

Life application: In having died with Christ, we are free from the bondage of the law, and from any other supposed spiritual principles of the world. We are to live in Christ, and for Christ. We are to trust in His grace which came at such a high cost.

*Lord God, when considering the cross of Christ, it is right that we who accept that payment would then be willing to submit ourselves to what that payment signifies. We have been freed from the law, and so it is right that we serve the Lord who fulfilled it in our place, not trusting in our own deeds to please You, but being grateful for Christ who accomplished this for us. And so, we do thank You, and we do praise You. Great are You, O God, and You are most worthy of our praise. Amen.*

**“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”** Colossians 2:21

The words here have no connecting particles. They are sent out in rapid-fire succession in order to show the urgency of the commands by those who would forbid another person from doing what they believe is wrong to do.

However, the first word translated as “touch,” and the last word translated as “handle,” should be switched. It should read, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.”

Both words are very close in meaning, but the last phrase means a less deliberate touch than the first. What is happening is the person doing the warning is making a climax of prohibitions. In essence, they are saying, “Don’t handle such a thing! No, don’t taste such a thing! And don’t EVEN TOUCH such a thing!”

This is referring to the Judaizers who would warn against something like eating pork, a meat considered unclean according to the Law of Moses. Here comes such a person into this group of Gentiles who have been sanctified by the blood of Christ which was shed in fulfillment of the law. And what do they do?

They urgently reapply the precepts of that obsolete law to the lives of these already purified souls. “Hey, what are you doing? That’s bacon! That bacon comes from an unclean animal! Don’t handle such a thing! No, don’t taste such a thing! And don’t EVEN TOUCH such a thing.” Bam! Bam! Bam! They fire off their legalistic warnings.

But Paul tells them otherwise, and he will explain it more fully in his words to come. Not to leave the verse hanging though, if you smell that delightful waft of bacon, feel free to pick it up, snack on it, and enjoy it. It cannot make you any less saved, and it cannot defile you in any way. The law is fulfilled in Christ, and it is finished. It is nailed to the cross. Thank God for the freedom we have in Him!

And as a side note, this set of prohibitions doesn’t just apply to the dislikes of the Jews, but of anyone who would come to you and say the same about any other tradition or teaching of man. As Paul says in Romans 14:14 –

“I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.”

Life application: If there is a food you find nummy, then nom nom away. You are free from guilt, even if you are not free from some type of stomach troubles because of how much you eat.

*Lord God, the freedom which is found in Christ is so wonderful. For those in Him, there are no restrictions on the things we eat or the days we worship. We live in Him in Spirit and in truth, and have been freed from the constraints of the law. Those things are nailed to His cross where we died with Him. Now let us live to You through Him. Praise to You, O God, for our marvelous Lord Jesus. Amen.*

**...which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? Colossians 2:22**

“Which” is referring to the words, “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” of the previous verse. The error of those who attempt to reinsert the prescriptions of the Law of Moses, or some other group who would mandate their own traditions or customs which are contrary to the finished work of Christ, is that they fail to see that these “concern things which perish with the using.”

The words “with the using” come from the Greek words, *té apochrêsis*. This word, *apochrêsis*, found only here in the Bible, gives the idea of “using up,” and thus being consumed. Combined with the word “perish,” which gives the idea of corruption through decomposition, we are given the correct idea of what Paul is speaking of. When someone eats something, regardless of what it is, it breaks down into something else.

The very eating of the thing destroys it. In other words, it is what Jesus was speaking of in Mark 7:18-23 –

So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, <sup>19</sup> because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus* purifying all foods?”<sup>20</sup> And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. <sup>21</sup> For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, <sup>22</sup> thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. <sup>23</sup> All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

Life application: The food regulations which are fulfilled in Christ, along with all of the law, are nullified. Any such teaching now is no longer of God, but is “according to the commandments and doctrines of men.”

The New Covenant is now in place, and thus the Old is set aside. And so, if anyone says to you concerning that tasty pork chop, “Don’t touch, don’t taste, don’t handle!” You can tell them, “Take a turn off the heresy highway, and onto the road of righteousness. I am purified not by my own deeds, but by the work of Christ.” And then go enjoy your dinner.

*Heavenly Father, what a beautiful world You have given us. What wonderful tastes, smells, and sensations surround us! From moment to moment, if we will but just look, we will always see some wonderful hint that You are there and tending to us. Help us not to*

*be so consumed with the busyness of life that we miss the precious displays of Your care for us, and which tell us You really are concerned about us. Praises to You, our great Creator! Amen.*

**These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.** Colossians 2:23

“These things” refers to what Paul has been speaking of in the previous verses – things like circumcision versus uncircumcision, partaking or not partaking in certain foods, participating in certain religious festivals, worshipping angels, and so on. He lumps them into this one thought and says, “These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion.”

People who participate in dietary restrictions, for example, seem to be more pious than others. Ascetics look at their self-denial as leading them to a state of holiness. The observance of religious festivals certainly attracts attention. Those who participate in them appear to be observing them in order to be more holy. And so forth.

But is a person more holy by not eating pork or by observing a Passover Seder? No! Christ fulfilled these things. By placing one’s faith in Christ, they skip over the shadow and obtain the substance of what the shadow only pointed to. Why put a beanie cap on your head when praying if you were never a Jew in the first place? Such is “*false* humility.”

In the end, it doesn’t add to personal holiness at all. The “neglect of the body” is specifically speaking of ascetic practices that he had just referred to – “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle.” But again, such things are, as he says, “of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

In the end, these things which are seemingly pious are actually prideful. They are “works to impress” God, but God does not need to be impressed. He came out of His eternal realm, donned garments of flesh, and fulfilled everything necessary to reconcile fallen man back to Himself. What God looks for is faith in that, not in self. An attitude of self-righteousness is completely opposed to trusting in Christ for imputed righteousness.

Paul’s words are clear and direct, and they ask us to put away externals as a means of seeking God’s favor. We are to be purified in our hearts, filled with faith in His provision, and trusting in His ability to complete our salvation to lead us back to Himself.

Life-application: As always, the Bible shows us that faith in what God has done, is doing, and will do, is pleasing to Him. When we put aside faith, and begin trusting in our own actions to merit His favor, or to increase our standing before Him, we are saying that we don't need Him. "It's OK God, I can handle it from this point on."

This is why, even after salvation, we are to continue to trust Him for our walk towards holiness. As Paul says in Galatians 3:2-4 – "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? <sup>3</sup>Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? <sup>4</sup>Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain?" Hold fast to Christ, and Christ alone!

*O God! It is such a relief to know that our salvation is a gift which cannot be earned, and that our continued walk with You is also something we can leave in Your capable hands. We don't need to observe Old Testament feasts, cling to its dietary restrictions, or trust in other observances of the law in order to please You. Instead, those things were only shadows of the reality found in Christ. Faith in Him is what brings us to the sweet spot. And how sweet it is! Thank You for this wonderful means of complete reconciliation with You! Amen.*

## CHAPTER 3

**If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.** Colossians 3:1

Starting in verse 2:11, Paul began his explanation of what it means to have died with Christ. He explained what that means in relation to the law, what that means for us in our daily lives, and how to avoid being trapped by those who look at Christ's death as being insufficient for their passage to heaven. He carefully explained that it is all-sufficient, and that we are freed from the basic principles of the world.

Now, at the beginning of chapter 3, he moves from what the death of Christ means to us, and he focuses on what it means to be raised with Him. He begins with, "If then you were raised with Christ..." In verse 2:12, Paul said that we were "buried with Him in baptism," and he then said that we "were raised with *Him* through faith." The explanation of what being buried with Him means is done, and now he explains what being raised with Him means.

The word "if" is not one of doubt, but one of certainty. Just as a believer in Christ is united with Him in His death where they became dead to sin, and also dead to the basic principles of the world, then being raised with Him should bring the believer to a new state. Christ wasn't just raised to eternal life to live out an earthly life.

Instead, He was resurrected to eternal life as the Lord of heaven and earth. In this state, He ascended to the Father with all authority and power in His possession. As He is now in heaven, then we who have been raised with Him are to "seek those things which are above."

This statement is well-explained by Paul in Philippians 3:12-21. We are to forget that which is behind (our earthly existence which died with Christ), and instead reach forward to those things which are ahead (our anticipated heavenly existence where Christ now is). This is what it means to seek those things which are above. It is to look to our heavenly home "where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God."

Of what value is it to fix our eyes, our hopes, and our attentions on what we have died to? It makes as much sense as watering flowers in a rainstorm to go back to observing the law, feasts, dietary restrictions, etc.

Instead, we are to fix our eyes on Jesus who has overcome all of these things. Our hopes and hearts should be directed to spiritual growth and maturity in preparation for an eternity of dwelling with Him.

Life application: We are dead to the basic principles of the world. We are not bound to laws which bring only a reminder of sin, but instead we are alive in Christ. He has freed us from this body of death, and He has raised us to sit with Him in the heavenly places. As this is so, then why would we look back to the earthly, carnal life we once lived? We came to Christ to get away from that, not continue wallowing in it.

*Heavenly Father, it is with great hopes that we await the coming of Christ to take us home. Until that day arrives, grant us the wisdom to seek those things which are above. Help us to look to our heavenly dwelling where Christ rules in righteousness, and to hunger after this at all times. May we never look back to the life which we died to, but instead be attentive to that life we have been raised to; a life where all power, honor, and glory radiate from You through our Lord Jesus! Amen.*

**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.** Colossians 3:2

Paul now builds upon the words of the previous verse. He just said, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” Because of this, he implores those in Colossae (and thus us!) to “set your mind on things above.”

The Greek word translated as “set your mind” is an interesting one. It is *phronéō*. This in turn comes from *phrén*, which is the midriff or diaphragm; the parts around the heart. Thus it carries the idea of regulating from within, as in an inner perspective which then is displayed in an outward behavior.

This may seem difficult to grasp because it combines the visceral organs with cognitive aspects of thinking, but we do this with other body parts quite often. If we say, “my heart will be with you,” we are simply using the heart instead of these other organs to show where our affections are.

Paul is exhorting his readers to have their thoughts directed to heavenly things instead of those “things on the earth.” We have died to the things of the world, and so our hearts should be oriented to where we have been raised to instead. As the scholar Lightfoot says, “You must not only seek heaven; you must think heaven.”

Life application: Do not let the world drag you out of your heavenly home. If you have been raised with Christ, then live for Christ.

*Lord God, Your precious word tells us that we have been crucified with Christ. We have been buried with Him in baptism, and we have been raised with Him, being seated in the heavenly places in Christ. As this is so, why should we allow this fallen, dirty world to drag us out of our heavenly home? Grant us the wisdom to understand that there is nothing here but loss, and to set our affections on the things which are above. Help us to anticipate the day when Christ comes to take us home, and to live now with that hope in mind. Amen.*

**For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.** Colossians 3:3

“For you died” is correct. Some older versions say, “For you are dead.” Without an accompanying explanation, that makes no sense. A dead person cannot read or respond to a letter. But for someone who has died, there can be the possibility of something new involved in that dying. The verb is in the aorist tense, and it denotes “death accomplished.” This is what Paul is now conveying. It builds upon what he said in Colossians 2:20 –

“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world,”

There was a death to “the basic principles of the world,” which now results in something new. Paul explains that with the words, “and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Jesus literally died. As the fulfillment of the law, the law died with Him. It was nailed to the cross (verse 2:14). But we also died with Him to the law. In His resurrection (a literal, bodily resurrection), our lives are now hidden with Him in God.

The word “hid” is in the perfect tense. It is hidden once and forever. Thus, the “life” is a continuous fact. In essence, “Your life was hidden, it is hidden, and it will remain hidden forever.” There is assurance in the salvation of Jesus Christ, not doubt.

As Jesus said in Matthew 22:32, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” As we spiritually died to the basic principles of the world, the world has no dominion over us. But as we are alive to Christ, we are hidden with Christ in God. In other words, we are spiritually alive, and we are kept safe in Christ – who can never die again – and therefore, we are eternally alive with Him in this mystical union which is “in God.”

As Christ is eternally in the Father, and as we are eternally in Christ, we are thus eternally in God. The fellowship is complete, and it is eternal.

Life application: Words have meaning. Paul writes in specific tenses in order to fully explain what has occurred for the believer in Christ. There is to be no doubt concerning our continued salvation. When we err, let us speak to the Lord about it and move on. He has saved us, and we are saved. Hallelujah to Christ Jesus who has delivered us from the body of death, which is the law!

*Heavenly Father, Your word shows that one who is saved can never lose that gift. We have died to the basic principles of the world, and our lives are hidden with Christ in You. As Christ is in You forever, and as we are hidden in Him forever, then we can be certain that we are forever reconciled to You. The pressure is off! The burden is lifted! We have peace and reconciliation once again! Thank You, O heavenly Father, for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

**When Christ *who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.**

Colossians 3:4

This concluding thought of the section corresponds very closely to the closing thought of the corresponding section found in Philipians. In Philipians 3:21 it says -

“...who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body...”

