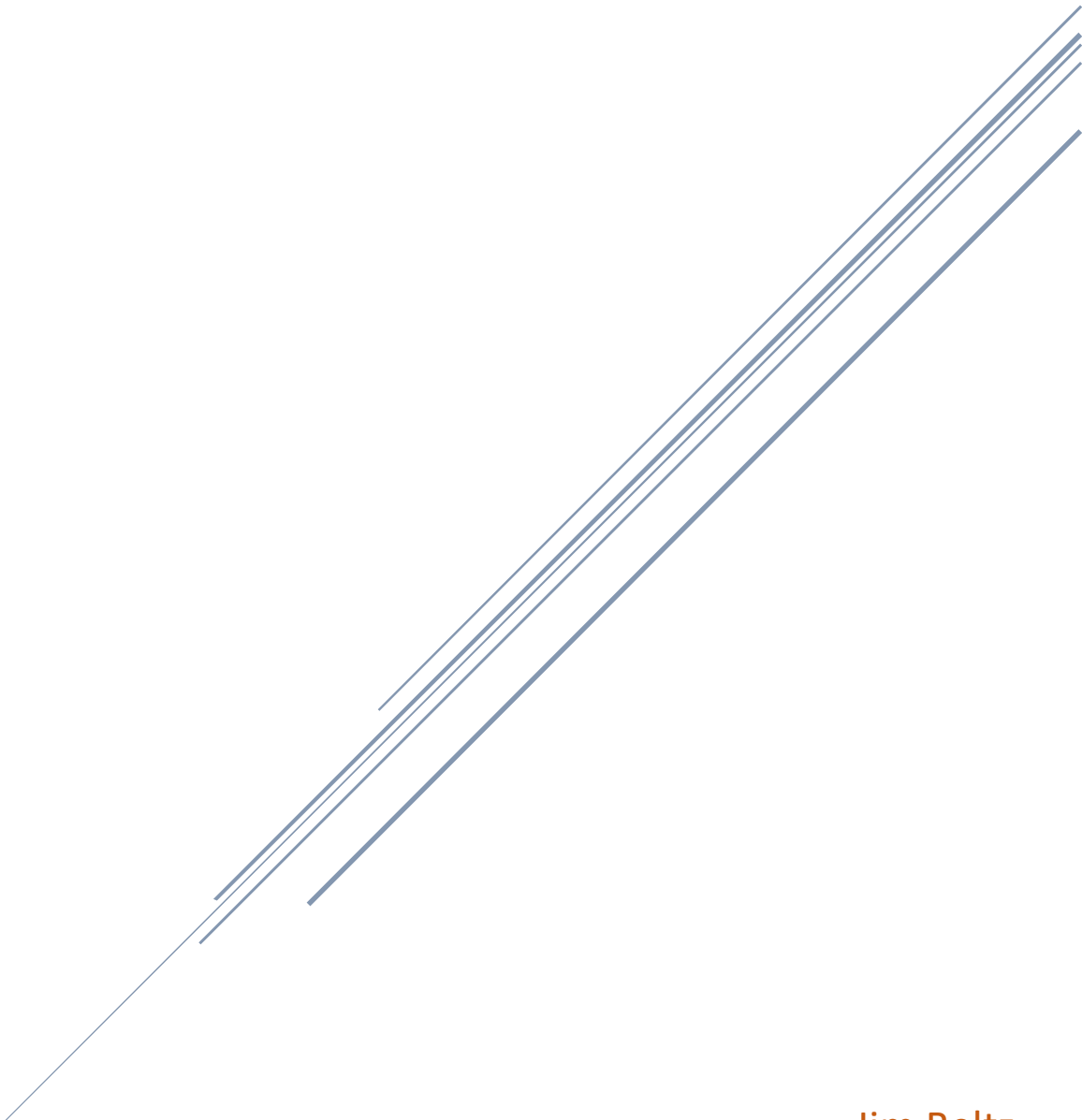


STUDY IN COLOSSIANS



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Colossians Introduction

Colossians is the third of four books Paul wrote from the city of Rome. Most think that this book was written at the same time, possibly even the same day, as the book of Philippians. There are many similarities between these two books, e.g., Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. The similarities would be expected if the books were written at the same time.

Colossians does have a different purpose than Philippians. Paul is primarily concerned in the book of Colossians with the exposure and refuting of error. Because of this theme we can readily see the usefulness of this letter for us.

The city of Colosse was about 100 miles from Ephesus, and only about twelve miles from Laodicea (Paul mentions this congregation in Chapter 2:1). It would be located in modern day Turkey.

I am not aware of any direct biblical information concerning the establishment of this congregation. It is probable that Paul's long stay in Ephesus resulted in the starting of the congregation in Colosse. Acts 19:10 says, "And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Acts 20:31 mentions that he labored with the Ephesian church for a period of three years.

Epaphras had come to Rome with disturbing information; false teachers had infiltrated the church of Christ in Colosse. These false teachers were spreading a combination of Judaism, Greek philosophy and eastern mysticism. In this powerful book we will see the apostle unsheathe the sword of the Spirit and allow the word of God to cut its way into and through any degrading doctrine. Paul left us an inspired example of how to handle false teachers within the church.

The book of Colossians is almost exactly the same size as Philippians; 104 verses in Philippians compared to 95 verses in Colossians. The four short chapters that make up Colossians constitutes one of the most comprehensive books of the Bible.

I believe that a thorough study of this book will fortify, uplift and encourage us in our daily lives. The truth of the Spirit, and Paul's unwavering stand for that truth, is what awaits us in a study of this important letter.

As this letter reaches the church at Colosse we need to keep in mind that the congregation had only been in existence for about eight or nine years. Error can damage a congregation quickly and completely, if not checked and refuted. May God give us the wisdom and courage to be able to stand against anyone and everyone who violates the plain, simple doctrine upon which the church of Christ has been established.

As always, I will be using the trusted King James Version of the Bible as the text for this study.

Colossians 1

- I. Salutations to the saints at Colosse (1, 2).
 - A. “Paul, an apostle.”
 1. He had been selected by Christ for a purpose, i.e., to preach the unsearchable riches of our Savior to the Gentile nations (cf Eph 3:8).
 2. Being “an apostle” signifies a special messenger, or envoy, sent with a specific purpose (cf Rom 1:1; Eph 1:1).
 - a. There are no apostles today because we are under the general commission of all disciples, rather than a special mission (cf Matt 28:19, 20).
 - b. This was the typical salutation Paul used. Of the thirteen books he wrote (the Holy Ghost being the author) nine books mention his name and his apostleship in the first verse.
Note: Only his letters to the Philippians, Thessalonians and Philemon do not specifically state his apostleship in the first verse.
 3. “[B]y the will of God” means Paul was independent of human teaching and appointment.
 - a. This is what it means to be called to preach. God called Paul, supplied his knowledge and filled his mouth with the proper words (cf Gal 1:11, 12).
 - b. Many in modern times claim to be “called to preach,” but none are.
 - c. We may have a desire to preach, but that desire has to be coupled with a degree of ability and then developed through effort and commitment.
When men have a desire to preach and then that desire is developed into a useful tool for the good of the local church they have answered the call to preach. Paul was called in a very different way (cf Gal 1: 16-18).
 4. “[A]nd Timotheus our brother” indicated he was a familiar person to the brethren at Colosse. You do not send greetings from a stranger.
 - a. The beginning of Acts 16 reveals Timothy joined the apostle on his 2nd evangelistic journey and in verse 6 of that chapter it says “they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia.” Colosse was a city located in Phrygia.
 - b. Timothy enjoyed a special place in Paul’s mind. There can be no doubt that Paul was able to do more for Christ’s church because Timothy was by his side. To his credit, Timothy was there in Rome with the aged apostle.
 - c. We need more young men and women who want to be servants; willing to do whatever they can for Christ. Youthful energy and enthusiasm are contagious.
 - d. The alliance of Paul and Timothy was the perfect combination.
 - B. “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ” are the same terms Paul used in Eph 1:1.
 1. Two words that refer to the same group of people; specifically in this context, the Christians at Colosse.

- a. Saints were the separated people. Whether the saints do the separating or the sinners do it, the Christian is to be a separated person (cf Lk 6:22; 2 Cor 6:17).
 - b. Modern minds have been contaminated with the term “saint.” The biblical word translated “saint” is simply another designation for a baptized believer (cf 1 Cor 14:33; Phil 4:21).
 - c. The term “faithful brethren” might have additional implications.
 - 1) It might indicate there were some at Colosse were classified as unfaithful.
 - 2) Brethren can have several types of faith: little faith (cf Matt 8:26); weak faith (cf Rom 14:1); dead faith (cf James 2:26); unfeigned faith (cf 2 Tim 1:5, genuine faith, NKJ); our goal should be the latter.
 - d. The term “in Christ” has specific meaning.
 - 1) There are three places in the New Testament that teaches about getting “in Christ” (cf Rom 6:3; 1 Co 12:13; Gal 3:26, 27).
 - 2) Those passages plainly state that baptism is the vehicle, the one and only vehicle, which gets us “in Christ.” Hence, no baptism, no salvation.
 - 3) “In Christ” is a precious place to be. If we are in Him the outward circumstances of this world cannot destroy our Christianity.
2. The standard definition of grace is the unmerited favor of God. I do not know how to improve on that definition (cf 2 Tim 1:9).
- a. There is no way we can merit or deserve what God has done for us.
 - b. God’s grace is glorious, but grace alone will not save us. It took God’s grace and Noah’s obedience to save him in an antediluvian world.
 - c. Paul ends the book of Ephesians with these words, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” Jesus had taught, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). If a person will not be obedient, they will not have the grace of God.

II. Thanksgiving was given for the faithfulness of the Colossian brethren (3-8).

Note: It appears that this section (3-8) is one, long sentence.

- A. Paul was a man of prayer. In each of his epistles written to congregations he follows the salutation with thanksgiving (except for the books of Galatians and 2 Corinthians).
1. Verse 3 begins with the word “we,” which would certainly include Timothy (cf Phil 1:1; Philemon 1), and probably Luke and Demas (cf Col 4:14).
 2. They gave thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the congregation at Colosse (cf Rom 1:8, 9).
 - a. This is more than a simple statement of thanksgiving. It was designed to focus attention on the spiritual blessings God gave the Colossians (cf Col 1:9).
 - b. Specifics in Paul’s prayers were common, e.g., he praised the Romans for their faith (Rom 1:8); he prayed the Corinthians would be enriched in

- Christ (1 Cor 1:5); he prayed for the Philippians to further their fellowship in the gospel (Phil 1:5).
- c. Being specific in our prayers will help keep us focused.
3. Notice the connection between prayer and thanksgiving. The prayer of faith produces blessings, when blessed, we are thankful. Gratitude for blessings calls for prayer and honors the giver, and then the cycle starts again. What a wonderful circle to get caught in.
 4. Verse 4 probably has reference to Epaphras (vs 7) bringing information about the congregation to Paul in Rome (cf Eph 1:15; 1 Thess 3:6).
 - a. Their faith was “in Christ Jesus.”
 - b. It is only “in Christ” one gains redemption (cf Rom 3:24).
 - c. It is only “in Christ” that we get all spiritual blessings (cf Eph 1:3).
 - d. It is only “in Christ” that one can glorify God (cf 1 Pet 4:16).
 - 1) Since this is true, how could anyone think there is salvation in any man-made organization (cf 1 Cor 12:13).
 - 2) The Bible plainly teaches how many bodies Christ died for (cf Eph 4:4-6).
 - e. People can have faith in a number of things, e.g., trees, rocks, dolls, statues, etc. Faith that is not “in Christ” is folly. Not just of no value, but worse than useless, it renders false hope.
 5. Love is the defining characteristic of Christ’s followers (cf Jn 13:35).
 - a. Loving your enemies may be the most difficult command the New Testament contains (cf Lk 6:32-35).
 - b. We must develop to the point where we can hate the sin while loving the sinner; Jesus did.
 - c. The Colossians had passed the test of gospel love.
- B. Hope was laid up in heaven for the faithful at Colosse (cf 1 Cor 15:19).
1. Hope always looks toward the future (cf Ps 31:19; Rom 8:24).
 2. It is an incentive for the Christian to keep moving in the right path (cf 1 Pet 1:3, 4).
 - a. How different that is from the world around us.
 - b. Everything is focused on the here and now. The physical, the material (cf Matt 13:22; Rom 12:2).
 - c. How refreshing it is to have a child-like trust in “a land that is fairer than day.”
 - d. The Christian looks forward with happy anticipation. Hope is a transforming influence that lifts the struggles and expects something better.
 3. How had this hope come to the Colossians? The same way it comes to people today, through the truth (cf Eph 1:13, 18).
 4. It was that simple message that brought forth fruit (cf Phil 4:17).
 5. “[A]s it is in all the world” (vs 6) demonstrates the universal nature of the gospel (cf Matt 24:14; Mk 16:15).

Note: This phrase is also used in a limited sense in passages like Luke 2:1 and Acts 11:28.

6. Since the beginning of their Christian journey the saints at Colosse had been bringing forth fruit in the truth.
 - a. The gospel was spreading rapidly.
 - b. There were false teachers, probably Gnostics, attempting to hinder the truth, but error could not stop God's intended purpose.
- C. Epaphras is mentioned as being a spreader of the truth.
 1. This great man is another of the unsung heroes of the church of Christ.
 - a. Only mentioned here and in Philemon, but did much good for the early church (cf Philemon 23).
 - b. He was much like Epaphroditus from the congregation in Philippi (cf Phil 2:25; 4:18).
 2. Epaphras is described by the Holy Ghost as a "dear fellowservant" and "a faithful minister."
Note: In Philemon 23 he is additionally described as "my fellowprisoner."
 - a. "Fellowservant" indicates that Epaphras worked with these brethren and not for these brethren (Col 4:7 uses the same word referring to Tychicus).
 - b. The word means, "co-slave."¹ This indicates serving the same master.
 3. Paul is drawing attention to this great man. He is practicing his own instructions given in Phil 3:17.
- D. When Epaphras arrived in Rome he reported to Paul. What did he report? The Colossians' great love (vss 7, 8).
 1. It is possible that the reference to love in this context may be an indication of their love for the apostle and those with him, Verse 4 notwithstanding (see II, A, 1, page 3; see II, A, 1, this outline, page 3).
 2. It is marvelous (and absolutely delightful) that people with very little in common can become so close, based on nothing other than a love for the truth (cf Gal 5:22).
- III. Prayer that they might walk worthy of the Lord (9-14).
 - A. "For this cause" (For this reason, NKJ) refers back to the statement in Verse 4 concerning their faith and love.
 1. Paul, from his confinement in Rome, was praying for them at Colosse rather than himself. His unselfishness is astonishing (cf 2 Tim 1:3; Philemon 4).
 - a. The words, "since the day we heard it" indicates the good news of their positive direction had elevated the apostle's spirit, along with those that were with him (cf Rom 1:8, 9).
 - b. Inspiration records that this is the fourth specific prayer Paul uttered from prison; Eph 1:15-19, Eph 3:14-19, Phil 1:3-11 and here.
 - c. He was a great example of his own teaching (cf 1 Thess 5:17).

¹ Strong's #4889

2. His desire was that the brethren at Colosse “might be filled with the knowledge of his will.”
 - a. This is something all serious Christians desire, but how many are making the strides to have it?
 - b. Knowledge cannot be increased through osmosis. It takes effort, time and much dedication.
 - c. It is my opinion that regular Bible reading (daily Bible reading charts) should be a stepping stone that leads us to a deeper study. It cannot be an end, per se.
 Note: Verse 9 contains the words “knowledge” and “understanding.” According to Strong’s “knowledge” means *full discernment* (#1922) and comes from a word that means *to become fully acquainted with*. “Understanding” means *a mental putting together* (#4920), not merely a casual reading (cf Lk 2:47).
 - d. Such knowledge begins with a proper attitude toward God (cf Prov 1:7; Rom 10:17).
 - e. Paul mentions wisdom in connection with knowledge and understanding. Wisdom is knowledge that has been digested and comprehended.
 - 1) The application of that knowledge to our lives (cf 2 Pet 2:20).
 - 2) He wants these brethren to use the great truths of Christianity in their daily decisions. Doctrine must be translated into daily life.
 - 3) The proper Christian life is a constant increasing of knowledge and understanding. As we grow we get closer to Him (cf 2 Pet 1:2, 3).
 - f. It is not enough to desire more knowledge, we must be willing to go get it.
 - g. The Bereans (Acts 17:10, 11) are a good example of this desire:
 - 1) Their attitude was right (with all readiness of mind).
 - 2) Their activity was right (searched the scriptures daily).
 - 3) Their desire for accuracy was right (whether these things were so).
3. The Colossians were to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing (fully pleasing Him, NKJ).”
 - a. The character of such a life is demonstrated in committing ourselves to do His will, not ours.
 - b. As always, Jesus is our best example of this character:
 - 1) Before He took any steps He *thought* of God’s will.
 - 2) In His prayers He *sought* God’s will.
 - 3) In His ministry He *taught* God’s will.
 - c. Many know, but are unwilling to submit to the Father (cf Matt 21:28-32).
- B. The strength, or power, that makes us faithful and fruitful comes from God through Christ (cf Eph 3:16; 6:10).
 1. It appears Paul is referring to the power of applied knowledge in the Christian’s life.
 Note: There is no power in ignorance, with the exception of destructive power (cf Eph 4:18; 1 Pet 1:14).

