

# PAUL'S LETTERS FROM ROME



## An Outlined Study

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Kissimmee church of Christ



## Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Paul's Letters from Rome .....	1
<b>The Book of Ephesians .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Ephesians 1 .....</b>	<b>3</b>
The God of spiritual blessings .....	3
<b>Ephesians 2 .....</b>	<b>11</b>
For by grace we are saved through faith.....	11
<b>Ephesians 3 .....</b>	<b>19</b>
The revelation of the mystery .....	19
<b>Ephesians 4 .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Unity .....	27
<b>Ephesians 5 .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Walking in love; marriage is symbolic of the church .....	37
<b>Ephesians 6 .....</b>	<b>49</b>
Additional relationships and the Christian conflict .....	49
<b>The Book of Philippians .....</b>	<b>57</b>
Introduction.....	57
<b>Philippians 1 .....</b>	<b>59</b>
Paul is thankful for the Phillipian church .....	59
<b>Philippians 2 .....</b>	<b>67</b>

Work out your own salvation.....	67
<b>Philippians 3</b> .....	<b>79</b>
Press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus .....	79
<b>Philippians 4</b> .....	<b>89</b>
Salutations and praise .....	89
<b>The Book of Colossians</b> .....	<b>101</b>
Introduction.....	101
<b>Colossians 1</b> .....	<b>103</b>
Paul is thankful for the Colossians' faithfulness.....	103
<b>Colossians 2</b> .....	<b>117</b>
Paul exhorts them to choose Christ over philosophy.....	117
<b>Colossians 3</b> .....	<b>131</b>
Putting off the old man and conducting our homes for spiritual growth .....	131
<b>Colossians 4</b> .....	<b>147</b>
Relationships and conduct; personal greetings.....	147
<b>The Book of Philemon</b> .....	<b>157</b>
A request to a slave owner for kindness and forgiveness .....	157
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	<b>173</b>

## INTRODUCTION

### Paul's Letters from Rome

Paul, during his confinement in Rome, wrote four letters, or epistles. They are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Those four books, in that order, will serve as the continuation of the study of the Book of Acts.<sup>1</sup> We will title this volume *Paul's Letters from Rome*.

As the book of Acts draws to a close we see the mighty apostle falsely accused by the Jews and taken into protective custody by the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem. The Jews of the city intended on killing Paul, as stated in Acts 21:31. The Roman soldiers saved Paul's life then and again in Chapter 23 when he is moved from Jerusalem to Caesarea, for his protection, when a plot to take his life is revealed. 40 men had taken an oath to kill Paul (Acts 23:21). After two years in confinement in Caesarea he appeals to Caesar, which he had a right to do as a Roman citizen.

The internal evidence of Paul considering himself a prisoner when he penned this letter is easily seen in such passages as Eph 3:1, 4:1 and 6:20. It appears he was confined in his own hired house, and not truly imprisoned, while in Rome (cf Acts 28:30). He was not alone in his confinement. We will see he had regular visitors, supporters and many close friends that help him and encouraged him in his stay.

By way of introduction, we know that Paul visited the city of Ephesus during his second evangelistic trip (cf Acts 18:18-21) and then again on the third trip (cf Acts 19:1). From his "own hired house," in Roman confinement, he writes his longest (by far) epistle to those saints in Ephesus. This letter is intended to emphasize the church of Christ as the body of Christ with Him as the head.

There were no problems mentioned, so this letter is a letter of encouragement. It stresses the blessings to be found in Jesus Christ.

The letter to the Ephesians, particularly the first three chapters, has been described as "the profoundest truth ever revealed to men..."

The text for these outlines are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> See *An Outlined Study of the Book of Acts*, same author.



# The Book of Ephesians

## Ephesians 1

### The God of spiritual blessings

- I. Paul's greeting (1, 2).
- A. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" was Paul's common way of beginning a letter (he used similar wording in the first verse of nine of the thirteen letters he wrote, e.g., Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1, etc.).
    - 1. It appears Paul's apostleship was challenged in the first century and has been challenged in most eras since then (cf 1 Cor 9:1).
    - 2. Paul's apostleship was by "the will of God."
      - a. He was not appointed an apostle by men, but by God (cf Acts 9:15; 26:15, 16).
      - b. He was an apostle by God's will, not by his own merit.
    - 3. "Saints" is the most often used term for members of the Lord's church in scriptures. All Christians were/are saints (Catholic canonization notwithstanding).
      - a. "And to the faithful" may refer to additional people, i.e., other than those in the city of Ephesus, who would also read the letter (cf Col 4:6; 1 Thess 5:27).
      - b. Not two different classifications of people.
  - B. Grace and peace occur together in many passages of scripture. In every passage in which they both occur grace is always before peace, e.g., Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; Gal 1:3, etc.

Note: The only exception is in Romans 16:20 where they occur in two different sentences within the same passage.

