

A
Doctrinal
and
Devotional
Commentary
on the book of
Colossians

by
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Info page

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General Introduction to the Epistle to the Colossians

1. As for theology:

This wonderful letter of Paul to the Colossian believers covers many important key areas of theology including the following:

- The deity of Jesus Christ (1:15-20 and 2:2-10)
- The reconciliation to the Father (1:20-23)
- Redemption (1:13,14; 2:13,14; 3:9-11)
- Election (3:12)
- Forgiveness (3:13)
- The nature of the church (1:18,24,25; 2:19; 3:11,15)
- Heretical teachings (Chapter two)

2. As for the author and the date:

The apostle Paul is identified as the author right at the beginning of the letter and we see this on two other occasions.

Col. 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother

Col. 1:23

if indeed you remain in the faith, established and steadfast and not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Col. 4:18

The greeting is by my hand, Paul's. Remember my *imprisonment*. Grace be with you.

We also have the testimony of some early church fathers (Irenaeus, Clement, of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen and Eusibius) who believed that Paul penned this epistle. We can also note that there are very close parallels with another epistle that Paul wrote (Philemon) thus giving another proof of his authorship. Both of these letters seemed to have been written in about 60-62 A.D. This was the time that Paul was serving time in prison because of his witness for Christ. Paul was a prisoner as mentioned in the following verses:

Col. 4:3

praying at the same time for us also, that God may open for us a door of the message, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which also *I am a prisoner*,

Col. 4:10

Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions—if he should come to you, welcome him),

The chains that Paul was shackled to did not stop him from being used by the Holy Spirit. This is a wonderful thought for all true believers. Many believe that the Lord God can not use them for His glory because of their particular present state - this is not so. Paul's personal situation, no matter how grave it was, did not deter him from caring about those who had received true eternal life in Christ Jesus. As long as the treasure of our hearts is Christ we will be used by the Lord God.

3. As for his co-workers:

It is surprising to note how many co-workers Paul speaks of in his letter - eight of them to be exact.

Timothy, is probably the best known of them. Paul had a long standing relationship with him. We also know that Timothy followed Paul in many of his voyages and that Paul trusted him deeply. At some point Paul left Timothy to take care of the church at Ephesus and loved him like his own son (1 Tim. 1:2).

Aristarchus, he was a native of Thessalonica, a faithful fellow-laborer with Paul (Acts 20:4; 27:2; Phm. 1:24)

Archippus, Paul considered him as a soldier of the faith (Phm. 1:2). Paul also speaks of his ministry in Col. 4:17:

Col. 4:17

And tell Archippus, “Direct your attention to the ministry that you received in the Lord, in order that you may complete it.”

Mark (John Mark), Paul mentions him, when in captivity at Rome, as one of those who were associated with him (Col. 4:10,11). Mark is an encouragement for all of us. He had abandoned Paul and Barnabas while they were on a missionary trip.

We later see that he was once more a vibrant worker for Christ. If we have backslidden or simply fallen 'asleep', like Mark, we can come back and the Lord will receive us and use us once again for His glory.

Epaphras, is believed to have founded the church at Colosse, and is named by Paul his '*dear fellow slave*' (1:7) and '*a slave of Christ*' (4:12). Epaphras was, for a time, an inmate of Paul's house imprisonment at Rome.

Luke, the evangelist, he is also called by Paul '*the physician our dear friend*' (Col. 4:14). Luke was the writer of the gospel which bears his name and of the Acts of the Apostles. He was a friend and a companion of Paul in most of the journeys recorded in Acts. His personal history before and after this period of companionship with Paul is unknown.

Onesimus, He had been a slave to Philemon of Colosse and had run away from his master and fled to Rome. He converted to Christianity through the preaching of Paul and he was the occasion for Paul's writing the epistle to Philemon (Phm 1:10). He is called '*my faithful and dear brother*' in Col. 4:9).

Demas, He was a fellow-laborer with Paul in Thessalonica who afterwards deserted him. Demas was either discouraged by the hardships of the Christian work or allured by the love of the world (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:10; Phm. 1:24).

2 Timothy 4

**10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica -- Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.
(NKJV)**

4. As for the background and setting.

Colosse was a city in the Roman province of Asia which today is part of modern Turkey. This city is on the shore of the Meander River and lies in the Lycus Valley. Mount Cadmus rose 8000 feet above the city. Colosse was a thriving city in the fifth century B.C. when king Xerxes (Husband of Esther) marched through the region. This city was at the junction of the main North-South and East-West trade routes. By Paul's day the main roads had been detoured towards Laodicea a near-by city. Colosse had greatly declined in power and stature when this letter was written.

Colosse was mainly populated with Gentiles (non Jews) but there was a large Jewish settlement dating from Antiochus the Great (223-187 B.C.). We can see this mixed population being reflected in the church.

The founder of this church was not Paul for he has never been there (2:1) but it was Epaphras (1:5-7) who is a faithful servant of the Lord. This church soon became plagued with a heresy called Gnosticism, which states that God is good but matter is evil. It also taught that Jesus Christ was merely one of a series of emanations (angels or spiritual beings) descending from God. They taught that this special knowledge (Gnosis) was necessary for enlightenment and salvation. This heresy also embraced certain aspects of Jewish legalism such as:

- The necessity of circumcision for salvation
- The observance of the ceremonial rituals of the Old Testament Law
- The following of a rigid asceticism

It also called for the following:

- The worship of angels
- Having mystical experiences

Epaphras was so concerned about this that he journeyed all the way to Rome to seek help from Paul. Since this letter was written from prison along with those to the Ephesians, Philippians and Philemon they are given the name of the 'Prison Epistles'. Like most of Paul's epistles, this letter consists of two parts, a doctrinal and a practical part. The doctrinal part comprises the first two chapters and the main theme is developed in chapter two. Paul warns the Colossians against being drawn away from Christ who embodies the fullness of the Godhead. Christ is the head of the body of which they were members; and if they were truly united to Him, they actually need nothing more.

The practical part of the epistle is found in chapters three and four and they enforce various duties which should naturally flow from a believers heart. The Colossians were exhorted to:

- Mind things that are from above (3:1-4)
- Mortify every evil principle in their nature by putting on the 'new man' (3:5-14)

Many special duties of the Christian life are also insisted upon as the fitting evidence of the new life given by the Holy Spirit.

In our study of this letter we will simply divide it into its three natural divisions:

1. Personal matters of Paul (1:1-14)
2. Doctrinal teachings of Paul (1:15-2:23)
3. Practical exhortations of Paul (3:1-4:18)

5. As for the message of this letter: to help his readers to understand

1. That genuine human and spiritual maturity that God wills for all Disciples are found in His son Jesus.
2. That God has done for the Redeemed what the 'Law' and all human wisdom could never achieve - reconciliation with Him. All of this thanks to the work of Christ at the cross.
3. To beware of religions or philosophies that exalt angels and asceticism and not Christ.
4. Finally, to assure the Christians that they are, even now, citizens of heaven.

I encourage you to read this epistle over and over again so that its teachings will be engrained in your hearts.

**Colossians
02 - Greetings
1:1-2**

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae. Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

LEB

As in all of Paul's epistles to a local church he begins with a general introduction and a series of thanksgiving concerning them. In our text we can see that this general introduction is found in the first two verses. He introduces himself as Paul the apostle for the Colossians have never seen him face to face for he has never been there. It was Epaphras who had started this church. Although they had never seen him they certainly had heard of him for his letters were 'passed around' from church to church as we see in the following verse:

Col. 4:16

¹⁶ And whenever this letter is read among you, *see to it that it is read also among the Laodicean church, and that you also read the letter from Laodicea.*

It is natural to believe that because Paul's letters were read from church to church that they may have been copied. A church would keep a copy for itself and send a copy to another church. Paul calls himself an '*apostle*' (APOSTOLOS) which means: one that is sent forth, a delegate, an ambassador or a messenger. Here we see that Paul was an apostle '*of Jesus Christ*'. He was called to be His messenger to the nations. It was at his conversion that Christ confirmed who Paul (Saul) was going to become:

Acts 9

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

(NKJV)

Being a 'sent one' whether an apostle as in the New Testament times or an evangelist, missionary or pastor in our times can only be based on one thing:

(v.1) ... through the will of God

There are many who call themselves 'sent ones' by the Lord God. They take on the names of pastor, teachers, evangelists, elders, prophets and missionaries. Unfortunately a great many of these have been sent by THEIR OWN DESIRES and not by God. You can easily distinguish them by what they teach and how they live. Jesus warned his disciples about them:

Matthew 7

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?

17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

(NKJV)

Believers need to have a watchful eye, a discerning eye because there are many imitators of 'one that is sent' in our days. Paul says that he is an apostle *'through the will of God'*. The word *'will'* (THELEMA) means: a determination, a choice, a decree. In other words Paul had no choice in this, it was all from the Father. As you recall Paul (Saul) hated the followers of Christ and was persecuting the church (Acts 8). But God decided that all of this would change (Acts 9). This also happened to all true believers - God intervened in their lives and they turned about, repenting of their sins and asking Christ to save them.

In verse one Paul also introduces Timothy to the Colossians - he calls him *'our brother'*. By doing so, Paul establishes Timothy as a true believer in Christ and also as someone who is a co-worker with him. Therefore Timothy was to be regarded with esteem because of his work for the Lord.

This letter is addressed to the following:

² to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae. Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Paul calls the Colossians *'saints'*. The word *'saints'* (HAGIOS) means: sacred, pure, blameless. This certainly 'pulls the rug under the feet' of the Roman Catholic Church which teaches that saints are dead believers who have lived an extra-ordinary life of Christ-like example and have done at least two miracles (before or after they have died). The Bible says that *'saints'* are people, living people who have received redemption from their sins because of what Christ has done in their favor.

Saints are not perfect and never will be, but they have received forgiveness of their sins and have become children of God (1 John 3:2) because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. If today you have once and for all placed your faith in Jesus to be saved by repenting unto Him then you are a saint and will continue to be one forever.

Romans 5

**1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
(NKJV)**

Hebrews 10

**10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
(NKJV)**

Hebrews 10

**14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.
(NKJV)**

After calling the Colossians '*saints*' Paul now gives a general description of the believers:

(v.2) ...faithful brothers in Christ

The word '*faithful*' (PISTOS) means: trustworthy, faithful. Faithful is what they were and faithful is what believers should ALL be, if we call ourselves servants of Jesus Christ. Faithfulness is a primary requisite for being a good disciple. Jesus spoke concerning the importance of faithfulness:

Luke 16

**10 "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.
11 "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?
12 "And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?
13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."
(NKJV)**

We also see that in verse two, Paul wishes that these Christians be blessed by God. What exactly does Paul want God to do for them? Would it be wealth, work, homes, possessions, health, knowledge, great marriages or children? None of that! What Paul desires God to do for them is the following:

(v.2) ... Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Out of all that Paul could have asked God for he wanted God to bless the Colossians with only two things: grace and peace and in that order! First of all is grace because that is the greatest thing a person can ever receive, for grace is the UNMERITED favor of God. The first time we see the word '*grace*' in the Bible it had to do with Noah!

Genesis 6

7 So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

**8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.
(NKJV)**

Noah had found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Out of all the people living on earth at that time it was Noah who found grace. As believers may we never forget that out of the billions of people presently living on this planet only a remnant have found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Only a few have become part of God's family through Jesus Christ, as it is written:

Matthew 22

**14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."
(NKJV)**

Then Paul wishes peace upon them, for how can we live life without true peace inhabiting our hearts? The word '*peace*' (EIRENE) means: to join, prosperity, rest. Peace is so fundamentally important in the life of a disciple that Jesus said the following:

John 14

**27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.
(NKJV)**

I believe that apart from the person of the Holy Spirit - peace - is the only other thing that Jesus specifically said that he would leave his disciples. Now grace and peace do not have their origin in this world and they never will. It is futile for mankind to believe that one day, and through their efforts, the world will enter a period of grace and peace. As we can see grace and peace are from the Lord God and no one else!

Not only is grace and peace found in God only but OUR grace and peace also flows from '*God our Father*'. In the last chapter of the book of Revelation we are given a picture of the grace of God flowing from Him.

Revelation 22

1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

(NKJV)

Another note I would like you to reflect upon is that God is called '*our Father*' in verse two. We can call God '*our Father*' because He is! We have been made his children by adoption. We see this in the following:

Romans 8

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

(NKJV)

Today, are you able to say that God is your Father? Can you honestly say that you have been adopted into His family? Have you been washed by the blood of Jesus? Have you become white as snow? If not, then God is not your father but your judge! Come to the cross, repent of your sins, honestly give your life to Christ and you will be saved.

Romans 10

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

(NKJV)

Colossians
03 - The faith of the Colossians
1:3-8

³ We give thanks always to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ *when we pray for you,* ⁴ *since we heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints,* ⁵ *because of the hope reserved for you in heaven, which you have heard about beforehand in the word of truth, the gospel,* ⁶ *that has come to you, just as also in all the world it is bearing fruit and increasing, just as also among you from the day you heard about and understood the grace of God in truth,* ⁷ *just as you learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow slave who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,* ⁸ *who also made clear to us your love in the Spirit.*

LEB

After his opening greetings Paul now turns to the main body of his epistle. Before all things, Paul says that '*We give thanks always*'. To '*give thanks*' (EUCHARISTEO) means: to express gratitude, to be grateful. The outlook of Paul and his companions towards the believers in Colosse should be held by every true Disciple of Christ. We also should express joy and gratitude that the Lord God has opened the hearts of others and that they have repented unto salvation. There is one thing that we NEVER SEE in the New testament and that is RIVALRY between honest believers. The modern Church has so much to learn from the early Church.

Give thanks to God and remember all that He has done in favor of ALL his children and not only in your favor! We should give thanks privately, when we are alone in our home or by our self. We should also give thanks as the Body of Christ when we gather together. Notice that Paul gives thanks:

(v.3) ...to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

His thanksgiving is lifted towards the Father. No man is worthy of receiving thanksgiving from his lips. This is also true for all believers. We are never to give thanks to a person, an organization, a specific church or a denomination. The Father works through men, and organizations and denominations. Nothing is done or can be done without the will and power of God assisting them. Remember what Jesus said:

John 15

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (NKJV)

What is important to understand when we read '*the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*' is that Paul is saying that Jesus is deity. No other prophet, priest or man ever declared this affiliation with Yahweh - none! Remember when Jesus said the following and how the Jews were enraged:

John 10

30 "I and My Father are one."

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

33 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

(NKJV)

Again in this other instance the Jews wanted him dead for he declared himself to be deity.

John 8

58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

(NKJV)

To this very day, not only for the Jews in general but also for every non-Christian religion or various philosophy it is scandalous that Christ confirmed that He was the living God. What do you believe? Is Jesus of Nazareth the Living God who walked among men?

Paul writes that he is thankful unto God '*when we pray for you*'. What we see here is the team effort in praying. Paul certainly did pray alone for the brothers and sisters in Christ. What we also see is that Paul prayed with others on behalf of the Colossians. In general, 'prayer meetings' in churches have but a fraction of the brethren attending. Far too many do not consider this spiritual activity of any importance. How important is it to come to the throne of grace and ask our heavenly Father for His blessings? It is our Christian duty to pray, may we all be attentive to this.

In verses four to eight Paul speaks of what he has heard concerning the brothers and sisters of Colosse. There are two things that I would like for you to notice. These two things that manifest that this church was generally in good health.

⁴since we heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints,

A quick note on the fact that Paul had *'heard'* Christian news or gossip is often like a wild bush fire that spreads in frightening speed. One must take heed not to participate in the spreading of gossip or rumors. On the contrary one should exalt the Lord for the good news that they hear about others in the faith. Now Paul had *'heard'* two specific things concerning the Colossians. The first was *'about your faith in Christ Jesus'*. The word *'faith'* (PISTIS) means: conviction, persuasion, credence. Since Paul had heard of their faith it means that their faith was open for others to see. The Colossians lived out their faith - right in the open. They were not what is called 'closet Christians'. Non believers could see that these people were followers of Christ. Faith was not something that the Colossians kept concealed in their hearts. Faith was not a hidden treasure that remain buried in the sand. Their faith was open for all to see. In other words their faith was not DEAD, it was alive, bubbly and bearing spiritual fruits. Now their faith was *'in Christ Jesus'* and in no one else. There is only one Lord and Savior, only one Messiah, only one Son of God - Jesus of Nazareth. Their faith was in Christ alone. And so must ours be! Our faith should not in a church or institution but in Jesus who alone is able to save us.

Acts 4

**12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
(NKJV)**

The Colossians had turned from their pagan idols and gods to the true God of heaven and earth. They had done the same thing as the believers in Thessalonica:

1 Thessalonians 1

8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

**9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,
(NKJV)**

That is what REAL faith does. It makes the new believer turn from his idols and serve the true and Living God. Do you have this faith? Have you tasted the power of resurrection in the Lord Jesus? Have you turned away from your idols and your wicked ways? Are you honestly following Christ and are you witnessing of Him to others? If not then reconsider if you have saving faith!

Now the second thing that Paul mentions that he had heard about was the following:

(v.4) ...and the love that you have for all the saints,

The new life which they had received through the Holy Spirit gave them a different view towards people especially the brethren. We see that love flowed from their hearts. Love is one of the basic ingredients that fills the heart of the born-again child of God. This was actually the seal of their discipleship, for Christ said:

John 13

**35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
(NKJV)**

So it was their faith in Christ and their love for the children of God that Paul had heard about. May I ask if this is what people also hear about you! Are you like the Colossians? Have people heard of your faith in the Lord God and do they actually see that you love people whoever they may be! Now the Colossians were able to have faith and love for the following reason:

⁵ because of the hope reserved for you in heaven, which you have heard about beforehand in the word of truth, the gospel,

Notice that faith and love gushed forth from their hearts '*because of the hope reserved for you in heaven*'. Their hope in life had changed. What once was earthly became a heavenly hope. They were no longer longing (like pagans) for things of this world but rather they were seeking the kingdom of God (Mat. 6:33). Because of this Paul would later write:

**3 Therefore, if you have been raised together with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not *on* the things on earth.
(LEB)**

Their heads, hearts and hope were now focused on their heavenly Master. Now where was this new hope to be found?

(v.5) ... which you have heard about beforehand in the word of truth, the gospel,

Here, the importance of spreading the Good News is stated. It is the ONLY hope for this life and it is ONLY found in the word of truth - the Gospel! That is why we must also speak of Jesus and not be silent!

The world needs to hear the Good News so that heavenly hope can enter their lives through repentance unto Jesus. So far, we have seen that Paul has heard of their: faith, love and hope. Doesn't this remind you of what Paul wrote to the Corinthians?

1 Corinthians 13

**13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
(NKJV)**

Evidently the Colossians were true Disciples of Christ. Their faith, hope and love were clearly manifested for all to see. They had a solid reputation before their fellow citizens. What is my reputation based upon? Is it based on my faith in Jesus, my hope of heaven and my love for people? Paul has introduced the subject of the Gospel and he will elaborate on this subject.

⁶ that has come to you, just as also in all the world it is bearing fruit and increasing, just as also among you from the day you heard about and understood the grace of God in truth,

First of all, the Gospel is presented as being active because it *'has come to you'*. The gospel is alive and it moves wherever it is spoken of. It moves from mouth to ear or from heart to heart. The Gospel has no limits and is not bounded by human borders. It is *'in all the world'*. The Gospel freely travels from city to city wherever the Holy Spirit directs it! The Gospel can journey by boat, bus, car, train, airplane or simply as you walk. The Gospel sees no barriers and it came to the Colossians just as it came to most of the believers - by being spoken!