2. “[U]nto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (vs 11) is the natural consequence of a life filled with wisdom (cf James 1:2-4).
 Note: We must keep in mind that these qualities are not born in us, we develop them via effort and determination.
 - a. “[L]ongsuffering” is a reference to being patient with people (cf 2 Tim 4:2).
 - b. We, as humans, often fail, disappoint, mistreat or hurt others. This makes it easy to give up on people. Paul is urging us not to do this.
 - c. Longsuffering is the ability to take people as they are, with their character flaws, problems and idiosyncrasies, and help them grow.
 3. This is to be done “with joyfulness” (joy, NKJ) as children of God.
 - a. Joy comes from knowing who we are and where we are going.
 - b. Does the world see the joy (of being a Christian) in our lives?²
 Note: In defense of many ministers and concerned Christians it is possible that the long faces are a direct result of realizing the magnitude of the number of lost souls speeding off to damnation like a runaway train.
- C. Gratitude to the Father for what He has done for them and us (vs 12).
1. Everyday should be Thanksgiving Day for the Christian (cf Col 3:17).
 - a. We should express gratitude for the right to participate in the blessings of God’s family (cf 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 2:13).
 - b. A lack of gratefulness indicates improper understanding of our special position as His children (cf Acts 26:18).
 2. The thanks is directed to “the Father” (cf Matt 11:25; Jn 17:1; 2 Cor 1:3).
 - a. The passage is dealing with our position in the inheritance provided by God.
 - b. “[H]ath made us meet” (has qualified us, NKJ) demonstrated the conditions set forth to obtain the inheritance, i.e., faith that will lead to obedience (cf Heb 5:9; 1 Pet 4:17).³
 - c. This inheritance is in a world of light. God dwells in light (cf Rev 21:23, 24; 22:5).
 3. Notice in Verse 13 the “delivered” is past tense. He had already removed, snatched, rescued, liberated (which are all possible translations of the word) from the authority or power of darkness (cf 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 4:18; 5:8; 6:12).
 - a. Darkness is an enslaving power. It is used in both a literal and figurative way within scriptures.
 - 1) Literal darkness is seen in places like: the beginning of creation (Gen 1:2), in one of the ten plaques brought on Egypt (Ex 10:21, 22), while Jesus hung on the cross (Matt 27:45), etc.

² Oliver Wendell Homes said that as a youth he considered becoming a minister until he realized that all the ministers he knew looked like undertakers.

³ The false teacher Rubel Shelly wrote in “Love Lines” October, 1991, “It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.” This is Calvinism to the core and in direct conflict with plain passages such as Romans 6:16, 16:19, 16:26 and many others.

- 2) Figurative darkness is spoken of as spiritual darkness (John 1:5) and intellectual darkness (Rom 2:19).
 - 3) In the figurative sense it is always used in a negative connotation.
 - 4) Paul uses “darkness” in this verse to refer to the devils power over those outside the light of God.
- b. Obedient people are those snatched from the fires of hell (cf Jude 23).
 - c. With the knowledge of what He has done for us, how could we possibly fail to express our thanks to Him?
4. “[T]ranslated” (conveyed, NKJ) refers to one being moved from one kingdom to another (cf 1 Jn 3:14).
 - a. Notice the past tense of “hath translated,” which means the kingdom was on earth when Paul penned these words.
 - b. Therefore, any church not in existence in approximately 62 AD, when Paul wrote this, cannot be the church of the Bible. If they are not the church of the Bible they should and must be rejected as extra-biblical.⁴ Note: If men and women were not blinded by the darkness of this world; by the darkness of human traditions, ignorance and false teaching they would surely see that the church of Christ and the kingdom are one in the same. They would want to become just Christians.
- D. Verse 14 is an explanation of how God delivers us from darkness and makes the translation into His kingdom.
1. It was done through the redemptive work of Christ (cf 1 Pet 1:18, 19).
 2. The word “redemption” means *ransom in full*⁵ and the price was the blood of our Savior (cf Matt 20:28; Acts 20:28; Eph 1:7).
Note: The words “through his blood” are supplied by the translators. They were probably anticipating the information stated in Verse 20.
- IV. Christ is before all things (the preeminence) (15-22).
- A. Paul describes Jesus, while here on earth, as “the image of the invisible God.”
 1. This apparent paradox is fraught with deeper meaning.
 2. Jesus “shows you not only what God is; he also shows you what man was meant to be.”⁶
 - a. We most often think of image as visual (same word used in Matt 22:20), but the word probably means a representation (as in John 14:9).
 - b. Adam was created in God’s image/likeness and the same words are used when he reproduced (cf Gen 1:26; 5:3).
 - c. Jesus physically resembled a Jew, spiritually He resembled the Father (cf Phil 2:6; Heb 1:3).
 - B. Then we have “the first born of every creature.”

⁴ If a religious organization was not in existence when Paul penned these word they would have the wrong place of origin (Jerusalem), the wrong time in history (the first Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection), the wrong founder (Jesus) the wrong name (the churches of Christ salute you, Rom 16:16) and the wrong law (the Bible only).

⁵ Strong’s #629

⁶ William Barclay, page 118

1. A lot of false teaching is generated from a misrepresentation of these inspired words.
 - a. We often get those who call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses knocking on our doors.
 - b. They are trained to leave a copy of a publication titled "Let God Be True" with you.
 - c. They believe Jesus was a created being and therefore, not equal with God the Father. They go as far as to rewrite the scriptures to make Jn 1:1 say, "a god" rather than "was God," stealing His divinity.
 - d. Refusing to accept Jesus of Nazareth as God is exactly the sin the Jews were guilty of in the first century (cf Lk 9:22; 17:25).
 2. "[F]irstborn" expresses His priority to and superiority over everything, hence the word preeminence at the beginning of this section.
 - a. Ex 4:22, Ps 89:27 and Jer 31:9⁷ all use the term "firstborn," but in each case it is referring to preeminence.
 - b. If anyone were to insist that Jesus was a created being, the next verse would require that Jesus created Himself. This type of illogical inconsistency is necessary in setting forth any erroneous doctrine.
 3. Jesus is the creator of the universe and all that is in it (cf John 1:1-3).
 - a. All three members of the godhead had an active part in the creation process (Elohim, plural in Heb, Gen 1:1, 26), but Jesus was the creating force (cf Heb 1:2).
 - b. Paul then breaks this down into divisions, which covers every aspect of the creation:
 - 1) Heaven: This embraces all the universe except the earth.
 - 2) Earth: All animals, plants, minerals, water; everything you see, hear, feel or smell.
 - 3) Visible and invisible: This, in my opinion, is a sub-section of the first two divisions. There are many things in our universe we have yet to discover. They are there, we just do not see them. The same would be true of angels, gravity, atoms and many other things we do not see.
 - 4) Thrones, dominions, principalities, powers: A possible reference to earthly powers without regard to ranking.⁸
 4. "Thus the two words, *image* and *firstborn*, stand for Christ's perfect manhood and perfect deity."⁹
- C. "[B]efore all things" in order of existence (cf Jn 17:5).

⁷ Ephraim was the youngest son born to Joseph while in Egypt. Preeminence should be obvious in such an example.

⁸ Many commentators make reference to an order, or classifications, of angels from these words. See Ellicott, Barnes, Benson, Poole and others. Not likely in light of Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12 etc. See notes on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians; pages 7, 18, and 49 respectively; this author.

⁹ J.B. Coffman, page 358

1. Notice Paul used the present tense, “is,” indicating Christ was alive and still is alive. We will die, but will live again (cf Job 14:14; 1 Cor 15:42-44).
 - a. Both “he” and “is” are emphatic (vs 17). He, and only He is; all else was created.¹⁰
 - b. The word translated “consist” means *to hold together*,¹¹ or *the universe is upheld by the Lord*.¹²
 - c. Not only the creative act, but the sustaining power by which “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).
 - d. If unsupported by Christ this universe would fall apart, (this is true both figuratively and literally speaking).
2. Paul now turns from holding Christ up as the preeminent one in the universe to His position in the church; the head of the body (cf 1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:23).
 - a. We must be firmly attached to the head (Christ) to be healthy.
 - b. Christ is the one and only head of the church. If we try to give the body more than one head we have created a monster (cf 1 Cor 12:12).
 - c. If the one head has more than one body it still must be classified as a monster (cf Rom 12:5).
 - d. As head of the body He controls its members, just like a physical head controls the body it is attached to. He controls us through His word (cf 1 Thess 2:13).
 - e. Because our head is in heaven, we have no earthly head-quarters, no council or earthly hierarchy to answer to. The Bible governs the body.
3. “Who is the beginning, the first born from the dead” (cf 1 Cor 15:20-23).
 - a. Jesus was not the first to be raised from the dead.
 - b. This does not mean, literally, that he was the first who rose from the dead, for he himself raised up Lazarus (John 11) and others (Luke 7:11ff), and the bodies of saints arose at his crucifixion (Matt 27:52); but it means that he had the preeminence among them all.¹³
4. The “fullness” of Christ (vs 19) refers to His deity (cf Jn 1:16; 3:34).
 - a. The exaltation Paul gives to Christ in this section is worthy of attention:
 - 1) Image of the invisible God (vs 15)
 - 2) Firstborn (vs 15)
 - 3) Creator of all things (vs 16)
 - 4) Head of the body (vs 18)
 - 5) Preeminent (vs 18)
 - 6) Fully divine (vs 19)

Note: These positions, which the risen Christ filled, are described as pleasing to the Father. Notice that the words “the Father” are not in the

¹⁰ Ellicott’s Commentary on Colossians.

¹¹ Robertson’s NT Word Pictures

¹² Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol 1, page 230.

¹³ Three were raised from the dead in the Old Testament, five raised in the New Testament; three before Jesus’s resurrection and two after.

original. They are implied, and therefore supplied by the translators (refer back to Verse 12).

- b. The statement Jesus made just before His ascension indicates that His power was limited on earth, but fully restored at His resurrection (cf Matt 28:18).
 - c. Paul will address His fullness again in the next chapter (2:9).
- D. The peace-making ability of Jesus of Nazareth was in His blood that He shed in His death.
- 1. “[T]o reconcile all things” (vs 20) is a strong word in the original and means *to change from one condition to another*.¹⁴
 - 2. When people are separated from God via sin, Christ can reconcile (cf 2 Cor 5:18, 19; Eph 2:16).
 - 3. How is it possible for Jesus to reconcile my sins? By His sacrifice on the cross. He became the purchase price of my sins.
 - 4. It was because of His paying the price, in full, that God can forgive me and still be a just God (cf Rom 5:10).
 - a. This is a principle established under the old law, as a type, with Jesus’ sacrifice being the anti-type (cf Lev 17:11; Deut 27:7).
 - b. Through this sacrifice man was, and is, reconciled to God, not the other way around.
 - 5. The last phrase in Verse 20 has been the source of controversy over the years, i.e., “whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”
 - a. Some try to build a case where angels were disgruntled and Christ, in some fashion, appeased their grievance. That makes no sense.
 - b. A better explanation is that the disharmony on earth was affecting the tranquility of those in heaven. They were concerned about our eternal destiny while separated from the Father (cf Lk 15:7, 10; 1 Tim 2:4).
 - c. The reconciliation made by Jesus’ sacrifice eliminated the alienation of man from God (cf Isa 59:2).
- E. No longer enemies, they have been brought back by the reconciling work of Jesus (cf Eph 2:1, 2).

Note: Sometimes we need to be reminded of where we once were, and how far we have come in Christ. Paul is reminding the Colossians of that very fact.

- 1. The far reaching purpose of reconciliation covered those receiving this letter in the first century, and all those reading it in the twenty-first century.
 - a. There are no innocent sinners (cf Titus 1:15, 16).
 - b. Sin estranges us from God (cf Rom 3:23; 5:12).
 - c. It is an easy thing to be cognizant of the sorrows and emotions when a husband and wife become estranged. That is exactly the way God felt when we were estranged and had no way to reconcile. Jesus fixed that (cf Rom 5:10).

¹⁴ Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol 3, page 261.

2. It is possible that Paul is placing, in juxtaposition, the figurative body, the church, mentioned in Verse 18 with His literal, earthly body, which was sacrificed to purchase that the body (cf Acts 20:28; Titus 2:14).
 - a. The words “to present” (vs 22) are fascinating. He voluntarily sacrificed Himself in order to pave the way for us to be presented before God.
 - b. It is the same word used of Jesus at the very beginning of His earthly life (cf Lk 2:22).
 3. This was done so that He might cause us to be classified, in God’s sight, as:
 - a. Holy. As used in the text it is an adjective, signifying separation from sin and, therefore, consecrated to God (cf 1 Pet 1:15, 16).
 - b. Unblameable (blameless, NKJ). Without spot or blemish (cf Phil 2:15).
 - c. Unreproveable (above reproach, NKJ). It implies not merely acquittal, but the absence of even a charge, or accusation, against a person.¹⁵
 Note: The word “unreproveable” is a qualification (same word as blameless) listed for both the deacon and elder (1 Tim 3:10; Titus 1:6, 7).
 4. The great redemptive work of our Savior is wonderfully expressed in these words.
 Note: I am far too weak of mind and tongue to articulate how profoundly grateful we should be for what He did for us.
- V. The proclamation of the gospel (23-29).
- A. Since salvation is conditional, the word “if,” that begins Verse 23, should give us pause (cf Heb 3:6, 14; 10:38).
 1. We must remain faithful. Any that are unwilling to persist in the faith shall rend themselves from the kingdom (cf 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 4:11).
 - a. The Christian life is often depicted as a race (cf 1 Cor 9:24; Heb 12:1).
 - b. A good start in a race is necessary, but a good start does not guarantee a proper finish (cf Acts 20:24).
 - c. The Israelites are a biblical example. They had a good start towards the Promised Land, but became idolaters, fornicators and complainers along the way.
 - d. Demas had a good start with Paul at Rome, but finished deficiently (cf Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:10).
 - e. Obviously, starting good is not good enough.
 2. Two words are used to assist in maintaining the proper spiritual direction; “grounded and settled” (steadfast, NKJ).
 - a. “[G]rounded” carries the thought of a foundation (cf Heb 1:10, in this verse the words “hast laid the foundation” are all from this same single Greek word).
 - b. “[S]ettled” in their own steadfastness (cf 1 Cor 15:58).
 Note: Bengel says: "The former is metaphorical, the latter more literal. The one implies greater respect to the foundation by which believers are

¹⁵ Ibid, Vol 1, page 131

supported; but settled suggests inward strength which believers themselves possess."

3. The hope of the gospel is ours, if we will remain grounded and settled.
 4. That hope lays within the gospel they had heard.
 - a. Hope anchors the soul (cf Heb 6:19).
 - b. That anchor keeps us from drifting.¹⁶
 5. It was preached to every creature under heaven, and why not? It was designed for everyone to hear (cf Acts 2:5; Rom 10:18).
 - a. The point is that the gospel is universal in nature (cf Rom 5:15).
 - b. The passion and commitment of the early Christians is evident in the fact that they spread the good news to the entire world. Lukewarmness and indifference is a great hindrance to our generation.
 - c. Paul began the letter with the same thought (vs 6).
 6. It was, and still is, a high honor to be a minister (cf Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 4:1-3).
 - a. To have the ability and opportunity to preach salvation; to encourage and teach the saved, may be the greatest work of all time (cf Eph 3:7, 8).
 - b. Paul did not hesitate to magnify his office (cf 1 Tim 1:12). Jesus used this same term with reference to Himself (cf Mk 10:45).
 - c. May the tribe of honest, grounded and sound men of the pulpit increase, and may we encourage them with every opportunity.
- B. The apostle knew, full well, that part of his work for the Lord would involve suffering. Jesus even announced this before his conversion (cf Acts 9:16).
Note: Paul recorded a partial list of his suffering in 2 Cor 11:23-33. He wrote 2 Corinthians before his third evangelistic journey and before his confinement in Jerusalem, Caesarea and Rome.
1. Yet, no matter how much he suffered as a minister, he considered it a light burden compared to the eternal weight of glory awaiting him (cf 2 Cor 4:17).
 2. He is not saying he suffered the same things that Jesus suffered. He is saying that he suffered the afflictions that are common to all good people who bear testimony in a wicked world (cf 2 Cor 1:5, 6; 2 Tim 2:9, 10).
 - a. He was willing to suffer for the one body, "which is the church" (cf Eph 1:22, 23).
Note: Denominationalism is wrong in every aspect of its existence. It only exists because some will unwittingly follow people, in total disregard for Christ's authority. They corrupt God's plan for teaching and worship.
 - b. It is our prayer that all will abandon man-made religions and embrace the Bible as the only guide for practice and worship. That is the only way man can glorify "his body... the church."