Paul is careful to remind his audience that our living for heaven now is not a futile endeavor, but it is an anticipatory state of that which lies ahead. As we are destined for glory, we are reminded how important it is to set our minds on things above now.

Anything which detracts from our full and focused attention on what we already possess through the work of Christ will lead to a loss of rewards when our glorified state is realized. And so, he says, “When Christ *who is our life* appears.”

It is not that our life is with Christ; but rather it is that Christ is our life. This is confirmed by the words of John 1:4 -

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

Christ was manifested in the flesh and completed His work. Upon completion of that, He ascended into heaven where we await His coming again. He will manifest Himself again at a specific time, known but to God, and when that time comes then His redeemed “will appear with Him in glory.”

The day is yet ahead, the circumstances of what will occur on that day are partially referred to elsewhere, but what we shall be like on that day is not known. Paul tells us this in 1 Corinthians 15, and John tells us this as well –

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2

As a point of doctrine: Paul tells us that Christ will appear (literally “shall be manifested”). This verse presupposes the thought that there is one specific time that He will come and manifest Himself to His people, not before.

Therefore, it is not only unwise, but it is against the words of Scripture to accept any supposed vision of Christ before that day. Dreams of visits to heaven (or hell), visions of Jesus, etc. are to be rejected.

Life application: As we are set on a heavenly course which is guaranteed to come about, should we not endeavor to live as if this is so now? Let us not spend our time foolishly, but instead let us set our minds on things above, and live lives which are pleasing to God, just as we will be when we are forever glorified.

*How good You are most gracious heavenly Father. You have granted us a guarantee of eternal life through the shed blood of Christ. And Your word now asks us to set our mind on heavenly things in anticipation of that day when we will be glorified. Give us the wisdom to do this, and to live lives which are pleasing to You as we await our glorification on that wondrous day! Amen.*

**Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.** Colossians 3:5

Paul begins this verse with “Therefore” in order for the reader to consider what he has just said. He has been speaking of our state in Christ. We died with Him, and we were raised with Him. And so, what does that mean for us when He appears in glory? We too shall appear with Him in glory.

Because of this, he will now tell us what we should abstain from in verses 5-9. Then he will relay positive things that we should strive to do in verses 10-16. In these, we will put off the old man, and we will in turn put on the new man. In order to put off the old man, he says to “put to death your members which are on the earth.”

The word is *nekroó*, and it means “to view as a corpse,” and thus “to regard as dead.” We are to look at our bodily members as if they are dead, and then he lists those members. To be noted is that he makes no distinction between the bodily members, and what they accomplish.

In other words, “fornication” is listed first as if it is a bodily member. The part of the body is being equated directly with the negative act it can commit. However, the same body parts that are listed can be used in a positive way as well, and so we are being given insights into how we are to conduct ourselves while still in this physical, corrupt body. We are to treat it as if it is already glorified.

As noted, the list begins with fornication. Fornication is sexual intimacy which is outside of the bonds of marriage.

Next is “uncleanness.” This is a general reference to life’s impurities, and anything that a man could pursue which would otherwise defile himself.

He then lists “passion.” This indicates strong emotions which are not directed by God, such as consuming lust.

After that are “evil desires.” Such desires are reflected in things like lewdness and the working of all uncleanness and greediness.

Coming next is “covetousness.” This is closely associated with fornication and uncleanness. It indicates a desire for more and more. It demonstrates eyes that are never satisfied with what they have, and an attitude which is insatiable towards self-gratification. Paul then explains covetousness by saying “which is idolatry.”

The reason covetousness is described this way is because it dethrones the Lord from our hearts and souls. Instead, we take what our attention is directed to and place it upon a throne of our heart’s making.

Life application: In the Old Testament, as forbidden actions were given there was an accompanying penalty which was noted for the offense. Such is not the case in the New

Testament. We have died to the law through Christ's death. Therefore, our penalty is something that will be realized less in this earthly life than it will be in the next.

A believer's salvation is secured, but our rewards are based on the lives we live after that salvation. However, this doesn't mean we won't also suffer in this life if we do bad things. We may profit from a greedy heart by making millions, but we may also lose by getting fired from our job. Paul's point is not what will happen in this life though, but in what will be reckoned to us in the next.

Therefore, let us pursue Christ now, being obedient to the admonitions and exhortations we are provided with.

*How glorious it is to consider Your ways, O God. You have given us such marvelous beauty in the world we live in. You have provided countless tastes to delight our senses. You have given us the ability to love and care for others. The list could go on and on, but just considering the things around us, how can we not praise You? How beautiful it is to consider Your ways, O God! Amen.*

**Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,**  
Colossians 3:6

Paul wrote of the wrath of God in Romans 1, explaining what brings it about. The things he mentions in verse 2 are a part of that process. It is because of participating in these things that the world is judged. And this judgment follows two distinct lines.

The first is judgment in this world through diseases, conflicts which lead to physical harm or death, and the like. The second judgment is that of being cast for all eternity away from the presence of God. The Lake of Fire is the ultimate end for all "the sons of disobedience."

As an apostle, Paul is showing us the importance of setting our minds on things above, living lives that are holy, and leading others who have not yet called on Christ to do so. Without Him, there is but one ultimate end for the souls of man. We can either be a Son of God through adoption, or remain a son of disobedience and be eternally separated from Him.

The warnings of Scripture, to include the apostolic warnings (which are now recorded in the Bible), are given to direct us away from that which is harmful, and which brings about the wrath of God, and toward that which is pleasing to Him.

Life application: To ignore the warnings of Scripture can only lead to a sad end. There will be trials and pains in this life, and there will be either judgment and condemnation for non-believers, or a loss of rewards for believers. Stand firm on the word, and do not be deceived by vain things which are contrary to the word of God.

*Lord God, Your word is often looked at as a book of heavy-handed rules which limit freedom and which steal joy. But this is the furthest thing from the truth. Instead of some type of bondage for disobedience which eventually leads to punishment and death, in it there is the freedom of living for You, and with no fear of that which brings condemnation. The rules in a society are given for the good of the people. How much more then is Your word given for the benefit of Your people! Thank You for the marvelous protections and safeties which Your word gives us. Amen.*

**...in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. Colossians 3:7**

The words “in which” are referring to “these things” of verse 6. That in turn is referring to the list of things from verse 5 – “fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

Paul notes that his readers (and certainly any who have come to Christ since his letter) “once walked” in them. It was their very conduct of life, and it was this for which the wrath of God would have come upon them. He then finishes up the verse with “when you lived in them.”

The verb is in the imperfect tense, and thus it more accurately reads, “when you were living in them.” Their walk in these things literally surrounded them. It was as if these sins were the very air they breathed. However, they had moved to Christ and so Paul exhorted them to put these things to death, rather than living in them. As Christ died for our sins, we are to die to sin and live for Christ.

Life application: Though there are many trials in this life, and temptations abound around us, we should endeavor to live holy lives. Let us stand firm in the fellowship of believers, stay close to the word of God, and not give the devil an inch. It is tough, but through Christ we can prevail over these things.

*Lord God, in our natural selves, we face many trials and temptations each day. But in Christ, and through His power, we are able to overcome them. Help us to stay close to You by keeping Your word in our heart, fixing our eyes on Jesus, and directing our*

*thoughts to that which is good, pure, and holy. Help us in this so that we may be pleasing to You in all ways and at all times. Amen.*

**But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.** Colossians 3:8

We have been told in verse 3:2 that we are to set our minds on things above, not on things of the earth. In order to accomplish this, Paul now gives exhortations which will help make this possible. The list is very similar to that given in Ephesians 4:31. He first says, “But now you yourselves are to put off all these.”

As we are in Christ, God looks at us and sees Him. We are adorned with His garments of righteousness. Because of this, we are to “put off” things which are unbecoming of this most favorable garment of honor.

He begins with “anger.” It comes from a word indicating “to swell.” It “proceeds from an internal *disposition* which *steadfastly* opposes someone or something based on extended personal exposure, i.e. solidifying what the beholder considers *wrong* (unjust, evil)” (HELPS Word Studies).

Next he says “wrath.” This is a word which signifies “getting heated up” or “breathing violently.” It is a “passion-driven behavior, i.e. actions emerging out of strong impulses (intense emotion)” (HELPS Word Studies).

He then notes “malice.” This describes the underlying attitude of evil. It is inherent evil which is present, even if it is not seen in an outward expression. Those evil things which we harbor, even inside, need to be quenched as we walk in newness of life in the Spirit.

Following that is “blasphemy.” This is the Greek word *blasphémia*. It indicates abusive language, and thus blasphemy. It “‘switches’ right for wrong (wrong for right), i.e. calls what God *disapproves*, ‘right’ which ‘exchanges the truth of God for a lie’” (HELPS Word Studies).

Paul then warns against “filthy language.” The word he uses is unique to Scripture. It is more than filthy speech, and vile communication, but it includes foul-mouthed abuse. Such speech is to be put out of our mouths.

Life application: It is unbecoming of one clothed in Christ to wear garments of indecency. Let us strive to emulate the Lord, and not be likened to the fallen, depraved world around us.

*Heavenly Father, Your word admonishes the follower of Christ to put away that which is profane, indecent, and vile. We have been clothed in the perfect righteousness of our Lord, and it makes no sense for us to again don garments of unrighteousness. Instead of filth, may we radiate out purity and holiness. We pray this to Your honor, and in hopes that we will not bring discredit upon Your glorious name. Amen.*

**Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,**  
Colossians 3:9

These words here are also close to Paul's thoughts from Ephesians 4:22-25 -

"...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, <sup>23</sup> and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup> and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another."

Paul is consistent in his words to his readers. Though the law is annulled in Christ, there are precepts which are repeated from the law which we are asked to comply with. This is because committing such offenses is contrary to our new life in Christ.

One of God's attributes is that of truthfulness. As we are to emulate Him, we are to be truthful in all we say; the old man has been put off. In the Greek it is an aorist verb. There is a set time when this occurred. As the old man is gone, and we are in Christ, it logically follows that we are saved one-time-for-all-time. This will continue to be seen in the next verses.

Therefore, going back and doing things which are past cannot result in a lack of salvation, but they can affect us negatively, nonetheless. We can lose friendships, we can lose fellowship, and we can be imprisoned or even killed for doing wrong. And further, we will certainly lose eternal rewards for such things. Therefore, let us strive to emulate the Lord in all ways, and to be pleasing to God as we live out this life in Christ.

Life application: If we think lying will somehow get us ahead in life, or get us out of some type of fix we are in, we are making a wrong judgment about the action. Instead, we should consider what we say from the heavenly, not the earthly, perspective. In doing so, we will benefit from that which is truly of value.

*Lord God, help us to realize that no matter what we gain in this life, if it was obtained apart from compliance with Your word, it is actually a point of loss. What good is gain now if we will lose rewards in what is true and eternal life? Help us to emulate the Lord Jesus, be desirous of pleasing You, and to live in Christ as pleasing instruments of Your grace and mercy. Help us in this, O God. Amen.*

**...and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, Colossians 3:10**

Paul just stated that the believer has “put off the old man with his deeds.” Now in contrast to that, he says that we “have put on the new *man*.”

Jesus uses the same Greek words when speaking of the new wine being put into old wineskins, and the new piece of cloth being sewn onto an old garment. The word for old is a chronological word indicating something ancient. The word for new likewise suggests “new in time.” It is something that is now revealed which didn’t appear before. In other words, we have had a complete break from what we were.

Such a person then “is renewed.” The word is actually in the present tense and is more accurately translated as “is being renewed.” This word, rather than being “new in time,” gives the sense of “new in quality.”

We have been made new, and therefore we are to be renewed, improving from moment to moment. The state of this renewal is to be “in knowledge.” There is an object which we are to focus on, and we are to grow in quality towards the knowledge of that object.

Paul then tells us what that object is by saying this should take place “according to the image of Him who created” us. We are to strive to be improved, from one stage to the next, until we bear the image of Christ. As our knowledge of Christ is, at this time, to be found solely in the Scriptures, then it means that we are to study that marvelous body of writings in order to become more like Him.

It would make no sense to put off the old man, as he said we have done in the last verse, and then to remain ignorant of what our transformation into the new man means. If that

were the case, we would actually remain in the state of whatever knowledge we possess. Without gaining knowledge of Christ Jesus, we would, by default, be new men possessing only an old knowledge.

Unfortunately, this is the state of a large portion of saved believers. They receive Christ and they stagnate. They remain carnal in their thinking despite having been regenerated in their spiritual selves.

Peter gives instructions on how to avoid this pitfall in 2 Peter 1:2-9. Try reading those verses today and reflect on how you too can avoid falling into the pit of forgetfulness, even to the point that you forget you have been saved in the first place.