    - 1. Real peace is precluded by the grace of God (cf Rev 1:4).
    - 2. Real peace comes only through obedience to Jesus Christ our Lord (cf Col 1:20).
- II. Spiritual blessings are "in Christ" (3-14).
- A. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," (v 3) is a call for us to praise or eulogize God (cf Mk 14:61; 1 Pet 1:3).
    - 1. We most often ask for blessings rather than giving our blessing (a word which means *to praise*) to God the Father.
    - 2. Paul is encouraging the readers to give thanks or praise to God for the blessing of His Son coming into this world (cf Ps 72:19).
    - 3. The spiritual blessings that God has bestowed upon us have two qualifications:
      - a. They are "in heavenly places."
        - 1. The spiritual blessings of God are in heaven (the heavenlies) where Christ now abides (cf Phil 3:20).

Note: “Heavenly places” is used five times in this letter, and nowhere else in the New Testament (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10 and 6:12. In 6:12 it is translated “high places,” (KJV) but is the same word in the original). Each time it occurs the word *places* is italicized, which means it is a supplied word by the translators.

2. In a very real sense we operate in two realms as Christians. We are here, in this terrestrial, mundane sphere, but we are also seated with Christ (Eph 2:6).

Note: The blessings Paul writes of can only be enjoyed by those who have accepted the doctrine of Christ through obedience. Proper acceptance requires one to rise above earthly pursuits and carnal appetites. Hence, we live in this world, but we are not part of this world (cf Rom 8:1).

3. The “heavenly places” of this verse does not refer to the church in the primary sense. It has more to do with direction than location. The Greek Lexicon translates this word as *above the sky or celestial*.

b. They are “in Christ.”

1. The Bible declares there is only one way to get “in Christ” (cf Gal 3:27-29).
2. The converse must also be true; refusing to be baptized “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) leaves one outside of Christ, shrouded in sin (cf Acts 22:16).
3. Being “in Christ” mean that the Ephesians Christians (and us) are lifted above the commonplace. This world is not our home.

B. Some have been predestinated to be the children of God from the foundation of the world (v 4-6).

1. This predestination does not mean God had included some and excluded others. It means He has predetermined what it will take to be one of His children. We then decide if we are willing to meet the requirements in obedience (cf Rom 6:17; Heb 5:9).

Note: The Calvinistic view of predestination (God has selected some and excluded others at His will) cannot be true. Even the Calvinists do not believe this doctrine. If so, why do they:

1. Preach the gospel (Rom 1:16)?
2. Teach repentance (Lk13:3)?
3. Teach God’s word saves (James 1:21)?
4. If there is nothing one can do, why do anything at all (Heb 5:9)?
5. How can men have the power to become the children of God if they are powerless (Jn 1:12)?

a. “The foundation of the world” goes all the way back to pre-Genesis time (cf Jn 17:5, 24).

- b. God knew what it would take to obtain salvation before He spoke our world into existence (cf 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 1:9).



- c. Jesus, the Christ, was/is God’s plan so we can be classified as both “holy” and be “without blame” before Him (cf Eph 5:27; 1 Thess 3:13).
  - d. God, the Father, arranged for Jesus to be sacrificed as “the Lamb of God” so that we could be reconciled to Him (cf Jn 1:29, 36; Rom 5:10).
2. Adoption (v 5) means legally made children (cf Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5).
    - a. Paul includes himself in this adoption by using the words “us” and “we” (vv 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 have “us”; vv 7, 11, 12 have “we”).
    - b. No person on earth (Jew or Gentile) is exempt from meeting the predestined requirements.
    - c. In verse 6 Paul emphasizes grace. God gives grace. We are the recipients of that grace. A true blessing (cf 2 Cor 4:15).
    - d. Grace is often defined as unmerited favor. In other words, we get what we do not deserve.
- C. Redeemed through the blood of Christ (7-10).
1. Redemption has a two-fold implication: it means something that was once possessed is lost, and a price was paid to purchase it back (cf Isa 59:2; 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Pet 1:18, 19).
  2. It cost the Son of God His life to pay the price for our sins.
    - a. Why would He do that for us?
    - b. By the richness of His grace (cf Rom 2:4; 9:23).
    - c. The word “abounded” in verse 8 describes the lavishness of God’s grace upon us. According to Strong’s it means *superabound* [sic] or to *be in excess* (cf Rom 5:20).
    - d. “Prudence” is the practical application of the wisdom for our salvation. It should be thought of as proper understanding of spiritual matters.
    - e. God not only thought of our salvation, He did what was necessary to provide for our salvation (cf Rom 11:33).
  3. The word “mystery” (v 9) *means to reveal something that was once unknown* (cf Matt 13:11; Rom 16:25, 26).
  4. We often refer to the three dispensations of the Bible, i.e., the Patriarchal Dispensation, the Mosaic Dispensation and the Christian Dispensation. This is where the idea originates.
    - a. The “dispensation of the fullness of time” simply refers to the last dispensation (cf Gal 4:4).
    - b. God waited until all things were ideal for the advancement of the saving gospel.
      1. The Romans had provided a quality road system to travel on. They also provided a universal law under which their citizens enjoyed unparalleled protection.
      2. The Roman army was ubiquitous and powerful. That made for generally peaceful travel on land and on the seas.
      3. The Greeks had provided a universal language to simplify the proclamation of the gospel.