¹⁶ Brother J.D. Tant (1861-1941) often ended his articles with the words, "Brethren, we are drifting." Those words were never truer than they are of us today.

Note: The mighty apostle never told anyone to join the church of their choice. Human worship is designed to please God, not ourselves. The only question that should be asked is, “what does He want from my worship?”

3. He was “made a minister” by the risen Christ (cf Acts 26:16).
 - a. The word “dispensation” (stewardship, NKJ) is a word we use often.
 - b. We speak of the Patriarchal Dispensation or the Mosaic Dispensation.
 - c. The word used here should have been translated as stewardship as it was in Luke 16:2-4.
 - d. The word denotes a manager or administrator of a household. Paul was to manage the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles (the word “edifying” as used in 1 Tim 1:4).
 - e. The connection with suffering and preaching the truth might be realized when enemies are made by unbendingly standing for the truth (cf Rom 15:19).

Note: For example, sermons on marriage, divorce and remarriage, the necessity of baptism, the one church, etc. may cause some to become angry. They need to be preached anyway. I would much rather have some person angry at me for preaching Bible facts, than have God angry with me for not preaching or standing for the truth.

- C. The “mystery” Paul brings up here is the same as was discussed in the book of Ephesians, namely the Gentiles being granted the same privileges as the Jews in God’s eternal plan of redemption¹⁷ (cf Rom 16:25).
 1. In the New Testament, a mystery is not something unknowable, just something previously hidden (cf Eph 3:4).
 - a. God had a plan to add Jews and Gentiles to the church via exactly the same means, an obedient faith that led to baptism (cf 1 Pet 3:21).
 - b. The Jews found this difficult to accept, and that fact became the biggest hurdle to clear in the first century church (cf Acts 15:1, 2, 7-10).
 - c. The two-fold description of “from ages and from generations” would indicate the eons of time and the various periods of different people who lived in those times (cf Eph 3:21).
 2. The words, “riches of the glory” (vs 27) could be described as the rich glory of the revealed mystery (cf Rom 11:33).
 - a. These riches are worth more than any amount of earthly treasures.
 - b. The word “riches” is Paul’s favorite portrayal of the gospel. He used that term some fifteen times in his writings, e.g., Eph 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16, etc.
 - c. “Christ in you” refers to Christ dwelling in our hearts (cf Eph 3:17).
 - d. It has long been my opinion that Christ dwells in us in exactly the same fashion that the Holy Ghost dwells in us and the Father dwells in us, in a figurative fashion¹⁸ (cf Rom 8:10; 1 Cor 3:16).

¹⁷ See notes in An Outlined Study of the Book of Ephesians, Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, same author.

¹⁸ The gift of God, Jn 4:10; the gift of Christ, Eph 4:7; the gift of the Holy Ghost, Acts 2:38 all have the same sentence structure. The way one of them is in us is the same way all of them are in us. If not, why not?

- e. Christ in them (and us) gave them the “hope of glory.”
- 3. Our word “warning” is commonly used in the sense of cautioning against danger. The Greek word used here means *to put in mind; to admonish; to exhort*.¹⁹
 - a. The idea here is, that he made it his great business to bring the offers of the gospel fairly before the mind of every man.
 - b. We are to declare the whole council of God (cf Acts 20:27).
 - c. That includes the precepts incorporated within 2 Timothy 4:2.
- 4. This type of teaching is what will make the Christians “perfect in Christ Jesus.”
 - a. We often hear well-meaning brethren say, “no one is perfect.”
 - b. What they mean is that no one is without sin, which is true. But, saying no one is perfect is both wrong and unscriptural (cf Matt 5:48; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 3:15 and many more).
- D. Paul sets before us, in great detail, the marvelousness of his great work (which begins in Verse 29; this thought will continue through Verse 3 of the next chapter).
 - 1. He uses the word “labour” indicating the difficulty in spreading the saving message to those who are inclined to reject it (cf 1 Cor 15:10).
 - a. The word “labour” means *to feel fatigue*²⁰ and is the same word Jesus uses in passages like Matt 6:28 (“they toil”); Matt 11:28 (“they labour”); John 4:6 (“being wearied”).
 - b. He also uses the word “striving,” which means *to struggle*²¹ revealing Paul taxed every energy to accomplish his task (cf Rev 2:3).
 - 2. The apostle, or any faithful teacher, achieves success only by the power of God, not of and by themselves (cf Eph 1:19).
 - a. His efforts were important because only through the message did people have the hope of salvation (cf 2 Cor 5:11).
 - b. Paul is saying that he was striving with all his strength to unite people with the Lord.
 - c. The thought continues into the next chapter.

¹⁹ Barnes

²⁰ Strong’s #2872

²¹ Ibid #75

Colossians 2

Paul exhorts them to choose Christ over philosophy.

- I. He was deeply concerned for the Colossians in the face of false teachers (1-5).
 - A. This chapter begins as the last chapter ended; Paul laboring in “great conflict.”
 1. The word in 1:29 (striving) is the same basic word used here, translated “conflict” (cf Lk 22:44; 1 Thess 2:2).
 2. What false teachers can do to our souls, both individually and collectively, should be a source of deep despair (cf 2 Cor 11:13; Gal 2:4; 2 Pet 2:1).
 - a. If we have seen those swept up in false teaching then we know the anxious feeling with which Paul is writing.
 - b. This would be reason to weep, indeed. Not just for the souls at Colosse, but those at Laodicea as well (cf Rev 3:14-16).
 - c. If the brethren at Colosse remained faithful, they did it in spite of the congregations around them, who were perishing to false teachers and false teaching (cf Rev 3:4).
 3. Paul ends Verse 1 with “as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.”
Note: Some have determined that this indicates Paul was never actually in the city of Colosse. That is more than the Bible teaches.
 - a. Not only would there have been many new converts since Paul was in the area (maybe as much as 7-10 years),²² but probably several new congregations had been established, as well.
 - b. At the end of this letter Paul writes of a previously unmentioned congregation located in Hierapolis (cf Col 4:13).
 - B. The second verse mentions Paul’s desire for them to be “comforted,” even as he is dealing with his own discomfort, stemming from the possibility of false teachers influencing them (cf 2 Cor 1:4-6; Col 4:8).
 1. “[B]eing knit together” comes from a single Greek word (we will see it used again in Verse 19, cf Acts 16:10), and means *to make come together*, e.g., tongue and groove lumber or flooring, which describes the manner in which the comforting should take place (cf Acts 4:32; Phil 4:16).
 - a. What does it mean to be of one heart? The Bible uses the word “heart” in a figurative sense, e.g., Matt 5:8.
 - 1) We understand with our hearts (cf Matt 13:15).
 - 2) We love with our hearts (cf Matt 22:37).
 - 3) We desire with our hearts (cf Rom 10:1).
 - 4) We purpose with our hearts (cf 2 Cor 9:7).
 - b. Therefore, their purpose, aspirations and goals were the same.

²² See class notes and maps on Paul’s third evangelistic journey from The Book of Acts, An Outlined Study, this author.

- c. That is how we obtain 1st century unity today.
- 2. “[U]nto all riches of the full assurance of understanding” refers to spiritual riches from practicing what we know is right (cf Phil 3:8; 2 Pet 1:3).
 - a. Spiritual riches emanates from the gospel. We are being told how to be rich without monetary gain (cf Rom 11:12; Heb 11:26).
 - b. We live in a world where so few things come with “full assurance.” Practicing Christianity will give us that assurance through faith (cf Heb 10:22).
- 3. “In whom” (vs 3) refers to Christ. The treasure trove, which was once kept secret, is now revealed in Christ.
- 4. The treasures of “wisdom and knowledge” include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Redemption (Rom 3:24).
 - b. Sanctification (1 Cor 1:2).
 - c. New creature (2 Cor 5:17).
 - d. All spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3).
 - e. Forgiveness (Eph 1:7).
 - f. Consolation (Phil 2:1).
 - g. Joy (Phil 4:4).
 - h. Strength (Phil 4:13).

Note: All the treasures of this world, e.g., gold, silver, jewels and land, will all pass away, but the treasures redeemed in Christ will last throughout eternity. We must make the most important thing the most important thing.
- C. Paul re-emphasizes his deep concern that false teachers might “beguile” (deceive, NKJ) through “enticing” (persuasive, NKJ) language.
 - 1. The Greek word translated “should beguile” means *to reason falsely*.²³
 - a. “This I say” (vs 4) is Paul’s way of insisting they pay attention to his words. There is great danger in false teachers.
 - b. This could be done intentionally or through ignorance (sophistry or subtlety), either of which is equally dangerous (cf James 1:22).
 - c. Paul had previously warned the Romans (cf Rom 16:17, 18), the Corinthians (cf 2 Cor 11:13) and the Ephesians (cf Eph 4:14; 5:6) about the dangers inherent with false teachers.
 - d. Baptized believers, who do not live according to New Testament law, will be condemned to hell just as quickly as the heathen (cf Col 2:18).
 - 2. Even though Paul was not physically present with the Colossians, he was with them in heart (cf 1 Cor 5:3).
 - a. It is commonly thought by many that the words “order” and “steadfastness” are military terms.²⁴

²³ Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Vol 1, page 112.

²⁴ Ellicott’s Commentary, “It has been noted that both words have military associations—the one being used for discipline generally, and the other for the firm compact solidity of the phalanx; and that the use of them may have been suggested by Paul’s captivity under military guard.”

- b. Military terms or not, Christians must have and maintain structure and stability to augment spiritually (cf 1 Cor 14:40; 1 Thess 3:8; 2 Pet 3:17).
- c. “[O]rder” and “steadfastness” were connected to their “faith in Christ” (cf Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 15:58).
- d. It should be obvious to any diligent student of the Bible that faithfulness goes far beyond simply “believing” (cf Acts 19:15; James 2:19).

II. The foundation of Christian progress (6-8).

Note: We will see in this section that action on the part of Christians is required.

- A. “[R]eceived Christ Jesus the Lord” is the initial step in living the faithful life, but a great deal more is necessary. Notice the six admonitions presented in verses six and seven:
 - 1. “[W]alk” (cf 1 Thess 4:1; 1 Jn 2:6).
 - a. The word “walk” usually refers to the manner of life.
 - b. As used here it has the sense of living wholly under the influence that Christ has brought to their lives.
 - 2. “Rooted” (cf Eph 3:17).
 - a. Paul switched metaphors to a root system that would allow continued growth.
 - b. It suggests stability and health. We should visualize a vibrant and strong tree.
 - 3. “[B]uilt up” (cf Matt 7:24, 25).
 - a. Again the metaphor is changed to a firm foundation, something to build upon. This word carries the thought of a solid wall or strong foundation (cf Eph 2:20).
 - b. We might use the vernacular that someone is “well-grounded” in the faith. That is exactly what Paul desired for the Colossians.
 - c. It should be noted that the building up in Verse 7 is continuous action. As a child of God the building goes on.
 - 4. “[S]tablished” (established, NKJ) means *confirmed* (cf 1 Cor 1:6, 8).
 - a. Even though it is translated as past-tense, it is a present tense participle.
 - b. The intent is that they had been established in the truth (at their conversion) and needed to continue to be stable on that foundation (cf 1 Pet 5:10; Jude 24).
 - 5. “[T]aught” is preceded by the words, “As ye have been,” indicating Paul desired for them to stay firm in the teaching that got them to where they were at the time of this writing.
 - a. As so often happens Christians want new and exciting teaching rather than sound, solid, scriptural teaching. It would have been dangerous for them, and equally dangerous for us.
 - b. They had been taught by (possibly) Paul and Epaphras. May we always want the firm foundation of the old paths, rather than frills, flashiness or superfluity (cf Jer 6:16).

6. “[A]bounding in thanksgiving.” which means *to be in excess* or *to excel*²⁵ (cf 1 Thess 3:12; 4:1, 10).
 - a. The apostle’s fear was that false teachers would lead them away from the simplicity in Christ.
 - b. “Having all the saving knowledge desirable, without need of the addition of aught any other way; being thankful to God that he had revealed such a Christ, his Christ, to them, for they could not have a better or another.”²⁶
Note: Keeping these six points in mind would render the Gnostic’s false teaching fruitless, which leads us to Verse 8.
- B. “Beware” or take heed. According to Robertson, it is like our common verb, “look out.”²⁷ An inspired warning about perversions of the gospel (cf Matt 7:15; 2 Pet 3:17).
 1. The Greek word “spoil” (take you captive, NASV) means to spoil in the sense of plunder or rob, as when plunder is taken in war.
 - a. The meaning is, “Take heed lest anyone plunder or rob you of your faith and hope through philosophy”²⁸ (cf Heb 13:9).
 - b. These false teachers would strip them of their faith and hope, as an invading army would rob a country of all that was valuable (cf 2 Jn 8).
 - c. “Properly, *lead you away as a spoil*, triumph over you as a captive, and make you a slave”²⁹ (cf 2 Cor 11:20).
 2. A feat done through “philosophy” was connected to “vain deceit.”
 - a. This is the only time the word “philosophy” is used in the New Testament, and some think it is only used here because the Gnostics like to use the word.
Note: A form of the word is used in Acts 17:18, where Paul references false philosophers of the Greeks in Athens.³⁰
 - b. Human reasoning contains no salvation and its destructive influences are ravaging our generation (cf Matt 13:22).
 - c. “[V]ain deceit” could have been translated ‘empty dilutions.’ That is what a person gets when they stray from the unadulterated gospel (cf 1 Cor 3:18, 19; 1 Tim 6:20).
 - d. Paul is saying that the opponents of the simple and pure gospel are claiming to have wisdom, but are full of vain deceit.
Note: Paul is talking about the perversion of philosophy. The word “philosophy” comes from the words “wisdom-lover.” Therefore, the philosophy condemned by Paul is modified by the second part of the verse; “after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world.”

²⁵ Strong’s #4052

²⁶ Matthew Poole’s Commentary

²⁷ Robertson’s NT Word Pictures

²⁸ Barnes’ Notes

²⁹ Ellicott’s Commentary

³⁰ The Book of Acts, An Outlined Study, page 109, this author.

- e. Traditions of men can be both harmless and harmful. Context is vitally important in this case: good and profitable traditions (cf 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6) as opposed to enforcing pointless traditions (cf Mk 7:3).
- f. The philosophers of Paul’s day were boasting of greater wisdom than God. If a person today intends to change or ignore Bible teaching they put themselves in exactly the same position, unwittingly or not.
- g. “[R]udiments” (basic principles, NKJ) refers to elementary training. Not to “first principles,” which we should never get far from (Heb 5:12), but leave behind the influences of any former religion (cf Gal 3:24, 25; 4:3).
- 3. “[A]nd not after Christ” encapsulates all false teachers and false teachings (cf Eph 4:17-21).
 - a. The inspired teachings of the Holy Ghost is the benchmark to measure all philosophies and human wisdom.
 - b. We out-smart ourselves when we think we are smart enough to out-think or out-reason our Creator.

III. Inspired reasoning on why Christians should not be drawn away from Christ (9-15).

A. In counter-distinction to the empty and vain philosophies of the Gentiles and Jews, Christ is the fullness of the Godhead, incarnate (cf 2 Cor 5:19).