Life application: Each of us is individually responsible for his own walk in the Lord. Are we going to move forward, seeking to know Him more and more each day? Or, are we going to stagnate and face life's trials with all of the uncertainties that the unregenerate world faces? Let us endeavor to live for the Lord now, grow in Him daily, and be pleasing to Him when we stand before Him at the judgment seat of Christ.

*Lord God, for those who have called on Christ, we have been given a new nature, youthful in regard to what we once were. Now help us to use that new vigor to renew ourselves into a higher quality of life, from stage to stage growing in a greater knowledge of You. And as this is the purpose of giving us Your wonderful word, help us to study it and apply its precepts to our lives. And thank You for being with us in the process. Amen.*

**...where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.** Colossians 3:11

Paul, still showing remarkable consistency with his other letters, now gives a verse reminiscent of Galatians 3:28 -

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Like in Galatia, he here explains the universality of the Gospel message. He begins with, “there is neither Greek nor Jew.”

The words are in opposite order to those written to Galatia. In Galatia, there was an insipid infection of believing that the Judaizers were more spiritual than those in Galatia.

The Judaizers forced their adherence to the Old Testament on the Gentile believers, and those Gentiles swallowed it up. This was less problematic in Colossae, and so he says, "Greek nor Jew."

The Gentiles were on the same level as the Jews. As distinctions go, this is where the greatest of all lay in the mind of the Jews. They were on one side; the Gentiles were on the other. The term "Greek" here is being applied to any non-Jew. Because of the conquests of Alexander, the Greek culture, influence, and language had permeated the known world. Within that sphere, the Jews remained Jews though.

In order to then show that this distinction was now void, he begins his list with this. To the Colossians, it was an admonishment that they were not to look to the Jews for their doctrine, but to God. They were not to insert the false teachings of the Judaizers, but to submerge themselves in the truth of the gospel.

He then further defines this category by saying, "circumcised nor uncircumcised." The addition is not unnecessary. One could say, "Being a Jew may not be a big distinction anymore, but being circumcised is." Paul spent a great deal of time on the issue of circumcision in Galatians, but he has not done so in this letter. Therefore, he is noting simply and directly that the rite of physical circumcision means nothing.

His next words say "barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free." The barbarian is an uncultured person. In comparison to others, he is uncivilized, unpolished, and looked at as contemptible. In the world at large, such a person would be considered less notable, but in Christ, all are on the same level. This also included the Scythian. This is the only time the Scythian is noted in the New Testament.

They were those people who lived on the north and northeast coast of the Black and Caspian seas. This region extended well into Asia. It included the lands of the Mongols and Turks of our more modern age. They were considered a savage people, and were uncivilized and ferocious. However, even such seeming enemies of the cultured areas of Paul's evangelism were to be considered on the same level if they were in Christ. Paul finishes the list with, "slave nor free."

The free people of the Roman Empire were considered on a completely different level than the slaves. This distinction was so great that Paul's words here could hardly be imagined by either class when considering the other. But once in Christ, the distinctions were removed. The letter of Philemon gives important insights into this.

After the list, Paul then finishes with, "...but Christ *is* all in all." The presence of Christ in a believer is all that matters. In Him, all distinctions are swept away, and all are on an equal playing field. We cannot hold grudges against race, creed, culture, ethnicity, etc. by saying that they are not deserving of Christ. All are, and all are welcome.

It is of note that Paul does not include "male nor female" here in his letter to the Colossians. This may have been considered a problem in Galatia, and so Paul addressed it to ensure that it was understood that women were on an equal footing concerning salvation.

However, in the Greek culture, this was not a problem. In fact, including them could cause the possibility of the growth of licentiousness. The attitude of men towards women might jump to an unintended extreme. Therefore, Paul simply left the matter unstated.

Understanding these things, his words of this verse actually imply that these distinctions still exist in the world in which we live. When naming categories, it shows that the categories are there to name. No one reading his words would say, "That person isn't circumcised" if he was actually circumcised. The same is true with those who are slaves and those who are free.

The differences exist, but Paul's point is that they have no bearing on being in Christ. And yet, those who believe the church has replaced Israel ignore the categories that Paul mentions first – Greek and Jew. In doing so, replacement theologians have even made the claim that those in the church are the true Jews, even if they are Gentiles! This is both unbiblical and irrational.

To state the names implies there is a difference. Though there is now no distinction between them "in Christ," there is a difference between them "in the world." The church is not comprised of only Jews.

Life application: If you are a Jew in Christ, you remain a Jew. If you are a Gentile in Christ, you remain a Gentile. There is no distinction between the two, but the differences remain. Don't call yourself what you are not!

*Lord God, You have swept away all supposed divisions of people in Your church. In Christ, there is now no distinction between Jew or Greek, barbarian or one who is cultured, and the visible differences of black, white, yellow, brown, and red make no difference to You. What matters is not an external identification, but an internal change of the heart. When*

*one calls on Jesus, they become a part of this great body which You have established. Thank You that You would even call someone like me. Praises to You, O God. Amen.*

**Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; Colossians 3:12**

Paul has just given a list of categories where one in any category is no longer lifted above another in any other category. All are on an equal basis before God because of Christ. For this reason, Paul says, “Therefore.”

As all are on this same equal level in Christ, there should be a resulting understanding of this, which is followed through with an equal respect for all. In confirmation of this, he says, “as the elect of God.”

In other words, any who have received Christ – whether Greek, Jew, circumcised, uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free – any such category, each person is one of the “elect of God.” The idea of being elect signifies privilege. All have the same rights and benefits, and each is “holy and beloved.” Charles Ellicott states, “The elect are ‘holy,’ consecrated to God in thought and life; and ‘beloved,’ accepted and sustained in their consecration by His love.” As every person in Christ bears these traits, we are not to look down on any other who is in Christ.

Rather, we are to “put on tender mercies.” Vincent’s Word Studies call this “a heart of compassion.” We are to be compassionate towards our fellow believers, not ignoring their needs because of some supposed difference which would otherwise lessen them in our eyes.

Likewise, we are to put on “kindness.” This is “the Spirit-produced goodness which meets the need and avoids human harshness” (HELPS Word-Studies).

Paul follows next with “humility.” The believer is to be humble in spirit, not raising himself above others, but instead giving preference to others, submitting to them and their needs and desires.

After that he notes “meekness.” It is the gentle and mild attitude where a person receives another with an open heart and an easy-going disposition.

He finishes the verse with “longsuffering.” This is a trait which displays the willingness to put up with another despite their faults. It is patience without exasperation, and it is even allowing one to overlook the wrongs committed towards oneself by another.

Life application: Bearing the traits Paul notes in this verse takes time and effort, but it is right that we work on them because those who are in Christ are also the elect. We are not raised above them, and they are not raised above us. Rather we are equal as we stand in relation to one another. And so let us do our best to act in the manner we have been exhorted to act in these words.

*Lord God, help us to live out the truth that all who are in Christ are on the same level. There are none greater or lesser, but all are elect. Because of this, help us to display qualities of gentleness, longsuffering, kindness, and humility toward our fellow brothers and sisters. May we never exalt ourselves over one another, but display a gracious attitude towards each other at all times. Amen.*

**...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*.** Colossians 3:13

This verse, which is a continuation of the thought from the previous verse, begins with, “bearing with one another.”

The word indicates a purposeful endeavoring in our attitude. We should have an earnest desire to exert ourselves in love in order to “secure a thing not lightly obtained” (Albert Barnes). People can wear us out with their own pet peeves, insecurities, jealousies, and the like. In our walk, we should be willing to bear such things in love rather than breaking down and shooting forth darts of anger.

He then says, “forgiving one another.” Forgiveness is something we are exhorted to do because without forgiveness there is no harmony. And without harmony, a wall of division is built up which normally will affect more than just the two who are in disagreement.

Small divisions which are left to fester can divide entire churches. Therefore, when someone offends another, and when the offender requests forgiveness for his offense, the offended is to grant that forgiveness. This will be built upon with the rest of the words of the verse.

Next Paul says, "...if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." God forgave us in Christ – completely and wholly – having canceled our debt through His sacrifices. There were no strings attached. The forgiveness is complete, it is eternal, and it was based upon a simple request for forgiveness of having offended God.

This then is the standard. Our forgiveness is to resemble that which God has provided to us. It is to be complete and completely forgiven. When we are asked to provide it, we are to give it.

Having said that, this needs to be explained further. Far too often, this verse, and several others, are taken to unintended extremes because people do not think through what is being said. Eventually, someone will offend someone else, and then those around him will say, "You must forgive that person." This is true, but only if the offender requests it. Forgiveness is not unconditional in Christ, and it would, therefore, be a greater standard than God expects of Himself to say that we must forgive everyone all the time.

To say that forgiveness in Christ is unconditional would lead to the theology of universalism – everyone goes to heaven, and nobody goes to hell. This is absurd, and the Bible never teaches it. God's condition for forgiveness is faith in the cross of Christ, receiving that for the lost soul – "Lord God, I am sorry for my sins. I ask that I be forgiven through the shed blood of Christ."

Whether those words are specifically stated or not, they are implied in what the cross of Christ signifies. All people, and all sins, are potentially forgiven in Christ. When we ask for that forgiveness, it is actually granted.

Some other examples of verses which are misused concerning forgiveness are -

1. Jesus on the cross said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). People will say, Jesus forgave them so you must too. First, Jesus didn't forgive them, He asked the Father to. Secondly, the sin was unintentional (they know not what they do). Third, after Jesus' ascension, Peter explained what occurred and said to these same people that they must repent or be destroyed and cut off – he even called them a "wicked generation." Their destruction occurred 40 years later when Israel was destroyed and the Jews were dispersed, just as Jesus predicted. Forgiveness didn't come for the nation who rejected Christ.

2. “But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Matthew 6:15. This is taken entirely out of context as a stand-alone verse. The surrounding verses are about asking for forgiveness first. When we do, He does. And we are to do likewise when someone repents toward us.
3. “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him” (Luke 17:3,4). In this verse, forgiveness clearly is based on repentance.
4. In a comparable passage in Matthew 18:35 people tend to only quote the forgiveness part – “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.” However, the entire parable is based on one getting on one’s knees and first asking forgiveness.
5. “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 20:23). Pretty clear here. Though speaking to the apostles, Jesus’ apostolic followers could retain the sins of others, and they were not forgiven.
6. When we say the Lord’s Prayer – “...forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” we are acknowledging God as our forgiver, and we are asking for that forgiveness. It therefore would logically be the same with those who “trespass against us.”

Life application: Context matters for proper doctrine, and doctrine matters for proper theology. Keep things in context.

*Heavenly Father, help us to remember that when others come to us and ask for forgiveness, we are to forgive them for what they have done. Our petty offenses are nothing in comparison to what we have been forgiven by You. When we asked for forgiveness in Christ, You freely and abundantly provided it. In Christ, all are potentially forgiven, and when we ask for it, we are actually forgiven. What a display of love! Thank You, O God, for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.** Colossians 3:14

In the previous two verses, Paul has given a list of things which the believer is exhorted to do in order to be a sound, well rounded Christian who accurately reflects the characteristics and traits of Christ. Now he places those things under one larger umbrella by stating, “But above all.”

The words here give the idea of a garment which covers everything else and encloses it. Over all of the things he has said, we are to “put on love.” Love is the external, covering garment of all of the other things we are to wear (or “put on” as he said in verse 12).

The reason for covering all of the other exhortations with love is because it is, as he says, “the bond of perfection.” Love is what ties together all of the other virtues he has mentioned. The word translated as “perfection” carries the idea of a collective which results from a combination of other things.

When kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, and the other virtues which Paul exhorts us to possess are tied together with love, then a perfection of the whole is the result.

Life application: If someone is kind to another person, but is kind in an unloving way, the kindness of the deed is lost. The same is true with any such otherwise noble trait. When love is lacking, there is a deficiency in it. Let us remember to be loving in all we do, letting it surround us as a garment of perfection.

*Lord God, You word asks us to clothe ourselves as if in a garment of love. In doing this, then all of the other things we do will be done well. If we do a kind deed without love, then what we have done will be quickly forgotten. But when we are kind with a loving attitude attached to the deed, it will be received for what it truly is. When You sent Christ Jesus into the world, He came with a garment of love which surrounded Him. Help us to emulate our Lord, and help us to be pleasing to You in this manner. Amen.*

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

Paul had just implored his readers to “put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” Now, in addition to that, he says, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.” In Philippians 4:7, he told the congregation that “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

In order to have the peace of God, it is necessary to have a knowledge of what Christ has done, and of what He promises for us because of what He has done. When we possess that knowledge, we can then let it rule in our hearts.

The word Paul uses for “rule” is used just this once in Scripture. It means “to be an umpire,” or “to arbitrate.” We are to let the peace of God be the umpire of our actions.

But again, we can only do this if we have a knowledge of what God has done, is doing, and will do for us.