4. The Babylonian captivity had provided the synagogues which were used by the early disciples to worship in and teach from.
  5. Never before had the world been so ready for the gospel of salvation to be spread.
- D. In him we have the guarantee of our inheritance (11-14).
1. The five word grouping in verse 11 “we have obtained an inheritance” comes from a single Greek word, which means *a portion* or *an allotment*.
    - a. In “the song of Moses” he refers to the people of the nation of Israel as God’s portion and Jacob as the lot of his inheritance (cf Deut 32:9).
    - b. There is a contrast and a connection between Israel and the New Testament church (see v 12; cf Rom 8:17; Gal 3:29).
    - c. Biblical predestination was covered on pages 3 and 4.
  2. The greatest single purpose of mankind is to glorify God (cf Isa 43:7; Rom 15:6; Eph 3:21).
  3. “Who first trusted in Christ” (v 12) probably refers to the Jewish anticipation of the coming Messiah.
    - a. This would certainly include Simeon and Anna (Lk 2:25-27; 34-38), but should not be limited to just those.
    - b. Daniel’s vision included the Messiah more than 500 years before His birth (cf Dan 9:26, 27).
    - c. In a very real sense we can see the Messiah in the prophecy of Gen 3:15 and possibly even in Adam’s statement in verse 20, which was made before she gave birth.
  4. Paul compares the Christians at Ephesus with the Jews who trusted God to fulfill His promise.
    - a. It would be important for them to understand that there were no second class Christians. The cross of Christ leveled the field (cf Rom 10:12).
    - b. Two important factors concerning the word of God are coupled together in verse 13; hearing the truth and then believing the truth (cf Jn 20:31; Rom 10:17).
    - c. God’s power to save is contained within the engrafted word (cf Rom 1:16; James 1:21).
    - d. The word “sealed” means *to mark for security* or *to stamp, as with a signet* (cf Matt 27:66, also see Acts 2:38, 5:32).
    - e. The “Spirit of promise” is our earnest or our pledge, but this does not necessitate miraculous signs (cf Lk 1:15; Jn 10:41).
      1. Think of “earnest” as a down-payment. If the regular payments are not made then the earnest is lost, i.e., vehicle, house, etc.
      2. The application to our spiritual lives is obvious. We pledge to God our lives so we might have eternal life with Him. God will not take away His earnest, but we can neglect making proper payment.
      3. The word “sealed” comes from a Hebrew word (pledge) which is found twice in Gen 38:17, 18.

- f. Verse 14 is a beautiful passage which reiterates God's promise of our salvation because we are ransomed souls (cf 1 Jn 3:1).

III. Paul prays for those who will read his letter (15-21).

- A. Paul does not stop giving "thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (cf Phil 1:3, 4; 2 Thess 1:3).

Note: The words "[C]ease not" do not mean Paul was in a constant state of prayer twenty-four hours a day. That would leave no time for the other obligations. Neither does it mean Paul was in what some call a *prayerful attitude* twenty-four hours a day. Prayer is an overt act that requires actions.

1. Verse 15 mentions "after I heard of your faith." Paul had not been in Ephesus since Acts 20, near the end of the third evangelistic journey (cf Acts 20:1).
  - a. Later in Chapter 20 (several months later, see Acts 20: 2, 3) Paul did counsel the elders from Ephesus in the city of Miletus (cf Acts 20:17).
  - b. That was the last contact Paul had with the congregation in Ephesus for several years, as far as we know from scripture.
  - c. Those years (possibly three or more, depending on when he penned this letter) would include his trip on to Jerusalem, his detainment and confinement in that city. His subsequent confinement in Caesarea, plus the length of time it took to get to Rome with the shipwreck and being castaway on Melita, known today as Malta (cf Acts 28:11).
2. What did Paul hear about the saints in Ephesus? He heard of their "faith" and "love" (cf Eph 3:17; 6:23).
  - a. Their faith was "in the Lord Jesus" (cf Gal 5:6).
  - b. Their love was "unto all the saints" (cf 1 Thess 4:9).
- B. God, the Father, is the One who hears and answers prayer. Therefore, praying to anyone or anything else is futile and unscriptural (cf Lk 11:1, 2).
  1. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was two-fold:
    - a. To receive the spirit of wisdom (cf James 1:5; 3:17).
      1. This is most likely not a prayer for the Ephesians to receive the Holy Ghost (they were already baptized believers, Acts 2:38), but rather to have a spirit or desire to understand what had been taught (cf Col 1:9, 28).
      2. This prayer is applicable to twenty-first century Christians.
    - b. "And the revelation in the knowledge of him" (cf 2 Pet 1:3; 3:18).
      1. The word "knowledge" goes beyond the common word for knowledge. It indicates a complete or thorough understanding.
      2. The NASV translates the word as "know fully" in 1 Cor 13:12.
    - c. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (v 18) is a beautifully worded way of expressing what Paul just recorded in verse 17.
      1. Jesus quoted Isaiah to say our eyes can be "closed" (cf Matt 13:14, 15).
      2. Near the end of His earthly ministry Jesus again quotes from Isaiah about "blinded" eyes (cf Jn 12:40).
      3. Many years later Paul would write to the Romans cautioning them about "darkened" eyes (cf Rom 11:10).

Note: All three of these New Testament references (*closed, blinded and darkened*) are taken from the same passage of scripture in Isaiah 6:9, 10.

C. The enlightening of understanding (v 18) has a three-fold application:

1. “Enlightened” in “the hope of his calling” (cf Phil 3:14).
2. “Enlightened” in “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (cf Acts 20:32; 26:18).
3. “Enlightened” in “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (cf Col 1:29; 2 Thess 1:11).