Notice also that the Gospel of the Lord is *'bearing fruit and increasing'*. As in Paul's day the Gospel message is fruitful. It has entered into countries that have rejected it for centuries. No political system can crush it! No amount of suppression can squash it. The Gospel of Christ is bearing fruit. People are being saved from these ungodly times - amen! But how does the Gospel bear fruit? How does it take effect in people's lives? Paul gives us the answer:

(v.6) ...just as also among you from the day you heard about and understood the grace of God in truth,

It is when you hear the Gospel that it seizes the heart which has the right soil (Mat. 13:8). One needs to hear the Gospel as Paul wrote to the Romans:

Romans 10

13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

(NKJV)

It is believed that it was Epaphras who 'spoke of the Good News' to his fellow Colossians. By the grace of God this testimony grew and grew and a fellowship of believers was born - the Church at Colosse. However it takes more than just hearing the Gospel - for many hear it and turn away from it! That's why Paul wrote the following in verse six: '*and understood the grace of God in truth*'. Understanding what you are hearing makes all the difference! And what they understood was '*the grace of God in truth*'. The grace of God was manifested in His beloved Son. You can say that Jesus is the dispenser of God's salvation through grace. This is why we call this - saving grace. This grace is God's truth for all who repent, like Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 15

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

(NKJV)

So the Colossians had heard and understood the message of the Gospel. It is still the same message today and it still saves from the coming judgment. Paul ends this section by mentioning Epaphras.

⁷ just as you learned *it* from Epaphras, our dear fellow slave who is a faithful minister of Christ *on* our behalf, ⁸ *who* also made clear to us your love in the Spirit.

The following are things that we learn about this man of God.

1. He taught the Colossians about Jesus (*just as you learned it from Epaphras. v.7*)
2. He was well loved (*our dear ...v.7*)
3. He was a fellow bond-servant (*fellow slave v.7*)
4. He was a faithful servant of Christ (*a faithful minister v.7*)

5. He worked in harmony with Paul (*on our behalf v.7*)

6. He was a messenger of the Colossians unto Paul (*who also made clear to us v.8*)

As we can see Epaphras was truly walking in the Spirit and bearing the fruits of faith, hope and love. May we also be like Epaphras:

- Heralds of the Good News
- Well-loved because Christ is living in us.
- Bond-servants, willing to do what the Lord asks of us.
- Faithful servants by not allowing the things of this world to deter us from our heavenly goal.
- Messengers from your church to other Christians who you meet.

May our Good Lord fill you with faith, hope and love just as he did with the Colossians!

Colossians
04 - A prayer for the Colossians
1:9-12

⁹ Because of this also we, from the day we heard about *it*, did not cease praying for you, and asking that you may be filled *with* the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual insight, ¹⁰ so that you may live in a manner worthy of the Lord, *to please him in all respects*, bearing fruit in every good deed and increasing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ enabled with all power, according to his glorious might, for all steadfastness and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you for a share of the inheritance of the saints in light,
(LEB)

In this section, the apostle Paul will show us what it means to be a caring Christian, a Christian who is attached to the Brethren in Christ. In our last section we have seen that Paul had heard of three things concerning the Colossians - their faith in God, their hope which rested in heaven and their love for each other. This was the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers. As you can see, the Holy Spirit had not left them unchanged. They had been renewed in their minds (Rom. 12:1,2) and were being transformed into the image of Christ!

What Paul does in relationship with these Christians, which he had never seen is:

(v.9) ...from the day we heard about it, did not cease praying for you'.

This is Paul's gift to the Colossians - he prayed for them. Praying is actually one of the most effective and positive things you can do for people around you. When you pray, it manifests two things:

1. Your faith that God hears and that He is capable of action.
2. You hold dear the person you pray for.

We know that the Colossian believers were dear to the heart of Paul - so he prayed for them and this is how he prayed:

(v.9) Because of this also we...

I would like for you first of all, to notice that Paul did not pray alone for the Colossians. He states that WE... did not cease praying. Paul had 'praying partners', other believers who also had these Christians at heart. It may be that Paul remembered these words from Jesus and practiced them:

Matthew 18

**20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."
(NKJV)**

We see that a group of people prayed (alone or together) for the Colossians. We should also do the same:

- With our spouse, family & friends
- Pray in church with the brothers and sisters
- Participate in prayer meetings

Next, we see that Paul prayed continuously *'did not cease praying for you'* (v.9). This does not mean that Paul prayed 24 hours a day for them but rather that he persevered in prayer for them not forgetting them when he prayed. Paul and his 'praying partners' knocked at the door of God's throne for those of Colosse. They did as our Lord Jesus had instructed them:

Luke 18

**1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,
(NKJV)**

Not losing heart is what *'did not cease praying for you'* is all about. Let us not lose heart in our prayer life.

The third aspect of Paul's prayer life is the following:

(v.9) ... and asking that you

Paul prayed specifically, he knew what he would be praying for, he knew why he was approaching the throne of God. In other words Paul was ready to pray - he had thought about what he would say. Prayer can and should sometimes be a spontaneous conversation with God as a child speaks to his or her father. But there are times when praying should be structured and well thought through BEFORE we enter the presence of God.

I truly believe that the children of God should think before they pray and know where they are going with their prayers.

We see here that Paul has a 'spiritual list' for what he will ask God on behalf of the Colossians. So let's take a look and see what Paul had in mind for them. I believe that this is exactly what we also need to pray for others. Please notice that in this section of general prayer (1:9-12) there is a very important word that recurs often. It is the word 'ALL' which is the word 'PAS' in Greek. We see it everywhere:

- ALL spiritual wisdom (v.9)
- ALL respects (v.10)
- EVERY (which is also PAS in Greek) good deed (v.10)
- ALL power (v.11)
- ALL steadfastness and patience (v.11)

Paul's first prayer for the Colossians deals with their MATURITY. All Christians need to grow and grow well. All need to be able to discern truth from lies and that can only happen when we have spiritual wisdom (Heb. 5:14).

(v.9) ...that you may be filled *with* the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual insight,

There are important key-words that we should take note of. They will help us to properly understand the depth of what Paul is about to mention.

The first word is '*filled*' (PLEROO) which means to make replete, to cram. Believers should be overflowing with knowledge, will, wisdom and spiritual insight. We should not be content with 'a little' of what the Holy Spirit desires for each child of God to possess. We should not be infants in the faith but rather mature believers (1 Cor. 14:20). The times are difficult and all Disciples of Christ desperately need to be '*filled*' to the brim.

The second key-word is '*knowledge*' (EPIGNOSIS) meaning: recognition, full discernment. It seems that discernment has been almost forgotten in many Christian churches! People believe anything that is said from the pulpit. People have become gullible and naive. As a result of this, they find themselves trusting in lies and deceit. It is our spiritual duty to search the Scriptures and see if what is taught is correct (Acts 17:10,11). Jesus warned his disciples that wolves would come desiring to ravage them (Mat. 7:15; 10:16).

The third key-word is '*will*' (THELEMA) meaning: a determination, a choice, volition. Our knowledge is a specific one. It is the knowledge '*of his will*'. The focus of our studies is the will of the Lord, his mind, desires and morals. While general knowledge is good for all and is important in life the most important and only eternal knowledge needed in a disciples' life is that of our great God. Paul reminds the Roman Christians that it is important to know: 'what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God' (Rom. 12:2).

The fourth key-word is '*wisdom*' (SOPHIZO) meaning: to render wise. The aim of knowing the will of God is to give spiritual wisdom to the child of God. We are daily confronted with human wisdom which fails us for it changes as time passes by. It also fails us because it is born from the flesh. Look around you and see what human wisdom has brought forth into this world. Look at the constant failures of mankind and the state of this world! Be filled with God's wisdom as Paul later writes in this letter:

Colossians 2

**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.
(NKJV)**

The fifth key-word is '*spiritual*' (PNEUMATIKOS) meaning: non-carnal, supernatural, regenerate. To become a spiritual person we must first of all be born again (John 3:3,5,7). It is only after, that the person is enlightened by the Holy Spirit into the truth of the Lord (John 16:13). Being spiritual is not through what I do but what I have become in Christ. Once this happens we can grow spiritually and become more and more conformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). In other words the more I think and act like Christ the more I become a spiritual person.

The sixth and last key-word is '*insight*' (SUNESIS) meaning: a mental putting together, intelligence. This gives the idea that a mature Christian will be able to 'put things together', understand in other words. We are not to remain as little children in relation with our knowledge of the Lord God. We are called to grow and understand the things of God. As normal parents desire that their children grow up to be functioning members of society, so does the Lord. He wants all of his children to become solid and mature in their faith. This is what the writer of Hebrews wrote about this:

Hebrews 5

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

(NKJV)

Paul warns the Colossians that they should be filled, bursting to the brim with the knowledge of God's will. Otherwise they are all 'sitting ducks' for their enemy. We are also preys that the devil delights in devouring, for Peter tells us:

1 Peter 5

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

(NKJV)

Our greatest asset is the knowledge of God's will which fills the believer with spiritual wisdom and understanding. Every single day we are threatened and people are always ready to take advantage of us. Our safety lies in the knowledge of God's will, for it is our shield of protection. Unfortunately, knowledge of God's will is what many Christians lack!

- How many read their Bibles every day not just a few verses or a devotional but the actual word of God?

- How many go to Sunday school and bring their children in order to be prepared against the attacks of the enemy?

- How many take advantage of Bible courses offered in their church or on- line?

- How many read Christian books (systematic theology, etc.) that deepen their understanding of God?

It seems that what Christians need the most is what they lack the most - knowledge, spiritual wisdom and understanding. We can see why Paul placed this on the 'top' of his praying list for the Colossians. Don't you think it should be the same for us? So, come on and stop sleeping, get up and study the word of God. Come and learn, for it is a matter of spiritual life or death!

¹⁰ **so that you may live in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects,**

If Paul's first prayer dealt with maturity, this second one deals with the Christian walk. Paul says that this walk must be done in '*a manner worthy of the Lord*'. The word '*live*' (PERIPATEO) means: to travel all around, hence to live. This section deals with our everyday life. Disciples of Christ should not have two types of lives: part time secular and part time spiritual. All of our life should be lived in a manner '*worthy*' (AXIOS) meaning: after a godly sort - of the Lord God. We are no longer to be children of the world but rather children of God like John writes:

John 1

**12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:
(NKJV)**

Disciples of Christ are called to walk differently. It is a walk that should '*please him in all respects*'. The word '*please*' (ARESKEIA) means: complaisance, pleasing. The aim of the believer is to live in such a way that it pleases his Lord God. The apostle Paul wrote it this way:

Ephesians 4

**17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,
(NKJV)**

Our walk is no longer to revolve around ourselves but has everything to do with '*pleasing him*'. To be able to do that, we must know him. This new walk in life should be '*in all respects*'. In other words, all the different aspects of our life should be touched by holiness. We should be the same person on a Tuesday as on a Sunday. May we desire to walk in a way that honors and pleases the Lord!

Paul now continues on with the third aspect of his prayer and this time it deals with bearing fruit in life.

(v.10) ... bearing fruit in every good deed and increasing in the knowledge of God, Believers are the vineyard of God and we are called to bear fruit in our life. In his parable concerning the word of God and the four different soils it falls on, Jesus says this about the last soil.

Mark 4

**20 "But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."
(NKJV)**

Notice that those who have good ground hear the word of truth, accept it and then bear fruit. If you have heard the word of truth and have accepted it, your fruits should be evident to everyone. If this is not so, then there is something wrong and the problem is not the Lord, for he said:

John 15

**1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.
2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.
3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.
4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.
5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.
(NKJV)**

If I am not bearing fruit, it is because I am not abiding in Christ - it is as simple as that. So, let us not fool ourselves! We should all bear fruit for the glory of God!

The fourth aspect of Paul's prayer for the Colossians deals with Christian strength. To be able to do all that Paul is already praying for - one needs strength - not personal strength but strength that comes from above!

¹¹ enabled with all power, according to his glorious might,

The Colossians needed to be strengthened and so do the Christians of the 21st century. We need God's power to abide in us, to live in us, to make us stand firm in life's storms. When Moses wanted to flee from the mission God had given him he simply said that he did not have the power to do what God wanted of him. The Lord responded as follows:

Exodus 4

11 So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?"

12 "Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

(NKJV)

Paul knew very well that to do God's work he needed power that was outside of himself. When he wrote to the Philippians he expressed that even though he was feeble he was able to do all he should.

Philippians 4

13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

(NKJV)

Our strength is from the Lord and never ourselves! So go and get all the strength you need. Go to the Lord, humble yourself and ask for his strength to carry on.

The fifth aspect of his prayer deal with the consequence of leaning on the strength of the Lord to be able to live a life that glorifies Him.

(v.11) ...for all steadfastness and patience with joy,

This is what the Lord God gives to his children who humbly come to him asking him to fortify them in their daily life. Paul speaks of three gifts that are given to those with a sincere heart. The first is '*steadfastness*' (HUPOMONE) which means: a cheerful endurance, constancy. Not only will you be able to move forward in your life of holiness but you will also be cheerful in doing so. God will give you a light heart as you walk your way. The second gift is '*patience*' (MAKROTHUMIA) meaning: forbearance, longanimity. He will give you strength to 'carry on', he will renew your strength from day to day (Isaiah 41:1). Jesus said it this way:

Matthew 6

34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

(NKJV)

The third gift God will give to his children is 'joy' (CHARA) meaning: cheerfulness, calm delight. In other words the peace of God will fill your heart. Have you noticed that Christians can often get 'all worked up' but within a short period of time all enthusiasm is gone! As soon as difficulties arise or the next 'new thing' comes along they drop what they were doing. They don't last, persevere, persist or continue - they just stop! They make plans, have desires and are full of 'good will' but like New Year's resolutions this doesn't last very long. Paul knows that Christian life demands courage and steadfastness and the way to achieve this is through the Lord.

¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you for a share of the inheritance of the saints in light,

Paul ends his prayer for the Colossians by giving thanks to the Father for the brethren in Christ. His prayer is addressed to the Father just like Jesus teaches his Disciples (Mat. 6:9). Paul desires the Colossians to remember the immense favor that God has poured upon them for he has '*qualified you for the share of the inheritance of the saints in light*'.

Notice that it is the Father who qualifies the believer and not the opposite. No one can enter the presence of God unless they are qualified by the Lord himself. This is pure grace - a gift to all who repent unto Christ for their sins.

Ephesians 2

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

(NKJV)

If you are a child of God through the cleansing blood of Christ, live in such a way that manifests that you have understood the massive grace that has been given unto you.

Colossians
05 - The glory of Christ
1:13-17

¹³ who has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred *us* to the kingdom of the Son *he loves*, ¹⁴ in whom we have the redemption, the forgiveness of sins, ¹⁵ who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, ¹⁶ because all *things* in the heavens and on the earth were created by him, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers, all *things* were created through him and for him, ¹⁷ and he himself is before all *things*, and in him all *things* are held together
(LEB)

In this incredible section, Paul draws a stupendous portrait of Christ: what he has done and who he is. Did you know that the vision you have of Christ will determine your life as a Christian! If you believe that Christ is a feeble, obscure, Jewish prophet who died for a lost moral cause then this will have no significant impact on you. On the other hand, if you believe that Christ is the victorious deliverer who came, conquered and was triumphant over all sin and evil - then your life will be totally changed.

Paul wants the Christians of Colosse to have the right image of Christ and he would want the same for us. So let's compare the truth of what is written about Christ in the Bible and certain thoughts that you might have about Jesus. First of all Paul, in verses thirteen and fourteen, deals with what Christ has done for the believer.

¹³ who has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred *us* to the kingdom of the Son *he loves*, ¹⁴ in whom we have the redemption, the forgiveness of sins,

There are four facts that are given about what Christ has done for the believer and these should be the foundation for our love and submission unto him. Here are the four facts that Paul writes about;

1. He has *delivered* us - this speaks of the POWER of Christ
2. He has *transferred* us - this speaks of the CARE of Christ
3. He has *redeemed* us - this speaks of the PLAN of Christ
4. He has *forgiven* us - this speaks of the LOVE of Christ

Paul, first of all, mentions the POWER of Christ:

(13) who has rescued us from the domain of darkness

Christ is the champion, he is victorious and he is triumphant, for he has defeated, conquered and crushed the enemy (Satan and his cohorts). Believers have been '*rescued*' (RHUOMAI) meaning: to rush or draw to oneself. Here we see that Jesus rapidly came to the rescue. Once he was on earth, he set himself the goal to fulfill his mission which was to become the living sacrifice for our sins and to draw us unto him (John 12:32) for salvation. Paul will later describe His rescuing:

Colossians 2

**15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.
(NKJV)**

Believers are no longer under the 'boot' of Satan, slaves of sin and of shameful things. We have been delivered and the chains have been broken and we have been set free. Paul writes that believers have been rescued '*from the domain of darkness*'. The word '*domain*' (EXOUSIA) means: authority, jurisdiction, token of control. We are no longer under the control and jurisdiction of the evil one. Remember what Satan said to Christ when he tempted him into worshipping him in Luke 4:6 'And the devil said to Him, "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.' By God's permission the earth has been under the 'control' of Satan since the fall of Adam and Eve. This is his domain and it is a '*domain of darkness*'. The word describing the devil's domain is '*darkness*' (SKOTOS) which means: shadiness, obscurity, darkness. This is in contrast with the domain of Christ which is of light. So Christ has rescued his disciples from all that is of darkness and he has made us not only able to see the light and live in the light but also to become lights ourselves (1 Thes. 5:5). Our eyes have been opened - the light of Christ has penetrated our hearts and we no longer walk in obscurity, groping and fumbling as we advance. Paul had the same theme in his second epistle to the Corinthians and he wrote the following:

2 Corinthians 1

**9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,
10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, (NKJV)**

We were sentenced, for all eternity, to spiritual death but Christ intervened and '*rescued us*'. If you are a true believer may you be eternally humbled and thankful unto your beloved Savior.

2. Secondly Paul mentions the CARE of Christ.

(v.13) ...and transferred *us* to the kingdom of the Son *he loves*,

If you have ever doubted that Christ cares for you read verses thirteen and fourteen again! Christ could have rescued us from our enemy and brought us in his kingdom and then left us to:

- care for ourselves
- protect ourselves
- provide for ourselves

By doing this he would have left us with no hope or confidence in a better life here on earth. He would be a knight in shining armor who comes to the rescue of a fair maiden. After battling the evil dragon and defeating him he brings the maiden on his horse with him only to leave her in the thick dark forest to fend for herself! But that is not what Christ does! Jesus did not abandon us but he '*transferred us*' (METHISTEMI) meaning: to transfer, carry away, remove. Believers were '*transferred*' from one domain to another. Christ drew us out of darkness unto himself! The deliverance has made us HIS, we now belong to Jesus and are citizens of his kingdom (Eph. 2:19). Notice that the Father is pleased with the Son and his work of deliverance for he is '*the Son he loves*'.