Through reading and understanding Scripture, we can see the ultimate end which is promised to us. In this, if we can just keep our eyes on what we know lies ahead because of Christ, we should be able to obtain and live in this peace. The saints of Paul's time only had the Old Testament Scriptures.

Today we have the whole counsel of God. In reading the words of the Bible, and in holding fast to what is recorded there about what lies ahead for the redeemed, we truly can possess the peace of God, even in times of the greatest trials and struggles imaginable.

With this knowledge, and the peace that comes along with it, we can comfort one another. We can reassure those who are downtrodden, and we can remind them of the glory which lies ahead. It is to this peace of God, ruling in our hearts, that Paul says we "were called in one body."

We are called to possess a knowledge of the word, and then to share it with others. Paul's noting of the "one body" is reminding us of the words of verse 11 where he cast aside all external distinctions and said that we are all of Christ equally. There should be no division in this one body because of these supposed differences.

In this state of knowledge and harmony with other believers, we are to "be thankful." Knowing the good end, which is promised for us, and knowing that we are not below any other believers, but that we possess the same promised blessings as they do, we are to rejoice and give thanks to God. Paul will next expand on this as he shares the means of accomplishing these things.

Life application: Christ has overcome the world. He has also promised that we who are in Him will also overcome the world. Truly then, why should we be overly despondent about what happens in this life. It is natural to mourn when sadness comes, but in our times of sadness, or other negative emotions, we should not let them get the best of us. Instead, we should be uplifted in Christ at all times because of the surety we possess.

*Lord God, we who have trusted in Christ Jesus possess the greatest surety of all. He defeated death, having come out of the grave in fulfillment of Scripture. Now, we are promised the same good end. We too shall overcome death and be raised to eternal life in a setting which we were originally intended to enjoy. Knowing this, how can we walk*

*around mourning about life's troubles? Let us rejoice and be glad in the glory that lies ahead! Amen.*

**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.** Colossians 3:16

Paul uses the rare term “word of Christ” (this is the only time it is seen) in this verse rather than the more common “word of God.” In Philippians 2:16, he calls it the “word of life.”

The word of God is the word of Christ, and the word of Christ is the word of life. Each time the word is given a descriptor in this manner, it helps us to more rightly understand the immense importance of this marvelous gift we have been given.

It is a word of intimate fellowship with our Creator, and it is a word from which life is produced, if we are willing to properly apply it to our own lives. Thus, it is the doctrine of Christ which Paul is speaking of. His word is our doctrine.

Paul admonishes those at Colossae (and thus us!) to let this marvelous word of Christ dwell in us “richly.” The word gives the idea of abundance. As it is an adverb, it means that the word of Christ should dwell in us abundantly.

It shouldn't just be a passing part of our lives, but one which overflows from us at all times. In understanding this, he then adds on a descriptive thought indicating that not only should the word dwell in us richly, but that it should be “in all wisdom.”

A question arises in these words though. Is “wisdom” described by “teaching and admonishing” which follow after it, or is it connected to the word “teaching?” Both are possible –

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom teaching, and admonishing...

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing...

It is hard to be dogmatic, and the ambiguity may mean that it was intentional. One is wise when they teach and admonish, but one who has the word of Christ in an abundant

manner will naturally desire to teach wisdom and to admonish others. Either way, the instruction and admonishment is to be “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”

Psalms are words which come directly from the Word of God (which is the word of Christ). They have been accumulated and are included in the Old Testament. As Paul cites them as profitable for instruction, then they are a useful tool for all of God’s people at all times, and are not to be ignored in our daily lives.

Hymns would be songs which include Scripture in them, teaching theological truths about God. They are intended to lead us to a firm foundation in knowing and understanding His wonderful works.

Spiritual songs would then be songs which are written about a relationship with God, but not necessarily relying on Scripture. They direct hearts and minds to God based on the emotion of the composer’s personal feelings about his relationship with his Creator.

Paul instructs his readers that they are to engage in these things while “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” The Greek has an article before “grace.” Thus, it literally says, “in the grace.”

Because of this, it is limited to the grace of God. As believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, this is what Paul is referring to. We are to rely on the Spirit and together with Him sing in our hearts to the Lord. Based on the construction of the Greek, it therefore correctly reads, “...in the grace, singing in your hearts to the Lord.”

We are to actively live in the grace of God, and we are to express that state with singing in our hearts to the Lord because of it.

Life application: One cannot fulfill the exhortations of this verse unless he fills himself with the word of God. We are to read it, meditate on it, speak it, share it, and rejoice in it. Let us never tire of filling ourselves with this most marvelous treasure which has been given to us by our glorious Creator.

*Heavenly Father, fill us with the desire to know Your word more and more each day. Help us not to fall away from it, but to allow it to dwell in us richly. In doing so, it will then overflow from us and come to the ears of those around us. And who knows which person will need the tender words of a psalm or a hymn at that moment? And even more, if nobody is around us, we still are surrounded by You. May our hearts overflow with songs*

*from our hearts to You because of the grace which abides in us, and which was bestowed upon us by You. Surely You are worthy of the songs of our hearts at all times. Amen.*

**And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Colossians 3:17**

Paul now gives a greeting rather similar to 1 Corinthians 10:31 – “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” He is a bit more specific in this exhortation, changing “eat or drink” to “word or deed,” and adding in that all should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The words “whatever you do” are really all-inclusive. Anything in our regular walk of life, and anything in our spiritual life as well, is to be brought into harmony with our dedication to the Lord. To expand on that, he adds “in word or deed.”

When we speak and when we act, we are to direct those things properly and in a manner worthy of “the name of the Lord Jesus.” He is to be the focus of our eyes, the direction of our thoughts, the utterance of our lips, and the reason for our deeds. And in addition to these things, we are to give “thanks to God the Father.”

The theme of being thankful has literally permeated this epistle. As he closes each section of exhortations, he has added, and will continue to add, a note concerning this (see Colossians 1:12, 2:7, 3:15, and 4:2). If we have words to utter, we are alive to utter them. If we have deeds to do, we have strength to do them. Each of these things comes from God who created us and sustains us. Because of this, thanks should never be left from our lips and lives.

But Paul goes a step further than just telling us to be grateful to God the Father. We are to do it “through Him,” meaning Jesus. Jesus is the focal point of God’s attention toward His people, and He is to be the focal point of our attention as we return thanks to God. Without Jesus, we would be lost forever, but because of Him, we have a sure hope of an eternal dwelling. There, Christ will radiate out the glory of God for all eternity.

Life application: Let us think on this verse often, and then put it into action. It is so very easy to get misdirected by the world in which we live. But if we just hold fast to Christ in all we do, and give thanks to God the Father through Him, we will be useful, pleasing vessels for God’s use.

*Heavenly Father, You have fashioned us as jars of clay, ready to be filled. We can be filled with useless, corrupt contents, or we can be filled with Your Spirit – alive and vibrant. Help us to live out our lives properly, being filled with You, and doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus. To Your glory we pray this. Amen.*

**Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Colossians 3:18**

Paul now goes from general precepts which affect the whole civil life of men, to precepts which are more specific, and which pertain to a man's family. He begins by addressing wives, writing a very basic thought which contains the same sentiment found throughout all of Scripture, but which is unfortunately mocked and ridiculed, even in the church itself, in today's world.

His words are fitting, proper, and what God expects. He says, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands."

The word "submit" is in the present tense. This is your duty now and as long as you are wife to your husband. You are to submit to him. God has ordained a hierarchy within the family unit, and this structure is expected to be adhered to. Disobedience to it is no different than any other type of disobedience. But modern sensibilities shun any such authoritative structure, and they place societal values above those of biblical values.

Because of this, the family unit readily breaks down, and in turn so do the marriages. But God's word stands, and for the woman of God who is obedient to His word, she will submit to her husband as He has directed. Paul says that such "is fitting in the Lord."

The verb now switches to the imperfect tense, signifying from the moment when she became a believer, or from the moment that she marries as a believer. His words here seem to imply that such was not the case with some women at Colossae, and he is specifically addressing the issue to correct that deficiency. But the spirit of non-submission found in Colossae is held in high esteem among the modern feminist movement.

If marriage takes place at all, it is with the attitude that says, "Submit schmubmit. I can handle taking charge." This approach has spread to believers, and it causes real problems within the church and within the families of the church.

Paul will give exhortations next to husbands, fathers, and bondservants. Each has his place and his responsibility within the home environment, and each should be willing to

follow through with adhering to the words we have been given. Paul speaks of this matter elsewhere, such as in Ephesians 5 and Titus 2. Peter also speaks of this matter in 1 Peter 3.

Life application: The word is written. We will either adhere to it and be considered obedient, or we will shun it and be considered disobedient. No other option exists for the believer in Christ. Human pride is a sad infection in our lives which must be quashed lest we stand before our Lord and suffer loss because of it.

Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. In turn, you will bring honor to Him and stability to your home.

*Lord God, it is You who has determined the family structure. Help us to be obedient to Your desire for each of us as we live in relation to that structure. In doing so, the family will be strong, the authority will be set, the members will be happy, and You will be well-pleased. May we adhere to Your word in this, putting away pride and not letting cultural norms take precedence over what You have ordained. Amen.*

**Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.** Colossians 3:19

After instructions to the wives, Paul next addresses the husbands. His words are carefully selected. First he says, “Husbands, love your wives.”

The word is present imperative active. Thus, “You are to do this now and always, you are certainly to do it, and you are to actively do it... Love your wives!” A man and a woman are one when united in marriage.

Because of this, they are to love one another just as they love themselves. Just because a wife is to submit to her husband, it does not give him the right to act in a non-loving way towards her. Rather, the exact opposite is true. Paul then follows up with, “and do not be bitter toward them.”

The verb now goes from the active to the passive. Thus, it should read, “and do not be embittered toward them.” As the woman is the weaker vessel, the husband may get exasperated by her weakness. Or there may be other ways in which a man gets frustrated with his wife (is it possible?), and so Paul admonishes the husband to not allow himself to become embittered towards her.

Each is an individual, and each is designed by God to form a whole. Surely men cause women to get exasperated (surely!), and the same is true with women. The husband, being the head of the house, is to not allow bitterness to grow because of this position.

Life application: When we consider the strengths of our spouses, then the failings will be less noticeable. It is so easy in life to focus on the negative, but let us not do so – especially in regard to our spouses. Instead, let us love, cherish, and honor one another. In so doing, the Lord will look with favor upon our marriages.

*Heavenly Father, You are so very good to us in having designed men and women to form a whole when coming together in the bonds of marriage. There is no substitute to this marvelous union, and we only destroy what is right, moral, and holy when we deviate from the plan, ordained by You. May we hold our spouses in high regard, and never give in to acknowledging any marriage union as acceptable other than this type which was ordained by You. Amen.*

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

Colossians 3:20

This verse is a shortened form of Ephesians 6:1-3 –

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: <sup>3</sup>“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

The necessity of children to be obedient to their parents is found throughout Scripture, both implicitly and explicitly. Solomon admonished it to the youth of his audience when he wrote –

“My son, hear the instruction of your father,  
And do not forsake the law of your mother;  
<sup>9</sup>For they *will be* a graceful ornament on your head,  
And chains about your neck.” Proverbs 1:8, 9

Having stated this, Paul is speaking of proper things which would be pleasing to the Lord. The words “all things” cannot mean things which are contrary to what the Lord would ordain for people to do. In such instances, disobedience to the parents’ directives would be the proper course of action. Even as children within a household, obedience to God’s word must come first.

However, when the instructions of one's parents are in line with Scripture, or at least neutral in regard to Scripture, then obedience to them is right and proper. As Paul notes, "for this is well pleasing to the Lord."

Christ was obedient to His Father, and He has set the example for all others to follow. There is a set hierarchy which has been ordained by God, and to which we are expected to adhere. In doing so, we will be pleasing to the Lord.

Life application: Again, Paul has set a standard for conduct within the family which is expected to be adhered to. Concerning children, how obvious it is that they should, in fact, be obedient to their parents. But this is not just a responsibility which is laid upon them. Rather, when they are disobedient, it is time for the parents to enforce the rules of the house.

It is something that seems almost foreign to modern families though. But just because it is unpopular to discipline children, it does not mean that it is wrong. As Solomon says –

"Do not withhold correction from a child,  
For *if* you beat him with a rod, he will not die.  
<sup>14</sup>You shall beat him with a rod,  
And deliver his soul from hell." Proverbs 23:13, 14

Are you going to trust a TV show or the word of God in how to raise your children?

*Heavenly Father, in this world where discipline supposedly seems like an unjust thing, help us to be obedient to Your word and not to the societal norms which have crept up around us. Without correction, there is no proper instruction. No wonder many schools have become riotous dens filled with unreasoning animals, and our prisons are chock-full of violent criminals. We have departed from Your word, and we are reaping what we have sown. Please turn our hearts and minds to a right application of Your word, and this unholy tide will be stopped. If so, law and order can rule once again. Amen.*

**Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.** Colossians 3:21

This verse is a close match to Ephesians 6:4 –

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

The word Paul uses for “provoke” is found only here and in 2 Corinthians 9:2. It gives the sense of stirring something up. His intent then is that fathers are not to irritate their children. In acting in such a manner, they are bound to “become discouraged.”