Note: Power is used twice in this verse. They are from two different words. The first one is *dunamis*, from which we get our words dynamo and dynamite. The second word will be explained under c., 3 below.

a. Not only hope now, but hope of eternal joy if we follow our understanding (cf 1 Cor 15:19; 2 Tim 1:12).

b. The riches of his glory are to be found in the saints.

Note: We cannot expect God’s riches if we are not counted, by God, to be in the saints. Everything He promises in the New Testament is promised to the church of Christ and nowhere else (cf Rom 16:16).

c. The greatness of God’s power to believers is revealed in three extraordinary words in verse 19:

1. “Working” is the word we get *energy* from (cf 2 Thess 2:11).

2. “Mighty” is a word that is used to increase the emphasis of His power (cf Eph 6:10).

3. “Power” is *kratos*. It means great strength (cf 1 Pet 4:11; 5:11).

4. The mighty energy and power of God can be known by His children through prayer.

D. The dynamic power and working of God was demonstrated (wrought, or worked, NKJ) in the resurrection of Jesus the Christ (cf Rom 1:4).

1. The “right hand” is a place of honor and authority (cf Ps 110:1).

a. Peter quoted this passage on Pentecost (cf Acts 2:34, 35).

b. This is the glory and position that Jesus prayed for just before His death (cf Jn 17:1-5).

2. “Heavenly *places*” would be the same as verse 3. See pages 6,7 for that discussion.

3. “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion” is simply a parallel passage to Matt 28:18.

a. Some have tried to make it classifications of heavenly beings, but that approach seems to make the passage unnecessarily hard (cf Col 1:16).

b. In His exalted position on “the right hand” He is “far above all” powers, celestial or terrestrial (cf 1 Pet 3:22).

c. Paul ends verse 21 with the thought of Christ having all power now (written in the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century) and will never be replaced by a greater power until the destruction of the world (cf Matt 25:31-34; 1 Cor 15:24).

IV. Jesus is the head of the church (22, 23).

- A. The last two verses of this chapter expand upon and reinforce what Paul had previously recorded for the Ephesians to consider (cf Col 2:10, 19).
1. The risen Christ was not given the exalted position of “the head over all things to the church” as a gift.  
 Note: The “all *things*” (the word *things* is supplied by the translators) goes far beyond the church. The universe is subject to the risen Christ (cf 1 Cor 15:57; Heb 2:8).
    - a. He voluntarily left heaven to come down to this earth and live as a man among men (cf Jn 1:14; Phil 2:5-8).
    - b. He was tempted by every possible temptation which befalls mankind while here (cf Matt 4:1; Lk 4:13; Lk 22:28; Heb 4:15).
    - c. An interesting way to look at the paramount incarnation of Jesus’ short sojourn on earth is to observe it from this perspective:
      1. What if He fully understood the possibility of a weak moment or small lapse in judgment could mean total failure for the human race (cf Lk 22:28)?
      2. That same possibility would eliminate His chance to return to heaven, for He would be a sinner without “a Christ” to intervene for Him.
      3. What if coming to earth was a very serious risk? That gamble involved His living as a man for some thirty-three years on earth without sin, dying as a pure sacrifice and trusting in the power of the Father to resurrect Him from the dead.
      4. What if He was gambling that He could do it because we needed His sacrifice? He put His eternity on the line for our hope of eternity. His position was not a gift, He earned it with valor.
      5. From this perspective, understanding what Jesus put on the line for us should inspire us to live the very best we can to show our gratitude for His effort.
      6. Is it possible that He was able to remain true and sinless because He knew the magnificence of the reward?
  2. “Church” (v 22) is the first time Paul uses the word (ekklesia) in this letter. He will use it eight additional times as he encourages the Ephesians to subject themselves to His leadership (cf Matt 16:18, 19).
- B. The church and the body are connected in parallel just as the church and the kingdom are connected in the passage from Matthew above (cf Col 1:18).
1. The head is incomplete without the body just as the body is incomplete without the head.
    - a. The church is described as “the fullness of him” (cf 1 Cor 6:15; Col 2:9, 10).
    - b. This makes the church the manifestation of the fullness of Christ, which is how the chapter started; “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (v 3).
  2. What Paul wants the readers to see is the love and care Christ will have for His body (church) since it is His body.

- a. Just as we protect and nourish our bodies He will do the same.
- b. He stands ready to supply for His body (us) whatever help we need to glorify Him in our conduct and actions (cf Eph 5:30).