3. Thirdly, Paul speaks of the PLAN of Christ.

The plan of Christ is stated as follows:

¹⁴ in whom we have the redemption, the forgiveness of sins,

First, there is the deliverance of Christ then the transference of Christ's disciples into his kingdom. This is called '*redemption*' (APOLUTROSIS) meaning: ransomed in full, salvation, deliverance. The price has been paid in full - amen! The wages of our sins is death:

Romans 3

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (NKJV)

However we often forget to read the following verse!

Romans 3

**24 being justified freely by His grace through *the redemption* that is in Christ Jesus
(NKJV)**

We fall short of the glory of God but Christ intervenes and brings justification through his redeeming power. This favor is given '*freely by His grace*'. Remember these words of Christ on the cross, seconds before he gave up the ghost:

John 19

**30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing
His head, He gave up His spirit.
(NKJV)**

Payment for our sins is finished, the sacrifice of Christ is perfect and eternal (Heb. 10:10-14). Now the goal of Christ was to redeem a people unto himself (Gal. 3:13) and he did it through his sacrifice on the cross. He became cursed by the Father so that we could be set free. Redemption brings adoption (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5) and all the privileges of being sons and daughters of the Most High are granted unto us. There is no greater good than to be adopted in the family of God. Do you truly realize what Christ has done? Do you adore him and follow him? Are you the light of the world and do you speak of his love and grace? Are you a thankful person?

4. The fourth and last fact about what Christ has done for his disciples is his love for them.

(v.14) ...the forgiveness of sins,

By forgiving our sins, Christ has made peace between the Father and the rebellious seed of Adam who would repent. Christ has destroyed the wall that separated us from God. Remember what is written in Isaiah:

Isaiah 59

**1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear
heavy, That it cannot hear.**

**2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have
hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.**

(NKJV)

People have actually become enemies of God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21) and until they have been ransomed by Christ (born-again) they remain that way - no matter what they do! This wall between God and mankind truly exists and the 'bricks' that form this wall are called our sins! The good news is that Christ has made peace between God and us. He has destroyed the wall that separated us from God.

Ephesians 2

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

(NKJV)

There is no more war between God and His people. The conflict has ceased, the battle has ended. A 'peace treaty' has been signed by the blood of Christ. Jesus says that the door to heaven is now open to all who desire to come in through him.

John 10

9 "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

May I ask if you have been delivered by the power of Christ? Have you been transferred into his kingdom of light? Have you been redeemed from your sins? Have you received forgiveness through his love? If not, then there is no better time to ask Christ to redeem you from your sins.

In the following section, Paul will speak on who Christ is. This 'block' is of the greatest importance for all believers. It is a cornerstone of our faith. We will quickly notice that Paul describes five facets of Christ. Each one of these could fill an entire book on itself - but this is not our present purpose.

¹⁵ who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, ¹⁶ because all *things* in the heavens and on the earth were created by him, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers, all *things* were created through him and for him, ¹⁷ and he himself is before all *things*, and in him all *things* are held together

1. First, we see that Christ is the perfect reflection of the invisible God.

(v.15) ...who is the image of the invisible God

We know that God is invisible for he is a spirit (John 4:24) and no man can see him unless he manifests himself in a form that can be seen. God wanted to communicate with the children of Adam since they were made in his image (Gen. 1:26,27). In the past the Lord God had communicated with mankind through visions and dreams and also by speaking directly to people. Yet, this was not complete - God wanted to walk with his creatures and he did so through the incarnation. God took on flesh (Immanuel) to be with mankind.

John 1

**14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
(NKJV)**

By becoming a man and dwelling among us, God - the Son manifested the invisible! By taking on flesh and dwelling among us, God - the Son (Immanuel) manifested the invisible. The word '*image*' (EIKON) means: likeness, representation, image. Jesus manifested the character of God - the Father. All that God - the Father IS was manifested by God - the Son in the flesh. This was the perfect way for mankind to see, hear and touch the invisible God. In John 1:14, John speaks of the glory, grace and truth manifested by Immanuel. But the writer of Hebrews goes even further in his description of Christ as God incarnate:

Hebrews 1

**1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers
by the prophets,
2 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;
3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and
upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our
sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
(NKJV)**

Yes, Jesus is the perfect image of the Father. Remember the conversation Philip had with Jesus. Philip wanted Jesus to show them the Father and this was his response to him:

John 14

8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

**9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?
(NKJV)**

2. Christ is the first-born of all creation.

(v.15) ... the firstborn over all creation,

Often cults will use this verse to show that Jesus is not God. They reason - 'How can he be God if he is the firstborn of all creation?' Paul probably used the term 'firstborn' to manifest to the Jews and Gentiles that Jesus was the Messiah prophesized in the Holy Scriptures. The term 'firstborn' was given to the coming Messiah in the following Scripture:

Psalms 89

27 Also I will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.

28 My mercy I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall stand firm with him.

**29 His seed also I will make to endure forever, And his throne as the days of heaven.
(NKJV)**

This is a short commentary from Matthew Henry about Christ being the 'firstborn':

He is the *first-born of every creature*. Not that he is himself a creature for it is *prototokos pases ktiseos*--*born or begotten before all the creation*, or before any creature was made, which is the scripture-way of representing eternity, and by which the eternity of God is represented to us: *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was when there was no depth, before the mountains were settled, while as yet he had not made the earth*, [Proverbs 8:23-26](#). It signifies his dominion over all things, as the first-born in a family is heir and lord of all, so he is the *heir of all things*, [Hebrews 1:2](#). The word, with only the change of the accent, *prototokos*, signifies actively the first begetter or producer of all things, and so it well agrees with the following clause. *Vid. Isidor. Peleus. epist. 30 lib. 3*

3. Christ is creator.

¹⁶ because all *things* in the heavens and on the earth were created by him, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers, all *things* were created through him and for him,

Christ is the author of creation, he is the LOGOS which spoke forth and things appeared. His will commanded creation to be. All that you see and all that you do not see were created by Christ. From the subatomic particle to the Super Nova. The word '*created*' (KTIZO) means: to fabricate, creator, to make. It seems that the terms thrones, dominions, rulers and powers speak of an order of fallen angels (as Peter also writes about in 1 Peter 3:22). We also know of the list of angels that have kept their abode in heaven namely: angel, archangel, seraphim and cherubs. Here Paul is declaring that Jesus is the creator of all the invisible hosts of spirits. Keep in mind that most of the people were influenced by these spirits in one way or another. So Christ is creator of everything and we know that only God can create (Gen. 1 & 2; Isaiah 40:28; 43:15).

Paul writes that '*all things were created through him*'. The term '*through him*' (DIA) gives the idea of being the channel of an act, proving that he is the source of creation. Paul also writes '*and for him*' (EIS) indicating the point reached. The point of creation was for Christ. He did not create this world for you and I. We may live in it and enjoy it but it was made for himself. As a man builds a house for himself and his family those who come to see him will enjoy his abode but it is not theirs.

4. Christ is pre-eminent.

¹⁷ and he himself is before all *things*,

Here Paul gives us yet another picture of Christ for the word '*before*' (PRO) means: above, before, over, superior. Here we are told that Christ is above or superior to all things created. We are told that one day all will bow down before him:

Philippians 2

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(NKJV)

Knowing this we should make certain that nothing becomes more important than our creator in our life.

5. Christ holds all things together.

(v.17) ... **and in him all *things* are held together**

Christ is the one that keeps all things working together. The term '*held together*' (SUNISTEMI) means: to set together, to make. This term is in the perfect tense indicating that everything is held by Christ and is continuously held by him. If it were not for Christ holding all things together the universe would explode in one instant, like a nuclear bomb that is set off. This will actually happen and Peter speaks of what we call 'The end of the world'.

2 Peter 3

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

(NKJV)

Scientists say that without the force of gravity, nothing in the universe could hold together - yet they do not know how all this 'force' functions. We know, it is the power of Christ the creator and sustainer of all things. May you abandon yourself to Jesus, let him be your Lord and Savior. Give him your life - your very breath.

Colossians
06 - Jesus is the head of the church
1:18-23

¹⁸ and he himself is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he himself may become first in everything, ¹⁹ because he was well pleased *for* all the fullness to dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile all *things* to himself, *by* making peace through the blood of his cross, through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

²¹ And *although you were formerly alienated* and enemies in attitude, because of your evil deeds, ²² but now you have been reconciled by *his physical body* through death, to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you remain in the faith, established and steadfast and not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

(LEB)

In this section we will be looking at the headship of Jesus Christ. Paul reveals that his headship has three facets. We can see this in verse eighteen:

¹⁸ and he himself is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he himself may become first in everything,

- He is the head of the body
- He is the head of death
- He is the head of everything

In our last section (1:13-17) we were left with this statement:

¹⁷ and he himself is before all *things*, and in him all *things* are held together
(LEB)

This was the expression of his status in the dominion called the universe!

1. Jesus the head of the body, the church.

The word '*head*' (KEPHALE) simply means: a head. This gives the idea of the importance one has. We have seen that Jesus is the creator and sustainer of all things visible and invisible. We understand that he is above all things.

But in this verse there is a new picture that is added - Jesus is the head of the *'body, the church'*. If Jesus is the *'head'* that means that:

- He is the ruler, making the decisions even in our lives.
- He is the final authority, there is no court of appeal.
- He is the legislator, the one that sets the rules for life and church
- He is the protector, he will bring his Redeemed to the promise land.
- He is the benefactor, he pours his kindness, mercy and grace over us.

Jesus is the *'head of the body'*. The word *'body'* (SOMA) means: the body as a sound whole. It is Jesus that makes the *'body'* sound! No amount of human wisdom will add an ounce of soundness to the Bride of Christ! This should be a warning to all church leaders who desire to 'do church' using their own thoughts on how things should work. The question is not: 'Is Jesus the head of the church?' for he bought it with the price of his own blood on the cross.

Acts 20

**28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
(NKJV)**

Rather, the question asked should be 'Is Jesus the unique ruler, final authority, legislator, protector and benefactor of YOUR life?'

2. Jesus the head of death.

(v.18) ...who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,

Paul teaches us that Jesus *'is the beginning'* (ARCHE) meaning: a commencement, a chief. He is the beginning of the church since the church was able to exist because of his perfect sacrifice on the cross. It is the Holy Spirit that 'gave birth' to the church at Pentecost but it was made possible exclusively through the redemptive work of Christ. He is also *'the firstborn from the dead'*. We have touched this in our last section. The word *'firstborn'* (PROTOTOLOS) means: first born, first begotten. Manifesting the pre-eminency of Christ. As Gen. 1:1 says: 'In the beginning God'. God was alive before creation as Christ was alive before all things. Paul states that Christ was *'firstborn from the dead'*. The word *'dead'* (NEKROS) means: a dead corpse. This speaks of his glorious resurrection, proving to all of mankind that he truly was the Messiah. This is confirmed by the following statement from the Father:

Acts 17

30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

(NKJV)

All who are born-again have inherited this new life and are no longer '*dead*' before the Lord God.

Rom. 6

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

(NKJV)

Although others have been brought back from the dead in the New Testament such as Lazarus (John 11:43), the 12 year old girl (Mark 5:42) and the widow's son (Luke 7:15), Jesus is the beginning of something new! Jesus is the first born from the dead because he is the first to have had victory over death. He is sinless, pure, holy and perfect in all things. Because of this, death could not keep the Lord Jesus in its domain! He is now the head of something new, of countless souls that have believed in him called '*the church - his body*'.

1 Corinthians 15

55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(NKJV)

3. Jesus is the head of the church because he is above everything:

(v.18) ...so that he himself may become first in everything,

The word '*first*' (PROTEUO) means: to be first in rank or influence. Jesus has authority in every domain of the life of the church and in the believer's. Again it is not a question of 'does he have first place' but rather 'do YOU let him have his rightful place (first place) in YOUR life?'

In verse nineteen we see WHY Jesus is the head of the church.

¹⁹ because he was well pleased *for all the fullness to dwell in him,*

The '*he*' in this sentence is God - the Father. He was '*well pleased*' (EUDOKEO) meaning: to think well, approve, be well pleased. The full approval of the Father unto the Son was heard at the baptism of Jesus by John:

Matthew 3

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(NKJV)

The Father also reiterated his full approval of Jesus when he had taken Peter, John and James to a high mountain where he was transfigured:

Matthew 17

5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

(NKJV)

The term '*well pleased*' is the same Greek word (EUDOKEO) in all three passages (Col. 1:19, Mat. 3:17; Mat. 17:5). We see that the Father was totally pleased that his '*fullness*' dwelt in the Son incarnate. The word '*fullness*' (PIEROMA) means: to be filled up, full, repletion. This is a wonderful verse which depicts the deity of Jesus Christ. ALL of God's essence was in the incarnate Son. Think of the power, wisdom, authority, holiness, immovability, mercy, character, sufficiency of the Father and you will find the '*fullness*' of the Father was in Christ. Christ is the incarnation of the invisible Father for he is Immanuel - God with us.

John 1

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

(NKJV)

Another reason why Christ is the head of the church is given in verse twenty, for Christ has reconciled believers to the Father.

²⁰ and through him to reconcile all *things* to himself, by making peace through the blood of his cross, through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Since mankind was banished from the garden of Eden, the relationship with God was broken. Our thoughts, deeds and desires are tainted with sin and we became separated from God (Rom. 3:9-20). Mankind is no longer welcome in his presence for all of us have become his enemies. The following verse perfectly reflects the thoughts of Paul:

Romans 5

**10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.
(NKJV)**

Paul writes that it is '*through him*' (DIA) meaning: the channel of an act. Christ is the channel through which the Father can be reconciled with his creatures and there is NO OTHER way or person (John 14:6). This is THE difference between true Christianity and all religions and philosophies. Christ is the channel, the only channel to obtain reconciliation with God - the Father. The aim of Christ was '*to reconcile*' (APOKATALLASSO) meaning: to reconcile fully. I would like to emphasize the fullness of this reconciliation. It is not dependant on our works to better ourselves but reconciliation has been fully achieved in Christ (Heb. 10:10-14). It is perfect and eternal - AMEN! I can now rest in Christ (Mat. 11:28,29).

We also see the instrument through which reconciliation occurred: '*through the blood of his cross*'. It was at the cross where reconciliation happened. Jesus offered himself to become our substitute. Our sins were placed on his shoulders and he was judged in our stead (Gal. 3:13).

(v.20) ...whether things on earth or things in heaven.

This is a particularly difficult phrase for it stands out as being unique in the N-T. What does Paul mean when he writes that reconciliation was for '*things on earth or things in heaven?*' Do angels need reconciliation? The fallen angels have no redemptive measure - they will be judged. The angels who have kept their peace with God and remained faithful have no need for redemption. So what is left?

A reasonable answer would be that Christ has made peace for the faithful that were dead (and are in heaven) and those who are alive (who are on earth). For each group was waiting for the promised Messiah.

Paul goes on and continues to declare why Jesus is the head of the church for he is the only one who can make you holy before God.

²¹ And *although you were formerly alienated and enemies in attitude, because of your evil deeds,* ²² but now you have been reconciled by *his physical body through death, to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,*

Paul paints a picture of what we were called before/after. Before reconciliation is found in verse twenty one. We were '*alienated*' (APALLOTRIOO) meaning: to be estranged, a non participant. In other words we had no dealings with the Lord God because we were '*enemies*' (ECHTHROS): meaning: hateful, odious, hostile. Where was this odiousness found in mankind? What made us '*enemies*'? It was because of our '*attitude*' (DIANOIA) meaning: deep thoughts. Our rebellion was ingrained in our very thoughts and this was manifested in our '*evil deeds*' (PONEROS) which means evil, bad. So mankind is alienated from God because of the evil that is in his very nature. This is an evil that he can not get rid of because it is not only IN him but because evil IS him.

The part that describes after reconciliation is found in verse twenty two. Paul begins with '*but now*' manifesting that something happened that changed the situation of being an enemy of God. So what happened? You have been '*reconciled*' (APOKATALLASSO) (as in verse 20) meaning: to reconcile fully. As noted our reconciliation is not partial or temporary but permanent. Believers are FULLY reconciled! Again we see that this reconciliation was given '*by his physical body through death*'. Once more the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is placed in the forefront. His death made his enemies to become (1) holy (HAGIOS) meaning: sacred, pure. (2) blameless (AMONOS) meaning: unblemished, without blame, faultless. (3) above reproach (ANEGKLETOS) meaning: un-accused, irreproachable. Those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ can now stand before God - the Father having no fear because Christ has made them to become pure, unblemished, irreproachable. May the redeemed bow their knees and sing praises to the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29,36).

Jesus is the only one who can present you before the Father as being holy and blameless - beyond any reproach. Jesus did what the Law of the O-T can never do - make people holy and blameless.

The Law only condemns mankind. Jesus does what no religion, philosophy or church can do - he makes us acceptable before the Father. Jesus presents his disciples as holy only because he imparts his holiness unto them. The Bible describes true believers as being:

- a holy priesthood (1 P. 2:5)
- a holy nation (1 P. 2:9)
- holy women (1 P. 3:5)
- holy men (2 P. 1:21)

Jesus makes believers TOTALLY blameless. God now sees them as though they had never sinned! Jesus places them BEYOND REPROACH. They will never be blamed for anything nor rebuked for anything. For what the Son already is - the believer, has become because they are now 'hidden in Christ'

Ephesians 2

**4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by
grace you have been saved),
6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in
Christ Jesus,
(NKJV)**

Now Paul ends with a serious matter.

**²³ if indeed you remain in the faith, established and steadfast and not shifted away
from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which was proclaimed in all creation
under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.**

It is a serious matter because there are many who believe or make believe that they are Christians while not having been born again. Many are religious and go to church. They may even participate here and there and follow the requirements of their denomination. There are many who love Jesus for what he stands for. We are warned by Christ to be very careful about our relationship with him.

Matthew 7

**21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven,
but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.
22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your
name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'
23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who
practice lawlessness!'**

(NKJV)

There were all types of people who made the fabric of the church of Colosse just as there are all types of people inside your church. From Paul's human point of view, he did not know who were truly saved (he had never even been in Colosse). Who then were to be found holy, blameless and beyond reproach before God? Paul knew that the work of God will bring the person unto completion. In other words, that God would always be at work in that person.

Philippians 1

6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

(NKJV)

This is called the perseverance of the saints. A true believer will persevere in his faith until he dies. Now, that DOES NOT mean that he will never have doubts and even walk away for a while. For Paul, the perseverance of a person was the seal (proof) of his salvation. That is why he writes '*if indeed you remain in the faith*'. For those who follow the Lord only when they like, and as they like and live a double-life, I would be terribly afraid of what the future will bring.

Please note that there are thirteen truths about Jesus that are given by Paul in Col. 1:15-20. Please take good note of them:

1. Jesus is the image of the invisible God (1:15)
2. Jesus is the first-born of creation (1:15)
3. Jesus is the originator of creation (1:16)
4. Jesus is the agent of creation (1:16)
5. Jesus is the goal of creation (1:16)
6. Jesus is the precursor of creation (1:17)
7. Jesus is the sustainer of creation (1:17)
8. Jesus is the head of the church (1:18)
9. Jesus is the first-born from the dead (1:18)
10. Jesus is the preeminent one (1:18)
11. Jesus is the fullness of God (1:19)
12. Jesus is the reconciler (1:20)
13. Jesus is the maker of peace (1:20)

Colossians
07 - The mystery of Christ
1:24-29

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings on behalf of you, and I fill up in my flesh what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ, on behalf of his body which is the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister, according to God's stewardship which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery *which* has been hidden from the ages and from the generations, but has now been revealed to his saints, ²⁷ to whom God wanted to make known what *is* the glorious wealth of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, ²⁸ whom we proclaim, *by* admonishing every person and teaching every person with all wisdom, in order that we may present every person mature in Christ, ²⁹ for which *purpose* also I labor, striving according to his working which is at work powerfully in me.