This word is one found only here in Scripture, *athumeo*. It gives the sense of being spiritless, and thus disheartened. It is not appropriate for a father to beat down a child to the point that they become despondent and broken in their spirit. Rather, a father is meant to do exactly the opposite, building the children up so that they will become mature and sound people.

Instead of deriding a child for missing the ball with the bat, the father should encourage him. “That’s OK son, it was a great swing.” In the end, such positive, rather than negative, reinforcement will produce the more stable child.

Life application: In dealing with your children, ask yourself if you would like to be treated the way they are being treated. How often we expect more of our children than we would of ourselves. It is true we should want them to become even better people than we are, but growing is a process that takes time and encouragement.

*Heavenly Father, help those of us who are parents to be more like You. Help us to encourage our children, guide them on the right paths of righteousness, and to teach them how to avoid the pitfalls of life. Your word does each of these things for us, and so help us to apply those precepts to our interactions with our own children. In the end, we will build them up rather than exasperate them if we do these things. Help us in this, to Your glory. Amen.*

**Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. Colossians 3:22**

Verses 22-25 closely match Ephesians 6:5-8 –

“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; <sup>6</sup> not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, <sup>7</sup> with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he* is a slave or free.”

There are some differences in the two passages though, which will be evaluated. So far, Paul has noted relations in the immediate family within the household. This one is almost as close, and maybe even closer, as far as daily contact is concerned.

The term “bondservant” is as good as one can get from the Greek word *doulos*. The term applies to one who is bound to the service of another. This could be a voluntary subjection or an involuntary duty, and it can also go as far as being a slave.

Their rights were extremely limited even in the best of cases. In some instances, they had virtually no rights at all. And yet, there is the note of a reward, even for them, which will be fully revealed in verse 24. For the Christian bondservant, Paul instructs them to “obey in all things your masters.”

Despite the many difficult rigors often suffered under cruel masters, Paul simply makes the command. He doesn’t qualify it with, “If they are good masters,” nor does he give any hint that they have a right to rebel. The status of slaves or bondservants was simply a fact of life.

Those who were so bound were to accept it. However, he does give a note concerning slaves elsewhere that is worth citing –

“Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. <sup>21</sup> Were you called *while* a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use *it*.” 1 Corinthians 7:20, 21

However, as long as a person was bound, they were to be obedient to their masters. And yet, Paul adds on a descriptor for them to consider. It is a master “according to the flesh.”

In other words, there are human limitations which are being spoken of here. Paul is implying that they are bondservants of Another as well, which is not according to the flesh. It is for this reason that they were to be obedient to their human master. Paul then asks that such bondservants be obedient “not with eyeservice.”

It is a word used only here and in Ephesians 6:6, and it appears to be a word invented by him. The use of it is to indicate someone who serves only when the eye of his master is present. When the master is out, he refuses to conduct his duties as he should. Paul says that this is inappropriate. Rather, a servant is to serve his master in the same manner as he would serve the Lord, which means at all times.

He next explains what that means by saying (not as) “men-pleasers.” This word is also found only here and in Ephesians 6:6. It indicates someone who is willing to please man rather than God. The idea of both of these words is that a bondservant is to look to his duties to his master (whether he is a good master or a crummy one) as if he was actually serving the Lord.

In so doing, he would be a responsible representative of the Lord in the presence of his master. This is explained in the next words, “but as bondservants of Christ.”

By acting as a bondservant of Christ, even for his earthly master, he will then be doing it “in sincerity of heart, fearing God.” Paul puts a stress on the value of the heart being sincere in the performance of the bondservant's duties. In this sincere attitude, a demonstration that one's heart is directed toward a proper fear of God is seen. And it is God who looks upon the heart to determine the value of all people's actions.

As we have a different system of employment in the world today, we need to adapt that system to Paul's words. Rather than masters, we have bosses. However, we are to treat our bosses with the same respect that the bondservant is called to for his master. We are not to be employees who perform with mere eyeservice, nor are we to simply be men-pleasers.

We are to act as if we are reporting to Christ, making the most efficient use of our time under the employ of our employers.

Life application: In the world, it is so easy to fall in with the “labor union” mentality. The liberal attitude, both in government and in private industry, says that it is OK to not work to the highest standard of integrity and diligence. But the Bible tells us otherwise. If you act like a democrat in your work environment by failing to give your all to your boss, you are not acting as the Lord would have you to work.

It is time to mature out of your self-centered work attitude, and to become a devoted, dedicated employee. And this is regardless of the attitude of your employer. If you can't deal with him, then it is you who needs to find another job. Think clearly! Apply the Bible and its precepts to your life! Be honoring of the Lord through your employment.

*Lord God, help us to have a proper attitude in our employment. You would have us work our jobs as if we are working for Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. It isn't always easy, but this is what You ask of us. In acting this way, productivity will be up, and*

*whining would be down. Help us to not be whiners, but to be faithful employees who strive to seek Your honor before our earthly bosses. Amen.*

**And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, Colossians 3:23**

Continuing on with his words to bondservants, Paul now tells them quite clearly that “whatever you do, do it heartily.” In the comparable passage in Ephesians 6, he told them that they were to be “doing the will of God from the heart.”

The two thoughts mean essentially the same thing. The heart is to be actively willing and eager to perform the required functions necessary to please God. If bondservants “fear God” as it said in verse 22, then they will naturally do their work heartily.

Paul then continues to explain this with his next words. The duties of a bondservant are to be conducted with a friendly and agreeable attitude because it is “as to the Lord and not to men” that this work is actually to be done. We may have earthly masters over us, but we are first and foremost servants of the Lord. It is to Him that we are fully accountable in all aspects of our lives.

As noted in the previous verse, we don't have slaves or bondservants in normal society today, but we do have employers over us to whom we are to submit. And the reason remains the same. We are representatives of Christ, and thus people will make their evaluations of Him based on our actions.

Life application: Who do you feel you are serving when you go to work? A crummy boss? A greedy company? In the highest sense, you are serving the Lord. Therefore, perform your duties to the highest of your capabilities, knowing that He will reward you for your efforts in glorifying Him.

*Lord God, some of us have bosses that are really crummy. Some of us work for corporations that are greedy and have no care about the world around them. To them, it is all about the amount of profit they can get out of others. And yet, when we go to our jobs, we are above all serving You. Give us the desire, as faithful followers of Christ, to perform our jobs to the utmost of our capabilities so that others will see our actions and speak well of Your name. Surely You will reward us for our efforts in bringing such glory to You. Amen.*

**...knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. Colossians 3:24**

This verse, still being addressed to the bondservants, is a close parallel to Ephesians 6:8-

“...knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free.”

As a slave, this is the very last thing that they would ever dream of as coming from their owner. The very nature of being a slave is that they were property, and had no rights to any inheritance. Only a family member would receive such things.

If there were no family members, the owner’s possessions would still go elsewhere, the slave included. He would simply be transferred as a part of the owner’s wealth to someone else. But Paul tells the slaves that they were to conduct their duties in the fear of God because they would, in fact, “receive the reward of the inheritance.”

Paul speaks of the inheritance of the saints quite a few times in Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. Likewise, the author of Hebrews, as well as Peter, speak of the inheritance of the saints. This promise is not only to those who are free in this life, but it is to be shared by those who are slaves as well. Together, all “serve the Lord Christ.”

There is one heavenly Master for all of the redeemed, and all will share in His inheritance. The share of each will not be based upon earthly position, gender, race, or any other such thing. Rather, it will be based upon what was done for the Lord in faith. Eternal rewards lie ahead for all, if they are but willing to pursue them now.

Life application: Don’t fear that your position or status in this life somehow drives your future inheritance in heaven. It doesn’t. Rather than worry about your status here, look to the future by being productive for Christ now. The highest ranking general has the same number of hours a day as the lowest private. What each does with his time for Christ is what matters.

*Lord God, we have all been given the same number of hours each day to live out our lives. The president has no more or less time than anyone else to be productive in sharing Your word. And the inheritance You have promised to us is not based on status, wealth, color, race, or any other such earthly division. Rather, it is based on what we do for You now. Help us to consider this, remember it, and then apply it to the few hours a day we each have. To Your glory alone we pray. Amen.*

**But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.**  
Colossians 3:25

This final verse of Chapter 3 (and the opening verse of Chapter 4) is close in thought to Ephesians 6:9 –

“And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

Paul has spent the last three verses of instruction on what bondservants were to do and how they were to act while under the authority of their masters. He now sums up the thought with something that will point in both directions – from the bondservant’s perspective and from the master’s – by saying, “But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done.”

This is certainly speaking of a master who would abuse his servant as much as it is a servant not being faithful to his master. He is thinking on the same lines in these verses as he was with the congregation at Ephesus, and the longer thought to them can be inferred in this briefer one.

This is the reason why the bondservant is to serve his master heartily. Even if the master is unfair to him, he will be repaid for his faithfulness, and the master will be repaid for his abuses. As Paul says, “...there is no partiality.”

Slave-masters are accountable to the Lord just as much as slaves are accountable to their masters. Therefore, it is implied that slave-masters are actually accountable to their slaves in a certain way, just as slaves are likewise accountable to the Lord. If the master was unfair to a slave, the Lord would see it and call him to account.

There is no partiality in the Lord, and all will be rewarded based on their conduct before Him.

Life application: If you are a boss, the concepts which are true in this verse certainly apply to you. You have charge over subordinates, and you are to treat them kindly and fairly. In this, you will be a responsible Christian and a faithful servant to your heavenly Master.

*Lord God, Your word tells us that we are to act responsibly towards those who are placed under us. Whether boss or business owner, we are to be considerate of those who we lead. Help us, if we are in such a position, to be kind and gentle-hearted towards them, and yet firm in our responsibilities towards those who are above us. Help us to have*

*peace in our work environments, knowing that we are ultimately accountable to Christ our Lord who will judge our actions fairly and impartially. Amen.*

## CHAPTER 4

**Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.** Colossians 4:1

These words (along with the closing verse of Chapter 3) closely match Paul's words of Ephesians 6:9 –

“And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

Though this thought carries over from the previous chapter, there is nothing wrong with dividing the chapters in this manner. It actually gives an additional highlight to the duties of the master in having it divided in this way. They are to be responsible in the care of their bondservants, giving “what is just and fair.”

The word “just” is an adjective which means “righteous” and “impartial.” The slaves were not to be deprived a fair hearing over matters simply because they were slaves. The word “fair” is actually a noun, and it is preceded by a definite article. It signifies “equality of treatment,” and thus it should be translated as “the equality.”

It is not an equality of condition, but a brotherly equality which stems from the relationship that arises from being in Christ. Though there is an earthly slave/master relationship, there is a spiritual brotherhood which is to take precedence in the master's conduct. The reason for this is that the believing master knows that he also has “a Master in heaven.”

Christ has treated this master of others in the most caring and compassionate manner imaginable. He has also shown him the epitome of righteous treatment. Further, He has bestowed upon him the equality par excellence, raising him to the same level as any president or king who has also been saved by Christ. This equality of the brethren is thus to be bestowed upon believing bondservants.

Life application: As noted in other verses, we have a different societal structure than ancient Rome. Instead of slaves, we have employees. But the concepts remain the same. We are to be fair to those we have charge over, particularly to fellow believers. This is because our great Master, Jesus, has shown this to us as the example to follow.

*Lord God, thank You for the undeserved treatment we have received from You because of the life of Jesus which was given on our behalf. We in no way merited such grace, and yet You have lavished it upon us. Help us now to act in a like manner to those around us. May we not forget the grace of Christ in our daily relationships, but rather highlight it in all ways and at all times. Amen.*

### **Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; Colossians 4:2**

Paul lays heavy stress on the need for prayer in his epistles. In 1 Thessalonians 5, he tells his readers to “pray without ceasing.”

The same thought is expanded upon here. He tells those in Colossae (and thus us!) to continue in prayer (as in praying without ceasing), but he tells them to do so in an earnest, steadfast manner. There should be a vibrancy in their prayer life, as if it is a natural extension of their very being.

The idea of continuing earnestly in prayer does not mean that we get on our knees and stay there all day without accomplishing anything else. There are many types of prayers, and the admonition fits any of them at any given time.

There are formal prayers and informal prayers. There are silent prayers of the heart given in our times of distress or deep need, and there are vocal prayers which are given to build up others for courage, comfort, or edification. There are secret prayers, given between oneself and God which reveal the innermost soul of the one praying.

There are public prayers offered for gatherings of God’s people as they meet to worship or petition Him. There are prepared prayers which are meticulously worded in order to inspire deep conviction, reverence, or courage. And there are sudden prayers which leap out of our souls as we come upon a moment of need.