## Ephesians 2

### For by grace we are saved through faith

- I. Those who were once dead in sin are alive in Christ (1-3).  
Note: Chapter two deals with the same subject that Paul introduced in verse 19 of the first chapter. He is exemplifying “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” through His mercy, love and grace (vv 4, 5).  
Note: Someone has said, “Those born once must die twice while those born twice must die but once.”
- A. Paul connects the power of God to raise Christ from the dead with the same power to quicken (make alive, NKJ) all who are dead in sin (cf 1 Cor 15:45).
1. “[W]ho were dead” refers to a state of spiritual death outside of Christ (cf 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Jn 3:14).
  2. Paul records that the Ephesians were dead “in trespasses and sins,” which are two words that refer to the same thing (cf Col 2:13).  
Note: By using these two words Paul incorporates all intentional and unintentional offences. Ignorance is no excuse.
  3. The word “walked” (v 2) is an indication of the manner of life for the Ephesians (cf 1 Jn 1:7; 2 Jn 6; 3 Jn 4).
  4. This former walk was according to:
    - a. “The course of this world” indicating the general lack of regard for following God’s laws of conduct and obedience (cf Gal 1:4; James 4:4).
    - b. “[T]he prince of the power of the air” refers to the devil’s power in this world (cf 2 Cor 4:4).
    - c. Jesus often referred to Satan by the description of “prince of this world” (cf Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).  
Note: “[O]f the air” possibly refers to the devil’s cunning way of whispering in our ears to do what we know we should not do (cf 2 Thess 2:8, 9).
- B. In contrast to the quickened (alive) Paul mentions the “spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (cf 2 Pet 2:14; 1 Jn 3:10).
1. Our “conversation” (conduct, NKJ) has changed because of our understanding of what God has done for us through Christ (1 Jn 2:8).
  2. We were all in the same condition. Lost. Lost in sin. Lost in our fleshly desires (cf Gal 5:19-21).
  3. Such low aspirations for being created in the image of God.
  4. Christians have to overcome fleshly desires and impulses of the mind.
    - a. It was in their past (cf Eph 4:22; Col 1:21).
    - b. The words “by nature” refer to the former conduct or common practices of the unconverted (cf Rom 2:14).
- II. God makes us alive together through grace (4-10).

- A. Even though mankind has “desires of the flesh” and are “by nature the children of wrath” (v 3) the God we worship is “rich in mercy” and has “great love” for us (cf 1 Pet 1:3; 1 Jn 4:10).
1. Verse 4 begins with an emphatic “but.” That “but” allows man to reverse the course that has been chartered in verses 1-3.
  2. In man’s darkest hour our great God extends hope to combat our total ruin (cf Rom 6:23).
    - a. “[R]ich in mercy” means He does not give us what we deserve.
    - b. Love is the motive for God doing what He did for us.
    - c. Mankind tends to love those who love them, God’s love is not selective. He loves us even when we are opposed to Him (cf Rom 5:8).
  3. To make sure the readers understand our desperate condition (v 5) Paul pens that we “were dead in sins” (cf Rom 5:6, 10).
  4. He did not leave us in that condition, but quickened us (see v 1) through Christ (cf Jn 6:63; Rom 8:2).
  5. Then, parenthetically inserted, are the words “by grace ye are saved.”
    - a. The grace of God is how we are brought out of the condition of being dead in our sins (cf Rom 11:5, 6).
    - b. To word the same sentiment differently, grace is how God brings us into a state of salvation (cf Titus 2:11).
    - c. Mercy is not getting what we deserve, grace is getting what we do not deserve.  
 Note: Some define grace as unmerited favor. The Greek word *charis* is as polymorphic in the original language as “grace” is in English (see Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, pages 169-171).
  6. “[R]aised us up together” (v 6) connects the Christian together with Christ in being raised up (cf 1 Cor 15:20).
    - a. Christ was raised up from the grave by the power of God (cf Acts 2:32; 13:30).
    - b. Paul made the connection between Christ being raised up and Christians being raised up after being buried in His likeness in Rom 6: 1-5 (cf Col 2:12, 13).  
 Note: The same power that raised up Christ (1:20) is exercised in raising up Christians from our lost condition.
    - c. The opportunity for us to sit together in heavenly places is ours only through the kindness and grace of God in Christ.  
 Note: “[I]n the ages to come” may indicate that Paul did not anticipate the eminent end of this world, as some have mistakenly taught. Future “ages” would be able to benefit from God’s kindness in Christ (cf Eph 3:21).
- B. Verse 8 begins with “For by grace ye are saved through faith.” Verse 9 begins “Not of works” which ties back to being saved.
1. This means that mankind does not have the ability to save itself.