(LEB)

As we will see, the mystery of Christ is the Church but before we look into this I would like for us to reflect on Paul's attitude concerning the Church. First of all, we need to know what the Church is. The Church is made up of all true believers in Jesus Christ wherever they are located on the planet; people who have passed from death unto life (John 5:24) because Christ has become their Messiah. These are people of all ages, who have given their life to Christ, understanding their absolute need for Jesus to atone for their sins in order to be reconciled to the Father. The Church is composed of Disciples - people who have determined to manifest their devotion to Christ by baptism and following him according to his plan for them. The Church is the Body of Christ as we shall see in the following verses:

Ephesians 1

22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

(NKJV)

Ephesians 5

30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

(NKJV)

It is through his Church that Christ lives, works, advances and evangelizes today. A Church IS NOT A BUILDING, it never has been. The building that you may be presently meeting in is a place to gather but it is the BELIEVERS who form the Church of Jesus Christ. Now, what was the attitude of Paul for the people that made up the Church? How did he see them and what was he ready to do for them? The answer to this is found in the following verses:

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings on behalf of you, and I fill up in my flesh what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ, on behalf of his body which is the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister, according to God's stewardship which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

Please notice that Paul begins by saying that he '*rejoices*' concerning the Church of Colosse. To '*rejoice*' in Greek means: to be cheerful, calmly happy. We all rejoice in different spiritual things, such as being together as a Body, singing praises to the Lord, having fellowship, and participating with the Lord's Table, hearing messages, listening to testimonies and having different ministries. But have you noticed what Paul was rejoicing for? It had nothing to do with fellowship, laughter or being present with them. It was '*I rejoice in my sufferings on behalf of you*'. Imagine Paul rejoiced that he could have '*sufferings*' (PATHEMA) meaning: hardship, pain and affliction. Do you know anyone who willingly is ready to suffer hardship for the benefit of the brethren? Are you inclined to accept affliction for the profit of believers that you have not even seen? Paul rejoiced that he could suffer for their sake. Paul writes '*on behalf of you*'. All he did was on behalf of the men, women and children of the believers in Colosse.

(v.24) ...and I fill up in my flesh what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ, on behalf of his body which is the church,

This section is interesting and can be misunderstood (and unfortunately it has been). Some, by reading this phrase, come to the conclusion that by our sufferings we can supplement what Christ has done for the Church, as though he didn't do the 'job' right. We know that this isn't true. His resurrection is the proof that the Father has accepted his perfect sacrifice (Rom. 1:1-4). There is nothing to add to the redemptive work of Christ and it would be blasphemous to believe so (Gal. 2:21). Then what is Paul referring to? The '*afflictions of Christ*' refers to what is common to all who closely follow their Lord and Savior. Jesus warns that his disciples will be hated by non-believers:

Matthew 10

18 "You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

19 "But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;

20 "for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

21 "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

22 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

(NKJV)

So Paul was ready to suffer in his *'flesh'*. He did suffer and wrote that he bore the marks of his apostleship in his body (2 Cor. 11:23-28). Now some might be willing to suffer a little by:

- Giving a little of their time - as long as it doesn't interfere with other plans.
- Some type of menial effort - as long as I don't sweat or get tired.
- Some basic service - but don't ask too much.

A great number of people have lost their vision concerning being ready to suffer for the Brethren. Paul's happiness was not found in being served - for he understood the words of Jesus.

Mark 10

45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

(NKJV)

Paul wanted to serve even when it was difficult and took all the resources he had. Paul was like a sentinel, on the lookout, searching for what he could do for the sake of the Church. But why did Paul have such a wonderful attitude concerning the Colossians? Why was he ready to be afflicted and suffer for them? It is because he understood his calling!

²⁵ of which I became a minister, according to God's stewardship which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

He knew he had become *'a minister'* (DIAKONOS) meaning: to run errands, an attendant. He saw himself as a simple servant of the Church. What a great lesson on leadership! Remember what Jesus said about being 'great'?

Mark 9

34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.

35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

(NKJV)

Paul knew that God had made him to be his witness and to suffer for His name (Acts 9:15,16). He knew that God had given him the responsibility to take care of the future Body of Christ and he freely accepted it! How much more ought this to be true for believers who are able to see each other. We all have a responsibility to care for each other. Jesus said it this way in John 13:35 - "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." So are you taking care of your Brothers and Sisters in Christ? Or are you as Cain when he answered God concerning the whereabouts of his brother Abel in Gen. 4:9 - "Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" We are all our 'brother's keepers'.

In verses twenty six and twenty seven, Paul begins to speak concerning the mystery of Christ.

²⁶ the mystery *which* has been hidden from the ages and from the generations, but has now been revealed to his saints, ²⁷ to whom God wanted to make known what is the glorious wealth of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

The word '*mystery*' (MUSTERION) means: secret, silence imposed. This mystery had been '*hidden*' (APOKRUPTO) meaning: to conceal away, to hide. This was voluntarily done by the Lord God. He knew before time began what the development of his plan was. He could have revealed it to Adam & Eve while they were still in the garden or to Moses when he gave the Law. But he didn't. It '*has been hidden from ages and generations*'. I don't know if this was hidden from the angels but it certainly was from mankind. It was God's choosing, in his great wisdom and for his own benefit.

(v.26) ...but has now been revealed to his saints

In his time, this mystery was '*revealed to his saints*'. The word '*revealed*' (PHANEROO) means: to render apparent, to appear. There was something hidden, concealed and kept secret that God kept 'locked' in his heart. Then time came and this mystery was to be unfolded to his saints. Time had come for the redeemed to be informed.

27 to whom God wanted to make known what is the glorious wealth of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

God wanted '*to make known*' (GNORIZO) meaning: to make known, to give to understand. Notice that it is God who enabled man to understand this secret. If he had not wanted it to be so, even the redeemed would still be in the dark concerning this. Here we see the grace of God towards his adopted children. It makes me think of when God visited Abraham and told him of his plans concerning Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 18

**17 And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,
18 "since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?
(NKJV)**

God revealed his plan to destroy these wicked cities just as he would later reveal his mystery concerning the church. Now this mystery is described as having '*glorious wealth*'. The word '*glorious*' (DOXA) means: glory, dignity, honor, praise. The word '*wealth*' (PLOUTOS) means: wealth, fullness, richness, abundance. By these two words we can see what this mystery meant to the Lord. The worth of the church (born-again believers) is indescribable! Let no one ever deceive you into believing that the Lord doesn't really care for the Body of Christ! The mystery is revealed:

(v.27) ...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The Jews were waiting for their Messiah. They had come to believe that this Redeemer was only for them and that the Gentiles had no part in God's redeeming plan. They had turned away from God's original covenant with Abram:

Genesis 12

**1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family
And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.
2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And
you shall be a blessing.
3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you
all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
(NKJV)**

All the families of the world shall be blessed, this had been forgotten and was even rejected by the Jews. The Messiah did come and the Messiah did redeem a people of all nations for himself (Acts 15:4; 1 Peter 2:10). The doors were open FOR ALL who would repent unto Christ for salvation. This mystery was filled with *'the hope of glory'*. The message of salvation in Christ is the *'hope of glory'*. It is the anticipation of being in *'glory'* (DOXA) meaning: glory, dignity, honor, praise. It is something that all true believers can look forward to - being in the presence of God and in perfect harmony with Him.

What did Paul do with this mystery? Did he lock it up somewhere? Did he bury it in a treasure chest? Did he seal it to make certain that it would never be revealed? Quite the contrary:

²⁸ whom we proclaim, by admonishing every person and teaching every person with all wisdom, in order that we may present every person mature in Christ,

Paul understood that the time had come and that the 'Lord wanted this mystery to be revealed to all men both Jews and Gentiles. Just look at the following words:

- Proclaim
- Admonishing
- Teaching

To proclaim, admonish and teach is what Paul did concerning this mystery. Another term for what Paul did was evangelize those around him. This is also the calling of every believer (Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). We should all become heralds and proclaim the Good News around us. For the mystery of Christ is still hidden for billions and billions of people. Our task is to get the Word out - that Jesus saves! Our message is one of hope whatever the situation is. It is a message of love that is manifested through the forgiveness of sins. It is a message of reconciliation with God through the cross of Jesus Christ. That is what believers should proclaim, admonish and teach. Now Paul did this:

(v.28) ...with all wisdom

His approach was filled with wisdom, not of man but of God. He spoke forth the truth knowing the power that resided in the gospel truth.

Romans 1

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

(NKJV)

And finally speaking of this mystery Paul tells us how he could proclaim, admonish and teach the mystery of Christ.

²⁹ for which *purpose* also I labor, striving according to his working which is at work powerfully in me.

We first see that Paul had a '*purpose*' and that was to proclaim the mystery of Christ. This was his goal. This is what he set his mind on. He did not let the trivialities of life deter him from his '*purpose*' in life. Often people ask: 'Why am I here, what is the purpose of all of this?' They may be in the dark concerning this but Christians know the purpose of their life. It is to tell of the Good News. We also see that Paul labored in his task. He did not do it half-heartedly, once in a while or on special occasions - he labored at proclaiming the gospel. This was his divine work and should be yours also.

(v.29) ...striving according to his working which is at work powerfully in me.

Paul did not do this in his own power. He knew that it was '*his working*' - the Lord working through Paul. How encouraging it is to know that God works with his people. Remember the encouragement he gave to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 15

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

(NKJV)

God was working with him and in him. So what about the mystery of Christ? Does it push me to rejoice in my suffering for the Church? Has it become my purpose in life and the labor of my life? Have I understood that God is the power in me that sustains me when I proclaim the Good news?

Colossians
08 - The worth of Christ
2:1-5

**2 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on behalf of you, and those in Laodicea, and all those who have not seen my face *in person*,² so that their hearts may be encouraged, united in love and into all the wealth of the full assurance of insight into the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ,³ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.⁴ I say this in order that no one will deceive you with persuasive speech,⁵ for even if I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and seeing your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.
 (LEB)**

In our last section we learned about the 'Mystery of Christ'. In this section, we will be looking at the 'Worth of Christ'. There are many treasures in this world and the Bible has many things to say about them. I believe that some of the greatest teachings concerning our relationship with treasures were given to us by Jesus in the 'Sermon on the Mount':

Matthew 6

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

**21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
 (NKJV)**

Here we are told that earthly treasures, whatever they may be, will one day lose all their worth. We also know that we can not take anything with us when we cross into eternity. Our study is about the greatest treasure of all - Jesus Christ! Jesus is the treasure that exceeds all the treasures combined. Before Paul begins speaking about the 'Worth of Jesus' he will speak of his beloved friends.

¹For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on behalf of you, and those in Laodicea, and all those who have not seen my face *in person*

Paul speaks about his '*great struggle*' on their behalf. The word '*great*' is not MEGAS but rather HELIKOS giving the idea of: as big as, how much, how great. There was something big in his life and it was his '*struggle*' (AGON) meaning: a contest, effort, conflict, fight. Paul was literally in a spiritual fight on their behalf.

Since he was not present with them, his fight became even more spiritual! It was on their behalf that he was struggling. This is encouraging for believers who do not have the physical capacity to be 'out there' and do ministry. They can often feel that they are useless. Please remember that Paul was not in Colosse, did not personally know or even see the Colossians. But his spiritual struggles for them were real. Praying and interceding for the brethren has great worth. Don't be fooled and do not be discouraged if you are 'house-bound'. You can become part of the team by praying.

Paul enumerated the people who he is spiritually struggling for. Are the friends of Paul limited to his co-workers, his fellow Christians close-by, his fellow apostles in Jerusalem or his missionary associates throughout time? Just as I could ask for ourselves - who are our beloved friends in Jesus Christ? Are they our Christian family, our church family, our missionary families, the people that we have ministry with? You see, Paul's friends went further than those close to him or those he worked with. It went as far as:

(v.1) ...on behalf of you, and those in Laodicea, and all those who have not seen my face *in person*

He even had concern for people he had never seen in his life. Here is the list of them:

- On behalf of YOU (Colossians)
- Those in Laodicea
- Those who have not seen my face in person

What a wonderful model for all of us - loving, caring and valuing people simply because they belong to Christ. May this also be our attitude for others in Christ. May we open our hearts and thoughts and care for them. Paul cared for them so much that he was willing to '*struggle*' on their behalf. Do we struggle, in prayer, for missionaries, evangelists, persecuted believers, the sick, those who are in leadership and so forth? Do I also care this deeply for those in my church and seek their good? Now it seems that Paul's struggle for the beloved brothers and sisters was manifested in verse two:

²so that their hearts may be encouraged, united in love and into all the wealth of the full assurance of insight into the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ

His struggle for them had three aspects. The first concerned their hearts: '*that their hearts may be encouraged*'. We know that the heart is the seat of our personality, the core of our being. Paul wants the deepest part of the believer to be '*encouraged*'. Now this word in Greek (PARAKALEO) means: to call near, comfort. The Holy Spirit is called the PARAKLETOS - helper, comforter (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 9:31) .

Here we see that Paul emulates the Holy Spirit and desires to bring comfort by encouraging them. Our hearts should also be set on seeking to bring encouragement to all who are in need of it.

His second struggle dealt with them being *'united in love'* with each other. The word *'united'* (SUMBIBAZO) means: to drive together, to knit together. Paul knew that to be encouraged in Christ, the Body needs to be closely knitted together. And the thread that would make this possible is *'love'*. Without love the Body of Christ becomes unhealthy and dysfunctional. We are capable of loving each other because the love of God has been poured in us by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Unity with each other through this love for one another is what Paul was aiming for in their lives.

There was a third ingredient to be added to his struggle for the Colossians. The greatest of all ingredients - Jesus Christ himself! The third struggle was: *'into all the wealth of the full assurance of insight into the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ'*. The word *'wealth'* (PLOUTOS) means: fullness, abundance, riches. There is a surpassing richness in Christ. There is also a *'full assurance'* (PLEROPHORIA) meaning: entire confidence. A confidence and peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil 4:7). All of this is *'in the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ'*. It is the *'knowledge'* (SUNESIS) meaning: a mental putting together.

It is Christ himself who is the ultimate wealth for the true believer. Paul stresses the importance of their *'knowledge'* concerning our Savior. While the Bible is the most important book for the Disciple of Christ, it is often the most neglected book! Imagine knowing where a treasure is and yet neglecting to acquire it! Paul speaks of *'ALL the wealth'*. This gives the idea that there is wealth of knowledge that we have not acquired yet! There is a fortune to be found in knowing Christ. It should be our desire to know the things of God. This is so you can have a *'full assurance of insight'*. The more you know your Bible, the more you understand the way God thinks and the more you comprehend spiritual truths the more you will be assured and strong in your spiritual life. One might ask, why we should study Christ specifically? Why should our knowledge focus on him? Why place our time and efforts in discovering all the facets of Christ? Verse three answers us.

³ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

Here wisdom and knowledge of Christ is compared to a *'treasure'* (THESAUROS) meaning: a deposit, wealth, treasure. Who would not desire to possess a treasure? When a man thinks of a treasure what does he imagine?

- A pirate's treasure of gold coins
- A bank's treasure hidden in its vault
- A shipwreck's sunken treasure
- An ancient treasure in an Egyptian pyramid

However, to the Lord - all of that is worthless. The true treasure is attainable and is within the reach of all who are in Christ Jesus. In Jesus *'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden'*. Will we see a treasure of gold, silver, jewelry and pearls? - NO! Rather we should see a treasure of *'wisdom'* (SOPHIA) meaning: wisdom either earthly or spiritual and of *'knowledge'* (GNOSIS) meaning: knowing, knowledge, science. In Jesus are hidden ALL the treasure of wisdom and knowledge. If pirates 'dig' to find their treasure in the sand believers should 'dig' in their Bibles to find theirs!

Paul will now tell the Colossians why he is writing them these things.

⁴ I say this in order that no one will deceive you with persuasive speech,

In verse two, Paul speaks of having a full assurance, a certainty and a firm conviction on which to stand. He then speaks of Jesus as being that very treasure of knowledge we need. There will come a time when people will try to 'steal away' their treasure and exchange it for a false one. Paul writes this *'in order that no one'*, this would include anyone they come in contact with. This should be a warning for all of us today, since there are countless false prophets, teachers, pastors and so forth out there. They have one thing in mind and that is to *'deceive you'* (PARALOGIZOMAI) meaning: to misreckon, to delude, to deceive. Just as the serpent *deceived* Eve in the garden by placing doubt in her mind, his seed was trying to deceive the Colossians and it is still trying to deceive believers today! They do this by using *'persuasive speech'* (PITHANOLOGIA) meaning: enticing words, persuasive language. Paul warns Timothy of this:

2 Timothy 4

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

**4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.
(NKJV)**

The Colossians needed to be very careful not to be deceived by the smooth-talkers who twisted the gospel of Christ. This danger will be true until the Lord returns to gather his church.

⁵ for even if I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and seeing your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Paul ends this section with encouraging words. Even if he was imprisoned he found the strength and joy to write to believers that he had not known. Should this not encourage us to look unto others even when our life is turned upside down? Paul is '*rejoicing seeing your good order*'. The word '*good order*' (TAXIS) means: regular arrangement, order. Everything was well done, as things should be. I wonder what Paul would say if he would see how some churches behave when they gather together (1 Cor. 14:40). He congratulates them also for their '*steadfastness*' in their faith in Christ. The word '*steadfastness*' (STEREOMA) means: established, stability. These men and women were committed and persistent in their faith and so should we be.

Colossians
09 - Walking with Christ
2:6-8

⁶ Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, live in him, ⁷ firmly rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding with thankfulness. ⁸ Beware lest anyone take you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ,
(LEB)

Having been taught that IN CHRIST are all the mysteries of God and also that IN CHRIST resides all the wealth of God, Paul now tells the Colossians to walk in Christ. Walking in Christ is basically what being a Christian is all about. Have you ever counted the number of times that it is recorded that Jesus said '*follow me*' in the Gospels? Nineteen times! From the calling of the first disciples in Mat. 4:19 to after his resurrection in John 21:22, to follow Jesus is the first calling of every new believer. We are expected to live as close as possible to Jesus and to emulate our beloved Savior.

Paul understood the importance of following Christ in our daily walk and he will reveal to the Colossians the 'how to' and the 'how not to' walk with Christ. Verses six and seven will describe our walk or life in Christ while verse eight will describe how not to walk in him. Now every child born of man one day learns how to walk. Notice that they are taught how to do so. Parents help their child learn to walk by:

- Holding both of their hands
- Then holding just one of their hands
- Then the child holds on to one of the parent's fingers
- Then the parent holds out both of their hands and encourages the child to move forward on his own

When you are born-again, you are like a child, and you also must learn to walk in Christ simply because you have never done this before. Even when you have become mature in Christ, you daily need to be reminded of how to walk in Christ simply because the flesh can easily make you forget. Let's look at what Paul wrote in relationship with walking in Christ.

⁶ Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, live in him,

The word '*received*' (PARALAMBANO) means: to receive near, to take unto. When do we '*receive*' Christ? It is not through baptism or any other religious ceremony but through repentance unto salvation.