- 1. “For in him” references Christ as He was while on earth (cf Matt 1:23).
Note: God tabernacled in the flesh for a purpose. The body had to live so that it could die.
 - a. His incarnation was not merely a manifestation of divine presence, but “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14).
Note: His presence on earth was not merely god-like, but in the fullest sense the divine nature of God.
 - b. Paul records these inspired words nearly forty years after Christ’s ascension, yet he uses the present tense word “dwelleth.”
 - c. Possibly an allusion to the body Christ had when He left this earth for His heavenly abode (cf Jn 20:17).
 - d. We know He had some type of body after His resurrection (cf Jn 20:27; 21:4; Acts 1:3, 9-11).
 - 2. “[T]he Godhead bodily,” means not just the idea of deity, but rather, all the divine attributes and all the divine nature.³¹
Note: This passage refuted doctrinal error of the first century. It is still being used in the same fashion in the twenty-first century. There is not one type of fullness of the Father and another type of the Son, but one of the Godhead.
- B. For one to be “complete in him” (vs 10) it is necessary for one to enter into His body. The door of entrance is baptism (cf Gal 3:27).
- 1. The completeness in Verse 10 means to fill up, or to be full.
 - 2. By implication it means nothing needs to be added, He is the head (cf Philemon 9-11; 1 Pet 3:22).

³¹ Wycliffe NT Commentary, page 791

- a. Not false doctrines.
 - b. Not the incorporation of the Old Testament laws.
3. Under the old law there was a literal circumcision. Under the new law there is still circumcision, but it is figurative.
- a. The Old Testament circumcision was a type, or shadow, of the circumcision of this modern dispensation (cf Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4).
 - b. Christian circumcision is done in the heart (“putting off,” vs 11), but is just as necessary as the removal of the foreskin in the last dispensation (cf Rom 2:29).
4. This figurative act (circumcision) is done via being buried in baptism.
- a. One cannot be raised unless they have been buried (cf Rom 6:4, 5).
 - b. The word “risen” (raised, NKJ) means “*to be roused from the dead.*”³²
 - c. All of this information is connected to the mighty power of the Father, His ability to raise the Son from the grave (cf Rom 4:24).
- C. The point is that these Gentiles had once been dead in sin (vs 13) (cf Eph 2:1, 5).
1. Separated from God by not being circumcised, separated by sin, separated by not being part of His once select nation.
- Note: Circumcision has been a part of all of the dispensations between God and man: Abraham- fleshly circumcision; Jews- fleshly circumcision; Christians- spiritual circumcision. God has always required a separation between His people and the others.
- a. “[Q]uickened together” (made alive together, NKJ) by making us partakers of the power of His resurrection.
 - b. When did this happen? When you died to sin. When you were buried with Christ. When you were forgiven your trespasses.
 - c. It should be obvious to every intelligent reader that one cannot be made alive (quicken) if one has not first died (cf Col 3:1-3).
2. “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances” (vs 14) is a specific reference to the old law. Not just part of the law, but all of the law, both moral and ceremonial.
- Note: The Gentiles had never had a written law from God. It, therefore, has to be a reference to the Law of Moses.
- a. The thought behind “Blotting out” is *to obliterate* or *to erase*.³³
 - b. What was erased? Approximately 613 Old Testament Laws (that is the totality of the old law) handed down from God to Moses.³⁴
 - c. Some will argue that some of the old laws can/should/must be followed in our modern time. Col 2:14 repudiates this false doctrine.
 - d. Paul declares that these ordinances (requirements, NKJ) were “against us.”
 - e. The old law was given because of transgression (cf Gal 3:19).

³² Strong’s #4891

³³ Idib. #1813

³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613_commandments

- f. The nature of the law was such that Peter called it “a yoke” (cf Acts 15:10), and Paul said it was a “yoke of bondage” (cf Gal 5:1).
 - g. It was designed to keep the Jews in check, orderly, until the Messiah would come.
 - h. That yoke was temporary. It had always been designed as temporary (cf Gal 3:23-25). God, through Christ, would provide a better way for Christians.
Note: The book of Hebrews uses the word “better” thirteen times to describe Christianity over Judaism, e.g., Heb 8:6; 11:40.
 - i. 2 Cor 3:7 refers specifically to the Decalogue as the “ministration of death” and were “to be done away.”
3. “[N]ailing it to the cross” shows that Christ’s redemptive work fulfilled the Law of Moses.
 - a. God had designed the old law to be a schoolmaster to the superior way (cf Gal 3:24, 25).
Note: The term “schoolmaster” is not used in the sense of one who teaches or instructs, but rather one who takes the children to school.
 - b. The events recorded in Acts 2 usher in a new law and a better way.
 - c. Obviously, more than just the earthly body of Jesus of Nazareth was nailed to the cross outside of Jerusalem.
 - d. 1,500 years of Jewish law ended that day.
 4. If we keep Verse 15 in context it would have to refer to the abolishing of the old law and opening the way of redemption to God (cf Eph 4:8).³⁵
 - a. Christ’s redemptive work was done openly and for all to view (cf Acts 26:26).
 - b. No one ever lived an acceptable and sinless life under the old law (with the single exception of Jesus of Nazareth).
 - c. Up to the point of the redemptive work of Christ, Satan had held men captive. Ruining their souls because we did not have a path for the reconciliation of our sins before God. Christ fixed that. Christ “spoiled” Satan’s bid for your soul (cf Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8).
 - d. Satan has many tools at his disposal and will employ all of them to deny us the eternal life we desire.

- IV. Do not disqualify yourself through ritualism or false worship (16-19).
 - A. The judging Paul refers to in Verse 16 relates to the “handwriting of ordinances” in Verse 14.
 1. It appears the great curse of the first century church was the Judaizing teachers who inflicted so much harm on the brethren.³⁶

³⁵ Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, page 27, this author.

³⁶ Barnes’ writes, The meaning is, “since you have thus been delivered by Christ from the evils which surrounded you: since you have been freed from the observances of the law, let no one sit in judgment on you, or claim the right to decide for you in those matters.”

2. Paul lists four areas in which a Christian was to ignore or avoid: (they were each part of an old, defunct law, and therefore, not binding on any Christian):
 - a. Meat (food, NKJ) and drink (vs 16).
 - 1) This must refer to the ceremonial requirements of clean and unclean sustenance under the old law.
 Note: The word “meat” in the KJV might cause the reader to connect sacrificial meat offerings to this verse. There is no indication that the word used in Verse 16 is anything other than common food.
 - 2) While the exact meaning of these words are obscure, there were several passages under the old law that restricted both food and drink, e.g., (food) Lev 11; 19; Deut 14; (drink) Lev 11:34; Num 6:3.
 - 3) Inspiration’s point is that the old law and its ordinances were not applicable to the Colossian Christians.
 - b. “[R]espect of a holyday” (festival, NKJ).
 - 1) No specific festival is referenced, but the word means feast day, possibly denoting the Jewish festivals, such as Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, etc. (cf Gal 4:10)
 - 2) The Christian is under no obligation to be involved in any holiday or festival (outside our obligation upon the first day of the week).
 - c. “[T]he new moon.”
 - 1) Since the Jewish calendar was governed by the phases of the moon this would be an observance of the month’s beginning (cf Num 10:10).
 - 2) On the appearance of the new moon, among the Hebrews, in addition to the daily sacrifices, two bullocks, a ram, and seven sheep were required to be presented to God (cf Num 28:11, 14).
 - d. “[T]he sabbath days.”
 - 1) A plural word is used here, likely including all the Sabbath days observed by the Jews, e.g., weekly Sabbaths (Ex 16:23); Sabbath years (Ex 23:10, 11); Sabbaths for the Jubilee (Lev 25:8-11).
 Note: The congregation at Colosse was largely made up of Gentile converts, but it seems some Judaizing teachers were teaching doctrines that would have the appearance of piety and humility and convinced the Christians to participate. This was condemned because there was no New Testament authority for it (cf 1 Chron 23:30, 31).
 - 2) Christians observe the first day of the week:
 - (a) Christ was raised on the first day of the week (cf Mk 16:9).
 - (b) The Holy Ghost came upon the apostles on the first day of the week (cf Acts 2:1-4).
 - (c) The church was started on the first day of the week (cf Acts 2:47).
 - (d) The only time the Christians were recorded assembling to break bread was on the first day of the week (cf Acts 20:7).
 - (e) The Christians were commanded to give on the first day of the week (cf 1 Cor 16:1, 2).

- 3) It is never proper to refer to the first day of the week as the “Christian Sabbath”. Not only is it unscriptural, but Jesus nailed that Old Testament day to the cross.
 Note: There was no Sabbath before the Law of Moses and there was no Sabbath after the law was nailed to the cross (cf Ex 16:26, 29).
 - 4) Jesus came to fulfill the law, all of the law (cf Matt 5:17, 18; Lk 24:44).
- B. The “shadow” in Verse 17 refers back to the four areas listed in Verse 16 (cf Heb 10:1).
 Note: A shadow does not exist on its own. Where a shadow is, there is substance casting that shadow. In both of the Old Testament dispensations there were numerous shadows cast pointing to New Testament facts.
 Some examples of fore-shadowing we observe in the Old Testament are:
 Adam and Christ; Noah and Christ; Jonah and Christ; Moses and Christ; Joseph and Christ; Melchizedec and Christ; Manna and Christ; The paschal lamb and Christ, etc. These are the types and anti-types the scriptures so often allude to.
1. The real substance signified by all the shadows (types) in the Old Testament are found in Christ and His body, the church of Christ (cf Eph 1:22, 23).
 2. The Colossians were admonished to cling to the real thing, not to the shadows.
 3. If these people, or anyone today, would return to the elements of the old law, it would mean that Jesus’ sacrifice was useless and pointless (cf Gal 2:21; 5:2).
 Note: A cursory reading of Hebrews 9 and 10 reveals the divine foretelling of Old Testament items and events designed to illuminate the realities of the New Testament church.
- C. In Verse 18 Paul switches to a warning, “Let no man beguile (cheat, NKJ) you of your reward.”
1. The compound Greek word in this phrase is used nowhere else in the New Testament and is translated by five words in the KJV; ‘Let beguile of your reward.’
 2. It means, *“To give judgment against, condemn; as used in an umpire’s decision against a racer.”*³⁷ Ellicott adds, *“Robbing the victor of his prize.”*³⁸
 3. When Paul uses the word “beguile” in Verse 18 he was warning against allowing ascetic regulations into their spiritual lives.
 - a. Let us “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt 5:6).
 - b. Let us have a “honest and good heart” (Lk 8:15).
 4. “[V]oluntary humility” Bengel said, “ Let no one, usurping the authority of judge [arbitrator] of the prizes, and accordingly abusing it, guide and regulate

³⁷ Vine’s, page 110, Vol 1.

³⁸ Ellicott’s Commentary

you in the race which you are running, and mislead you by prescribing what you, about to receive the prize, should follow, what you should avoid.”³⁹

- a. This was not true humility, but a self-imposed humility; something to be seen rather than genuine.
 - b. It appears this humility is associated with the worshipping of angels.
 - c. Angel worship is idolatry and is strictly forbidden by scripture (cf Rev 19:10; 22:8, 9).
 - d. There are numerous writings from early church history that mentions the false doctrine of worshipping angels. Colosse was no exception (cf 1 Tim 4:1).
 - e. If Christians try to worship God through inferior beings we deny the only access we have to God, Christ (cf 1 Cor 8:5, 6; 1 Tim 2:4-6).
5. The last half of Verse 18 seems to be a reference to the false teachers who claimed to have “seen” supernatural beings and were influencing others.
- a. Paul calls this mentality “puffed up,” which means *to be haughty or inflated*⁴⁰ (cf 1 Cor 8:1).
 - b. We have people in our world who claim to have seen things that are just not true. But, some believe them and are drawn away from the truth (cf Gal 5:19-21).
Note: Admittedly, this is a difficult passage, and worthy of deeper study and reflection.
6. If one becomes “puffed up” in their own wisdom they will falter in holding Christ as Head, which is a fatal error (cf Col 1:18).⁴¹
- a. If we do not hold Christ solely and supremely above all others, we do not hold Him at all (cf Eph 4:15, 16).
 - b. Every part of the body depends on being connected to the Head for all productivity and capability, just like in our physical bodies (cf Jn 15:4-6).
 - 1) As every part of the physical body works in conjunction with the other parts, so it is within the body of Christ.
 - 2) “[I]ncreaseth with the increase of God” may refer to numerical growth, but probably has reference to the individual maturity of the Colossian brethren (cf 1 Thess 4:10; 2 Thess 1:3).
 - 3) When Christians stand up to error they will grow faster and stronger than at any other point in their spiritual lives. One has to know (really know) what the Book says in order to defend it!
- V. If you are really “dead with Christ,” act like it (20-23).

³⁹Bengel’s Gnomes, “A French interpreter has skilfully [sic] used the word *maitriser*, “*to domineer*,” for the apostle is not speaking of a rival snatching the prize of the race before you, but of an odious, perverse, insolent judge (umpire).”

⁴⁰ Strong’s #5448

⁴¹ Vaughn writes, “Puffed up renders a term suggesting a pair of bellows, and depicts the false teacher as inflated with conceit.”

- A. After the warnings are given to the Colossians Paul now poses a question (verse 20-22) for their consideration (cf Rom 6:2, 3).
1. “[D]ead with Christ” is another reference to baptism (cf Rom 6:4). The word “dead” is an indicative verb, which denotes a definite time in their past when they had died “with Christ.”
 2. Because they were dead with Him they were dead to:
 - a. Sin, self, the old law and the rudiments (principles, NKJ) of the world.
 - b. Why would anyone who has been freed from such things voluntarily put themselves in subjection to them again? It would be a step down for a Christian, not a step up; a step back, not a step forward.
Note: Possibly a specific reference to Verse 14.
 3. Paul is teaching what Peter taught in 2 Peter 2; if we learn more correctly, and strive to do better, we cannot return to where we once were (cf 2 Pet 2:20-22).
 4. Inspiration is contrasting the completeness in Christ to the shallowness of the false teachers.
 - a. This is a real struggle in our world today, i.e., doing things to please ourselves, or ingratiating one’s self to others. (cf James 4:4).
 - b. We are commanded to be different than the world, yet how close do we try to live like the world?
 - c. How much effort do we exert to be blend into the world, rather than being different and separate from the world (cf 2 Cor 6:17)?
 5. Parenthetically inserted are some specifics concerning the “ordinances” plaguing the Colossians:
 - a. “Touch not, taste not, handle not” were probably given as an overview of the types of ordinances these false teachers were binding on the Christians (cf Rom 14:17; 1 Tim 4:3).
Note: The word “[O]rdinances,” (regulations, NKJ) declares the rules by which one is governed. It comes directly from the Greek word “*dogma*,” which means *a law*.⁴²
 - b. Mankind has always been inclined to mix his own philosophy with the wisdom of God and make it binding (cf Matt 15:9).
 - c. Some commentators see an influence of the sect of the Jews known as the Essenes in Colosse.⁴³
Note: It seems impossible to know exactly what ordinances Paul has in mind as he pens these words. Whatever they might have been, man’s wisdom is futile and unprofitable. That would include every doctrine of man, old or new.
 6. Most commentators see the Old Testament food restrictions in these verses.

⁴² Strong’s #1378 and #1379

⁴³ Albert Barnes referring to the Essenes, “They allowed themselves no food that was pleasant to the taste, but ate dry, course bread, and drank only water. Many of them ate nothing until sunset, and, if anyone touched them who did not belong to their sect, they washed themselves as if they had been most deeply defiled.”

7. God's food restrictions were required for a limited period of time, i.e., 1,500 years, and for the Jews under the Law of Moses only. No food restrictions are found before the Old Testament law (cf Gen 9:3) and no food restrictions after the Old Testament law (cf Acts 10:13-15).
 - a. Paul adds the reason why the ordinances of man hold no validity; they "perish" (or decay) with the using.
 - b. There was no importance on what was ate or drank, as long as it was not injurious (cf Mk 7:19).
 - c. Verse 22 ends with, "[A]fter the commandments and doctrines of men." To impose man made laws, as if they were binding and essential for our salvation, would circumvent and render inefficient the inspired laws of the Bible.
 - d. Paul declares that such abstinences have no bearing on a Christian's spiritual life. They will "perish with the using" (cf Mk 7:15).
 - e. The last part of Verse 22 finishes the statement that began in verse 20.
- B. The last verse of this chapter is a powerful reminder that appearances can be deceiving.
 1. "It was but a mere show, a bare pretext, a specious appearance, a fair colour of wisdom, which is of no worth, not the reality and truth of Christian wisdom, however it might beguile those that were taken more with shadows than substance."⁴⁴
 2. Some might have been putting on a great show of piety when they commanded, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." But, it is all fallacious doctrine.
- C. "Which things" (These things, NKJ) connects these man made doctrines to "will worship."
 1. "[W]ill worship" means *arbitrarily invented worship*.⁴⁵ The NKJ translates this phrase as, "[I]n self-imposed religion."