- a. Salvation is a gift from God, we do not deserve it, but He gives it (offers it) to us anyway (cf Rom 6:23; 2 Cor 9:15).
  - b. Yet, mankind must have faith and must obey the gospel to obtain this gift (cf Gal 3:14; Heb 5:9; 1 Jn 5:10, 11).
2. If we could save ourselves we might have reason for boasting. Since that is not the case we are all on equal ground in our need for God's saving grace (cf Rom 11:6; 2 Tim 1:9).
    - a. Every generation of godly people must be reminded that we can never live good enough to deserve a place in heaven (cf Rom 3:23).
    - b. A proper understanding of God's word will eliminate boasting or glorying in our minds (cf Rom 3:27).
  3. "For we are his workmanship" (emphasis added, jb) reemphasizes our lofty position is only obtained by what Christ has done for us (cf Phil 1:6; 2:13).
    - a. The Greek word for "workmanship" is used in Rom 1:20 where it is translated "the things that are made" (cf Eph 3:9).
    - b. In Rom 1:20 Paul is writing of things created at "the beginning," here he is writing of things created new in Christ, unto good works (cf Matt 5:16).
    - c. The idea of "works" is often misunderstood in our modern religious world. The term is used differently throughout the New Testament:
      1. In a positive way:
        - a. Acts 9:36; Dorcus was a woman full of good works.
        - b. 2 Cor 9:8; The Corinthians were to abound to every good work.
        - c. 1 Tim 6:18; That they may be rich in good works.
        - d. 2 Tim 3:17; The scriptures furnish us with all good works.
        - e. James 2:14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26.
      2. In a negative way:
        - a. Rom 3:27; Boasting because of works.
        - b. Rom 4:2; Attempting to be justified by works.
        - c. Rom 4:6; Righteousness without works.
        - d. Gal 2:16; Not justified by the works of the law.
        - e. Gal 3:10; As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.
    3. Understanding the context is paramount in discerning what is meant by the word "works" in scripture.
    4. This means that man does not have the ability to save himself, but salvation is a gift of God through Christ. We will show what that gift means to us by the things we do for others, in His name (cf Titus 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14).
    5. Our walk, as Christians, has a direction (cf 1 Jn 1:7; 2:6).
- III. The Gentiles' moral condition prior to conversion (11, 12).
- A. "Remember" (v 11) is to remind the Gentiles of their hopeless condition before their conversion to Christ (cf Jer 14:8; 17:13; Jn 4:22).

Note: “*Physically* they lacked the ancient sign of the covenant; *politically* they had no part in Israel’s national or religious life, and *spiritually* they had no knowledge of the true God.”<sup>2</sup>

1. It is always good for us all to be reminded where we once were without Christ.
2. We were once physically, politically and spiritually inadequate.
3. The extreme prejudice the Jewish nation harbored against all the Gentile nations was ingrained in them from their early years.

Note: “The Jews said that God created Gentiles as fuel for the fires of hell, that of all the nations God made, He loved Israel alone, . . . that it was not even lawful to aid a Gentile woman in labor because it would only bring into the world another Gentile. The barrier was absolute. If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, a funeral for that boy was carried out. Even setting foot in a Gentile’s house defiled a Jew.”<sup>3</sup>

4. Unity in Christ was the only hope to eradicate this innate prejudice (cf Jn 17:20, 21; Eph 4:3).

B. Paul lists (v 12) a five point summary of the Gentiles’ previous (before the church of Christ came into existence, Acts 2:41, 47) foreboding condition:

1. “That at that time ye were without Christ,”
2. “[B]eing aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”
  - a. The words “being aliens” are translated as *alienated* in Eph 4:18. The NASV translates the words as *excluded* in both passages.
  - b. The same word is used in Col 1:21 with reference to the separation from God that sin causes (cf Isa 59:2).
  - c. The word “commonwealth,” which is used with reference to their kingdom or government, is used only one other time in the New Testament, with reference to the Roman chief captain’s highly desired *freedom* or citizenship (cf Acts 22:28).
3. “[S]trangers from the covenants of promise,”
  - a. The promises were made to Abraham (cf Gen 12:1-3; 17:1, 2).
  - b. The covenant was made with the Hebrew people (cf Ex 24:7, 8).
  - c. All of the great and precious promises God made with the Hebrews were unknown by the Gentile nations (cf Rom 3:1, 2).
4. “[H]aving no hope,”
  - a. Before God’s gift (vv 4, 8) most of the world was without hope.
  - b. Many teach that the rest of the world continued under the Patriarchal law after the special covenant was given to the Hebrew people. Why then are the Gentiles classified, by inspiration, as being without hope and without God?

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<sup>2</sup> George E. Harpur, A New Testament Commentary, Ephesians, page 174

<sup>3</sup> William Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, page 125

Note: The “patriarchal system could not save the Gentile nations any more that the Law of Moses could save the Jews.

5. “[W]ithout God in the world.”
  - a. Generally speaking, the Gentile world worshipped many gods (cf Acts 16:17; 1 Cor 8:4, 5).
  - b. Paul’s point is not that they could not know God, but that they had no real knowledge of Him.
  - c. The words translated “without God” are from a single Greek word *atheos*, which is our word atheist.
6. The Gentiles were truly in a sad condition before Christ. How thankful we should be for God’s grace and mercy (v 5).

#### IV. Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile through Christ (13-18).

Note: This next passage will deal with what God has done for the Gentiles who were once “far off.” The word “now” (v 13) refers to the gospel dispensation (13-15).

- A. The sacrificial blood of Christ is the factor that brought, or allowed, all of mankind near to God (cf 1 Tim 4:10; Titus 3:4).
  1. Through His atoning blood we are:
    - a. No longer separated from God (cf Rom 3:25; 5:9).
    - b. Dead to the world, but alive in Christ (cf Rom 6:11).
    - c. No longer without hope (cf Heb 6:19, 20).
    - d. Now spiritual Israel (cf Gal 3:9, 16).
    - e. Understanding that it was the sacrificial blood of Christ that did all this for us should sharpen the focus of our weekly observance of the Lord’s supper (cf Acts 20:7).
  2. Peace is the emphasis of this passage of scripture. Paul will mention peace in verses 14, 15 and 17.