Romans 10

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

(NKJV)

Have you not '*received*' Christ through faith in him? Absolutely!

- It was by faith that you came to Christ
- It was by faith that you abandoned your sins
- It was by faith that you cried out for salvation
- It was by faith that you asked Jesus to become your Savior

What Paul is saying is the following: Just as you have received Christ (by faith) also now '*live in Him*' (by faith). The word '*live*' (PRARIPATEO) means: to tread all about, walk at large. In the gospel of John the word '*life*' is written 39 times! These all refer to Christ either being the life or giving life or having life in him, except for one verse (John 6:63) which mentions the Holy Spirit and life. Life found in Jesus or '*live in Him*' as Paul writes is of the upmost importance. Remember what Jesus said in relationship with '*abiding*' (living) in him:

John 15

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

(NKJV)

When Paul writes to '*live in Him*' it automatically comes in contrast with '*living in the flesh*' in Christ. Many believe that to live in Christ one must suffer in their flesh, or live in their own strength, always doing things to get approbation from the Father. But this is not so, once we are born of the Spirit we simply '*live in Him*'. This occurs by following the Spirit's guidance.

So believers should not walk by their own strength, understanding or wisdom - that's through the flesh. In verse seven the apostle Paul tells us the answer to the following question: How do we live in the Lord?

⁷ firmly rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding with thankfulness.

We can see that there are five items that Paul wants the Colossians to look at about their life in Christ. The first is being '*firmly rooted*' in Jesus. The word '*rooted*' (RHIZOO) means: to become stable, to root. I can illustrate what this means. Have you ever tried to uproot a big weed? If you have, then you know how difficult this is. You pull and you pull but it hardly comes out. Sometimes you even need to take a shovel to get the job done! That my friend is being '*firmly rooted*'! Your Christian roots need to run so deep in Christ so that when someone or something 'pulls on you' it won't have any effect. To be able to '*live in Him*' believers need to be '*firmly rooted*' in the Lord. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians he also spoke of being rooted in Christ.

Ephesians 3

**17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--
19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
(NKJV)**

The second thought about 'living in Christ' is '*built up in Him*'. The term '*built up*' (EPOIKODOMEO) means: to build upon. For our life to be in Christ it must be built upon Christ! At the end of his famous Sermon on the Mount Jesus said:

Matthew 7

**24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:
25 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.
26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:
27 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."
(NKJV)**

Unfortunately some disciples build their lives on sand instead of on solid rock. When the winds of adversity come, everything crumbles for they had not been *'built up in Him'*. Building our life in Christ is a process, a bit like a tree that grows and grows. For us it is also continuous, season after season until we achieve our full maturity. No one can say: 'I have grown enough' or 'I am strong enough' so I don't have to be firmly rooted or built up in Christ any longer! How foolish even believers can be - may it not be our case!

A third thought about *'living in Him'* is *'established in the faith'*. The word *'established'* (BEBAIOO) means: to be stable, to confirm. There are Christians that are not stable and are pushed by every new wind or wave in Christendom. They jump on every new thing that comes along. They are never satisfied and are always looking for 'the next thing'. They are not *'established in the faith'* for they are not stable. One of the reasons why Paul wrote the book of Romans was the following:

Romans 1

**11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established
(NKJV)**

Paul wanted to make sure that the believers in Rome would be established in their faith. We all need to be established in our Christian convictions and to be strong and firm in the Lord. To understand his will for us and to be able to confront all adversities that will come forth in our life are essential.

The fourth thought about *'living in Him'* is *'just as you were taught'*. Walking in the Lord often does not come naturally. Yes the Holy Spirit works in the believer molding him into the image of the Son, but he often does this through what we are taught in the Bible. What comes naturally is walking in the flesh and we need to fight this. That is why Paul wrote the following:

Romans 13

**14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.
(NKJV)**

We are often taught to 'take off' the things of the flesh and to 'put on' things of the Spirit such as:

- Rom. 13:12 - to put on the armor of light.
- 1 Cor. 15:53 - to put on immortality
- Gal. 3:27 - to put on Christ
- Eph. 4:24 - to put on the new man
- Eph. 6:11 - to put on the whole armor of God
- Eph. 6:14 - to put on the breastplate of righteousness
- Col. 3:10 - to put on the new man
- Col. 3:12 - to put on tender mercies
- Col. 3:14 - to put on love

Being '*taught*' is something that is crucial in the believer's life. This is what sustains the life of the believer (Mat. 4:4) for without it we wither away and become useless for the Lord. It is impossible to '*live in Him*' if we are not '*taught*' concerning Him! May we daily be fed by the Lord's bread.

The fifth statement is '*abounding with thankfulness*'. The word '*abounding*' (PERISSEUO) means: to super abound, excel, abundance. To bring closure on how to live in Christ, Paul ends with being thankful unto Christ. As you can see, we need to be more than just thankful, we need to '*super abound*' in our thanksgiving. To grow in Christ, an appreciative soul is essential. Where there is no gratitude, thankfulness and appreciation of Jesus - there is NO walk in Him! Do you remember the story of the ten men who had leprosy and how all were cleansed by Christ (Luke 17:12-19). But only one came back and was grateful unto Jesus for what he had done for him. Jesus asked where the other nine were, for they had not come back. Only one out of ten was thankful and only he received an additional blessing. May we be like this Samaritan falling at the feet of Christ and glorifying him.

In verse eight Paul speaks of the dangers that surround the Colossians. They had an enemy, who will do all he can to abolish their walk with God. As a woodsman of old he will set traps, tricks, snares, ploys and ruses to catch the believer off-guard. He still does the same today!

⁸ Beware lest anyone take you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ,

Paul begins with the word *'beware'* (BLEPO) meaning: beware, to look at, to take heed. This is a big red light that Paul is flashing. He is saying that this is a matter of life or death for the disciple. Let us also be very careful and attentive to what Paul will bring in this verse. The aim of the enemy is to *'take you captive'* (SULAGOGEO) meaning: to lead you away, to seduce. Satan knows that he has been defeated at the cross (Col. 2:13-15) but he is trying to hurt the Body of Christ in any way he can. If he can render a believer useless then he will have succeeded in taking away some glory that the Lord could have in his child. Just as he did with Job he will also test those who believe. He will try to lead you away by using one, or more, of these four instruments. Please notice that it is every believer's duty to be on the lookout for the enemies traps and snares!

The first snare is *'through philosophy'* (PHILOSOPHIA) meaning: found of wise things. In Paul's days the known world was filled with Greek and Roman philosophies. They were taught in school and heard in the streets. Great Roman philosophers such as: Cicero, Hypatia, Pliny the Elder or Plutarch. There were even greater Greek philosophers such as: Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Zeno, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Thales of Miletus. Different philosophies and schools of thought were in abundance in the Roman empire. These could easily lure you away from the treasure of God - Christ. Remember what the Lord God told his people:

Isaiah 55

8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

**9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.
(NKJV)**

So beware, often when someone speaks against the ways of the Lord it may resonate as being 'sound'. But it is only human wisdom - vain and futile! So don't get trapped and remember what Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning this:

1 Corinthians 1

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--

(NKJV)

The second snare is: *'and empty deceit'*. The word *'deceit'* (APATE) means: delusion, deceit. In French we have the word *'appât'* also from the Greek APATE and it means: a lure, which is something that will attract someone or something to be trapped, like a lure on a fishing line. A deception is a lie or speech that aims at deceiving you. Paul says that these *'deceits'* are *'vain'* (KENOS) meaning: empty, delusion. If not philosophies, there are people whose speech is vain. It has no spiritual worth whatsoever. It is *'vain'* - empty of any truth. These men surely speak to tempt your ears but the fruits of what they say will poison your life. Paul encourages Titus to be aware of these men and to rebuke them (Titus 1:10-13). He calls them: insubordinate, idle talkers, deceivers. He says that their mouths need to be shut because they subvert entire households. What we see is that the devil offers emptiness of words, hope and promises. What the devil offers is an empty shell. There is no substance to what he says it is ALL *'empty deceit'*. There is NO TRUTH in the enemy - just empty deceptions. Remember what Jesus called the devil:

John 8

44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.

He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

(NKJV)

Paul continues with a third 'trap' from the enemy: *'human tradition'*. This is a fierce tool in the hands of the devil against the child of God! Tradition of men will prevent you from fully walking in the Lord.

- Your family does not follow Christ
- Your friends think that spirituality is stupid
- Your co-workers do not believe in the God of the Bible
- Everyone you see live just like their forefathers

So why be the oddball, the one that is different? Why miss out on all the fun? All you have to do is 'walk in the fold' and be 'another sheep' that follows a different shepherd. Come on, things have been done this way for decades - get in line and do the same.

That's what *'human tradition'* would like you to do. Human, social and religious traditions will block your *'life in Him'*. Remember these words from Christ:

Matthew 15

2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

(NKJV)

So don't be afraid to walk against the current for man's traditions are often a spiritual trap! It will bring division and strife but believers are called to follow Christ and Christ only!

A fifth and final trap is *'according to the elemental spirits of the world'*. The word *'elemental'* (STOICHELON) means: something in orderly arrangement. These are things that have been established and seem to be very plausible. This is how the world functions and we just take it as it seems to be. This can also be applied to the religious aspect of the world. Jesus had a lot to say concerning Jewish religion and its representatives.

Matthew 23

28 "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

(NKJV)

The basic elemental principles of the world brings about spiritual hypocrisy and lawlessness. Paul said the following concerning this subject.

Colossians 2

20 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--

21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"

22 which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 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.

(NKJV)

Don't touch, don't taste, don't handle! The basic principles of the world have an APPEARANCE of wisdom and self-imposed religion, humility and neglect of the body. But they have NO VALUE, quite the contrary they just feed the flesh! So beware of traps that are set before you as you *'live in Him'*: philosophy, empty deceptions, tradition of men, and the elementary principles of this world. Remember that to walk in Christ you need to: stay rooted, keep on being built up, be established in your faith, receive instructions and be filled with gratitude.

**Colossians
10 - In Him
2:9-15**

⁹ because in him all the fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you are filled in him, who is the head over every ruler and authority, ¹¹ in whom also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made by hands, by the removal of the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which also you were raised together with *him* through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And *although you were dead* in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ having destroyed the certificate of indebtedness in ordinances against us, which was hostile to us, and removed it out of the way by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ *When he* had disarmed the rulers and the authorities, he made a display of *them* in public, triumphing over them by it.

(LEB)

In this section we will see what Christ has done for the believer (v.10-13) and also what he did to accomplish this (v.14,15). Before this is explained, Paul will speak once more about the deity of Jesus.

⁹ because in him all the fullness of deity dwells bodily,

Paul has already spoken on this subject (1:15-20) but it seems that he, once more, needs to bring glory to Christ by emphasizing who he actually is - Emmanuel (God with us). After all these years of ministry and hardships he is still awestruck at what the Lord has done for him. He can not but desire to bring glory to his Redeemer. I wonder if we are like Paul? Are our hearts still enflamed for the one who has purchased us with his own blood? Or has time slowly dimmed our love for him!

In verse nine Paul depicts a glorious and irrefutable picture of the deity of Jesus Christ. It begins with the word '*in*' (EN) meaning: a fixed position, instrumentality, a relation of rest. In the Old Testament we see that the Holy Spirit would fill a prophet or a person and enable that person to do a specific task. Some say that Jesus was 'filled' with the Spirit which allowed him to do his ministry and work wonders but he was not God. There are people who actually believe this. They say that at Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit came upon him and that the Spirit left him just before his sacrifice at the cross. But the Greek tells us that what he was (deity) is a fixed position. It was not a temporary one or a transient one.

Now had Christ 'partial' deity? In other words did Jesus only have certain traits or capacities of YHWH? Was he able to do certain things but not other things? Was he a dim reflection of the true light - although he shined brightly among men! In other words was he a 'little god' or maybe just a cherub sent by God? The answer to this question is also answered with the Greek word '*all*' (PAS) meaning: all, any, every, the whole. There is no question about it, it is the entirety not just a portion of the godhead that was in Christ Jesus.

Jesus had '*all*' of what? Paul writes that Jesus had '*all*' the '*fullness of deity*'. The word '*fullness*' (PIEROMA) meaning: repletion, completion, what is put in to fill up. It seems that Paul is overdoing it! First with '*all*' and then with '*fullness*'. However he is wanting to make it very, very clear that ALL of who YHWH is was in Christ. All the fullness of God resided in the Son. There was nothing lacking of YHWH in Christ. In other words, Jesus was 100% God. He lacked nothing of who God is. Paul writes that all the fullness of '*deity*' (THEOTES) meaning: divinity and godhead was in Christ. Do you remember the response of Jesus when Phillip asked him to see the Father?

John 14

8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

**9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
(NKJV)**

Jesus and the Father are ONE. They are totally, completely, entirely and uncompromisingly ONE. All the fullness of God has been explained in Col. 1:15-20:

- He is the image of the invisible God
- He is pre-eminent over all creation
- He is the creator of all things in heaven and on earth
- He is before all things
- He holds all things together
- He is the head of the church
- He is the first-born of the dead
- He has first place in everything
- All the fullness of God dwells in Him
- He reconciles through his blood

Jesus is our Redeemer, our Lord and our God. Now Paul continues on and explains what Jesus did for the redeemed. First of all, let's look at what believers have received *'in him'*

¹⁰ and you are filled in him, who is the head over every ruler and authority, ¹¹ in whom also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made by hands, by the removal of the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

The first thing that the believer has received *'in him'* is to be filled. The word *'filled'* (PLEROO) means: to be made replete, to cram, finish. Please notice that Christ has *'fullness of deity'* the word *'fullness'* (PLEROMA) has the same root meaning as the redeemed being *'filled'* (PLEROO) with Christ. Just as the Son is *'filled'* with the Father so are the redeemed *'filled'* with the Son. Not that we are deity but that deity is in the believer. This DOES NOT MEAN that believers have become perfect, for we are still sinners and Paul knew this very well:

1 Timothy 1

**15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.
(NKJV)**

Romans 7

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

**24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?
(NKJV)**

This filling of Christ refers to our standing before the Father. Notice that the filling of the believers of Christ is *'in him'*. The word *'in'* (EN) means: a fixed position, instrumentality, a relation of rest. This is the exact same word that describes the godhead being *'in him'* (v.9) Jesus. This is important so please try to understand this. The Father had a fixed position in the Son and believers have a fixed position in the Son. This means that our position in Christ can not be changed just as the position of the Father in the Son can not also be changed! The grace of God is immeasurable and so is his forgiveness! For we have perfect salvation in Christ Jesus (Rom. 5:1; 8:1; Heb. 10:10-14).

Christ is then described as Lord over every '*ruler*' (ARCHE) meaning: a commencement, chief, magistrate and every '*authority*' (EXOUSIA) meaning: ability, capacity, mastery, potentate. I believe that Paul speaks again of this (1:16) simply to emphasize that evil spiritual rulers and authorities (evil spirits, fallen angels) can do nothing against believers since they are submitted to the Almighty. Yes, the redeemed are complete in Christ Jesus!

The second aspect of the believer being filled with Christ is the following:

¹¹ in whom also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made by hands, by the removal of the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

Not only the redeemed have complete and perfect salvation in Christ, they also have received a 'spiritual circumcision' from him. In the Old Testament, circumcision was a sign that you were part of the covenant of God. At the age of eight days, a baby boy was to be circumcised in order to enter into the Lord's covenant with his people. With the New Testament it is no longer the flesh that is circumcised but the heart of the person which enters into the new covenant with God through the Messiah. Circumcision is no longer limited to baby boys. Each man and woman who receives salvation has his/her heart circumcised by the Spirit.

Romans 2

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

(NKJV)

God has placed a 'mark of ownership' in our hearts! Therefore, we are his and his forever! This circumcision is a spiritual one. Once more, we see that it is something that is done in favor of the redeemed. It is not something that I can do to myself or that another person can do for me. God intervenes in the life of the new believer and circumcises the very heart of that person. This 'mark' is given for a very special and unique day - the day of redemption.

Ephesians 4

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (NKJV)

So '*in him*' believers first have been made complete and secondly their hearts have been circumcised. Let us now look at what Christ did for the redeemed in verses twelve and thirteen.

¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which also you were raised together with *him* through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And *although you were dead* in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

There are three things that Paul point out in these two verses. These are three things that the Lord has done for his disciples. Please notice that Paul is describing the process of the believer's passing from death unto life.

- We were *buried* with him (v.12)
- We were *raised* with him (v.12)
- We were *made alive* with him (v.13)

We also find the theme of being dead then becoming alive in Christ in other letters of Paul (Eph. 2:1-6). Before Christ, we were spiritually dead, but by the grace of God we have passed from death unto life because of Christ. Paul speaks of '*having been buried with him*'. When Christ died, he was place in that stone cold tomb and in a spiritual way so were all the present believers and those to come. So believers died with Christ. However the story continues, for what worth would it have if we would only have died with Christ?

Paul writes '*in which also you were raised together with him*'. As Christ rose from the dead on the third day - so did all of those who would believe in him! So when the sun pierced the darkness of the sky, when Hades was defeated and could no longer keep Christ in its kingdom, when Christ became victor over death itself - we were also there because in some spiritual manner all believers were '*raised together with him*'.

Romans 8

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

(NKJV)

Believers were buried with Christ and also raised with him. Now Paul will speak of believers being '*made alive*' in him.

¹³ And *although you were dead* in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

For many, the thought of seeing themselves as being spiritually dead is not possible. It is our very own spiritual 'deadness' that blinds us to this fact. Most people believe that they are a 'good person' not perfect but good enough for God to allow them into his kingdom. But God says that we have all sinned (Rom. 3:23) and are excluded from his presence (Isaiah 59). The first step towards redemption is to realize that we displease God because of our sinful nature. Paul describes that our spiritual death was because of our *'trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh'*. Our sins and our flesh caused this separation. But something wonderful happened :

(v.13) he made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

We were dead but now we are alive *'together with him'*. It is Christ that gives us this new life! Nothing else will do! Only Christ can make you pass from death unto life. Paul also wrote about this in his letter to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 2

**4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by
grace you have been saved),
6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in
Christ Jesus,
(NKJV)**

Believers can now walk in a new life, see with new eyes, think with a new mind and all of this because they are no longer spiritually dead but have passed from death unto life. Being now alive with Christ means that there are no limits to what we can do for the kingdom of God. What happened so that believers pass from being dead to becoming alive in Christ? Paul writes: *'having forgiven us all our trespasses'*. I stress the word *'all'* (PAS) meaning: all, any, every, the whole. If believers could fully understand the depth of salvation given by Christ it would change their lives! Far too many are burdened because they believe that God only takes away a certain amount of sins. Or they think that if one sins again, God will no longer forgive. Some believe that they have 'gone too far' in certain sins and that the hand of God does not procure forgiveness. Brethren, please listen and believe what Scripture says - *'having forgiven us all our trespasses'*. Each and every sin that you have made, that you are making and that you will make has been forgiven because of the sacrifice of Christ at the cross.

Psalms 103

10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;

12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

(NKJV)

Hebrews 8

10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

11 "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

12 "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

(NKJV)

In verses fourteen and fifteen, Paul explains what happened at the cross. What was done by the Father and the Son in the believer's favor.