Note: Will worship is one of four different types of worship mentioned in scriptures: Vain worship (Matt 15:9); Ignorant worship (Acts 17:23); Worship in spirit and truth (Jn 4:24).
 2. So jealous is God of human will-worship that He left us poignant reminders:
 - a. Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-3), added to the command, "[W]hich he commanded them not".
 - b. King Saul (1 Sam 13:10-14), he changed it to suit himself, "I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering."
 3. It appears the humility that is mentioned in Verse 23 is the ostentatious display of humility, one that they were proud of.
 - a. The exact same word is used in 2:18 and 3:12 of this book, so the context must determine whether it is used in a positive or negative connotation.

⁴⁴ Matthew Poole's Commentary

⁴⁵ Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

- b. Coupled with the “neglecting of the body” or severe treatment of the physical body, which do not esteem or gratify (cf Eph 5:29).
- D. This philosophy may have morphed into the heresy of Gnosticism, which was in an infancy stage at the writing of this letter. (Gnostic is a modern word coined for an ancient philosophy. It is never used in scriptures).
- 1. The self-will mentality would become a blight upon the church.
 - 2. Making a show of worship and humility have always been, and will always be, dangerous.
 - a. Cain worshipped, but it was will-worship. He worshipped as it suited him (cf Gen 4:3-7).
 - b. Many today try to worship in the spirit of Cain. “I must have the piano, the organ or maybe an entire band to worship, because I like it.” It is will-worship (cf Eph 5:19; Col 3:16).
 - c. The converse is also will-worship. Binding the multiplicity of man-made restrictions on the church, e.g., one cup, located preachers, cooperating in assistance to Christians and non-Christians, women teaching in classrooms to children, Bible class material, ad nauseam.
 - 3. Paul’s exhortations will continue in the next chapter.

- b. Seating arrangements were an important part of many cultures over the centuries and still are in many places (cf Matt 20:21; Heb 1:3, 13).⁴⁶
 - c. We see Christ is in a rightful position of power and honor, but also in close proximity, to be our advocate, intercessor and helper (vs 1).
- B. We have ‘heavenly affections,’ (vs 2) “Set your affections on things above.”
1. We need to cultivate an earnest desire and continually be engrossed in what heaven holds for us (cf Phil 2:2, 5).
 - a. Paul places the temporary, “things on this earth,” in contrast to things eternal (cf Matt 6:19, 20).
 - b. “The Christian has to keep his feet upon the earth, but his head in the heavens.”⁴⁷
 - c. We sing the song, “This world is not my home,” but do we conduct ourselves like we believe it?
 2. The second part of Verse 2 is the converse of the first part; affection for above or affections for the earthly.
 - a. Our time on this earth is so brief, and can be taken from us in an instant (cf Lk 12:20; James 4:14).
 - b. Facing the everlasting horrors of hell are not worth anything this world can offer.
 - 1) The temptations of this earth are real and dangerous (cf 1 Jn 2:15-17).
 - 2) Therefore, our affections (desire and motivation) must be set above.
 - c. If we allow our affections to be centered on terrestrial things then we are no different than:
 - 1) The rich, young ruler (Matt 19:16-22).
Note: This incident is also recorded in Mark 10:17ff and Luke 18:18ff, but Matthew is the only one who refers this man as “young.”
 - 2) The wealthy farmer (Lk 12:16-21).
Note: It is not wrong to have wealth or position, but it is wrong if these possessions change our affections. The most important thing has to be the most important thing (cf Matt 6:33).
- C. We have ‘heavenly assurance,’ (vs 3) “your life is hid with Christ in God.”
1. “For ye are dead,” refers to the spiritual condition of the baptized believer (cf Col 2:20).
 - a. Physical death is the separation of body and spirit (cf James 2:26).
 - b. Death to this world is our deliberate separation from Satan’s dominion (cf Eph 2:2; Col 1:13).
 2. We are dead to this world and our “life is hid in Christ” if:
 - a. We walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7).
 - b. We walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7).
 - c. We abide in His word (1 Jn 2:24).

⁴⁶ According to Seating Etiquette Guide there is a proper order of seating even today, “The guest of honor is seated to the right of the host, with the second guest of honor seated to the left.” <https://www.etiquettescholar.com>

⁴⁷ Robertson’s NT Word Pictures.

3. Verse 3 sets the tone for most of the rest of the chapter: Those hid in Christ will be:
 - a. Sexually pure (vs 5).
 - b. Emotionally balanced (vss 8, 9).
 - c. Helpful to others (vss 12, 13).
 - d. Live a life of love (vs 14).
 - e. Live a life of peace (vs 15).
 4. When a person sinks beneath the waters of baptism they disappear forever to this world.
 - a. The one who rises from that watery grave is a new person, a person hid in Christ (cf 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:24).
 - b. The thought behind the word “hid” is to hide in a place of security, maybe like a treasure being concealed (same word used in Matt 13:35).
 - c. Since our new life “is hid with Christ in God” it cannot be taken from us by force; however, it can be forfeited by sin, apathy or ignorance.
- D. We have ‘heavenly anticipation’ (vs 4) for a much better life at His second coming.
1. There is a great day coming!
 2. When Christ returns, the saint from all over the earth will participate in His glory (cf Matt 25:31; Rom 8:18).
 - a. This heavenly anticipation both fuels and sustains our Christian lives.⁴⁸
 - b. There is no need to speculate the when of Christ’s return. It is simply unknowable (cf Matt 24:36; Rev 3:3).⁴⁹
 - c. It is certain that He will come at the appointed time, and every eye shall see Him (cf Rev 1:7).
Note: There will be no secret, partial or mysterious second coming (cf 1 Thess 4:17).
 3. There are several things we can know about His second coming:
 - a. The dead shall be raised (cf Jn 5:28, 29).
 - b. The earth and the works there in shall be burnt up (cf 2 Pet 3:10-12).
 - c. He will deliver the kingdom (the church of Christ) to the Father (cf 1 Cor 15:24).
 - d. Judgment Day will be a reality (cf Matt 25:31-33, 46).
 4. Paul is assuring the Christians at Colosse that they shall “appear with Him in glory.”
 - a. He shall appear in glory. We have an opportunity to appear with Him in glory.
 - b. The glory is the crown of victory we wear in the future life (cf 2 Tim 4:8; James 1:12).

⁴⁸ As a soldier stands on a distant shore, looking homeward. His heart is already there, longing, anticipating; not home yet, but only the body remains to follow. That imagery should depict us longing for heaven.

⁴⁹ One thing we can know with certainty, if a person claims to know the date of His return they can immediately be marked as a false teacher

- c. Hopefully you want that crown (cf Rev 2:10).
- d. Hopefully you want to be selected to the right hand and embrace eternal rewards.
- e. We will all face a judgment decree of one kind or another (cf Matt 25:21-23, 30).

II. The new self (5-7).

- A. Paul begins this section with a list of sins that we have mortified (put to death, NKJ) in our members (literally, parts of our bodies), which allows us to be “hid with Christ in God” (cf Matt 5:29, 30; James 3:5, 6).

Note: These are not difficult words. A good dictionary and a Bible dictionary are all that is needed. I do caution about using a modern speech Bible. They often use words to simplify the text and insert words that are not what the apostle intended.⁵⁰

1. Fornication; which includes all illicit⁵¹ sexual intercourse.⁵² It is a general term, which would include adultery.
 - a. This sin is one of the specific sins the council in Jerusalem indicted the Gentile Christians from which to abstain (cf Acts 15:19, 20).
 - b. The word used here is the verb form of *porneia*, and is the word from which we get our modern word pornography.
 - c. It seems this sin was a prevalent problem in the Gentile world and they needed to be reminded that it could not be brought into the church.⁵³
Note: It is the same word that Jesus used in identifying the one and only reason for divorce (cf Matt 19:9).
2. “[U]ncleanness;” which would be all physical and moral impurity.
Note: Paul gives a divine commentary on what God thinks is “unclean” in Romans 1:24-27.
3. “[I]nordinate affection;” (passion, NKJ) which is always used in the New Testament in connection with bad desires (cf Rom 1:26).
 - a. The word means *lust* (cf 1 Thess 4:5).
 - b. Depraved and vile passions.
4. “[E]vil concupiscence;” (evil desires, NKJ) the word *concupiscence* simply means *a longing*. Connected with the preceding word “evil” it is basically the ‘inordinate affections’ just mentioned.
5. “[C]ovetousness;” is the desire to have what belongs to others.
 - a. The apostle often ranks this sin with those detestable passions afore mentioned (cf Rom 1:29; Eph 5:3).

⁵⁰ An example is translating fornication as “sexual immorality” or “immorality.” There are numerous digressions that could be classified as immoral, but Paul used the word *pornea*; unlawful sexual intercourse.

⁵¹ Webster’s New World Dictionary defines illicit as, “not allowed by law, custom, rule, etc.; unlawful; improper; prohibited; unauthorized.”, page 672

⁵² Vine’s, page 125, Vol 2.

⁵³ See The Book of Acts, An Outlined Study, page 90, this author.

- b. Examples of covetousness abound in scriptures: Judas, Demetrius, Ananias and Sapphira, etc.
- 6. “[W]hich is idolatry;” idolatry dethrones God and replaces Him with something else, something inferior.
 - a. We may never be guilty of the first five sins on this list that we are to be dead to, but many are guilty of replacing Jehovah God with a lesser god.
 - b. The covetous person is an idolater (cf Eph 5:5).
 - c. Sins of the mind and sins of the flesh are obviously connected (cf James 1:14, 15; 1 Jn 3:15).
- B. Paul calls upon them to dig out and root up the old ways of their Gentile lives.
 - 1. Verse 6 literally means that on account of this immorality (vs 5) the wrath of God comes upon all those who disregard the gospel of Christ.
 - 2. If a person enters Christianity, but plans on continuing in the same old paths, the same old sinful ways, what advantage do they think will come to them?
 - 3. A new relationship with God demands a new lifestyle (cf Eph 2:10, 15; 4:24).
- C. God’s wrath is real (vs 6) which has been abundantly demonstrated in Holy Writ.
 - 1. As Ellis wrote, “Far from negating God’s love, his wrath confirms it. For without justice, mercy loses its meaning.”⁵⁴
 - 2. The sin of homosexuality in Sodom and Gomorrah caused His wrath to utterly destroy those cities (cf Gen 18:16-20; 19:23-25).
 - 3. That great wrath was demonstrated against the Egyptians in Exodus 14, being engulfed in the Red Sea, not a single one of them surviving (cf Ex 14:28).
 - 4. It was also demonstrated against the Hebrew people just a short time later when the golden idol was made in Exodus 32.
 - 5. A cursory reading of the book of Revelation reveals the wrath of Jehovah repeatedly mentioned: Rev 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15 and others.
- D. In some circles within our brotherhood only the love of God is allowed to be preached.

Note: Some modern speech translations have gone so far as to eliminate the word “disobedience” from the text, e.g., ESV, NIV, etc. This is not the first time some arduous doctrine was eliminated from God’s word because some person deemed it unpopular (cf Jer 36:1-3, 23, 24).

 - 1. God’s love is wonderful and marvelous (cf 1 Jn 4:10).
 - 2. God’s wrath is just as real (cf Jn 3:36).
 - 3. To preach one point and neglect the rest of the gospel is dangerous and fraudulent (cf 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Pet 2:17).
 - a. The Holy Ghost inspired the apostle to remind the Colossians that disobedience brings the wrath of God (cf Rom 1:18).
 - b. Modern congregations that want only positive messages preached are guilty of rejecting the whole counsel of God (cf Acts 20:27).

⁵⁴ E.E. Ellis, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, page 797.

- c. We might want to live in an “*I’m ok, You’re ok,*”⁵⁵ society, but the Bible teaches that we have to obey all of God’s will (cf 2 Thess 1:8).
 - d. God wants us to confront and correct sins, not accept sins and sinners as they are (cf 1 Jn 3:4).
- III. External change is not enough, we must change inwardly, as well (8-11).
 Note: The sins listed here could be classified as sins of the tongue. It appears that the last four words of Verse 8 (“out of your mouth”) apply to all the sins listed.
- A. “[A]nger” is the sudden violent emotion, or the rise in passion. “[W]rath” is a similar, but stronger word and carries the idea of hot anger.
 - 1. Although we often use the word “anger” interchangeably with “wrath”, the words used here have different meanings in the original language.
 - 2. The Christian is under an obligation to control their anger and wrath.
 Note: The reason these two words are grouped together is because the Bible often uses them transmutably, e.g., the “wrath” in Verse 6 is the same Greek word translated “anger” in Verse 8.⁵⁶
 - B. “[M]alice” is ill-will, the desire to injure.
 - 1. Since this word is used in a list of sins of the tongue it must be connected to the things said to hurt or harm another.
 - 2. It is the same word, which is translated as “wickedness” in Acts 8:22, when Simon wanted to buy the gifts of the Holy Ghost (cf Acts 8:18-22).
 - 3. In James 1:21 this word is translated as “naughtiness,” and in 1 Peter 2:16 it is translated as “maliciousness.”
 - C. “[B]lasphemy” is a term we normally associate with words against deity (cf Matt 26:65; Rev 13:6).
 - 1. The word, as used here, means to injure with words.
 - 2. In Ephesians 4:31 this word is translated as “evil speaking” toward another.
 - 3. The Christian, the new self, will put off the attitude of unkind or cruel words.
 - D. “[F]ilthy communication” (filthy language, NKJ) is from a compound word that means shameful or venal conversation.
 - 1. This is the only time the word is used in the New Testament.
 - 2. In a world filled with vulgar language the Christian should never be involved in lewd, indecent or immodest communication (cf Eph 4:29).
 - 3. Our tongues are often tainted by movies, television, printed material and casual conversations. We must actively guard against such influences (cf 2 Pet 2:7, 8).
 - E. “[O]ut of your mouth.” Ultimately, the great harm that comes from improper control of the tongue is not the harm done to others, but the harm one does to themselves.
 - 1. People need to know that we are followers of Christ by what we do not say as much as by what we say (cf 1 Pet 2:1).

⁵⁵ A self-help book authored by Thomas Harris, 1967.

⁵⁶ See class note from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, pages 30, 31, same author.

2. Be different, be better than the world around you.
- F. “Lie not one to another” is part of the list of tongue related sins started in Verse 8.
1. We should always speak the truth, but especially to other Christians (cf Eph 4:25).
Note: Someone unknown has said, “Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle that fits them all.”
 2. The devil is the father of liars (Jn 8:44), but he is not our father. Why would we allow him to have custody of our tongues?
 3. One of the hardest traits in people to deal with in this life is when someone will lie.
 - a. God hates a liar (cf Prov 6:16-19).
 - b. Liars will not be allowed into heaven’s eternal rest (cf Rev 21:8, 27; 22:15).
 4. These Colossians were once guilty of participating in these sins, but now they are to be new people (cf Rom 12:2).
 - a. “[H]ave put off” (vs 9) carries two important factors. According to one brother,⁵⁷ the prepositional prefix connected to the Greek word (a single Greek word is translated by four English words; *ye have put off*) means both “away from” and “out of.”
Note: Verses 8 and 9 deal with sins “the old man” eliminates. Verse 10 focuses on “the new man.”
 - b. A renewed person has a spiritual rebirth; born again (cf Jn 3:7; 1 Pet 1:23).
 - 1) Like a beggar changing out of old, filthy rags, we get ‘out of’ and step ‘away from’ the rags in order to put on the clean, new clothes in Christ (vs 10).
 - 2) The farther we get away from sin the less danger there is of falling back into sin (cf Rom 6:6).
 - c. Our image grows more like Christ’s image as our knowledge increases, hence, “the image of him that created him.”
- G. In Christ there is no national or racial distinction (cf Acts 10:34, 35).
1. This would be an unusual situation for the early Christians. National and racial boundaries were seriously guarded.
Note: The first four words of Verse 11 (“Where there is neither”) could have been translated, “There cannot be.”
 2. Paul then lists four groups that are to be considered on equal ground as new men in Christ:
 - a. “Greek nor Jew.”
 - 1) All the faithful are the children of Abraham (cf Gal 3:9, 29).
 - 2) Occasionally we still see race related barriers in the church today.
Thankfully, they are scarce and dissipating.
 - b. “[C]ircumcision nor uncircumcision.”