Note: In the original language the word *peace* is used twice in verse 17. It should read, “And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and peace to them that are nigh.”
  3. “For he is our peace” refers to God being at peace with us through the atoning sacrifice of Christ (cf Isa 9:6; Micah 5:5a).
  4. He made both (Jew and Gentile) one by breaking down the wall (fence or hedge) that separated the two.
    - a. It is true that there was a wall of separation in the temple at Jerusalem that divided the Jews from the Gentiles, but that wall would have little or no significance to the members of the church of Christ in Ephesus.

Note: The literal wall of separation in Jerusalem would not be torn down for another eight or nine years (if written in 61 or 62 AD) from the writing of this letter, yet Paul speaks of it as past tense. Therefore, this is not a reference to the temple or a literal wall. The barrier was the old law.
    - b. God, through Christ, did not bring the Gentiles into the Jews. Neither did He bring the Jews into the Gentiles. He made something new in Christ (cf Gal 3:26-29).

Note: The word for “new” (v 15) is *kainos*, which means *a new kind of thing* (Barclay).

5. In His crucifixion (v 15) Christ abolished (took away) the Old Law of Moses.
  - a. The Old Testament Law was done away with because it had fulfilled the intended purpose (cf Matt 5:17; Gal 3:19, 23, 24).
    1. The old law was a good law (cf Rom 7:12).
    2. The old law was misused by the Jews as a source of contempt, and a source of hostility by the Gentiles. God removed it to make room for a better law (cf Heb 7:22; 8:6).
  - b. Christ is not only our peace, He is also our peacemaker, regardless of nationality or race. One shepherd, one church, one body, one people (cf Acts 17:26; 2 Cor 5:16a).

B. One body through the cross.

1. Reconciliation of both (Jew and Gentile) is what Christ accomplished on the cross (cf Rom 5:10; Col 1:21).
  - a. Not into “a” body, or into “some” body, but into one body (cf Matt 16:17-19).
  - b. The word “one” (heis) means *one in contrast to many*.<sup>4</sup>
2. It was difficult (and still is for many) to live without walls being erected, i.e., socially, nationality, racially, etc. (cf Gal 2:11, 12).
  - a. Christ died to remove barriers (cf James 2:1-4).
  - b. “[H]e might reconcile” (v 16) are from a single word which means *to completely change from one form to another*.<sup>5</sup> It is a stronger form of the common word to reconcile.
3. What would be the natural result of comprehending this reconciliation? Peace in the brotherhood (cf Acts 10:34-36; Rom 5:1).
4. The “afar off” and “them that were nigh” (v 17) reiterates the “both” of verse 16 and again the “both” in verse 18.
5. Verse 18 mentions all three members of the godhead.

Note: In every verse in this section Paul mentions the collectiveness of Christianity. Not two or more, but one blended together. That important thought will continue in the next section.

V. The unity of the Ephesians is described allegorically in four ways (19-22).

A. They enjoyed full citizenship (v 19a).

1. This is the point from verse 12. They were once aliens, but now they are citizens (cf Phil 3:20). Paul gives them the bad news then the good news.
2. Foreigners in a nation are without the privileges and protection of the natural born citizens (cf Lev 25:23; 1 Chron 29:15).
  - a. Paul was emphasizing that the Gentiles were not second class citizens compared to the Jewish Christians.

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<sup>4</sup> Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament words, page 137, 138.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, page 261

- b. In a real sense our citizenship is not of this world (cf 1 Pet 1:17; 2:11).
- 3. This would be easily grasped by those who were under Roman law and citizens of Rome (cf Acts 22:25-29).
- B. Part of the one household of God (v 19b)
  - 1. The human family is held together by love. How much more so the family of God (cf Gal 6:10; Eph 3:15).
  - 2. The household of God is equal to the church of God (cf 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 4:17).
  - 3. The Ephesians were not strangers or servants in that household, but sons and daughters of the family (cf Heb 3:5, 6).
  - 4. As children they now had access to the Father in ways those outside the family did not enjoy (cf Gal 4:6).
- C. Part of a building (v 20).
  - 1. “B” was referencing the members in a house, “C” is the house itself. They (we) are stones in the building.
  - 2. The proper foundation has been put down, our lives add stones to the structure of the building (cf 1 Pet 2:4, 5).
  - 3. Christ is the “chief corner stone” which Jesus said of Himself in Matt 21:42 (cf Ps 118:22; Isa 28:16; 1 Pet 2:6).
- D. Part of the holy temple (v 21).
  - 1. Fascinatingly, the “holy temple” will not be a completed building until the return of Christ and the end of all terrestrial things (cf Rev 21:1, 14).
  - 2. This “holy temple” was started in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41, 47).
  - 3. Sometime later (possibly Acts 18:19) the preaching of the gospel converted the Ephesians and they added another part to the “holy temple.” Not a different temple, but an addition to the same one.
  - 4. All this was done based on the “chief corner stone” who controls all the lines, angles and building material of the edifice.
    - a. The words “fitly framed together” (being built together, NKJ) are from a single Greek word used only here and in Eph 4:16.
    - b. The word means *carefully jointed together, as in expert carpentry work*.
    - c. Those who are Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female are all perfectly jointed together in Christ (cf Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).