¹⁴having destroyed the certificate of indebtedness in ordinances against us, which was hostile to us, and removed it out of the way *by* nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵When he had disarmed the rulers and the authorities, he made a display of *them* in public, triumphing over them by it.

What we have through Christ is VICTORY. This is the victory that Christ gives to his disciples:

- The certificate of debt has been canceled
- The degrees against us have been annihilated
- That which was hostile to us has been annulled
- The dark rulers and authorities have been disarmed

Christ is TRIUMPHANT and he made a public display of his kingship. There is therefore:

- No more condemnation
- No more judgment
- No more alienation
- No more accusations

Our '*certificate of indebtedness*' has been canceled (v.14)! It no longer exists. The Law which accumulated our debt against God has been paid for. God had literally '*destroyed*' the evidence of our debts towards him for Christ has fulfilled the Law (Mat. 5:17; John 19:30). Our debts, the ordinances against us and the hostility that existed, God '*removed it out of the way by nailing it to the cross*'. Two things were nailed to the cross on that day. First there was our debts, the decrees against us, the hostility between God and us. Second, there was Jesus, who took away the condemnation, judgment, alienation and all accusations against us. Christ has TRIUMPHED in our stead just as he wrote in Romans:

Romans 8

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(NKJV)

Beloved of Christ, let us be grateful and manifest our deep attachment to our Savior for what he has given to us. Never forget what he has done for you!

Colossians
11 - Watch out
2:16-23

¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you with reference to eating or drinking or participation in a feast or a new moon or a Sabbath, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of what is to come, but the reality *is* Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one condemn you, taking pleasure in humility and the worship of angels, going into detail *about the things* which he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by the ligaments and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

²⁰ If you have died with Christ to the elemental spirits of the world, why do you submit *to them* as if living in the world? ²¹ “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch,” ²² which *things* are all *meant* for destruction by consuming according to human commandments and teachings, ²³ which *things although they have*, to be sure, an appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and humility and unsparing treatment of the body, *do not have any value* against the indulgence of the flesh.
(LEB)

In this section, Paul tells the believers to be on the lookout for a certain kind of people, whether they are participants of the church or outside of it. He knows that there are people who just love to judge others. Unfortunately this still continues in our gatherings even today. There are people who just criticize everyone who do not follow 'their standards'.

¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you with reference to eating or drinking or participation in a feast or a new moon or a Sabbath,

It seems that there were people in the church of Colosse (as there are today) that believe that they have a God-given right to pass judgment on what others say and do; from the pastor's sermon to the food at pot-luck from the hymns to the agitated children. They believe that they have been appointed by the Lord to be spiritual 'hound dogs' and track down the offenders! They are constantly 'sniffing' around and 'barking' when they have found a culprit! The bible tells us that we are our brothers keeper (Rom. 12:5,10,16; 13:8; 15:5) and that before judging others we have to examine ourselves first.

Matthew 7**1 "Judge not, that you be not judged.****2 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.****3 "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?****4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?****5 "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.****(NKJV)**

Jesus calls these 'spiritual hound dogs' a bunch of *'hypocrites'* simply because they do not consider their own life and refuse to take a look at their personal sins! This was true in the times of Jesus, in the times of Paul and it is also true in the present. Coming back to our text, Paul tells the Colossians to watch out for people who easily pass judgment upon others. Paul also discloses some of their favorite 'pet peeves' categories.

(v. 16) ...with reference to eating or drinking or participation in a feast or a new moon or a Sabbath

We can see three categories of things that these people love to judge others by:

- *Eating and drinking* - food items
- *A feast or a new moon* - your social life
- *A Sabbath* - spiritual practices

It seems that these people had every aspect of your life covered: from what you eat to where you go, to how you lead your spiritual life. They would condemn you for what you would eat or drink, forgetting that God had made all foods and people acceptable (Acts 10:1-14; Rom. 14:1-3). Others would judge you because of your *'feast or a new moon'* - your social life. Some people just can't refrain from minding their own business and have to criticize ALL that you do, where you go, the clothes you wear, type of music you listen to and so forth - the list never ends. They will be quick to let you know how wrong you are. They may not even have bible verses to back them up. They are irritated with the liberty that you allow yourself to have in Christ Jesus. Others will judge you because of your spiritual practices - *'a Sabbath'*.

- That's not the way to dress
- That's not how you should pray
- That certainly is not music for church services
- That's not the right bible translation that should be used
- etc...

So they condemn their brothers and sisters in Christ. This is often not because they have truly sinned in one of these three areas or insulted God by their life but simply because they are not doing things the way THEY wanted them to. Paul knew that believers had been freed from these religious conventions. He is reminding the Colossians that they should not pass their time judging each other because Christ had set them free. This is not because believers are free from the moral standards of their Lord but rather that the Lord Jesus had perfectly accomplished the ceremonial, social and spiritual Laws of the Old Covenant. Paul will now give a description of the people who pass judgment so easily on others.

¹⁸ Let no one condemn you, taking pleasure in humility and the worship of angels, going into detail *about the things* which he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by the ligaments and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

Paul begins by saying: '*Let no one*' (MEDEIS) meaning: not even one, none. There are no exceptions to this rule. Believers have been freed from all of these laws of: don't eat, don't touch, don't... and so forth. Christ has given his disciples new liberties and they should not be shackled again. Remember when Paul openly rebuked Peter because of his hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-17). Paul never let Peter try to take away the freedom that is in Christ. In some cases we need to openly challenge what someone is trying to impose on believers, in other cases, we can do so privately.

In verse eighteen Paul shows the REAL intent of these pseudo-judges. It is to '*condemn you*' (KATABRABEUO) meaning: to defraud, beguile of reward. They want to take something away from you - your new found freedom in Christ. They want to enslave you back to how it was before. They are actually stealing from what Christ has given you. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. Paul gives five traits of character that they should be looking for in these people.

The first is: '*taking pleasure in humility*'. The word '*pleasure*' (THELO) means: to delight in. There was something that they really enjoyed manifesting about themselves. This was '*in humility*' (TAPEINPPHROSUNE) meaning: humiliation of the mind.

They seemed so humble, modest and meek. Others think they LOOK spiritual - I guess they ARE spiritual. Their first trap was a visual one. Just like Eve when she SAW the forbidden fruit in the tree and that it was pleasant to the eyes (Gen. 3:6). By looking so humble the natural defense system of the believer is lowered and that's when they can pounce on you. Humility is not an automatic sign of true spirituality, it takes more than that!

The second trait of character and warning is the sign of: *'worship of angels'*. The word *'worship'* (THRESKEIA) means: ceremonial observance, worship. Some were given to have special contact with angels and spirits of the invisible world. They would receive communications from the 'other side'. Many believed that between God and mankind there was a series of angels that one had to pass through to attain communion with God. This is still current in many religions today where people are taught to pray to these angels, ask for protection and special favors. One must beware of anyone who lives or teaches these things. So once again these persons looked so spiritual for not only are they humble but they also *'worship angels'*.

The third trait of character (and warning) is: *'the things which he has seen'*. These spiritual hypocrites not only worshipped angels but they also had visions concerning them. This must have proven that they were 'chosen ones' since angels appear to them. Are they not on the same level as the apostle John to which an angel spoke and showed him things to come? So they boasted about visions they were given. Please notice that most cults of the past and present deal one way or another with their leader(s) having heavenly visitations from angels with a new gospel to share!

A fourth trait of character (and warning) is: *'inflated without cause by his fleshly mind'*. They were *'inflated'* (PHUSIOO) meaning: to inflate, make proud, haughty. They may appear to be humble but here we see the inside of the person - proud and haughty, arrogant and puffed-up! Paul says that this was *'without cause'*, there was no apparent reason to be so proud since all of this had nothing to do with true spirituality. They may have believed that they truly were humble, and having visions and worshipping the right way - but it was all vain! This is simply because it was all founded *'by his fleshly mind'*. The word *'fleshly'* (SARX) means: the body as opposed to the soul or spirit. All of this was of the flesh and not of the Lord.

A fifth and last trait of character (and warning) is: *'not holding fast to the head'*. Christ was not their head, master and Messiah. They were disconnected from Christ who is the head of the church. When a person or religion clearly manifests that they are disconnected from Christ, surely one needs to stay away from them.

When they bring another gospel, when the Good News is no longer Christ alone but an organization, church or faith then one needs to turn their backs on them. For it is Christ that *'holds'* (KRATEO) meaning: to use strength to seize or retain. And also Christ that *'held together'* (SUMBIBAZO) meaning: to drive together, unite, knit together. That is what Christ does to the Church his body. If these people are disconnected from the head, then they are disconnected from the very source of life for the church.

These people who pass judgments all the time and bring constant criticism are no longer holding fast to the head. They have abandoned Christ and his teachings, for they no longer walk with Him. This is what was wrong with them. Still today, anyone who acts like them ought to be severely warned. Outwardly they seem spiritual but inwardly they are corrupt. Remember what Christ said to the spiritual hypocrites of his day:

Mat. 23

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

(NKJV)

In verses twenty and twenty-one, Paul reminds the Colossians not to become 'victims' of these people but rather to take responsibility for themselves and to not allow themselves to be *'spiritually bullied'* by those who judge all the time.

²⁰ If you have died with Christ to the elemental spirits of the world, why do you submit to them as if living in the world? ²¹ "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch,"

Since Believers are 'dead in Christ' (Eph. 2:1,5; Col.2:13) they are also dead to these principles:

- Don't handle
- Don't taste
- Don't touch

Paul reminds the Colossians that when they died with Christ, they also died to the *'elemental spirits of the world'*. In other words they also died to the way this world functions and is governed. Believers are no longer slaves of this world and slaves of the kingdom of darkness. Remember what Paul wrote earlier:

Colossians 1

**13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,
(NKJV)**

So if you truly are 'dead in Christ' and others want to take your God given liberty away from you by enslaving you to these old principles (Don't handle, don't taste, don't touch) don't let this happen to you - refuse! Why should I, you might ask? Paul is very clear in verse twenty-two. Don't allow yourself to become prey of these 'spiritual hound dogs' because it has nothing to do with true spirituality and nothing to do with Christ - even though it looks like it!

²² which things are all meant for destruction by consuming according to human commandments and teachings

First of all these things '*are all meant for destruction*'. None of this will pass the test of fire that Paul speaks of:

1 Corinthians 3

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

(NKJV)

Second, these things they are trying to impose on you are '*according to human commandments and teachings*'. What is taught is not from the Lord God but from their sinful hearts. Worthless, useless and empty, that's what they are. In other words they are simply rules and regulations that spring forth from the flesh. In the book of Acts we have the perfect example of Christians judging others and wanting to force their views on them.

Acts 15

1 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

(NKJV)

There were new rules and regulations or actually old ones trying to be included in the New Covenant, such as: "You need to be circumcised to be saved". So they talked about this in Jerusalem. Paul and the other apostles and teachers of the Law spoke about this and this was their conclusion:

Acts 15

7 And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

8 "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,

9 "and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

(NKJV)

No extra ANYTHING was to be observed - Christ had done it all. Once again, never let others impose on you anything that ADDS to the sacrifice of Christ. Now in verse twenty-three, Paul also gives another reason why we should stop all judges from defrauding believers from our liberty in Christ.

²³ which things although they have, to be sure, an appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and humility and unsparing treatment of the body, do not have any value against the indulgence of the flesh.

All of these matters, subjects and rules that these enemies of liberty in Christ bring to your attention, only serve the purpose of satisfying their own flesh. This is what satisfies their flesh:

- They have an appearance of wisdom
- They have an appearance of being religious
- They have an appearance of humility
- They have an appearance of unsparing treatment of the body

However, all of this, all they say and do has no value because it is of the flesh. You can recognize the 'spiritual hound dogs' easily Jesus says the following:

Matthew 7

17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 "Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

(NKJV)

The self-proclaimed judges of the brethren are also easily identified:

- They will easily get irritated when confronted
- They view life as "my way or no way"
- They lack patience and grace
- They will search to condemn you instead of edifying you

So watch out for these men and women who want to force you into acting like they do or they want, instead of wanting to see you grow in the grace of Christ. Be on your guard and stand firm.

Colossians
12 - Where is your mind?
3:1-11

Therefore, if you have been raised together with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not *on* the things on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, *who is your life*, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory

⁵Therefore put to death *what is earthly in you*: sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustful passion, evil desire, and greediness, which is idolatry, ⁶because of which the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷in which also you once lived, when you used to live in them. ⁸But now you also lay aside all *these things*: anger, rage, wickedness, slander, abusive language from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, *because you have taken off the old man together with his deeds*, ¹⁰and have put on the new *man* that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created him, ¹¹where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, *or free*, but *Christ is all, and in all.*

(LEB)

In this section, Paul gives the Colossians one of the secrets for having a victorious life and it deals with your mind. There is a spiritual war going on between darkness and light and the battlefield is your mind. If the enemy, the world or your flesh can overcome your mind then you are in danger! You will become a puppet whose strings are pulled by the enemy. Jesus explained it this way:

Matthew 6

22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

(NKJV)

On the other hand, if the Lord is in control of your mind then you are on the road to glory! I must impress your heart in understanding how important this section is to everyone! Let's look at Paul's first teaching concerning our mind.

¹Therefore, if you have been raised together with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

When Paul speaks of being '*raised together with Christ*' he is thinking of the new birth given to those who repent of their sins unto salvation and the new life that they now can live for the honor and glory of God. He explains it this way:

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.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

(NKJV)

Since true believers have been '*raised together with Christ*'. They should be seeking '*the things above*'. The '*above*' is where Christ presently is - '*at the right hand of God*'. The fact that Christ is seated at the Father's right hand describes who he is; King, High Priest and Prophet. It also describes his authority for he is the 'head' of the church. It also manifests (once more) that the Father was well-pleased with the Son's sacrifice on behalf of the fallen race of Adam. Just as Christ is sitting at the Father's right hand we are also taught that true believers are also sitting right now where Christ is, because we are 'in him' (Eph. 2:4-6)!

So our thoughts are to be centered on heavenly values and not on earthly things. Our eyes should seek to see Christ in all we do. Our hands should work to prosper the everlasting things. Our desires should be for the kingdom of God like Christ told his disciples:

Matthew 6

33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

(NKJV)

One might ask 'how am I to do that?' What am I to do to 'seek first the kingdom of God?' The Scriptures do not leave us without answers. They reveal the narrow road we are to walk upon. Notice that in verse one, we are to SEEK, in verse two, we are to SET.

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

Seeking is: searching, probing and examining the things that are above. Once I have discovered the things that are above I am now to SET my mind on them. In Greek '*set your mind*' (PHRONEO) means: To exercise the mind, to be mentally disposed.

Believers are called to train their mind to look at *'the things above'*. The word *'above'* (ANO) means: upward, on the top, brim, high up. Paul sums it up this way in Philippians:

Philippians 4

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.

9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

(NKJV)

These are some of the things that we need to set our mind upon and NOT *'on the things on earth'*. Paul brings into contrast things from above and things on earth. The word *'not'* (ME) means: negation, never, no. Believers do not have a choice! We are not to be looking for or towards *'the things on earth'*. The word *'earth'* (GE) means: soil, earth, world. The meaning is very clear - the compass of our hearts should point towards heaven! Often Disciples of Christ do not see themselves as being capable of doing this. They see themselves as being weak and feeble and sometimes as being wretched and useless - unable to seek what is right. One must believe that it is possible for them to SEEK for and SET their minds on the right things. You actually can do it and once again it all depends on 'where your mind is'.

³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

If your mind tells you that you are alive to sin and helpless, you will sin. But if your mind feeds on the truth of God and you understand that *'you have died'* with Christ - then victory is yours! That is why I began by saying that the battle is for the possession of your mind. Paul explains what happens when one dies in Christ in relationship with sinning:

Romans 6

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

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.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

(NKJV)

Is your mind telling you that you are DEAD in Christ and to sin? Is it telling you to enjoy a sinful life? If your mind is not bothered by the sins in your life, I would sincerely wonder if you are saved at all! So I am to SEEK and then SET. I should also SINK my mind in God's truth concerning whom I have become in Christ and the power that now resides in me through the Holy Spirit.

⁴ When Christ, *who is your life*, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory

Paul not only reminds the Colossians that they have died with Christ, he encourages them to look forward towards that day when they will be with them. If believers are to remember that they are dead with Christ, they also need to remember that Christ is their very life - '*Christ, who is your life*'. Christ is not to be part of our life, as our spouse & children are but rather the very essence of our life. Paul wrote:

Galatians 2

**20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
(NKJV)**

There is a precious promise to be found in this verse. This is a promise that will encourage believers to carry on no matter what the circumstances are - '*then you also will be revealed with him in glory*'. The day will come when Christ will re-establish all things and we will be by his side in his glory!

⁵ Therefore put to death *what is earthly in you*: sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustful passion, evil desire, and greediness, which is idolatry,

With verse five, Paul begins to tell the Colossians what they are to do to keep their mind 'in Christ'. Sin is first born in the mind and then it transfers itself into action. James explain this in his epistle:

James 1

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

(NKJV)

It begins with *'Therefore'* this refers to what he had just written: that Christ is our life and that one day we will be revealed with him. Knowing this, this is how all true believers should react to the grace they have been given in Christ Jesus. We are commanded to *'put to death'*: (NEKROO) meaning: to deaden, to subdue, to mortify. Christ did his part in our salvation story. We are now asked to do our part in our sanctification story. Believers have to decide to *'walk with Christ'* and to do so we need to put to death *'what is earthly in you'*. It is the same Greek word for *'earthly'* (GE) meaning: soil, earth, world used here and in verse two. We look towards non-earthly things (v.2) and we get rid of earthly things that are in our mind! Paul gives a short list of these things that one needs to *'put to death'*.

- *'sexual immorality'* (PORNEIA) meaning: harlotry, fornication.
- *'uncleanness'* (AKATHARSIA) meaning: impurity whether psychological or moral.
- *'lustful passions'* (PATHOS) meaning: lustful affections.
- *'evil desires'* (KAKOS) meaning: worthless, depraved, evil and (EPITHUMIS) meaning: a longing for what is forbidden.
- *'greediness'* (PLONEXIA) meaning: fraud, extortion, covetous practices.

Desires of the flesh (sexuality), a longing for the things that are forbidden by God and the fruits of greed all need to be put to death. With the Holy Spirit in the believer, it is possible not only to recognize that these are great sins before the Lord, but also to repent from them and abandon them.

⁶because of which the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷in which also you once lived, when you used to live in them.

In these two verses Paul explains why it is foolish to continue to live in these sins and why a believers must *'put to death'* these things. Paul says that *'the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience'*.

The judgment is coming and God's wrath will be manifested! It was manifested many times in the Old Testament, entire nations disappeared from the surface of the earth, cities were destroyed, evil men and women were killed. His wrath will continue to be manifested and one day the entire universe will be cleansed from all evil and sin (2 P. 3:1-7). Believers need to stop doing these things because God hates them. So we need to search our hearts to see if any of these things are hidden in them. For Disciples of Christ do not get a 'free pass' to live the way they lived before. Believers were once 'darkness' but now they are in the 'light'. We are called to continue to live in the 'light'. The responsibility for:

- seeking the things that are above
- setting our minds on them
- sinking our thoughts on God's truth
- searching our hearts to get rid of sin

All of this is OUR responsibility. I am responsible to do what God tells me to do in my life!