Paul’s admonition to “continue earnestly in prayer” is one which should be taken literally. There is never a time that we can simply talk to God and it not be considered a prayer. He next expands upon his words by saying “being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.”

In life, we often get sidetracked by things that come our way, and our minds tend to wander from our connection with the Lord. Paul tells us that we are to be vigilant, or watchful, ensuring that we don’t let go of our prayer life. And in our prayers, we are to add in thanksgiving. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, he admonishes, “...in everything give thanks.”

It is the same thought here. If we are praying continuously, and if we are giving thanks in all of our prayers, then we are giving thanks continuously. This attitude should be a constant part of who we are at all times.

Life application: How easy it is to not be thankful. We simply forget about the many kindnesses which come to us. But if we can remember to be in prayer always, and that thanksgiving should be a part of those prayers, then we will not fall into the state of ingratitude.

It takes mental effort, but it can be done. Don't let the world of whining and griping get you down. Instead, let the spiritual connection you have with God be nurtured to a state of constant vibrancy.

*Lord God, it sure is easy to forget to be thankful. This is especially so in this world where whining and griping seems to permeate every aspect of our lives. The work environment, the news media, social media, and on and on... complaining has become the standard. But help us to not be drawn down in that way. Instead, help us to remember Your kind deeds which have come our way. Help us to be grateful for them, and to pray without ceasing while adding in thanks to that steady stream of prayers. Help us in this Lord. Amen.*

**...meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, Colossians 4:3**

Paul has just exhorted those at Colossae to remain vigilant in prayer with thanksgiving. He then asks them, "...meanwhile praying for us."

If prayer served no purpose except acting as some type of pressure relief valve, he would never ask for such a thing. But Paul firmly believed that prayers are something which are effective in determining outcomes. As he desired a certain outcome for himself and those with him, he specifically requests it now, desiring "that God would open a door to us for the word."

Paul uses this same "door" terminology in 1 Corinthians 16:9 and 2 Corinthians 2:12. This was Paul's great desire, but it was something that was currently denied, at least partially. Being in chains, he had a very limited opportunity to share the word. But he was in chains for doing exactly that. He was hoping that it would again be possible to communicate the word, not just in letters, but in person.

Therefore, “a door for the word” is probably initially a reference to being released from prison. With such a release, along with the Lord leading the way in new evangelism, he would then be able “to speak the mystery of Christ.”

The mystery of Christ is everything involved in the gospel that brings salvation to mankind. A mystery in the Bible is something that cannot be deduced without specific explanation. For each person who has never heard about the work of Christ, there is no way for them to be reconciled to God.

Therefore, it is a mystery to them. Paul desired that he would be able to share this mystery so that salvation could come to whoever heard it and received it. But in his sharing it in the past, there were unfortunate consequences. He notes that it was because of speaking the mystery of Christ that he was “also in chains.”

His imprisonment was brought about because of his desire to speak about Christ, and yet he wanted to get right back out there and start speaking once again. If it meant future imprisonment, that was of no matter. He would speak until he could speak no more. It was for this ability to get out and share the word that he requested prayers.

Life application: How many people have you shared the message of Jesus with lately? People are dying and being eternally separated from God because of a failure to communicate. Are you a part of this failed system? Or are you opening your mouth and speaking? The Bible says, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” Simple gospel instructions: Meet person; open mouth; speak.

*Lord God, for those who have received the gift of eternal life and a return to Your garden of delight, have we been willing to bring others along on the trip as well? Have we simply taken the time to open our mouths and tell others about what Jesus did for us? How mournful it is that we are unwilling to simply speak about the greatest event in human existence! Change our hearts and help us to speak about the mystery of Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**...that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.** Colossians 4:4

Paul has asked for prayers for himself and those who were his fellow workers, and then to explain that further, he said they were to open a door for him to speak the mystery of Christ. He then noted that it was for this reason that he was in chains. Going back to the request for prayer now, he says that his desire is that he “might make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”

The word “it” is speaking of “the mystery of Christ.” He is already in chains, and so he is asking that an effective door be opened to him to speak this mystery even while in chains. It is not to discount prayers for release, which would be an open door, but whether in chains or whether free, he is praying for opportunities to speak the words which would make the mystery of Christ manifest to those he would meet.

His words show that he cared less about being in chains than he did about getting the message of salvation out to the people he encountered. His desire was first and foremost for an effective door to be opened to him in order to speak. It is a mark of the true inward-burning evangelist.

Life application: Do you encounter people and think, “I need to tell this person about Jesus”? Or do you just look for a normal social interaction and then move on? If you aren’t hoping to share Christ, it would be good for you to pray about your attitude, and to embolden yourself to open your mouth and speak. Whose job is it to tell others about Jesus? The answer is, “Each one of us.”

*Most glorious heavenly Father, would I dare to withhold the message of Jesus out of timidity? “Oh me! I might offend someone with what I know!” Should we care about that? Will we feel offended when they are eternally separated from You because we wouldn’t simply open our mouths and speak? Offense schmo offense! Let us be bold and unwavering in our faith. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. You have shown that no man may come to You but through Him. Help us to garner the courage to proclaim this truth. Amen.*

**Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time.** Colossians 4:5

The words are similar to Ephesians 5:15, 16 -

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, **16** redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

In exhorting believers to “Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside,” he is saying that we are to act in a manner which is above reproach. Everything we do is to be done fairly, with integrity of heart, and with the goal of being the finest example of emulation that those around us can find.

In acting in this way, we are more likely to win them over to Christ. “Those *who are* outside” is referring specifically to non-believers. We should obviously act this way

among believers, but Paul instructs that we should act this way at all times. If we deal one way with believers and another with unbelievers, it would – all by itself – demonstrate a lack of integrity that would certainly not be worthy of emulation.

Who would want to follow the path of a hypocrite, unless he too was already a hypocrite? And what Christian wants to be surrounded by a bunch of hypocrites?

The title of “Christian” should be carried by people who are wise, honest, and filled with integrity. And in that capacity, walking in this way toward those who are outside, we will be “redeeming the time.”

The word “redeeming” comes from the Greek word *eksagorázō*. It is a combination of two other words, *ek*, which indicates “completely *out from*.” This intensifies the word *agorázō*, which means, to “buy-up at the marketplace.” In this then, it indicates to “take *full advantage* of, seizing a buying-opportunity, i.e. making the most of the *present opportunity* (recognizing its *future gain*)” (HELPS Word Studies).

In the few hours that we have each day, in the short number of days we have each week, and in the quickly fading weeks, months, and years of our lives, we need to take advantage of the time we have been given, pursuing the greater and weightier matters which have eternal significance.

Instead of whining about what is bad, we should give praise for what is good. Instead of moaning about our situation, we should be in prayer for the needs of others, and for the glory of God.

Instead of reading novels which satisfy our minds for a moment, we should read and study God’s word which will enrich our souls for eternity. Rather than telling others about the latest sports statistics, we should tell others about the great deeds of the Lord and the love of God found in Christ Jesus. These are the types of things we should pursue in order to redeem the time.

In such ways, and in relation to those who are non-believers, we will be using our time in a manner which is properly directed toward their eyes and hearts. We will be bringing them closer to, not pushing them away from, a relationship with Christ.

Life application: Those around us are watching. Many are perverse and will never come to Christ. Instead, they are enemies of soundness and right reason. But there are those who are evaluating the world around them, searching for answers to life’s difficult

questions. If they see us filled with joy, contentment, and peace, they will want that. If we act in this manner towards them, they will want it even more. Such should be the conduct of our walk.

*Lord God, help us to walk in a manner which is worthy of emulation by others. Sure enough, there are a lot of perverse people who are simply the enemies of Christ for whatever crazy reason exists in their heads. But there are many who are simply not aware of the goodness of the Lord. If we are their only gauge of what a believer in Christ Jesus is, then will we draw them closer to You, or will we drive them further away? Help us to act in a way which will draw them in! Help us to be decent representatives of the marvelous Lord we serve. Amen.*

**Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.** Colossians 4:6

Paul continues to give exhortations for sound Christian living. In the previous verse, he noted appropriate conduct, or “walk.” Now he moves to appropriate speech by saying, “Let your speech always be with grace.” The Greek literally reads, “in grace.”

It is the element in which speech is to be saturated. Our speech should be happy, sincere, filled with humility, etc. It should pour forth from the pitcher of grace like sap pours fourth sweet syrup from the tree.

He then says that our speech should also be “seasoned with salt.” The use of salt goes back to the Old Testament offerings. It says in Leviticus 2:13 –

“And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.”

Salt has exactly the opposite effect of leaven or honey in the Bible. These were forbidden to be in almost all offerings because they signify sin and corruption. Salt, on the other hand, produces and signifies incorruption. It strengthens the food in which it is, and also preserves it. Thus, it is a sign of faithfulness and covenant keeping.

It goes so far as to indicate the perpetual nature of a covenant. It will never be broken as long as it is in force. Jesus refers to the use of salt in sacrifices in Mark 9:49, 50 –

“For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. <sup>50</sup> Salt *is* good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”

The inclusion of salt in the Old Testament offerings pictures Christ’s incorruption; He having never sinned before God. It represents His covenant keeping nature, and even as One who will never break the covenant He makes.

Paul would have us emulate Christ in our speech, using words of strengthening, incorruption, and preservation of all that is good. His words in this verse are given as if directing a meal of delicious conduct concerning our speech. And this is so “that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

Each person that one encounters is an individual. We cannot gear our speech to just one approach, but it needs to be modified for the sake of the one we are talking to. But in that speech, we are to draw from the well of grace, and add in the seasoning of salt at all times. We are to be able to give a reason for the hope we possess, we are to do it in meekness and fear, and we are to be courteous and sincere as we utter forth our words.

Life application: How easy it is to let our words slip into that which is profane and even harmful. But we are admonished to not allow this to happen. If what we say is drawn from a nurturing well of grace and then seasoned with salt, it will be helpful, not harmful. It will be soothing and able to build up others instead of tearing them down.

Let us strive to meet this goal at all times so that Christ will be exalted by our words.

*Lord God, help our speech to others to be given out in grace and to be seasoned with salt. May each thought we convey to others be a meal of delight and not one of bitterness. People are judging our spiritual lives by our earthly conduct, and in turn their perception of Christ is what is ultimately being evaluated. Help us then to make all of our words sincere, meaningful, and helpful. Be with us in this, O God, as it is not always an easy thing. Amen.*

**Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.** Colossians 4:7

This and the next verse are almost an exact repeat of Ephesians 6:21, 22. Tychicus would have been sent out with Paul’s letter(s) of instruction, and he would have carried along other information about how he was and what he was up to. This Tychicus is mentioned

several times in the New Testament. He is found in Acts 20:4. There he is described as being a person “of Asia.”

He was also accompanying Paul from Corinth to Asia. He is mentioned in Ephesians 6:21, 2 Timothy 4:12, and in Titus 3:12 as well. In this letter, he is called “a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord.”

The word used for “minister” is *diakonos*. This is the source of our word “deacon,” and it comes from two separate words – *dia*, meaning “through,” and *konis*, meaning “dust.” Therefore, it is someone who scurries through the dust, and is thus a servant or a minister.

In this verse, he is doing exactly what the name implies. He is traveling with the message through the dusty streets of cities for the benefit of the saints. This term is probably not being applied to him in the technical sense of a “deacon,” but rather it points to the duties which he is carrying out. He is ministering to Paul as a friend, a brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant.

It is this hardy soul who was with Paul in such a close relationship who “will tell you all the news about me.” Not only would he bring the beautiful epistle in his hands, but he would also tell all about how Paul was doing. He would also answer any further questions that would come about concerning Paul and his ministry.

Life application: How willing are you to relay the good news concerning the gospel to others? Tychicus was willing to travel by land and sea in order to get the news out to those who were hungry to hear it.

Are you at least willing to share it in the circles you travel? Do the people at the restaurant you frequent even know that you are a Christian? Do the people you work with know this? Get the news out!

*Lord God, how often we go to our favorite restaurant, to the same bank time and again, to our job each day... and yet, do the people at those places know that we are Yours? Have we ever taken the time to simply share the hope that we possess? We sure will talk about the politician that excites us, or the one we hate, but what about Jesus? Which is more important? Which is our life and hope? Help us in this Lord. Give us boldness to speak about the most important issue humanity will ever face – our saving faith in Christ. Amen.*

**I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, Colossians 4:8**

The word “him” is speaking of Tychicus of the previous verse. The words, “for this very purpose,” relate to what Paul just said to them in that verse. It is he who “will tell you all the news about me.”

He then reexplains this in fuller detail with the words, “that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts.” He had sent Tychicus to Colossae with his epistle, entrusting him to fill in all of the information about him which was unstated in the letter, and certainly also to determine their condition in the Lord. In so doing, and in answering any questions they had about Paul and his associates, he says that he would be able to “comfort your hearts.”