⁵⁷ Noel Merideth

- 1) In the context this would be the false teachers trying to supplement New Testament Christianity with Old Testament laws.
- 2) Circumcision was not a test of fellowship.
- c. Barbarian, Scythian.
 - 1) The word “barbarian” means *one who speaks a strange or foreign language*.⁵⁸
Note: The word was not used offensively, but simply in the sense of identifying a foreigner (cf Acts 28:2-4).
 - 2) “Scythian” simply means *savage*. Normally thought of as originating in an area north of the Black and Caspian Seas. This would be modern day Kazakhstan or southern Russia.⁵⁹
 - 3) The point of using the word is that there were no disqualifications based on social mores or points of origin. If a person was a “new man” he was to be accepted.
- d. [B]ond nor free.
 - 1) This is a reference to slaves and non-slaves. Slavery was very common in the first century. It is possible that 40% of the inhabitants of the major cities were slaves during this time.⁶⁰
 - 2) Slaves made up a significant portion of the early church. Slavery did not exclude them from the hope of heaven.⁶¹
3. This verse ends with the powerful, “Christ is all, and in all.”
 - a. In Him we lay down our differences.
 - b. It does not matter who you are or where you come from, if you are in Christ, Christ is in you (cf Gal 2:20; Eph 3:17).

IV. The new man has a spiritual character (12-17).

- A. Paul returns to the metaphor of putting something on, as a garment (see vs 10).
 1. The Christians at Colosse were called, “elect of God, holy and beloved...”⁶²
 - a. Elect because they were obedient to His will (cf 1 Pet 1:2).
 - b. Any faithful person, in any faithful church of Christ anywhere across this world, is “elect of God, holy and beloved.”
 2. “[B]owels (tender, NKJ) of mercy” is translated, “the heart of compassion” in the NASV (cf Lk 1:78; 2 Cor 7:15).
 - a. We must “[p]ut on” the ability to be sensitive to the feelings of others.
 - b. When we were sinners and against God, He showed mercy and compassion on us. Reciprocating those feelings is part of Christianity (cf 1 Pet 3:8-11).
 3. “[Kindness]” is courtesy and goodness (cf Gal 5:22).

⁵⁸ Vine’s, page 99, Vol 1.

⁵⁹ International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

⁶⁰ Slavery in Ancient Rome; en.m.wikipedia.org.

⁶¹ There is more information concerning slaves on pages 42 and 43, this outline.

⁶² J.B. Coffman wrote in his commentary, “This writer also believes that “beloved,” as in so many of Paul’s letters, has reference to the love which the apostle himself had for the addressees...” pages 403, 404.

4. “[H]umbleness of mind” is not proud or haughty, not thinking too highly of ourselves.
Note: It is the same word that was translated “humility” in Col 2:18, 23.
 5. “[M]eekness” is the opposite of arrogance.⁶³
 6. “[L]ongsuffering” is the ability to remain patient under trial.
 - a. It is often easy to run out of patience when tried, we must not.
 - b. We hope God will not run out of patience with us, we must have or develop the ability to reciprocate God’s patience with others.
 - c. The same word is translated as “patience” in Hebrews 6:12 and James 5:7.
 7. “Forbearing one another” (bearing with one another, NKJ) is tolerating other’s weaknesses and frailties.
 - a. Strong’s gives a figurative meaning of this word as *put up with*⁶⁴
 - b. The noun form of this word means *patience with regard to adverse things*.⁶⁵
 - c. Matthew records Jesus as using this same word when He refers to a “faithless and perverse generation” (Matt 17:17).
Note: Just because someone does things or says things differently than we do does not make them wrong, just different.
 8. “[F]orgiving one another” is axiomatic to proper spiritual character.
 - a. How can we possibly expect God to forgive us if we refuse to forgive others (cf Matt 6:12, 14, 15)?
 - b. Forgiveness is something we covet, we should give it in the same fashion we will desire it. Maybe better said, we should give it because we need it (cf James 2:13).
 - c. The verse ends with “even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” This would be the manifestation of a Christ-like spirit (cf Acts 5:31).
- B. “And above all these things put on charity...” (vs 14).
1. Love is the thing that holds everything in verses 12 and 13 together (cf Rom 13:8; 1 Cor 13:13).
 2. Love is like the cement that holds the Christian in proper shape (cf Jn 15:12).
 3. God’s love was manifested in Christ’s sacrifice (cf Eph 5:2).
 - a. The church is token of that love.
 - b. The Bible is a gift to instruct and guide us (cf Rom 10:17).
 - 1) It contains God’s mind, so we can know and do right.
 - 2) It keeps us from sin.
 - 3) It illuminates the pathway to heaven (cf Ps 119:35, 105).
 - c. Paul goes on to say that love is the “bond of perfectness.”
 - 1) All of the Christian graces are bound together in love (cf 1 Jn 4:7-11).
 - 2) We must learn to hate what God hates and love what God loves, i.e., hate sin but not the sinner; love the church enough to defend her.

⁶³ Strong’s gives this word the definition of “mildness.” #4240.

⁶⁴ Ibid, #430

⁶⁵ Vine’s, page 116, Vol 2.

- C. The peace Paul mentions in Verse 15 enables us to maintain a state of congeniality with those around us (cf Jn 16:33).
1. We live in a troubled world, but the peace we have as Christians insulates us from many problems (cf Jn 14:27).
 - a. Most people are not at peace with themselves. It appears they do not want others to be at peace either.
 - b. Peace (true and lasting) will only come through obedience.
 2. “[R]ule in your hearts” is an interesting phrase. The imagery is an umpire making a ruling.
 - a. The peace of God umpires our hearts; controls, governs and makes orderly our desires and mental direction (cf Phil 3:16).
 - b. Where the heart is governed (umpired) by peace there will be no disorder, discontent or tumult (cf Gal 6:16).
 - c. It is truly sad that so many in the brotherhood fail to take advantage of the blessings of Christianity and do not allow peace to govern their lives.
 3. The “one body” is the church of Christ, and is a blessing to the world.
 - a. Its praises should be shared with others (cf Heb 13:15).
 - b. Its uniqueness, its singularity, should constantly be pointed out.
 - c. The safety and salvation, found only in the church, will give peace to those added to its friendly confines.
 - d. How thankful we should be for the privilege to be part of the body of Christ (cf 2 Cor 4:15; 9:11).
 Note: A spirit of thankfulness would serve well to promote harmony and peace.
- D. Paul encourages the Colossians to allow “the word of Christ” to dwell in them.
1. This would be the biblical doctrines of the New Testament.
 - a. Many today want to shy away from the word doctrine. They claim it is too harsh a word to use. Some might be offended by using it. This is ridiculous and borders on the absurd.
 - b. The people were “astonished” at Jesus’ doctrine (cf Matt 7:28, 29; 22:33).
 - c. He taught doctrine (cf Mk 4:2; Jn 7:16, 17).
 - d. After His death those who followed His doctrine taught doctrine (cf Acts 2:42; 5:28).
 2. How does “the word of Christ dwell in” us richly (vs 16)? When it fills our hearts and molds our thoughts (cf Jn 15:7).
 - a. The word “richly” means *abundantly*,⁶⁶ and is translated so in Titus 3:6 and 2 Peter 1:11.
 - b. The context indicates the adverb “richly” is connected to “in all wisdom” (cf Eph 1:17; 5:17).

⁶⁶ Strong’s #4146

3. “[T]eaching and admonishing” are parallel to “[s]peaking to yourselves” (Eph 5:19) and carry the same thought.⁶⁷

Note: The only difference is Paul says that “psalm and hymns and spiritual songs” were to be used in teaching and admonishing.

- a. The word “teaching” is sharing instruction. The same word is used with reference to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 4:23 and 5:2.
- b. The word is used to instruct or impart doctrine.
- c. The word “admonishing” means to warn or exhort. Strong’s adds, *to caution or reprove gently*.⁶⁸
- d. And who is it that we are to teach and admonish? “[O]ne another” (cf 1 Thess 5:11, 12; Heb 12:12, 13).
- e. The words *you* and *one another* are both plural words, indicating everyone in the congregation is to be active.
 - 1) Psalms would refer to singing parts of the Old Testament. Most likely a common practice in the early church (cf 1 Cor 14:26). We still do this, Psalm 23 (cf James 5:13).
 - 2) Hymns, by definition, would be religious songs. Songs that would praise God, Jesus, the Christ, the Holy Ghost or all three at once.
 - 3) Spiritual songs would be songs related to spiritually up-lifting thoughts, e.g., Isaiah 5:1 and 26:1.
 - 4) This would automatically exclude doctrinally improper or inappropriate songs, because the subject is “the word of Christ.”
Note: We cannot demand sound preaching (and we must) and then allow unscriptural songs to be used in our worship services.

4. As we sing we are to teach, to instruct, to admonish, to warn, to encourage, to exhort, to edify; so much can be done by singing!

Note: Before we leave this subject notice what the verse does not say; to play, to hum, to whistle, to yodel, to make vocal music, it simply reads “singing.”⁶⁹

- a. It should be with great thankfulness that we can sing, “with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (cf Col 4:6).
- b. The purpose of our singing is to praise God and to teach others (cf Heb 13:15).

Note: See Appendix A for additional information of the subject of authorized music in our assemblies.

5. In connection with acceptable music in worship (Verse 17) the Christians is to honor the authority of Christ in every aspect of our worship and lives (cf 1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:23).

⁶⁷ See class note on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, page 39, same author.

⁶⁸ Strong’s # 3560

⁶⁹ See class notes on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, page 39, point 4, same author.

- a. To do all things, “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is to have His authority in all we do⁷⁰ (cf 1 Jn 3:18).
 - 1) Would this apply to all we do in public worship? Yes.
 - 2) Would this apply to private matters? Yes.
 - 3) Would this apply to any and every worldly proclivity? Yes.
 - b. We must always keep in mind that the book of Colossians was written to correct and eradicate error in Colosse. Doing all things in His name, or by His authority, would accomplish that. It still will today.
6. God has authority. He delegated that authority to His son. It was transferred to men through the Holy Ghost. It was recorded and made available to mankind through posterity, in the reliable versions of the Bible we have today. That is where God’s authority lies. Nowhere else.
 7. When Jesus walked among men He often appealed to the scriptures as the final authority (cf Matt 19:4, 5; 22:23-33) and even pointed out that it could not be broken (Jn 10:35).
- V. Admonitions for the home (18-25).
- A. The section on a properly regulated home begins with exhortation for the wives. Note: This is basically the same information the Holy Ghost gave to the Ephesians church through Paul’s inspired pen (Eph 5:22ff).⁷¹
 1. This section reminds the wives in a Christian home of their duties, not of their rights.
 2. All of the women’s liberation organizations and movements notwithstanding, do not and cannot change God’s will for the home (cf 1 Pet 3:1, 2).
 - a. The words “submit yourselves” mean *to subordinate, to obey*.⁷² The same word is used in Heb 2:5, 8.
 - b. Some might say that they do not like the concept of being placed into subjection. But, the truth is that everyone is placed in subjection to someone else (cf 1 Cor 11:3).
 - c. It is not optional, it is an obligation established by the Lord (cf James 4:7). Note: Even Jesus was placed in subjection while He was here on earth (cf Phil 2:7, 8).
 3. Because she is a Christian, she will become the very best wife, mother, home maker that she can possibly be.
 - a. Paul says, “as it is fit in the Lord” means *for it is well pleasing to the Lord*.⁷³
 - b. As Paul has stated in Ephesians 5:22 the wife is to voluntarily submit to her husband because it is the arrangement God has for the home. It was

⁷⁰ Vine’s gives the following definition of the word “name” as used in Col 3:17; in recognition of the authority of (sometimes combined with the thought of relying or resting on).

⁷¹ See class notes on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, pages 40-44, same author.

⁷² Strong’s #5293

⁷³ Benson

not Paul's opinion, it was not cultural politeness, it was, and still is, "fit in the Lord."

- c. The Christian home is a rare and beautiful thing to behold. It should be a little slice of heaven on earth. It will not happen without extreme effort and cognizant cooperation.
- d. The wives in Colosse that obeyed would establish an example for the heathen wives in the community.
- e. A happy home is a desirable commodity. This, by its self, might win some to Christ. And, of course, the converse would also be true. A defiant, rebellious wife would cause an unhappy home, and an undesirable inclination.

B. Paul then moves to the obligations of the husband.

1. The first and most basic of his responsibility is to love his wife (cf Eph 5:28).
2. The husband might ask, to what extent am I to love her? Inspiration reveals he is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:25). He is to love her as he does his own body (Eph 5:28). Nothing else on that subject should need to be said.
3. He adds "be not bitter against them." This is added because there might be a tendency for the dominate one to adapt a wretched irritability. "The husband's primacy is not for dominion but for guidance, with sweetness, wisdom and peace"⁷⁴ (cf Eph 4:31).
4. If he loves her the way Paul instructs she will be well protected and lovingly cared for.

Note: In my opinion modern marriages suffer from an "I need my space" mentality. In the marriage vows the couple has agreed to a life-long commitment to each other. That commandment needs to be embraced. Do not seek time apart, but rather plan time together. We can use Joseph and Mary as our examples. They both loved the baby born to them. They both took Him to Egypt. Together they moved back to Nazareth. Together they journeyed to Jerusalem to worship. The law only required Joseph to be there (Ex 23:17), but Mary wanted to be with him. They made a habit of doing this together (Lk 2:41) and they took the child along. When He became lost they searched for Him together. He was submissive to both of them (Lk 2:51). Together is how they lived, together is how they raised their son. Instead of planning time apart, couples today need to do the opposite, plan everything together.

C. In following the same pattern set forth in Ephesians, Paul then moves to the responsibilities of the children within the home.

1. Children have always had an important role to play in Bible history, e.g., it was a child who got the nurse for baby Moses (Ex 2:7), it was a child that Jesus used to teach the great lessons in Matthew 18, it was a child who brought the five loaves and two fishes that fed the multitudes (Jn 6:9).

⁷⁴ Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

2. Verse 20 has three important sections for children to embrace:
 - a. “[O]bey your parents” (cf Eph 6:1-3).
 - b. “[I]n all things.”
 - c. “[F]or this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”⁷⁵
 - 1) God has always required children to obey their parents (cf Deut 21:18-21).
 - 2) Being disobedient to parents receives some of the harshest condemnations listed in scripture (cf Rom 1:30; 2 Tim 3:1, 2).
 - 3) “[U]nto the Lord” refers to the example those outside the Lord’s church will see of those families claiming to be of Christ.
 - 4) When children obey their parents the entire household runs smoother.
 - 5) It is ridiculous for us to think we can set a poor example in raising our children and at the same time be a good example to lead others to Christ.
 Note: The family government is designed to mimic the divine government of the church. This is the reason elders must have faithful children. It is not to see if they can procreate, but to have a living example of how they have led their own family in obedience to God. If they have failed in their family, they cannot be expected to succeed in leading His family.
 3. Since fathers have been given the leadership role in the home inspiration forewarns the fathers about improper conduct (cf Eph 6:4).
 - a. Fathers must exercise discipline, but discipline and abuse are not the same.
 - 1) Fathers, ask yourselves a question; if your son grows up to be the same type of person you are, what kind of man will he be?
 - 2) Set the example for the next generation of families and church leaders.
 - b. According to William Barkley, when Paul penned these words in the first century, “A parent could do anything he liked with his child. He could sell him into slavery...He even had the right to condemn his child to death and carry out the execution himself.”⁷⁶
 - 1) Christianity ushered in a better life for both wife and child.
 - 2) Our modern fanaticism has reversed these “rights.” It appears the child has all the rights and the parents have none.
- D. Paul wraps up the household members by addressing the slaves (bondservants, NKJ).
1. Slaves have been commonplace throughout the history of mankind.
 - a. Barclay estimated some 60,000,000 slaves within the Roman Empire, and it has been said by another that a full 40% of the Roman Empire was made up of slaves.

⁷⁵ R.W. Dale has written, “Parents should care more for the loyalty of their children to Christ than for anything besides, more for this than their health, their intellectual vigour and brilliance, their material prosperity, their social position, their exemption from great sorrows and great misfortunes.”

⁷⁶ Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, page 212.