Paul will now continue with another list of earthly things that needs to be set aside:

⁸ But now you also lay aside all *these* things: anger, rage, wickedness, slander, abusive language from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another,

It is the same thought as in verse five (*Therefore put to death*). Again we see that it is our responsibility (*you also lay aside*). Believers need to take a stand and make a choice. There are two roads before us and there is only one that Christ is calling us to walk upon (Mat. 7:13; Luke 13:24). If the first list dealt mostly with the things of the flesh, this second list deals with our character and temperament.

- '*anger*' (ORGE) meaning: violent passions, punishment, vengeance, wrath.
- '*rage*' (THUMO) meaning: fierce indignation, wrath.
- '*wickedness*' (KAKIA) meaning: badness, depravity, evil, malice.
- '*slander*' (BLASPHEMIA) meaning: vilification mostly against God, evil speaking.
- '*abusive language*' (AISCHROLOGIA) meaning: vile conversations, filthy communications.
- '*lie*' (PSEUDOMAI) meaning: to utter an untruth, to deceive by falsehood.

Notice that this second list of things to put away deals with our anger/rage/wickedness which sits at the very center of our hearts since we are sinners. It also deals with slander/abusive language/lies which has to do with what comes out of our mouths. It seems that when our hearts are filled with anger the mouth spews out words to hurt and deceive people. James reminds us that our tongue is like a fire and commits ravages in our lives and in the lives of others.

James 3

5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

(NKJV)

God tells his children to put these things out of their lives but he also tells them that he provides for our victory over sin! It is up to the believer to do so by using God's power and authority over sin. God has given all things necessary to *'lay aside'* these eleven sins.

(v.9) ...because you have taken off the old man together with his deeds,¹⁰ and have put on the new man that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created him,

This is God's recipe it has just two ingredients. The first is *'taken off the old man together with his deeds'*. Remember that Paul wrote that the *'old man'* was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). So technically the *'old man'* can be conquered. We also need to *'take off... his deeds'*.

The power of the *'old man'* will be shaken down when believers will stop answering to his desires towards the flesh. It is a decision that one needs to make every time that an occasion to sin occurs. By saying NO we are pushing away these evil deeds. However Christian life is not only a life of negation, it is a life filled with good things that are to be done.

¹⁰ and have put on the new *man* that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created him,

Once believers have put off the *'old man'* they are not called to remain in this state - naked if I may say! We are called to *'put on the new man'*. We need to cover ourselves with a newness of life. Since the heart has been changed so automatically the actions will change. This *'new man'* lives, thinks and acts *'according to the image of the one who created him'* and that, as we have seen, is Jesus Christ. Putting off the *'old man'* and putting on the *'new man'* is how Paul describes God's recipe for victory. It's like taking off dirty clothes and dressing up with fresh, clean clothing! All of this will require a decision on your part! It is literally up to you for your mind is the battlefield. So where is your mind? Someone might say: 'All of this is fine, but it seems that it's not for me - I'm just too weak'. If this is your case I need to once more ask - where is your mind? So that ALL Disciples of Christ will feel included in the process of getting rid of sin Paul wrote the following:

¹¹ where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free, but Christ is all, and in all.

Do you fit in this category:

- Greek or Jew
- circumcised or not circumcised
- barbarian or Scythian
- slave or free

We actually ALL fit in the first category of Jew or Gentile. If you are a believing Jew or if you are a believing Gentile then *'Christ is all'* (he is all sufficient) and he is *'in all'* (in every believer) and that automatically includes you. So you also have the power to put off the *'old man'* and to put on the *'new man'*. Just believe what the Lord God tells you. Place your mind on Him.

Colossians
13 - As children of God
3:12-17

¹² Therefore, as *the* chosen of God, holy and *dearly* loved, put on affection, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, ¹³ putting up with one another and forgiving one another. If anyone should have a complaint against anyone, just as also the Lord forgave you, thus also you *do the same*. ¹⁴ And to all these *things add* love, which is *the* bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And the peace of Christ must rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom, with psalms, hymns, *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God, ¹⁷ and everything *whatever* you do in word or in deed, giving thanks *for all things* in the name of the Lord Jesus to God the Father through him.

(LEB)

In our last section we have learned the importance of taking off the 'old man' and putting on the 'new man'. We have also seen that the power to do so resides in all the children of God - whoever you are and whatever background you come from. Paul finished that section by writing:

¹¹ where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, *or* free, but Christ *is* all, and in all.

Yes, every single true believer has Christ in him. We are of one Body in Christ Jesus and together ALL believers are one in Christ. Paul will continue with this theme of being one and the relationship we should all have. Receiving Christ as our Savior is a life changing event. We have passed from death unto life, from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Light. It is normal that our relationship with others also changes since our hearts have changed. This entire section is dedicated to this new life that Disciples of Christ have. Paul begins by reminding us of the immense grace that was given to all believers.

¹² Therefore, as *the* chosen of God, holy and *dearly* loved

There are some words that some Christians do not like and the word '*chosen*' is certainly one of them. Since almost the very beginning (fourth and fifth century) with Augustine of Hippo -vs- Pelagius there has been a 'battle of words' between these two groups and their

offspring. This battle still rages today: Does God choose us or do we choose God? In our text it is written *'chosen of God'*. The word *'chosen'* (EKLETOS) means: select, favorite, chosen. How this actually works may seem very complicated, for man is called to make a choice (Mat. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 11:28) yet not everybody has ears to listen (Mat. 11:15; 13:9,15,16, Acts 17:51). We are also taught that it is God who reveals and draws people unto himself (Mat. 11:27; Luke 10:22; John 6:37,44). Whether we like the word *'chosen'* or not this seems to be a mystery and I will leave it at that. What we do know is that God's choice of making us his children has a direct impact on who we have become.

Paul states that believers have become *'holy'* (HAGIOS) meaning: sacred, pure, blameless. The thought of having become *'holy'* should rejoice every believer for we have been declared blameless before the Lord God. Imagine being without a single blame - this is a recurring theme in Paul's theology (1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; 1 Thes. 3:13). The Father sees all of his children as being *'holy'*. May our hearts be eternally filled with gratitude.

He also writes that they have become *'dearly beloved'*. How intimate are the children of God's relationship with him. Never forget that before believing in Christ, we were all enemies of God with his wrath upon us (Rom. 3:9-20). As a result of the perfect sacrifice of Christ and his substitution for our sake, true believers have become *'dearly beloved'* (AGAPAO) meaning: to be loved in a social or moral sense. A favorite verse of mine manifests that we truly are *'dearly beloved'* by God.

Romans 5

**8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
(NKJV)**

Paul will continue with a series of thoughts concerning what it means to have become *'holy'* and *'dearly beloved'*. As I said before our nature has become new and the Spirit of the Living God is now working in the believer to make him more and more Christ-like.

(v.12) ...put on affection, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience,¹³ putting up with one another and forgiving one another. If anyone should have a complaint against anyone, just as also the Lord forgave you, thus also you *do the same.*

There are eight things that the children of God need to *'put on'*. We have seen this theme in the past section when the Colossians were told to take off the old man and to *'put on'* the new man. In a sense Paul continues to show us what we are to *'put on'*.

The first is *'affection'* (SPIAGCHNON) which figuratively means: pity or sympathy. Our general outlook towards others should change and become more sensitive. Pity and sympathy for the ills and burdens of others, should fill our hearts. Our hearts should no longer be stone cold and judgmental.

The second is *'compassion'* (OIKTIRMOS) meaning: pity and mercy. There is a difference between pity and mercy. Pity is mainly a sentiment that we can have when we look at a situation. It is an emotion that we have. On the other hand having mercy is more of an act. We first have the sentiment of pity for another's situation then we have mercy which pushes us to do something about it. We can say: 'It's terrible, our neighbors have lost everything in the fire' and actually feel bad for them, this is pity. But if we say: 'It's terrible, our neighbors have lost everything in the fire - let's bring them home and provide for them until things work out for them', that is mercy. So believers not only need to be filled with *'affection'* they also need to act out of *'compassion'*.

The third is *'kindness'* (CHRESTOTES) meaning: excellence in character, goodness. It is inevitable that we put on *'kindness'* since our mind has been renewed and has taken on the traits of character of Jesus. Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 2

**16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.
(NKJV)**

If we have the mind of Christ, we will be filled with kindness. Think of Jesus and how kind he was to the Samaritan woman, to the woman caught in adultery, to the demon possessed, to the blind and lame, to the hungry crowds. By looking at Jesus and how he dealt with people, we have a picture of how our kindness should be manifested unto others.

The fourth is *'humility'* (TAPEINOPHROSUNE) meaning: humbleness of mind. Jesus said:

Matthew 11

**29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
(NKJV)**

This is *'humility'*, being gentle and lowly in heart. When we are humble the natural consequence is that people will feel comfortable with us. As Jesus said: *'you will find rest for your souls'*. Our character should draw people unto us and not scare them away. In the eyes of the Lord, *'humility'* has great worth for he said:

Matthew 18

4 "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

(NKJV)

The fifth is *'gentleness'* (PRA) meaning :gentleness, humility, meekness. What type of person am I considered to be? Do I strike people as being rough and forceful, always wanting to get my way, or rather gentle and calm. In Matthew twenty six when Jesus was betrayed by Judas and a cohort came to capture him, Peter took out his sword to defend Jesus and cut off the ear of a man. In response to Peter's defending him, this is what Jesus said:

Mat. 26

53 "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?

(NKJV)

Jesus was filled with *'gentleness'*, he did not retaliate but placed everything in the hands of his Father. We also need to be gentle, knowing how to act appropriately and making certain that it glorifies the Lord God.

The sixth is *'patience'* (MAKROTHUMIS) meaning: longanimity, forbearance. This reminds me of what Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning love (1 Cor. 13:4). The first quality of love is *'patient'*. In both verses the word *'patience'* or *'patient'* is from the same Greek root word. In what circumstances should believers be patient?

- In the continuance in doing good (Rom. 2:7)
- In tribulations (Rom. 12:12)
- With all people (1 Thes. 5:14)
- As a servant of the Lord (2 Tim. 2:24)
- Until the coming of the Lord (James 5:7)

The seventh is *'putting up'* (ANECHOMAI) meaning: to put up with, to bear, to endure. Due to our sinful nature, even the best of us, will from time to time, irritate others and that is why believers need to be *'putting up with one another'* .

Just as Christ has endured our sins we also need to have his attitude. Peter reminds us of this when he wrote the following concerning Christ's attitude - even on the cross!

1 Peter 2

**22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";
23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;
(NKJV)**

If believers need to endure and put up with the brethren this should be even more the case with non-believers. They must see in us the light of Christ.

The eighth is '*forgiving one another*' (CHARIZOMAI) meaning: to grant a favor, pardon, rescue. This is a key element in our reflecting the character of our Savior, for without forgiveness, we still would have a judgment waiting for us. For the human being, forgiveness is what Jesus is all about. That is what attracts us to him. What a wonderful sentiment it is to know that we are forgiven before the Lord and that we have become blameless (1:21,22). We need to remember a 'golden rule' of Christ:

Matthew 7

**12 "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.
(NKJV)**

Paul comes to a conclusion and sums up his thoughts concerning '*forgiving one another*' by writing:

(v.13) ...If anyone should have a complaint against anyone, just as also the Lord forgave you, thus also you *do the same*.

A '*complaint*' (MOMPHE) means: fault, quarrel. We will find faults in others and others will find faults in us. It is inevitable. As we have seen, Christ is our perfect model. Since as he forgave you - you also must forgive others (Mat. 18:21-35).

Paul adds one more trait of character that all children of God should manifest:

¹⁴ And to all these *things add* love, which is *the* bond of perfection.

We need to be certain to *'add'* to our list *'love'* (AGAPE) meaning: love, affection, charity. Twice we are told that God is love (1 John 4:8,16). He is the purest form of love and it should be natural for children of God to follow in the Father's business of loving. Why is love called *'the bond of perfection'*? The word *'bond'* (SUNDESMOS) means: a joint tie, a uniting principle. Love will unite people together, as nothing else can.

¹⁵ And the peace of Christ must rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom, with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God

To be able to do all of this we see that *'peace must rule in your hearts'*. So *'peace'* (EIRENE) meaning: to join, quietness, peace, is absolutely necessary. So much so that it must *'rule'* (BRABEUO) meaning: to arbitrate, prevail, to govern - our heart. Love and peace are the governing factors by which all believers should weigh what they do. In Ephesians 4:3 Paul writes that believers should do all they can *'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'*. If Christ suffered to bring peace between God and mankind, is it not probable that believers should also be willing to suffer some injustice to also establish or maintain peace within the body?

In verse sixteen, Paul writes that not only peace should rule in the believer's heart, but also *'the word of Christ'*. The believer should immerse himself in the words of our Lord. There must be an attachment and deep affection for the Bible. Although there are many books ABOUT the bible the best (by far) is to read the bible itself. Nourish yourself with the Sermon on the Mount or the Sermon in the Upper Room. Feed upon the four Gospels and savor every word that is written. Devour the Epistles and all the Holy Scriptures in the Old Testament. Stop wasting time with the trivialities of life and set your desires on knowing the word of God.

Notice that once the *'word of Christ'* dwells in the believer we are not to keep it inside - no! It must come out of our hearts in the form of *'teaching and admonishing one another'*. It is there for the good of others also. As caretakers of the brethren we need to use the *'word of Christ'* to help and encourage others. This must be done *'in all wisdom'*. Believers need to be led by the Holy Spirit and use wisdom that is from above. Often we are encouraged by clichés instead of the solid word of God. Notice also that teaching others is not only through direct instructions but also through:

v.16 ...with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God

Here we see the importance of hymns and worship songs - they **MUST** be grounded in the word of God. Too many modern songs have little theological meaning and teach little or even lies about the Lord God! The power of music is undeniable and the words in the songs have an important impact in the life of the singer or listener. Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs have two goals. The first is to glorify the Lord God and the second is to teach others about the Lord God.

¹⁷ and everything *whatever* you do in word or in deed, giving thanks *for* all *things* in the name of the Lord Jesus to God the Father through him.

Our life should be a living sacrifice, looking to glorify the Lord God in all (thoughts and actions) that we do. Let us be grateful for all that was done for us and live in such a way that it pleases the Lord.

Colossians
14 - Christian responsibilities
3:18 - 4:1

¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, so that they will not become discouraged. ²² Slaves, obey your *human* masters in everything, not *while being watched*, as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, accomplish *it* from the soul, as to the Lord, and not to people, ²⁴ *because you know that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. Serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ For the one who does wrong will receive back whatever wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.*

4 ¹ Masters, grant your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you also have a master in heaven
(LEB)

In this section the apostle Paul will be writing about everyday living as a believer in Christ. When Christ said '*Follow me*' he meant just that. Following Jesus means to accept his instruction in our life and not to cherry-pick what we like and leave behind what we dislike! The following statement of Christ manifests his intention for us:

Matthew 11

28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
(NKJV)

We are not only to come to him for rest but ALSO to take his yoke and learn from him which will give the rest we are looking for. It is the Holy Spirit who inspired Matthew to write these lines. It is also the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul to write these lines and both deal with learning from Christ how to live. You will notice that Paul begins his exposé of our Christian responsibilities within the family circle:

¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

The word '*wives*' (GUNE) means: a woman married or unmarried. Now these fully grown married females needs to '*be subject*' (HUPOTASSO) meaning: to subordinate, to be under obedience. In other words, to be under the authority of '*your husband*' (ANER) meaning: a man, a fellow, a husband. Here we see that it is in the context of two people having made a husband-wife covenant (they are married). Please notice it is not to ALL men she needs to be '*subject to*' but only to her husband. Why should a wife be subject to her husband? This goes back to the Garden of Eden. Before the fall, you will notice that there was no subjection of Eve towards her husband. She was created to be his helper in life. After the fall Adam, Eve and the devil were each judged by God for their rebellion. As for Eve, this is what the Lord said:

Gen. 3

16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

(NKJV)

Yes, '*he shall rule over you*'. This, along with her pain when giving birth and her desire to be towards her husband, were going to be her personal judgments. This is what Adam Clark wrote in his commentary on Gen. 3:16:

'and he shall rule over thee, though at their creation both were formed with equal rights, and the woman had probably as much right to rule as the man; but subjection to the will of her husband is one part of her curse; and so very capricious is this will often, that a sorer punishment no human being can well have, to be at all in a state of liberty, and under the protection of wise and equal laws.'

This was not something new for the Jewish woman to understand, but there were many Gentiles in Colossus who needed either to learn or to be reminded of the consequences of Eve's rebellion against the Lord. Now Paul writes '*as it is fitting in the Lord*'. The word '*fitting*' (ANEKO) means: to be proper, to fit, convenient. In other words, it is the right thing to do. If a wife does not accept the rule of her husband over her and rebels against him, she just manifests the same attitude that Eve did towards the Lord. We are all subject to someone in one way or another (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:10). What we all need to do is to accept this submission to glorify God.

To the husbands, the apostle Paul leaves these responsibilities to perform in relationship with their wives.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

The word *'husbands'* (ANER) is the same word used in verse eighteen in relationship with the wives. The wives needed to be reminded of their duty to accept their husband's authority. The husband also needed to be reminded what he needs to do. Paul mentions two things, the first is to *'love your wives'*. Life, in general, shows that it is easier for a woman to love her husband than for the husband to love his wife. This is also because of the curse given to Eve by the Lord *'your desire shall be for your husband'* (Gen. 3:16). The desires of a husband can more easily stray from where they should be - focused on his wife. So husbands need to be told and retold to love their wives and only their wives. Sexual infidelity was rampant in the Roman Empire just like it is today!

The second is: *'and do not be embittered against them'*. The word *'embittered'* (PIKRAINO) means: to embitter, to make bitter. This is the general attitude a husband should have in his dealings with his wife. He should act in a way that does not make her bitter. There is a secular saying that says it all: *'unhappy wife - unhappy life'*. A man is foolish to act in a way that irritates his wife. Nothing good will ever come from this. Whether in speech or action, the Lord tells husbands to handle their wife with great care (1 Peter 3:7).

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord.

Paul continues with the family circle and now speaks to the *'children'*. This word in Greek (TEKNON) means: a child, daughter or son. There is no difference for both sons and daughters need to *'obey your parents'*. As we have seen, the wife needs to be subject (HUPATASSO) to her husband and children need to obey (HUPAKOUO) meaning: to listen attentively, to heed or conform to their parents. Notice that obedience is towards both parents and not only towards the father. Both mothers and fathers need to be honored by the children in the family. This is even one of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:12). Notice that Paul continues with the words *'in everything'* (PAS) meaning: any, all, every. There are things that are easy to obey and other things that are more difficult (as a child grows older). Obeying parents is *'in everything'*. Paul tells us why it is important for children to obey their parents: *'for this is pleasing in the Lord'*. The word *'pleasing'* (EUARESTOS) means: fully agreeable, acceptable. Both the obedience of a wife towards her husband and the children's obedience of their parents have the same reason why - because it is right before the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, so that they will not become discouraged.

Paul now speaks to the *'fathers'*: (KURIOS) meaning: supreme in authority, controller. The husband is the top human authority in the family cell. He is accountable before the Lord for acting in a way that is godly towards ALL the members of his family. Here we see that the *'fathers'* are not to *'provoke'* (ERETHIZO) meaning: to stimulate, to provoke. With both his wife and his children, he is not to act in a way that will bring irritation and provoking them to unhealthy bursts of emotions. A child who is constantly provoked in his spirit will soon become rebellious and will even hate his father! That is why Paul writes: *'so that they will not become discouraged'*. The word *'discouraged'* (ATHUMEO) means: to be spiritless, dishearten. Fathers can actually break the spirit in his child and this will affect him for years to come, even all of his life! So fathers be an encouragement for your children and build them up to become strong and stable young men and women.