Tychicus was obviously faithful in his ability to recount anything that Paul passed on to him. If there was a personal greeting, he would relay it. If there was a note of commendation, he would relay it. If someone needed correction, Tychicus was competent and faithful to ensure it was passed on. For the most part though, the duties of Tychicus were to relate how Paul and those with him were faring.

They certainly would want to know how he was getting along while in prison. They would want to know about his care, any visitors, how he was treated, and so on. With this knowledge, their hearts would be comforted. It appears that Tychicus was eminently suited to this task, because it was he who performed the same mission to Ephesus as is recorded in that epistle.

Paul’s use of him in this manner is a confirmation of complete confidence in him. It stands as a personal commission concerning him.

Life application: It is always good to know that a person can be completely trusted. Is this how others see us? Are we willing to conduct our lives with such high integrity that we can be relied upon with even the most sensitive or personal material? Let us endeavor to be such people at all times.

*Lord God Almighty, Your word says that a good name is better than precious ointment. May each one of us strive to be a person of integrity, and one who seeks after a good name. Help all of us to have such high integrity that we can be relied upon in every way, even in the most sensitive matters that arise. Because we bear Your name, our actions*

*ultimately reflect upon You. And so, help us in this Lord. Help us to be people of complete and total faithfulness in all we do. Amen.*

**...with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here.** Colossians 4:9

Onesimus is the runaway slave for whom Paul makes a passionate appeal in the book of Philemon. Here, he is called “the faithful and beloved brother.”

There is a definite article in front of faithful, and so it says “the” not “a.” Paul is carefully highlighting the high status of Philemon, who was once a slave on the run. He then says, “who is *one* of you.” This is more than probably a reference to his being from Colossae.

In the words selected, and with the emphasis on “faithful and beloved,” Paul is showing that this former slave is on an equal level with them in Christ, and that they should acknowledge him as such. Paul’s true love and concern for Onesimus is seen in this short verse, but it will literally pour out of him in his letter to Philemon.

He had become a believer in Christ under Paul, and it was Paul’s highest desire for him to be treated as a fellow brother in Christ because of this. Together with Tychicus, these two men would “make known to you all things which *are happening* to me.”

These words signify everything that was of note concerning Paul and his interactions with the church there in Rome. The letter was for guidance, exhortation, and knowledge, being a prescriptive writing for those at Colossae (and eventually as an epistle for the entire church). On the other hand, the things that would be conveyed by these men would consist of matters not necessary for doctrine and teaching.

Life application: The person at church who works as a garbage man all week is to be considered as being on the same level as the millionaire who runs a large company, or the congressman who attends when he is in town. It is really not appropriate to exalt others over one another because of their position in life.

Instead, those who are faithful to the word, who are productive in the church, and who give themselves for Christ are the truly exalted ones among their brethren.

*Most gracious heavenly Father, You have determined that Your church is not built on worldly status, position, or wealth, but on a faithfulness to Your Son, and on a faithful devotion to Your word. Those who are productive in these ways are the truly exalted ones*

*in the congregation, and they should be acknowledged as such. Help us not to fawn over the temporary, fading things of this world, but to exalt those things which are eternal. To Your glory we pray. Amen.*

**Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), Colossians 4:10**

Aristarchus is a fellow Jew who is listed three times in Acts (19:29, 20:4, and 27:2). He is mentioned one more time in Philemon. Though a Jew, he was a Macedonian from Thessalonica as well (just as Paul was from Tarsus of Cilicia).

Curiously, he is called “my fellow prisoner here, but in Philemon, he is called “my fellow laborer.” At the same time, Epaphras is called “my fellow prisoner” in Philemon.

There is much speculation about this, such as that they chose to be voluntarily imprisoned with Paul at times in order to help him. This is not impossible to suppose as Paul had an affliction which seems to have required much help (many believe it to be poor eyesight).

However, what is just as possible is that terms such as “fellow prisoner,” “fellow servant,” and “fellow laborer” apply to both of them during each instance (all being equally true), but Paul chose to focus on one term or the other for each individual for his own reasons. Whatever the case, Aristarchus is, at this time, a fellow prisoner with Paul. In this capacity, he sends his greetings to those at Colossae. Along with him is “Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.”

He is also a Jew. This would be John Mark who went along with Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey, but who left that task before it was finished. Because of this, on the next missionary journey, there was a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas.

Barnabas wanted to bring Mark along again. The disagreement was so severe that they split apart, each going their own way. Barnabas took Mark and Paul took Silas, and off they went in different directions. Now, this long time later, it is noted that Paul has received Mark with an open hand once again.

What appears to be the case is that at some point Paul had mentioned the strife between himself and Mark to those at Colossae, and he had given instructions that the

rift was mended between them. This seems evident from the words “about whom you received instructions.”

In telling them about Mark in a favorable manner, he now implores them that “if he comes to you, welcome him.” The old wounds were healed and Paul wanted those at Colossae to be sure to treat him with a warm welcome.

This Mark, also known as John Mark, is noted in 1 Peter 5:13. There Peter calls him “Mark my son.” This is then the same Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark, and who according to extra-biblical tradition became both the bishop at Alexandria, and who was martyred there.

At the ending of Paul’s years, during the writing of 2 Timothy, Paul writes, “Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.”

The old wounds had healed, and Paul saw great value in Mark’s assistance in his ministry which he had once, long ago, abandoned. Paul had forgiven, and Mark had grown up. Together towards Paul’s end, they were a united force in the work of sharing the gospel to the world.

Life application: Forgiving old offenses can be a difficult thing to do, but it is also the right thing to do when there is a uniting in repentance and a willingness to move forward in a new direction. If this is the case, then let the past go, and strive to make a new start with the one you either offended or were offended by.

Life is short, and eternity is forever. Which will you direct your actions towards? Look to the long term, be forgiving when it is right and proper, and do great things for the Lord in a united way when it is possible.

*Lord God, it is You who created, and it is You who will also make all things new. As we walk in this fallen world, help us to remember this, and to not get bogged down in the mud of despair which surrounds us. There is wickedness, there is intolerance for that which is good, and there is real trouble awaiting those of us who want to be sincerely pleasing to You. But in Christ, there is that great hope of the day when we are swept out of here, and where we will be in the best place of all. Help us to keep our eyes on Jesus as we await that glorious day. Amen.*

**...and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.**

Colossians 4:11

The name "Justus" is found in Acts 1:23 & 18:7, but it is a surname which is not necessarily speaking of the same person. The name "Jesus" is Jewish, meaning "Salvation." It could also be a form of "Joshua," meaning the Lord is Salvation. This Hebrew name was probably the name used among the Jews. "Justus" is Latin, and means "The Just One." It would have been the name used among the Gentiles.

This is not at all uncommon in the New Testament. He is not mentioned in the Epistle to Philemon, even though all the other names here are. Paul, however, includes his greeting of the brethren here. After this, he says something rather important which is often overlooked, but which teaches us an essential point. He says, "These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision."

Why is this important? It is because he will continue with other names of people who greet the congregation at Colossae, including Luke. This then signifies, without any doubt at all, that Luke was a Gentile. Thus, at least two books of the Bible, Luke and Acts, were in fact written by a Gentile.

Despite this being as obvious as the nose on one's face, there are still people who will argue against this, demanding that Luke was a Jew. They base this on Romans 3:2 where Paul notes that it is to the Jews that "were committed the oracles of God." This is what is known as a category mistake.

Luke and Acts were not yet a part of the canon of Scripture. Paul was speaking of the Old Testament which pointed to Christ. It further means that they were entrusted with these oracles, not necessarily that they had all been written by Jews. Job was a Gentile, and he may (we do not know) have been the author of his book.

Regardless of Job, the New Testament is not the Old, and Paul's words do not apply to what is being referred to in Romans 3:2. And yet, despite Paul's clear and obvious words here, people will still make up false analyses concerning Luke in order to justify their presuppositions. This is a very bad way of handling the word of God.

The people Paul has thus far mentioned are the only ones of the circumcision, or Jews, who were with him. He then says about them, "...they have proved to be a comfort to me."

The word “comfort” is *parégoria*. This is the only use of it in the Bible, and it is used in a medical sense of quieting or soothing. It is where the English word paregoric comes from. Whatever affliction Paul was facing – be it medical or mental – they were there to take away the unnecessary pain and discomfort which he faced. They were as if a soothing balm to him.

Life application: If the Bible teaches that Luke was a Gentile, which it does, but you are stuck with a presupposition that he was a Jew (or a proselyte to Judaism), get over it. Luke was a Gentile.

*Lord God, help us to accept what Your word teaches, and then to be obedient to it. Our favorable agreement concerning a precept is irrelevant to our obedience to that precept. We may not agree to driving 40 mph on a certain road, but we are obligated to do so if that is the speed limit. How much more should we be willing to adhere to Your word, even if it isn't what we want to do! Help us in this Lord. Amen.*

**Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.** Colossians 4:12

Paul now re-introduces Epaphras whom he calls “one of you.”

He was a fellow of those at Colossae and obviously well known to them. He was an evangelist, having taught the word of the Lord to those at Colossae. This was seen in verse 1:7. He is also called “a bondservant of Christ.” It is a title which Paul uses of himself elsewhere, as do both James and Jude. One other person that Paul calls a bondservant is Timothy.

It is true that all Christians are servants of the Lord, but this term is certainly being used in these five instances as a particular designation. What is possible is that the others, like Paul, would often refuse wages for the work they accomplished. This is speculation only, however. This Epaphras “greet you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers.”

The word “fervently” is *agónizomai*. It means “to struggle” as a person would in an athletic competition, reaching for a prize with all their might. One can see a hint of the word agonize in it. The prayers of Epaphras were as if in such a struggle.

He so cared about those he was praying for that it was as if a struggle existed, and he was going to obtain the prize by making his petitions in a favorable manner. This was his intent so that, as Paul says, “you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

The idea that we obtain from these words is that those he was praying for would be found perfect in their doctrine, not mixing in false philosophies or other errors. In this, they would be able to be fully pleasing to God in all ways. The idea of one “standing” in the Bible is that of being firm and fixed.

When a wind blows, a person can get toppled over. But the prayers of Epaphras were that they would be able to stand against every wind of doctrine, and not be tossed about by the trickery of false teachings.

To stand in this perfect way would then show them complete in all the will of God, meaning every precept by which the Christian should live. This was his great hope for those he cherished at Colossae.

Life application: How fervently do you pray for others? There are true prayer warriors out there who literally weep over those they pray for. And then there are those who say they will pray and then never do. Between the two there are certainly many different levels.

What we should each do is to attempt to move up the ladder of intensity until we are mature as people of prayer, able to pour out our hearts to God in sincere hope that He will hear and respond to our petitions.

*Heavenly Father, help us to be people who are sincere in our prayers. If we say we will pray for someone, help us to follow through with that. And help us to remember that our prayers are never to be mixed with unbelievers or those who pray to false gods. You alone are God, and You alone are to be exalted through the offering of prayer. May we never implicitly condone a false religion by condoning the prayers of those who practice those false religions. Help us in our prayer life always. Amen.*

**For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.** Colossians 4:13

Paul, still speaking of Epaphras, says, “For I bear him witness.”

He is testifying to the character of Epaphras, having personally come to know him and to learn of that which motivated him and consumed his thoughts. Paul's witness was "that he has a great zeal for you."

This is the only time that he uses this word in his letters. It gives the sense of labor, but it is a labor of pain, as if struggling to make ends meet in the fields, but ending up each day in poverty. The word is used by John three times in Revelation where it clearly signifies physical pain. Epaphras was willing to expend himself in concern for his beloved church in Colossae, "and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis."

Colossae and both of these other cities were in Phrygia. It is known that Laodicea had a church (Colossians 4:15, 16 & Revelation 1:11 & 3:14), but nothing more is said of Hierapolis in Scripture. Whether there was a church there, or just a group of believers who traveled to another church is not known. Vincent's word studies gives a brief description of these locations -

"The cities are named in geographical order. Laodicea and Hierapolis faced each other on the north and south sides of the Lycus valley, about six miles apart. Colossae was ten or twelve miles farther up the stream. Hierapolis owed its celebrity to its warm mineral springs, its baths, and its trade in dyed wools. It was a center of the worship of the Phrygian goddess Cybele, whose rites were administered by mutilated priests known as Galli, and of other rites representing different oriental cults. Hence the name Hierapolis or sacred city."

Life application: Many people are willing to expend themselves in great labor for something. What is it that you would be willing to give your greatest exertions for? There are things which are temporary and futile, and there are things which have true meaning and which will earn eternal rewards.

How shallow we can be when exerting our energies for that which has no true and lasting value. Let us redirect, and let us be willing to expend ourselves in a great way for others, and especially for the building up of the church.