- b. Slavery is neither condoned nor condemned in the Bible. It is simply treated as a matter of fact.⁷⁷
 - 1) A man could sell his daughter into slavery with God's blessings (cf Ex 21:7; Neh 5:5).
 - 2) A widow could sell her children into slavery to pay off their father's debts (cf 2 Kgs 4:1).
 - 3) A man could sell himself into slavery (cf Lev 25:39, 47).
- c. In this country we most often only think of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade of a few centuries ago.
- d. The truth of the matter is that almost every nation and almost every race has been enslaved at some point in history.
- e. It is estimated that some thirty million people are living in slavery today.⁷⁸
- f. Slavery was so common in Paul's day that the proper conduct of the slave was part of his instructions for the Christian family unit.
- g. If a slave became a Christian there was a divine code of conduct for the slave to follow (cf Philemon 16).
 - 1) No matter what station we have in this life, if we have obeyed the gospel we have something great awaiting us (cf Heb 10:36).
 - 2) Paul admonished the slaves to be obedient to their masters. Do not render eye-service to your master, but offer them honest service, because of your relationship with God (cf Lk 6:46).
 - 3) We do not have much obvious slavery in our country today, but the same principle certainly applies to work-force related conduct.
- 2. Verses 23-25 are connected to the attitude Paul expected of the slaves in the Christian home.
 - a. Whatever our lot in life, we should approach it with all the gusto we can muster (cf 1 Pet 1:22).
 - 1) We will not always receive proper accolades for service rendered on earth, but God will make sure we get our just rewards in the next life (cf 1 Cor 10:31).
 - 2) Paul is stressing the fact that they were working for the Lord; they must do their best in every situation (cf 1 Cor 7:22).
 - b. Verse 24 has "...the reward of the inheritance..." But, slaves had no inheritance. Imagine a slave hearing these words for the first time (cf Acts 20:32).
 - 1) Maybe a gleam in their eye, maybe a straightened body, maybe a purpose for keeping on.
 - 2) When we faithfully serve here on earth, we faithfully serve our Lord in heaven.

⁷⁷ Dennis Gullledge wrote, "It is interesting that no inspired writer ever made an attack on slavery as an institution. They did not command, or even suggest emancipation; but they did teach a spirit which ultimately destroyed the system by peaceful means." The Book of Ephesians, page 219.

⁷⁸ http://www.theworldcounts.com/stories/Modern_Day_Slavery_Statistics

- c. If the Christian slaves did wrong to earthly masters, more than just the wrath of the masters would be upon them (cf 1 Cor 9:17, 18).
 - 1) The wrath of the heavenly master would be much worse.
 - 2) He demands His children to be trustworthy and faithful in all and every relationship.
- d. “[T]here is no respect of persons” in God’s eye (cf Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11).
 - 1) God will not reward a person for being free or a slave, for being rich or poor (cf Eph 6:8).
 - 2) He will reward a person for proper conduct, for we are all servants to someone (cf Rom 2:6, 7).
 - 3) He expects the very best from His children.

Colossians 4

Relationships and conduct; personal greetings.

- I. The first verse of Chapter 4 is part of the admonitions for proper conduct within the home.
- Note: This is another example of an unfortunate chapter break. Verse 1 clearly connects with the admonitions in Chapter 3. (Chapter divisions did not occur until the 13th century (1228 A.D.,⁷⁹ it was divided into chapters by a man named Stephen Langton, the archbishop of Canterbury⁸⁰) and often adds confusion rather than clarity.
- A. For a Christian master to expect the best results from his slaves he must offer what is “just and equal” (just and fair, NKJ) (cf 1 Tim 6:2).
1. Slaves being treated “just and equal” was God’s desire from the establishment of the Old Testament law (Ex 21).
 2. If we expect kindness and mercy we need to render kindness and mercy (cf James 2:13).
 3. Slavery has not been an official issue in this country for more than 150 years, but these same principles could apply to the work environment, social interaction and our home dynamics.
- B. Reminding the masters that they have a Master over them should be sufficient to keep them voluntarily in line (cf Eph 6:8, 9).
- Note: A Christian employer should never take advantage of its employees. Christian employees should never take advantage of their employers. We all have someone to answer to (cf 1 Cor 7:22; Eph 5:23).
- C. Verse 1 ends the family arrangements of this section which started in Verse 18 of Chapter 3. If followed faithfully, these instructions will bring about many rewards:
1. The husband will be rewarded with a better wife.
 2. The wife will be rewarded with a better husband.
 3. The children will be rewarded with better parents.
 4. The parents will be rewarded with better children.
 5. The servants will be rewarded with better masters.
 6. The masters will be rewarded with better servants.
 7. When God’s rules are followed everyone is rewarded, both here and in the world to come, plus God is glorified by our actions.
- II. Pray for those in the church and also those outside the church (2-6).
- A. “Continue in prayer” comes immediately after nine powerful verses on proper conduct in the home.

⁷⁹ Holy Bible, KJV, New Clarified Study Edition, Royal Publishers, Inc., page 302.

⁸⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Langton

1. How can they (we) be the wives, husbands, children or servants that God would approve of? By praying for wisdom and guidance (cf Lk 18:1; Phil 4:6).
 - a. This may be an indication that family prayer time is an excellent way to strengthen and fortify any family unit.
 - b. In Ephesians 5:22-6:9, Paul gives similar information concerning family demeanor, then follows that teaching with the ‘armor of God.’ The next thing that is recorded is, “Praying always, with all prayer and supplication...” (Eph 6:18). Someone has said, “The family that prays together stays together.”
Note: “Ceaseless prayers, combined with ceaseless praise was the atmosphere of Paul’s spiritual life, and should be ours.”⁸¹
2. “[W]atch in the same with thanksgiving” or to be alert, alive and pay attention in our prayer lives.
 - a. The scriptures often tie the thoughts of prayer and watching together (cf Matt 26:41; Mk 13:33; Lk 21:36; 1 Pet 4:7).
 - b. Our prayer lives must be in tune with the events and activities currently facing us (cf Eph 6:18).
 - c. Our prayers should be an active exercise, not some boring obligation or mundane exercise.
 - d. All this is coupled with “thanksgiving” (cf Col 3:15, 17).
3. Verse 3 begins with the word “Withal” (meanwhile, NKJ) which means *at the same time*.⁸²
 - a. Paul was requesting prayers for himself and his companions⁸³ who were with him in Rome (cf 1 Thess 5:25; Heb 13:18).
 - b. He specifically desired prayers “that God would open unto us a door of utterance...” (A door for the word, NKJ) or that God would grant them the freedom and ability to speak (cf 2 Thess 3:1).
 - c. The “bonds” (chains, NKJ) the apostle was enduring was related to the “mystery” of salvation offered to the Gentiles (previously discussed in 1:26 and 2:2 of this outline).
4. The request for prayer for opportunity connects to prayer for grace to use it in Verse 4.
 - a. This clause qualifies the "open door" (vs 3) that the apostle wants to make effective use of (cf Acts 28:31; Phil 1:14).
 - b. If a teacher like Paul, with all his power, opportunity and education, asks for prayers to take advantage of doors that are opened, would it not make sense for us to do the same?⁸⁴

⁸¹ Added notes by J. W. Shepherd, A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, by David Lipscomb, page 307.

⁸² Strong’s #260

⁸³ He will note those with him at the end of the chapter.

⁸⁴ Soliciting the brotherhood for prayers to speak as we ought to speak will help us all do what we desire to do.

B. Paul is writing this letter to the members of the church of Christ in Colosse, (Col 1:2), but he now turns his attention to those outside the body.

Note: This is the third time Paul has used the word “walk” in this letter (cf Col 1:10; 2:6). It is a reference to the Christian’s conduct, specifically, toward the non-Christian.

1. In order to benefit others, spiritually speaking, the chief qualification of the Christian is proper character (cf 1 Thess 4:12; 1 Tim 3:7).
 - a. In this passage “them that are without” means those outside the church. It takes wise walking to win them for Christ (cf Rom 8:1; 13:13).
 - b. We all have been on the outside at one point or another in our lives. We know what it feels like.
2. To be “without” is to be without Christ, without the kingdom, without the church, without the faith.

Note: Paul wrote this letter to those “in Christ” (1:2), those who had been “translated into the kingdom” (1:13), those “in the faith” (1:23), those “in one body” (3:15).

 - a. We have a responsibility to those without to impress upon them the necessity to get in Christ (cf 2 Tim 1:1; 2:10).
 - b. Our obligation is to make the message (the gospel) plain, honest and simple (cf 1 Pet 4:6).
3. “[R]edeeming the time” means seize every opportunity (cf Eph 5:15, 16).
 - a. Squandered opportunities will haunt us.
 - b. Souls will be lost if we allow those occasions to slip past us (cf Gal 6:10).
4. In addition to that fact, we also have to use time wisely.
 - a. We are stewards of the time allotted. We all have the same 168 hours per week to serve God. Our time allocation is used up quickly (cf Job 7:6, 7; 9:25, 26; James 4:14).
 - b. It is all His time; we belong to Him.
5. “Let your speech be always with grace” means speech that is pleasant, marked by courtesy (cf Eph 4:29).
 - a. This directive is connected to those who are “without.”
 - b. What we say and how we say it will influence all who hear us, and will make the first impression of the Lord’s church.
6. “[S]easoned with salt” is used here to indicate palatability. We must make the gospel desirable, tasty (cf Matt 5:13).⁸⁵
 - a. Harsh words and abrasive speech will not save souls.
 - b. Use what you say and how you say it to impress favorably those outside the body.

⁸⁵ *Meyers wrote in his NT Commentary: “...a figurative representation of speech as an article of food, which is communicated. The salt is emblem of wisdom, as is placed beyond doubt by the context in Colossians 4:5, and is in keeping with the sense of Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:49-50). As an article of food seasoned with salt is thereby rendered palatable, so what is spoken receives through wisdom (in contents and form) it’s morally attracting, exciting and stimulating quality.”*

7. “[T]hat ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” has less to do with our individual cleverness and more to do with the clear and kind way we answer questions about the one, true religion.
 - a. We always want to know the biblical answer to any Bible question, but a harsh, unkind, correct answer will not benefit the querist or the Lord’s church (cf 1 Pet 3:15).
 - b. We must study to learn the scriptures and pray we will have the right attitude in sharing our knowledge.
 - c. This will only be done if we properly season our speech.

III. Personal greetings and messages to those at Colosse (7-14).

Note: The Lord’s faithful are often only known to Him. Paul mentions a few names here. He did not hesitate to give recognition to those who had done well, neither should we (cf Phil 3:17).

A. The first name mentioned is Tychicus.

1. He is mentioned, by name, in four other books. Always mentioned in some connection to the apostle Paul (Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21; 2 Tim 4:12; Titus 3:12).
 - a. He is described as being from Asia by Luke (cf Acts 20:4). Asia was a providence of Asia Minor.

Note: This is the same area that all seven of the churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 were located.

- b. His close relationship with Paul is recorded in Eph 6:21, 22. Possibly from the city of Ephesus. Ephesus and Colosse were about 125 miles apart.
 - c. If we delegate a person to speak for us, we will pick someone of the highest caliber. Someone who is honest and that we trust. Tychicus was such a man.
 - d. Scriptures describe this man as “a faithful brother, and a faithful minister and a fellowservant.”
2. The brethren at Colosse would be interested in Paul’s welfare, and he was interested in theirs.
 - a. He wanted them to know his condition. He wanted to have their hearts comforted. He was not being mistreated, nor in a dungeon (cf Acts 28:30) and still spreading the gospel as best he could (cf Phil 4:22).
 - b. These brethren had a fight on their hands with the false teachers, they did not need to be concerned with Paul’s confinement. He was allowing them to focus on the needs at Colosse.

B. Onesimus is the second person mentioned (vs 9).

1. A runaway slave who ran right into a great man of God.
2. Paul will describe this man as his own “son” (Philemon 10). Paul uses this term for only one other person, Timothy (1 Tim 1:2).
 - a. Paul also says Onesimus is faithful (like Tychicus) and a “beloved brother.”
 - b. Paul then reveals the close connection of Onesimus to the Colossian church, “who is one of you.”

- c. From this verse we can deduce that both Philemon and Onesimus were from the city of Colosse.
 - d. Philemon would also make known Paul's affairs, as did Tychicus.
 - e. He ran away as a slave, returns as a trusted equal to Paul. The brotherhood of Christ levels the social playing field (cf Gal 3:28).
Note: His conversion made him profitable, the name Onesimus means profitable.
- C. Next, Paul mentions Aristarchus and Marcus (vs 10).
1. Aristarchus was from Macedonia (cf Acts 19:29).
 - a. He was one of the men who was rushed into the theater in the city of Ephesus (cf Acts 19:29).
 - b. He was among the men who accompanied Paul back to Jerusalem with the contribution from the Gentiles (cf Acts 20:4, 5).
 - c. He was also on-board the ship as Paul and Luke sailed toward Rome from Caesarea (cf Acts 27:2).
 - d. The word "fellowprisoner" means *co-captive*.⁸⁶
 - e. Paul uses this term with reference to three other brethren (two in Rom 16:7, one in Philemon 23).
 - f. Lightfoot surmised that "probably his relationship with the Apostle in Rome excited suspicion and led to a temporary confinement, or that he voluntarily shared his captivity by living with him."⁸⁷
 2. Marcus was the same man who wrote the book of Mark.
 - a. Also known as John Mark, the man we were first introduced to in Acts 12:12 when Peter was released by "the angel of the Lord" from prison.
 - b. He is a wonderful man who had come a long way in Christ. He had departed from the work of the 1st evangelist tour and returned to Jerusalem (cf Acts 13:13). Now, many years later, he is a close and trusted friend and someone who was very useful to Paul (cf 2 Tim 4:11).
 - c. Peter thinks so highly of this man that he calls him "my son" (cf 1 Pet 5:13).
 - d. The parenthetical phrase at the end of Verse 10 might be an indication of just how long negative perceptions can follow us. Mark abandoned Paul some fifteen to eighteen years before this letter. If those brethren had heard about Mark's faux pas and holding that against him, Paul was instructing them to "receive him" in full fellowship.
- D. Then "Jesus, which is called Justus" is mentioned (vs 11).
1. We know nothing of this man other than what is said here.
 - a. He is mentioned as "of the circumcision" so Jesus would have been his Jewish name and Justus his Roman name.

⁸⁶ Strong's #4869, which is a compound word from #4862 and #164

⁸⁷ Vine's page 214, Vol 3.

Note: “[W]ho are of the circumcision” probably refers to the last three names mentioned.

- b. Paul did encounter a man by this same name who gave him shelter while in Corinth (cf Acts 18:7).
2. The phrase, “These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God” is thought to reference the Jewish Christians with Paul in Rome. We know he will mention three more Gentile Christian workers, by name, in verses 12 and 14.
 - a. They are described as giving Paul “comfort” in his confinement. This is a different Greek word than what is used in Verse 8, where it is used as a verb, to give comfort (e.g., 2 Cor 1:4; 7:13). In Verse 11 it is a noun which denotes soothing or solace (used only here in the N.T.).
 - b. The word *to sooth* or *to comfort*⁸⁸ is the Greek word *paragoria*. The medicine we might give to our children is named after this Greek word, “Paregoric.” It is a medical term, maybe Luke is teaching him some terms.
Note: Interestingly, Paul does not mention Peter being in Rome. The Catholics claim he was pope in Rome for almost 30 years. The Bible has him off in Babylon working with the church of Christ, not in Rome (1 Pet 5:13).
- E. Epaphras is the subject of verse 12 and 13.
 1. We know this man was a “dear followservant” and “a faithful minister” of the church of Christ in Colosse (Col 1:7).
 - a. Paul says he “is one of you” indicating he was from Colosse and had journeyed to Rome as an aide to Paul.
 - b. Being a servant is our duty as Christians (cf Jn 12:26).
 - c. It is how Peter, James and John describe themselves, through inspiration (cf James 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; Rev 1:1).
 2. Philemon 23 records him as a “fellowprisoner.”⁸⁹
 3. Paul says Epaphras was “laboring fervently for you in prayers.” The words, “laboring fervently” come from a single Greek word that means *to agonize*,⁹⁰ but this agony was in his prayers for the church.
 - a. He made regular, earnest and fervent pleas for their spiritual welfare (cf Col 1:9, 22; Jude 24).
 - b. This is another indication of the potential damage false teachers could inflict on them.
 - c. Our modern churches need faithful servants that will pray like Epaphras prayed, for us to remain in the old paths (cf Jer 6:16).
 - d. The zeal that Paul mentions in Verse 13 is not only for the saints in Colosse, but for two additional congregations.
 - 1) The church at Laodicea is only mentioned in this book (4x) and once in the book of Revelation.

⁸⁸ Ibid page 206, Vol 2

⁸⁹ See page 49, this book, “C” for additional information on “fellowprisoner.”

⁹⁰ Benson’s Commentary

- 2) The congregation at Hierapolis is mentioned nowhere else.
- 3) The significance of this verse is that these three cities were located close together. They were all located in the Lycus Valley.
- 4) Only about ten miles between Colosse and Laodicea, and only about five miles from Laodicea to Hierapolis. Their proximity would make them vulnerable to the same false teaching and false teachers.

Note: Robertson speculates that Epaphras evangelized all three cities.⁹¹

F. Luke and Demas are brought up in Verse 14.

1. Here, Luke is described as “the beloved physician.”

Note: This is a giant of a man in the 1st century. He is responsible for writing more of the New Testament than any other writer. He wrote more verses than did Paul (2,158 vs 2,033) and more words (50,194 vs 43,402). The most prolific writer of the New Testament was a Gentile.