Paul will now introduce another human 'circle' or relationship - slaves and masters.

²² Slaves, obey your *human* masters in everything, not *while being watched*, as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, accomplish *it* from the soul, as to the Lord, and not to people, ²⁴ *because you know that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. Serve the Lord Christ.* ²⁵ For the one who does wrong will receive back whatever wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

Slavery was common in the Roman empire. It is said that there were more slaves in Rome than free citizens! By the grace of God, some slaves had received salvation through Christ and they also needed to be reminded of their Christian responsibilities towards their masters. They also are to *'obey'* (HUPAKOUO) meaning: to listen attentively, to heed or conform. Please notice that wives, children and slaves all had to do the same thing - to be under the authority of another person. Slaves were to *'obey your human masters'*. The word *'masters'* (KURIOS) means: supreme in authority, controller. They were to obey the one that they belonged to. They were also to obey the one who was the supervisor in their task. They were to do this *'in everything'* (PAS) meaning: all, any, every. They were not to choose which aspect of their work they were going to perform and neglect what was undesirable. Paul also reminds them of the attitude they should have while working:

(v.22) ...not *while being watched*, as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Still today, many have a tendency to change their pace when their supervisor is gone. Being more relaxed people tend to 'slow down' their production. As a Christian this must not be our way of working. There are two ways of doing one's work. The first is as though you are *'being watched'* (OPHTAIMODOULEIA) meaning: sight labor, that needs watching.

One works better and faster because he is being watched. This is done *'as people pleasers'* (ANTHROPARESKOS) meaning: man courting, man-pleaser. You want to please your supervisor and work rapidly. The other way is *'with sincerity'* (HAPLOTES) meaning: sincerity, singleness. This work is done in a heart-felt way. The reason why the slave (and any Christian) should work honestly is because of his *'fearing the Lord'*. The word *'fearing'* (PHOBEO) means: to be alarmed, afraid, fear. One works this way because of the Lord, knowing that he is to do his work properly, as if it was unto the Lord himself.

²³ Whatever you do, accomplish *it* from the soul, as to the Lord, and not to people,

Again, Paul reminds the slaves, to be motivated properly in everything they do. They needed to place their entire being in what was to be done - their very soul in it. For the second time, Paul reminds them that what they are actually doing for their masters, they are really doing for the Lord *'as to the Lord, and not to people'*. This should also be a reminder for all Christians - we need to work not for our earthly masters but for the Lord. We should give a good and honest day's work. We should not work sparingly nor abuse the times allotted for lunch or breaks. We work for the Lord not for man!

1 Corinthians 10

**31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
(NKJV)**

Paul continues and explains why slaves (and all believers) should work diligently and not waste their time:

²⁴ because you know that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. Serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ For the one who does wrong will receive back whatever wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

Paul encourages slaves to look towards the future. He reminds them of the conclusion of all things. Due to our human nature, we tend to fix our eyes on the present instead of looking at the grand end of all things. When our eyes are fixed on the present we can easily become discouraged and even outraged. It is by lifting our eyes and remembering the promises of the Lord, that our present situation can be tolerated. There is a reward for being a child of God and enduring the present times: *'you will receive the reward of the inheritance'* (Eph. 1:14-18; Col. 1:12; Heb. 9:15; 1 Peter 1:3-5). Because of this great inheritance, all believers are called to *'Serve the Lord Christ'*. But what happens if a Christian slave did not act the way he should and instead became a disgrace unto the Lord?

²⁵ For the one who does wrong will receive back whatever wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

There is a warning to those who desire to rebel against their masters, These who have a bad attitude and only work well when they are under direct supervision. They will *'receive back whatever wrong he has done'*. Our names and all that we do is written in the Lord's book (Ps. 69:28; Ps. 139:16; Mal. 3:16; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:12). Christians will appear before the tribunal of Christ (Rom. 14:10-12) as Paul wrote:

2 Corinthians 5

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

(NKJV)

Paul ends this section concerning Christian responsibilities speaking to the masters of these slaves:

4 ¹Masters, grant your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you also have a master in heaven

The Christian masters are also to act in a godly way. It is not because one has full authority over another, that one has the right to act in an unacceptable way! Often power becomes an instrument of injustice, discrimination and evil. It is said that often people become 'drunk with power' and believe that they can do whatever they please. Not so with Christian masters! They are called to give two things to their slaves. The first is *'justice'* (DIKAIOS) meaning: what is just, right. In his dealings with his slaves a master needed to be just and not to show favoritism. The second was *'fairness'* (ISOTES) meaning: equity. All his dealing with his slaves needed to be wrapped in justice and fairness. By doing so, this would avoid many problems and avoid rebellion. The master is also reminded why he should act this way: *'knowing that you also have a master in heaven'*. Notice that like the slaves, masters also will have an account to give. They also have a master - Jesus and he is watching the way they treat people.

Colossians
15 - General exhortations
4:2-6

Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving, ³ praying at the same time for us also, that God may open for us a door of the message, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which also *I am a prisoner*, ⁴ so that I may reveal it, as it is necessary for me to speak. ⁵ Live with wisdom toward those outside, making the most of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, so that *you* may know how it is necessary for you to answer each one.

(LEB)

These are the last general exhortations of Paul's letter. They are reminders of what the Colossians should personally do and also do in favor of Paul. It begins with '*Be devoted*' (PROSKARTEREO) means: to be earnest towards. Some Christians hardly pray, some pray casually, some pray every day. Others are devoted to praying and actually believe that their prayers are heard and may have an effect on the Lord God. They are the ones who keep knocking at God's door knowing that he delights in his children. So Paul is telling the Colossians that they should '*pray without ceasing*' (1 Thes. 5:17). They are to pray, not as a ritual, or a thing to do but out of the heart. He also tells them that they should be '*keeping alert*' (GREGORENO) meaning: to keep awake, to be vigilant. This reminds me of the parable of the woman who constantly keeps coming to the judge to have justice done in her favor. She never stops, day after day, until the judge is so tired of seeing and hearing her that he does give her justice. This is how Jesus tells this parable which teaches about persevering and being vigilant:

Luke 18

1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.

3 "Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'

4 "And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man,

5 'yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said.

7 "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?

8 "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

(NKJV)

One needs to keep on praying just as this woman kept on appearing before the unjust judge. In prayer, the Colossians needed to be devoted, alert and were to pray with *'thanksgiving'* (EUCCHARISTIA) meaning: gratitude, grateful language. The attitude of the heart is very important. It involves not demanding but asking the Lord's favor upon yourself, not being filled with pride but overflowing with humility. It entails thanking the good Lord for his care. Paul now turns to his own needs and asks the Colossians not to forget him in their prayers.

³praying at the same time for us also, that God may open for us a door of the message, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which also *I am a prisoner*, ⁴so that I may reveal it, as it is necessary for me to speak.

Even in prison, Paul is looking to fulfill the will of God, by preaching the gospel to those who came to see him or the soldiers that were with him. It is almost unimaginable to conceive that while being bound in prison his heart was still beating for the Lord! His love for his Savior had not diminished or withered away a single bit. He knew the power of prayer was necessary not only in life but also in ministry and that is why he asks them to pray so *'that God may open for us a door of the message'*. The word *'door'* (THURA) simply means: a portal, entrance, door, gate. He knew the Lord had to walk before him so that his evangelism could be effective. Paul did not ask for anything else but prayers. So many things are needed today for ministry, people count on so many different things. It seems for Paul that prayers were his favorite spiritual tool for ministry. It is God who opens the doors of their hearts, just like Elisha's servant needed his eyes to be opened to see the spiritual reality of their situation. For they were surrounded with heavenly soldiers and chariots of fire (2 Kings 6:17). The message was about *'the mystery of Christ'* from the incarnation to his ascension - from the cradle to the cross. That was Paul's message - he preached Jesus and Jesus crucified (1 Cor. 1:17-25). There was a price to pay for preaching *'the mystery of Christ'* and that was *'for which I am a prisoner'* (DEO) meaning: to be in bonds. Paul was ready to pay the price! What about you? If Christ has died in your stead, are you ready to live for him?

⁴so that I may reveal it, as it is necessary for me to speak.

All the mighty powers of Rome could not stop Paul to '*reveal it*' (PHANEROO) meaning: to render apparent, appear. Paul is revealing what had been hidden - the mystery of Christ, for he was the promised Messiah! Paul even goes to say: '*as it is necessary for me to speak*'. The word '*necessary*' (DEI) means: necessary, binding, must. Just as Paul needed to breath, eat and sleep - he also needed to spread the Good News. May I ask if you are pushed by the Holy Spirit to bear witness of Christ. Is the destination of lost souls troubling you? Is it necessary for you to speak of Jesus?

Paul now comes back to the Colossians with other exhortations.

⁵ Live with wisdom toward those outside, making the most of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, so that *you* may know how it is necessary for you to answer each one.

He first speaks of their relationship with those who are not within the brotherhood. He writes: '*live with wisdom toward those outside*'. The word '*Live*' (PERIPATEO) means: to tread about, walk at large. This gives the picture of daily living. This must be done '*with wisdom*' (SOPHIA) meaning: wisdom-worldly or spiritual. Naturally he is speaking of wisdom from above, having given warning concerning earthly and devilish wisdom (2:8). The hearts of the believers need to be filled with God's wisdom (Ps. 1). This wisdom is especially needed with our relationship with '*those outside*' (EXO) meaning: away, outward, strange. Here Paul is speaking of non-believers. He tells the Colossians to be '*making the most of the time*'. Don't waste your time. Better still, use your time well. Your days here on earth are counted (Ps. 39:4).

Just as Paul did, when believers evangelize they absolutely need to know how to control their tongues and use the right words. That is why he wrote:

⁶ Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, so that *you* may know how it is necessary for you to answer each one.

The word '*speech*' (LOGOS) means: something said, a topic. The subject here is evangelism, the spreading of the Good News. This message must be told '*with grace*' (CHARIS) meaning: the divine influence upon the heart. Just as Christ brought the gospel to the people of his day, so we must use words of wisdom. Christ was hard-hitting only with the spiritual hypocrites of his day (Scribes, Pharisees, teachers of the Law, Sadducees) but ever so gentle and caring with the general crowd and even with sinners & adulterers.

Their speech also needed to be '*seasoned with salt*'. The word '*seasoned*' (ARTUO) means: a stimulating condiment, a spice. Seasoning can certainly enhance what is said. Do you remember what the testimony of the guards were concerning Jesus?

John 7

44 Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

**45 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them,
"Why have you not brought Him?"**

**46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"
(NKJV)**

May our speech also be guided by the Holy Spirit. The reason for this is simple: '*so that you may know how it is necessary for you to answer each one.*' The word '*know*' (EIDO) means: to know, to be aware, to behold. Believers must allow the Holy Spirit to take control of their tongue, so that they will know how to conduct their conversations with un-believers. Too many conversations end up with a war of words and this never produces good fruit.

Colossians
16 - Final greetings
4:7-18

⁷ Tychicus, my dear brother and faithful servant and fellow slave in the Lord, will make known to you all *my circumstance*, ⁸ whom I have sent to you for this very *reason*, in order that you may know *our circumstances* and he may encourage your hearts, ⁹ together with Onesimus, my faithful and dear brother, who is *one of you*. They will make known to you all *the circumstances* here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions—if he should come to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are* the only ones who are fellow workers for the kingdom of God from the circumcision, who have been a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is *one of you*, greets you, a slave of Christ always struggling on behalf of you in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³ For I testify to him that *he is working hard* on behalf of you and those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke the physician, our dear friend, greets you, *as does Demas*. ¹⁵ Greet the brothers in Laodicea, and Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶ And whenever this letter is read among you, *see to it* that it is read also among the Laodicean church, and that you also read the *letter* from Laodicea. ¹⁷ And tell Archippus, “Direct your attention to the ministry that you received in the Lord, in order that you may complete it.”

¹⁸ The greeting *is* by my hand, Paul’s. Remember my *imprisonment*. Grace *be* with you.
 (LEB)

This is the final section of the Epistle to the Colossians. Some might see this as just a list of names of people that Paul knew. Others see this as a treasure of information about what type of people the apostle Paul surrounded himself with. I prefer to see it as clues that the Holy Spirit left us concerning the 'Pauline Team' in his ministry. Let's take a look and see the people that Paul worked with.

⁷ Tychicus, my dear brother and faithful servant and fellow slave in the Lord, will make known to you all *my circumstance*¹, ⁸ whom I have sent to you for this very *reason*, in order that you may know *our circumstances* and he may encourage your hearts.

TYCHICUS (v.7,8) is the first person who is named. He is also mentioned in other places (Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12) in the New Testament. He works with Paul until (what seems to be) the very end of his life. Paul describes him as a '*dear brother*' also as a '*faithful servant*' and finally as a '*fellow slave*'. We can see that Tychicus was very close to Paul's heart for he was '*dear*' to him. He was a man that could be counted on in ministry '*faithful servant*'. Paul also recognized him as a fellow worker in the faith: '*fellow slave*'. He knew Paul intimately because he was able to '*make known to you all my circumstances*'. So he was up to date with Paul's latest news. Paul also knew that Tychicus would give an accurate account of his '*circumstances*'. Finally we see that Tychicus had the gift of encouragement and used it for the benefit of God's people.

⁹ together with Onesimus, my faithful and dear brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all *the circumstances* here.

ONESIMUS (v.9) is also mentioned elsewhere (Phm 1:10). He was a runaway slave who landed in Rome where he was converted by Paul and sent back to his master Philemon. Since both Colossians and Philemon were 'prison epistles' and that Paul had sent Onesimus back to Philemon, it is possible that Philemon sent Onesimus back to Paul to continue to help him in prison. He is described as '*my faithful and dear brother*'. As a member of the 'Pauline Team' he was matched with Tychicus '*They will make known*'.

¹⁰ Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions—if he should come to you, welcome him),

ARISTARCHUS (v.10) is also named elsewhere (Acts 19:29, 20:24, 27:2; Phm 1:24). He also goes back to when Paul was on a missionary trip. We can see that he is a long time associate with him. Paul considers him a '*fellow prisoner*'. We do not know if he was in chains with Paul or if this means that as a believer and a co-worker he is a '*fellow prisoner*' of Christ.

MARK (v.10) he was '*the cousin of Barnabas*' and is named elsewhere (Acts 12:12,25; 15:37,39; 2 Tim. 4:11; Phm. 1:24). He once abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their missionary trip. On a later trip Barnabas wanted to take Mark along but Paul disagreed and a quarrel occurred. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus and Paul took Silas and went through Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:36-41). Here we see that Mark had seriously come back to ministry and Paul approves of Mark and confirms him as a minister '*if he should come to you, welcome him*'.

¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are* the only ones who are fellow workers for the kingdom of God from the circumcision, who have been a comfort to me.

JESUS (v.11) '*who is called JUSTUS*'. There are two other men called Justus in the New Testament. The first, in Acts 1:23, is among the earliest believers in Christ. The second, in Acts 18:7, was a Jewish proselyte in Corinth who lived next door to the synagogue. Finally there was Justus who was a '*fellow worker for the kingdom of God*'. He is from the '*circumcision*' revealing that he was a Jewish believer. It is also said that he was '*a comfort to me*'. We see by this that he was (or had been) very present in Paul's life. Unfortunately no other information about this man is given.

¹² Epaphras, who is *one* of you, greets you, a slave of Christ always struggling on behalf of you in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³ For I testify to him that *he is working hard* on behalf of you and those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis.

EPAPHRAS (v.12,13) is mentioned elsewhere (Col. 1:7; Phm. 1:23). Paul already had described him as a '*dear fellow slave who is a faithful minister of Christ*' (1:7). He is described as '*who is one of you*' giving the idea that he was either from Colosse or nearby. He was a man of prayer '*always struggling on behalf of you in his prayers*'. We can also see that he was not a lazy person but rather '*that he is working hard on behalf of you*'. He prays for the Colossians and he also works diligently for them. We see that his ministry extended Colosse and flowed over to Laodicea and Hierapolis. We can see that Epaphras was a very busy man in the Lord's work.

¹⁴ Luke the physician, our dear friend, greets you, *as does* Demas.

LUKE (v.14) is mentioned in (2 Tim. 4:11; Phm. 1:24). We also know him as the author of the gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. We know that he traveled with Paul on his missionary trips. He is called '*the physician*', making him a doctor of his day, a learned man of science and anatomy. He was with Paul when he was in prison in Rome and seemed to be with him until the very end. Luke is an extremely important person in the history of the church.

DEMAS (v.14) is also named in other places (2 Tim. 4:10; Phm. 1:24). Paul calls him a '*fellow worker*' in Phm. 1:24. He continues to be with Paul as we see in Col. 4:14. But at some point we read the following:

2 Timothy 4

10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica--Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

(NKJV)

At one point, when Paul was in prison in Rome, Demas abandoned Paul. The reason was that *'having loved this present world'*, Demas had let his guard down and had become mesmerized by the enemy. He turned his back on the Lord and Paul and left to live for the pleasures of this world.

¹⁵ Greet the brothers in Laodicea, and Nympha and the church in her house.

NYMPHA (v.15) this is the only verse that speaks of this person. It is difficult to know if the name is Nympha or Nymphas, the first being the feminine noun and the second being the masculine. That is why in certain versions this person is a lady and *'the church in her house'*. While in other versions the person is a man and *'the church in his house'*. What we do know is that this person had opened his/her home for church meetings. Actually, church meetings were not in 'buildings' until the fourth century. The first three centuries were mostly years of persecution and believers met in private homes or places hidden to the general public.

¹⁶ And whenever this letter is read among you, *see to it that it is read also among the Laodicean church, and that you also read the letter from Laodicea.*

Here we see how Christian doctrine was passed along. Paul encourages the believers in Colosse to pass his letter to them along to the Laodicean believers and encouraged them to read the letter the Laodiceans had also received. We don't know if the letter from the Laodicean believers was from Paul but we can easily imagine it. If this is so then this would also mean that we have no trace of this letter.

¹⁷ And tell Archippus, “Direct your attention to the ministry that you received in the Lord, in order that you may complete it.”

ARCHIPPUS (v.17) is also named elsewhere (Phm. 1:2). In Philemon he is called *'our fellow soldier'*. Some believe that he was a son of Philemon but no one knows for sure. Archippus seemed to be in ministry but was having some difficulty to keep his eyes focused on the Lord. Paul encourages him to *'direct your attention to the ministry that you have received in the Lord'*. This same encouragement fits perfectly well with our modern times. If the believer's eyes are not on the Lord, on who or what are they focused?

¹⁸ The greeting is by my hand, Paul's. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

In his final verse Paul signs his letter to the Colossians. It was not uncommon for someone to write his letters for him (as a secretary) and Paul would sign it to confirm it was from him. He asks the Colossians not to forget him, for he was in prison because of his testimony of Christ. He needed their support and prayers. May we also not forget those who are persecuted and in prison because they bear the name of Christ upon them. A final considerate thought: *'Grace be with you'*. He wanted the Lord's favor to be with them. And may the Lord's favor be with you also.