*Almighty and most wonderful Lord God! How good it is to be in Your presence and to know that You are always with us in our times of need. Help us, in return, to be willing to expend ourselves for the things that are pleasing to You. May we bear in our hearts a desire to share Christ, help the church in its mission, and tirelessly work to bring Your glory to the hearts of others. May we not fritter away our few hours each day on that which is temporary and vain. Be with us in this, O Lord, Amen.*

## **Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. Colossians 4:14**

As noted in verse 4:11, from this verse it becomes obvious (like the sun shining at midday) that Luke is not a Jew, but a Gentile. The earlier verses gave a list of names which that followed by the words, “These *are* my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision.”

This means “Jews.” As Luke is now named, it verifies that he was, in fact, a Gentile. This is the same Luke noted in Acts 17:10, and he is recorded as being with Paul in 2 Timothy 4:11. He is cited here as a physician, something readily supported by his annotations in both the Gospel of Luke and in the book of Acts. His carefully worded statements demonstrate an observant eye and an understanding of both health and healing issues.

The wording about him in the Greek is more emphatic. It says, “Greet you Luke, the physician, the beloved.” The emphasis is on Luke’s status as the beloved doctor. Following this high note of acknowledgment, Demas is noted, almost as an afterthought.

It appears obvious that he was there with Paul and said something like, “Oh, tell them I said ‘Hi’ also.” But the highlighting is on Luke. What can be inferred from a later note concerning him in relation to the warm comments about Luke is that Demas was not of the same caliber as Luke. In a sad note towards the end of his life, Paul writes concerning these two men –

“Be diligent to come to me quickly; <sup>10</sup> for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup> Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:9-11

Demas may have been with Paul at the time of his writing to those at Colossae, but it is apparent that his heart was not in his assignment. All of the others mentioned in this chapter have something extra added in about them except Demas.

Life application: Question: “If your pastor was to describe each person in his church, when he got to you what do you think he would say?” “Albert is a wonderful soul, always helping out. Max is such a blessing to be around. Sperry... ummm Sperry is usually at church. Anita makes the life of everyone else a bit brighter. Marigold? Marigold... ummm. She... ummmm.” Do you want to be remembered as an “Um?”

*Lord God, if someone were to ask about each one of us, what type of person we are, what would be the response of those who have been asked? "John is the greatest guy. He works hard and is always pleasant to be around. And then there is Charlie. Ummm, Charlie is... Ummmm." If people have to struggle to say something nice about us, what does that say? Help us not to be Um people. Give us the desire to put our best foot forwards and be exceptional examples of Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house. Colossians 4:15**

What seems like a simple and easy to understand verse is actually a bit complicated. First, Paul says to "Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea." In verse 16, he will say, "also in the church of the Laodiceans."

It is argued by some then that this is a special body of Christians which are being referred to here. Others feel it simply refers to all of the Christians in Laodicea in both verses. Individually, they are "the brethren," and collectively they would be "the church." It's hard to be dogmatic, but that makes complete sense. It would be like saying, "Pass along our greetings to any brethren you meet, and be sure to greet the church as a whole." He then says, "and Nymphas."

Who Nymphas is cannot be determined. This is the only mention of the name in the Bible. And further, it isn't known if this is a male or a female, or if this is the full name or a shortening of a longer Greek name. From there, Paul goes on to mention "the church that is in his house."

Again, there are disputes between manuscripts. Some say "his house," some say "her house," and some say "their house." If "their," then it would be speaking of Nymphas and the family. Again, it's hard to be dogmatic, but scholars put their trust in one manuscript or another and will often, dogmatically, claim to be correct. Nothing is lost in doctrine by any possibility.

The same term of "church that is in their (your) house" is used in Romans 16:5 and 1 Corinthians 16:19 – both speaking of Aquila and Priscilla. It is also mentioned in Philemon 1:2 when speaking of the church in the house of Philemon. The word simply means "a general assembly." Wherever the saints gathered to meet, fellowship, study, etc., that was considered the church. This is the idea which is seen here.

Life application: Way too often, we spend our time worrying about the church building we attend in relation to our walk with the Lord – as if it is the source of our walk. But this is incorrect. The gathering together of the brethren, in any place, can be the church to us. As long as it is focused on a right application of the word of God, then we can consider it to be our church.

The walls of a building do not define our walk with the Lord, but rather that which occurs within whatever walls is the church. Today with the internet, the church can be a gathering of people in that way – streaming online as a single body. Just keep the word and proper worship of the Lord at the center of the meeting, and you will be in the sweet spot.

*Lord God, we thank You for the churches we attend. Help us to be active in upholding the word of God and being obedient to its precepts wherever we meet. If the place we meet fails to adhere to Your word, and starts deviating down nutty or perverted paths, help us to see this and either get things straightened out, or to get up and get out. A heart for obedience to You is far more important than meeting with a bunch of people who have no heart for obedience to Your word. Help us in this. Amen.*

**Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.** Colossians 4:16

Paul's words of this verse show that it was meant that his letters be read openly, and thus they are intended as church doctrine. "Now when this epistle is read among you" shows us this. It is similar to his words to those in Thessalonica –

I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

-1 Thessalonians 5:27

The letters he wrote were not intended only for the leadership, but they were written for all to hear and understand. It is an amazingly similar sentiment to what it says in the Old Testament at the giving of the Law.

Time and time again, the words "Speak to the children of Israel, saying:" are used. At times, it specifically says, "Speak to Moses [and/or] Aaron," but these are usually within a section which has already been addressed to all of the children of Israel, and they are those things which are specific to the priestly duties.

The same is true with Paul's letters. They are addressed to the church, and give doctrine for all to hear. It is an important thing that is done, showing that the word of God was to be open to all, and not held in private by a select few who would then have control over it. After the letter to those at Colossae was read to the congregation, Paul says, "...see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans."

The intent here is that the letter was to be circulated for others to know proper doctrine as well. It is possible that the original itself was circulated on to the next church, especially because it contained Paul's personal signature with his own specific handwriting.

It is also possible that a copy was made and sent. Or, if the original was sent, it is certain that a trustworthy copy was kept back in case the original was lost. The letter would be cherished and referred to often as questions or disputes arose. Finally, he says, "and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea."

There are about seventeen hundred miles of commentary on these words. As there is no letter to the "saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Laodicea," it is speculated that this is a lost epistle. As if Paul wrote a letter to them and it just disappeared. This is unlikely because, as stated above, a copy would have been made, and either the original or that copy would have been retained.

There is a forged letter known as the "Epistle to the Laodiceans," but as scholars know that it is an obvious forgery, that is not what is being referred to here. This is sure because Paul says, "from Laodicea," not "to Laodicea."

There was no letter written to Laodicea, but rather there was a letter written to someone else which was carried to Laodicea for their instruction. This letter was then to be passed on to Colossae. As this is so, it is rather certain that Paul is referring to the letter to the Ephesians.

Both letters are similar in content in some areas, but both contain many great differences as well. Also, Tychicus was used to convey Paul's words to both Ephesus and Colossae (see Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7).

Because of this, it can be deduced that there is no lost letter, and also that the letter he is referring to is that of Ephesians. If this is not the case, it would then be another letter which we possess and which was picked up by Tychicus and brought from Laodicea to Colossae.

Life application: We have a sure word, and that sure word is not to be secreted away, but it is to be openly read and proclaimed. Its truths are not for a “pope” and his magisterium to determine what it means, nor is it meant for any other select individual to interpret. Instead, it is intended for all of God’s people to open, research, and delight in. It is also intended for our doctrine.

*Lord God, it is Your intent that Your word belongs to all people. It was never intended that a “pope” and his select group of people would be the arbiters of what it says and what is expected of Your people. You decide what is right for them, and then in both testaments, You have instructed that they are to hear it and to receive it as Your word. With modern printing, and even the internet, we have it available to us to read, cherish, and obey. Help us to take advantage of this marvelous time in which we live by seeking out Your word. Help us to not instead just get stuck on Facebook reading stupid posts! Amen.*

**And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.” Colossians 4:17**

Paul’s words here are taken by many scholars as a rebuke of Archippus which are intended to urge him back to a proper fulfillment of his duties. Why anyone would come to this conclusion is a bit hard to understand. Paul begins with, “And say to Archippus.”

The letter is written to the church at Colossae. It was to be read to all there, and then it was to be read to the church at Laodicea. To rebuke someone like this at the very end of the letter would be inappropriate at best. See 1 Timothy 6:20 for a similar charge that Paul made to Timothy that is certainly in line with what is seen here in Colossians.

Instead, the words, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received,” are certainly a note of encouragement. Paul’s letters are written as notes of doctrine. They are intended to instruct the churches in how to handle false apostles, false teachings, and heretical ideas which crop up.

Archippus had received a “ministry” which he was responsible for. In Greek, it is *diakonia*, or a deaconate. But rather than being a deacon, it is probably meaning that he was in charge of the deacons. Some take this to mean that he was the lead pastor, or at least in a similar position.

This position he received “in the Lord.” Rather than saying, “from the Lord,” Paul uses this term. It means that he was not an apostle, but rather had received his ministry from

someone who was already in the Lord, and was acknowledged and ordained to the position that he held.

This is an implicit reference to the idea of the “apostolic age” which was coming to an end. When those who had received their ministry “from the Lord” were all gone, there would be no more apostles from the Lord. Rather, all would be ordained “in the Lord” from that time on.

As he was in such a ministry, Paul was encouraging him. Being in the position of a pastor brings with it many headaches as people come forth with a constant stream of ideas about what they think, despite having little or no theological training, and having spent limited time in Scripture itself. It can be maddening at times to live in a world full of “specialists” to lead.

Archippus apparently bore this type of thing as well, and Paul was encouraging him to apply the words of his epistles to his ministry. It would allow him to “fulfill it.” By relying on his ordination, and by applying OT Scriptures and whatever New Testament writings were being circulated, including apostolic epistles, he would be strengthened to perform his duties in an effective manner.

Archippus is mentioned just one more time in Scripture, in Philemon 1:2. There he is called “a fellow soldier.” As these two letters were written at approximately the same time, we can see that Paul’s note in this epistle is not one of rebuke, but of encouragement.

Archippus was in the battle, and he was working effectively, but he needed the additional encouragement of Paul’s apostleship to strengthen him.

Life application: When going to your pastor, or some other person you might correspond with who has a ministry, it is courteous to ask rather than dictate. The person you are speaking to is fallible and could very well be wrong on an issue, but to charge at him like a bull can only put up a wall which is then hard to later break down.

Let your words be seasoned with salt, and work without belligerence. Remember, you are one person coming to an individual who probably hears from many people over the course of a week. How easy it is to get eroded down if everyone is on the attack!

*Lord God, thank You for those people who have gone before us, searching out Your word, carefully analyzing it, and making helpful commentaries on it. We have 2000 years of*

*knowledge heaped up that we can draw from in order to understand this precious gift. Help us to pay heed to those things we are taught, and to also apply our own study time in pursuit of Your superior word! Amen.*

**This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.** Colossians 4:18

This is the final verse of Colossians. The book has spanned four chapters totaling 95 verses. To close out this masterpiece of wisdom and instruction, Paul begins with, “This salutation by my own hand – Paul.”

The letter was probably written by an amanuensis (one who takes dictation), but then Paul signed the letter to confirm that it was from him. This is the standard with most of his epistles. His handwriting was very distinct, having large letters (Galatians 6:11). In closing, and concerning himself, he says, “Remember my chains.”

Numerous times in his letters, he refers to his bondage and chains, even in verse 4:3 of this letter. It is probably for a twofold reason. The first obvious reason is that he desired their prayers, and he wished that they would have sympathy for him and empathize with him.

The second reason is because his bondage was to remind them of his love for them. He, a Jew, was imprisoned for the sake of the Gentiles. Thus, it was for their sake and for the glory of Christ. There was nothing shameful in his chains. Instead, it was the Lord’s will that he should be where he was. These ideas are to be inferred from a similar sentiment found in Hebrews 13:3 –

“Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.”

Paul finishes his personal greeting with, “Grace *be* with you. Amen.”

In Greek, it literally states, “the grace,” and thus he is speaking of “the grace of Jesus Christ” specifically. This is a condensed form of that sentiment which is unique to this letter and the two letters to Timothy. Most other epistles give a fuller form of the thought. Paul desires them (and thus us!) to have and live in the grace of Jesus Christ. He then closes with “Amen,” or “So be it.”

Life application: Having read and studied the book of Colossians, you are now admonished to continue reading it, along with the rest of Scripture, every day of your lives. Pursue the Lord, cherish His word, and be ready to share both with others at all times. Always be prepared!

*Lord God, how can we be prepared to share Your word with others if we don't know it? Give us the wisdom to pick it up, read it, and contemplate it daily. Open our eyes to its truths, and give us the ability to then share it with others. Help us to be bold about proclaiming it, and help us to stand fast on its truth. Even while the world heads in the opposite direction, may we hold fast to the truth of Jesus Christ – the Author and Subject of this most marvelous gift. Amen.*