- a. He was with Paul, and had been with Paul during most of his travels. The famous “we” passages in Acts reveals his dedication to the famous apostle (cf Acts 16:10; 20:6).
- b. Luke was with Paul when he left Caesarea on that eventful voyage toward Rome (cf Acts 27:1).⁹²
- c. Some think that Paul was taken captive a second time after his release. If that is the case, 2 Timothy 4:11 has Luke with Paul even at that later date.
2. Something is conspicuous in its absence concerning Demas. His name is mentioned without comment.

Notice:

- a. Tychicus—beloved brother, faithful minister, fellow servant.
- b. Onesimus—faithful, beloved brother.
- c. Aristarchus—fellowprisoner, fellow worker.
- d. Marcus—fellow worker.
- e. Justus—fellow worker.
- f. Epaphras—a servant of Christ, laborer for you.
- g. Luke—beloved physician.
- h. Demas—
 - 1) We know apostasy does not happen overnight.
 - 2) Bad seeds are planted. False ideas root and grow.
 - 3) 2 Timothy 4:10 records, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...”
 - 4) Maybe Paul had reservations about him at this early date. Surely, the Holy Ghost knew what was going to transpire.

IV. Paul’s final salute and instructions toward other congregations (15-18).

- A. Since we know what has been recorded in Revelation 3:14-16, we know these Christians were in danger.

⁹¹ Robertson’s NT Word Pictures

⁹² See The Book of Acts, An Outlined Study, pages 98, 127-128 and 170, this author.

1. The risen Christ said they were “lukewarm.”
 2. Paul’s deep concern for the churches in this area was expressed at the beginning of Colossians 2.
 3. When we do not realize that the danger is real, we fail to see, or heed, the warnings permeating the pages of the New Testament we are doomed to follow the steps of the Laodiceans (cf 1 Cor 8:9; Heb 3:12).
- B. Nymphas (16) was a man who hosted a congregation of the Lord’s people in his house.
1. Many here, no doubt, have been a part of this same kind of worship.
 - a. It was not uncommon in the 1st century, and is still common in our modern world (cf Rom 16:5; Philemon 2).
 - b. Sometimes it is necessary to separate from larger, formal congregations when they allow, or make the decision, to be influenced by apostasy and false teaching.
 - c. Would you be willing to meet in a house in order to be right in the sight of God?
 - d. Aquila and Pricilla made this choice (cf 1 Cor 16:19).
 2. It is very possible that the inspired letters were circulated throughout the early church. It was the only inspired teaching many of them were ever blessed with having received.
 - a. A letter exchange was established between Colosse and Laodicea.
 - b. The letter to the Laodiceans was not preserved for posterity (cf 1 Cor 5:9).
 - c. Does this mean we have part of God’s will for mankind missing? No! God’s providence has preserved all we need to know for salvation and proper conduct.
 - d. Many books, even in the Old Testament, are mentioned that we simply do not have today, e.g., 1 Kings 11:41; 2 Chron 9:29; 12:15.
 - e. These churches were cooperating in evangelism. False brethren today, notwithstanding.
- C. Archippus (17) is also mentioned in Philemon 2 as a “fellow soldier.”
1. Imagine, if you will, the impact this brother would feel as all these people began encouraging him, at the request of Paul.
 - a. I am convinced that this man fulfilled his ministry after such an admonition.
 - b. What could we do today if we captured this spirit?
 - c. The word “ministry” is the same word used in Acts 1:17, 6:4, 1 Tim 1:12 and many other places.
 Note: Lest we think this would only apply to a “minister,” the same word is used in Luke 10:40 (serving), Acts 6:1 (ministration), 11:29 (relief) and several other places.
 - d. No matter what position we fill as Christians, we are admonished to “[t]ake heed,” or to be on guard, (cf Rom 11:21), but here it is a specific reference to his ministry (cf Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 4:16).

2. The word “salutation” (18) can be used at the beginning or at the end of a message (cf Luke 1:41; 1 Cor 16:21).
 - a. It appears that Paul may have dictated many of his letters to someone who wrote the message down for him (an amanuensis), but he often signed, or finished the letter himself (cf 2 Thess 3:17).
 - b. No matter who put pen to paper, the words were Paul’s, as directed by the Holy Ghost.
 - c. His ending the letter in his own hand would authenticate the message. Note: If his signature was enough to authenticate this letter, then the people at Colosse must have known Paul.
3. “Remember my bonds” (chains, NKJ) was Paul’s way of asking for their continued prayers (cf Heb 13:3).
 - a. The restrictions of his confinement kept him from free course of spreading the gospel. He felt the urgency, but could not go himself.
 - b. Also, remember the reason for “my bonds.” He was a political prisoner because of the gospel.
 - c. Beginning in Acts 21:31, and continuing all the way through the rest of Acts, Paul was in protective custody at the hands of the Roman government.
 - 1) He was never officially charged with a crime that we have evidence of. (with the possible exception of Acts 16 at Philippi) (cf Acts 26:2, 30-32).
 - 2) Unjustly charged by the Jews, unjustly detained by the Romans, yet still a mighty force for the cause of Christ.
4. “Grace be with you. Amen”
 - a. Our Christian life begins with grace (cf Acts 15:11; Rom 11:5).
 - b. We are kept by grace (cf 2 Pet 3:18).
 - c. Grace will bring us home (cf Eph 2:5).

Conclusion: The book of Colossians calls each of us to love Christ, His truth and to hate evil and error. The false teachers in and around the church of Christ at Colosse had to be faced. It is equally necessary to do so in our modern world. What we can learn from this book is that the truth, and only the truth, will make us free.

Colossians Appendix A

God does not accept unauthorized worship. Colossians 3:16 is a basic and easily understood passage, yet there is so much confusion in our world about the addition of mechanical instrumental music and other deviations.

Why do so few chose to follow the instructions of Colossians 3:16? Why do so many want to add extraneous items to worship? I do not believe it is a lack of understanding. I do believe it is a gross lack of respect for biblical authority.

Just because an act is intended to be worship does not make it an acceptable act of worship in God's sight. Cain's worship was not accepted (Gen 4). Jesus described the most religious and outwardly righteous people on earth as offering "vain" worship because they mingled human reasoning with God's wisdom (Matt 15:1-9).

The Bible often uses the word "strange" to indicate that which is not authorized. Nadab and Abihu offered "strange" fire before the Lord (Lev 10), King Solomon married "strange" women (Neh 13:27), Sodom and Gomorrah went after "strange flesh" (Jude 7) and we are warned not to go after "strange doctrines" (Heb 13:9). One thing we do not want to do is be "strange" in our worship. In order for us to keep from being "strange" we must learn how God does and does not authorize.

God does not authorize by:

1. Our personal likes and dislikes.
2. By any erroneous conclusions we might reach.
3. Upon our opinions or the opinions of others.
4. By what is popular.
5. By locally established traditions (i.e. we have always done it that way).
6. Silence of the scriptures.

However, God does authorize by:

1. Example.
2. Implication.
3. Direct statement.

Having established how He does authorize a few questions are in order:

1. Does God authorize mechanical instruments of music?
2. Does God authorize choirs?
3. Does God authorize solos?
4. Does God authorize special music?

The answer to all four of these questions is a resounding NO! But, some will try to bend and pervert the word of God to suit their own desires or agendas.

The answer to question #1 (Does God authorize mechanical instruments of music?). It is a simple task to find the authority for vocal, a cappella singing. There are, at least, eight verses authorizing or indicating a cappella singing: Acts 16:25, Rom 15:9, 1 Cor 14:15, Eph 5:19, Col 3:16, Heb 2:12, Heb 13:15, James 5:13.

How many verses in the New Testament support mechanical instruments of music? None.

The answer to questions #2, 3 and 4 can be grouped together (Does God authorize choirs, solos, special music?). “Speaking to yourselves” (Eph 5:19) would include everyone at Ephesus. If not, why not? “[O]ne another” (Col 3:16) would include everyone at Colosse. If not, why not? What verse could be used for singling out a choir, praise groups or even a solo, from God’s word? None.

If a person is an award winning singer; and has been blessed with the voice of an angel, there is still no authority to set that person apart, or single that person out in a song service. Singing is a congregation obligation. The “you” in Colossians 3:16 is plural. Plus, there is an obligation for all to be “teaching and admonishing” which cannot be done if you are silent, and it is a command that cannot be done by proxy. The liberally minded brethren will try to circumvent plain scriptures by giving microphones to the best singers. There is no authority to place one member above another in our worship. In some congregations they have even invented the term “praise groups” for emphasizing a group less than the whole congregation. They had to wrestle the term from the denominational world because it is not a scriptural term.

We have even had groups among us that tried to use their voices as mechanical instruments of music. Some seem to think this is a ‘legal loophole’ in order to “sound” like a band playing. Sounding like an instrument is still a violation of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16.

Historically speaking, there were no mechanical instruments of music used in the church for about 600 years.⁹³ There were plenty of instruments around, and inspired history even records those instruments to be connected, or associated, with idol worship in Daniel’s time (Dan 3:4-7). I do not know if this is why Jesus and the inspired writers of the New Testament left those instruments out of the Bible, but they have been left out, and they need to stay out of our assemblies.

Denominationalism is wrong in every aspect of its existence, but even those various denominational organizations knew that instrumental music in a worship service was more than God authorized. The following are excerpts from their own publications indicating they knew it was wrong, even if Mission magazine, and those of that stripe are spiritually blind.

We will start with the Roman Catholic Church:

Gerhard Gietmann wrote in The Catholic Encyclopedia,

⁹³ According to Chambers Encyclopedia the Pope introduced the organ in worship in 666 A.D., Vol 7. Page 112. Many question the reliability of this source, and place the actual date much later.

Although Josephus tells of the wonderful effects produced in the Temple by the use of instruments, the first Christians were of too spiritual a fibre to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice. Clements of Alexandria severely condemns the use of instruments even at Christian banquets.⁹⁴

How long did the practice of singing a cappella continue? Joseph Otten, in The Catholic Encyclopedia wrote,

For almost a thousand years Gregorian chant, without any instruments or harmonic addition, was the only music used in connection with the liturgy. The organ, in its primitive and rude form, was the first, and for a long time the sole, instrument used to accompany the chant. ...The Church has never encouraged, and at most only tolerated, the use of instruments...The Sistine Chapel has not even an organ.⁹⁵

What did Augustine think of instrumental music? According to Augustine,

Musical instruments were not used. The pipe, tabret, and harp here associated so intimately with the sexual heathen cults, as well as the wild revelries and shameless performance of the degenerate theater and circus, it is easy to understand the prejudice against their use in worship (A.D. 354, describing the singing at Alexandria).⁹⁶

Regarding the use of instruments used in worship Thomas Aquinas wrote,

Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize.⁹⁷

The Catholic church did not use or authorize mechanical instruments of music and up to the 16th century were working hard to abolish there use entirely. ⁹⁸

The Greek Orthodox Church:

The Greek Church split from the Catholic Church over disagreements about the use of instrumental music in worship.

The execution of Byzantine church music by instruments, or even the accompaniment of sacred chanting by instruments was ruled out by the Eastern Fathers as being incompatible with the pure, solemn, spiritual character of the religion of Christ.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Vol 10, pp648-652, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10648a.hym>

⁹⁵ Transcribed by Ferruccio Germani, Vol X, pp 657-688

⁹⁶ <http://www.bible.ca/H-music.htm>

⁹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, Bingham's Antiquities, Vol 3, P137

⁹⁸ Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, II, 1702

⁹⁹ Constantine Cararnos, Bysantine Sacred Music, p10, II

To this day the Greek Orthodox Church, which claims to be “today the second largest organized body of Christians in the world,”¹⁰⁰ does not worship with the instrument.

The Lutheran Church:

This denomination still holds the name of Martin Luther as its namesake. Martin Luther commented on the use of instrumental music in worship with these sage words:

The organ in worship is the insignia of Baal! The Roman Catholics borrowed it from the Jews.¹⁰¹

The Presbyterian Church:

John Calvin was the founder of the Presbyterian denomination and the diabolical force behind what we commonly refer to as Calvinism.

In a commentary this man wrote about the book of Psalms, specifically Psalm 33, he wrote, “The name of God, no doubt, can, properly speaking, be celebrated only by the articulate voice.”

In the publication titled, Questions on the Confession of Faith and Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of American, this question was posed; “Is there any authority for instrumental music in the worship of God under the present dispensation?”

Answer: Not the least, only the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs was appointed by the apostles...not a syllable is said in the New Testament in favor of instrumental music nor was it ever introduced in to the Church until the eight century, after the Catholics had corrupted the simplicity of the gospel by their carnal inventions. It was not allowed in the Synagogues, the parish churches of the Jews, but was confined to the Temple service and was abolished with the rites of that dispensation.¹⁰²

The Methodist Church:

Adam Clarke is probably the most famous of the Methodists, present or past. He wrote a commentary on the whole Bible that took forty years to complete. He became a master of both the Hebrew and Greek languages.

Clarke states his view on mechanical musical instruments in a clear fashion:

I am an old man, and an old minister; and I here declare that I have never knew them [musical instruments] productive of any good in the worship of God; and have had reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God I

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaaith/articles7053.asp>

¹⁰¹ McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia, Vol 6, p762.

¹⁰² <http://www.ccel.org/calvin/calcom08.xxxix.i.html>

abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity.¹⁰³

John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist Church. Mr. Wesley, who was a music lover, was asked about his opinion of instruments of music being introduced in the chapels of the Methodists. His response reveals his deep understanding of what is acceptable in this matter...”I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen.” To this Adam Clarke said, “I say the same...”

The Baptist Church:

The Baptist Church is the largest of the Protestant religions. Their noted historian, David Benedict, stated in his book titled, *Fifty Years Among the Baptist*, which was published in 1860, that congregational singing generally prevailed among the Baptist Churches. He explained how small instruments of music were gradually accepted in some Baptist congregations. He continued,

The changes which have been experienced in the feelings of a large portion of our people has often surprised me. Staunch old Baptists in former times would as soon have tolerated the Pope of Rome in their pulpits as an organ in their galleries, and yet the instrument has gradually found its way among them, and the successors in church management, with nothing like the jars of difficulties which arose of old concerning the bass viol and smaller instruments of music.

Charles Spurgeon may well be the most famous preacher of Baptist persuasion the world had known. In his book titled, *Treasury of David* he wrote the following in connection to Psalm 33:2 and the phrase, “Praise the Lord with harp.”

Man need all the help they can get to stir them up to praise. This is the lesson to be gathered from the use of musical instruments under the old dispensation. Israel was at school, and used childish things to help her to learn; but in these days, when Jesus gives us spiritual manhood, we can make melody without strings and pipes. We who do not believe these things to be expedient in worship, lest they should mar its simplicity.

The Church of Scotland, founded by John Knox, did not use mechanical instruments of music.

The Church of England had famous scholars W.J. Conybeare and J.S. Howson write in the *Christian Encyclopedia* in commenting on Ephesians 5:19,

Throughout the whole passage there is a contrast implied between the Heathen and the Christian practice... When you meet, let your enjoyment consist not on fullness of wine, but fullness of the spirit; let your songs be, not the drinking songs of heathen feasts, but psalms and hymns; and their accompaniment, not the

¹⁰³ Clarke’s Commentary, Vol 4, page 684.

music of the lyre, but the melody of the heart; while you sing them to the praise not of Bacchus or Venus, but of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁴

The question is not if they had instruments of music in the Temple. The question is not if there will be harps in heaven. The question is, can a person use mechanical instruments of music in the New Testament church and be pleasing to God? There is not a single passage that authorizes or implies their use. Not one.

A century ago the proponents of this digression tried to use the Greek word “psallo” to justify using mechanical instruments of music in worship services. Brother N.B. Hardeman debated Ira Boswell on this subject in 1923. Hardeman so convincingly devastated the concept of warranting mechanical instruments based on this Greek word that this erroneous defense was abandoned by most of the reprobates. The heart (Eph 5:19) is the only divinely authorized musical instrument to be used in our worship services.

The real question should not be, why do the churches of Christ not use mechanical instruments of music in their worship services? The real questions should be, why does any group add these unauthorized instruments?

Colossians 3:17 is a divine appeal to have Bible authority for all we do and practice. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” It is not a mistake that the Holy Ghost followed a statement about acceptable music (vs 16) with the necessity of scriptural authority.

Let me conclude with these remarks: Entertainment is not worship. Worship is not entertainment. Worship is worship. It is always safe to do as God commands. It is never safe to do what He has not commanded.

¹⁰⁴ Thanks to Allen Webster for compiling much of the historical information used here.