## Ephesians 3

### The revelation of the mystery

- I. The minister to the Gentiles (1-7).
  - A. Part of God's plan for salvation to all mankind was the dispatching of the apostle Paul to the Gentiles (cf Acts 9:15; 13:2, 3; 22:20, 21).
    1. "For this cause" (reason, NKJ) refers to the Gentiles' equality in the one body, along with the Jewish converts (cf Eph 2:11-13).
    2. Paul was in Rome's custody, specifically in Nero's detention, yet he considered himself to be the prisoner of Jesus Christ (cf Eph 4:1; 6:20).
      - a. In the four letters we often (mistakenly) call the "prison epistles" Paul mentions either chains or bonds in each of them (cf Phil 1:13, 14; Col 4:18; Philemon 13).
      - b. He states that he did this "for you Gentiles" (v 1).
      - c. He was arrested and held captive because he insisted the Gentiles were saved and on equal status with the Jewish Christians.

Note: Since the Jews had rejected Jesus as Christ and the old Jewish religion was defunct (nailed to the cross, Col 2:14), this would make the Gentiles "preferred" over the rebellious Jews (Acts 13:46; Rom 11:11-13).
    3. Paul was given a special "dispensation," which means he was given the gospel to give it to the Gentiles (cf Gal 1:16; 2:7-9).
      - a. The word translated *dispensation* carries the idea of dispensing, as in a steward. Both the NAS and ESV use the word "stewardship" here.
      - b. It comes from a word which means the *administration of a household* (Strong's #3622). Paul uses the same word with reference to the qualifications of elders in Titus 1:7.
      - c. Paul was not asking them if they had heard (v 2), but was reminding them of the fact that they had heard it from his own mouth (cf 2 Tim 1:11).
  - B. Paul reveals that it took a revelation from Christ for him to understand the saving gospel had to be preached to the Gentiles (cf Acts 26:17, 18; Gal 1:12).
    1. "[M]ystery" probably refers back to 1:9 and the fact that salvation was "made known" to the Gentiles (*something that was once unknown*, see page 5, cf Rom 16:25).
    2. While "the mystery" may refer to 1:9 there is no way to know if the first part of the parenthetical phrase *as I wrote afore in a few words* (v 3) refers to 1:9 or something else.
      - a. The statement is certainly ambiguous.
      - b. There were an unknown number of epistles written by Paul (and possibly others) that were not preserved for posterity (cf 1 Cor 5:9).

3. Preaching the gospel to the Gentile world was a new concept. The Lord was clear that the gospel was for the entire world (cf Matt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47).
  - a. The fact is that the Jewish Christians ignored their marching orders and basically disobeyed their commander (cf Col 1:26, 27).
  - b. Paul's specific commission rectified the problem (cf Rom 11:13; Gal 1:16).
- C. Paul continued the thought of "as I wrote afore..." with "when ye read, ye may understand." Whatever Paul meant by "wrote afore" he is stating that they could understand it. Therefore, it also applies to us. If we read we will understand.
  1. This may possibly be a reference to reading the other letters written to neighboring congregations (cf Col 4:16).
  2. The important point is that knowledge was to be gained by reading.
  3. Specifically, Paul says the knowledge will be in connection to the "mystery of Christ" (cf 1 Cor 4:1).
    - a. If we use Colossians as a commentary on Ephesians we can conclude that Paul is referring to Christ dwelling in these Christians (cf Col 1:27).
    - b. They (we) were once classified as without hope (Eph 2:12), now they have "the hope of glory."
  4. The context is dealing specifically with Gentiles, Verse 5 should be kept in that context. The "mystery" is not a general revealing of God's plan for salvation, but rather the specific plan to include Gentiles in full fellowship.
    - a. Since "now revealed" (v 5) is used, the "prophets" likely refer to prophets of the New Testament church (cf Acts 15:32; Eph 4:11).
    - b. Inclusion of the Gentiles was revealed by many before the church was established, (Isa 49:6; 56:6, 7), but never taught as clearly as now (cf Acts 11:18; Rom 16:25).
    - c. Ever generation of the church has had to fight difficulties of one kind or another. For the first century church one of the great difficulties was Jewish Christians' prejudice. Otherwise, there is no point in penning Eph 2:14-16 more than three decades after the church was established.
    - d. The promise was made to Abraham and was to include all "families" (cf Gen 12:3).
    - e. No people, either individually or collectively, were to be subservient. All were made children via adoption, and therefore heirs (cf Gal 4:7).
- II. The unsearchable riches of Christ (8-13).
  - A. Paul declares himself to be "less than the least of all saints" (cf 1 Cor 15:9).
    1. This self-degradation probably stems from Paul's days as Saul, the persecutor of the church (cf 1 Tim 1:13, 15).
    2. Paul is not trying to draw attention to himself, he is trying to emphasize the great grace available in Christ.



3. As Saul of Tarsus, he made havoc of the church (cf Acts 8:3). Havoc can be defined by what inspiration says about Saul's actions as recorded in Gal 1:13, 23.
  - a. He was the worst of the worst and God, through Christ, still found sufficient grace for him. What joy for us all!
  - b. The phrase "less than the least of all saints" is unique to this verse.
  - c. It shows an exceptional amount of humbleness from possibly the greatest man the church has ever known.
4. Paul was conscripted into service by the very One he opposed, and God's grace allowed him to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ" among the Gentiles (cf 1 Cor 15:10).
  - a. The word "unsearchable" means *past tracing out* (Vines). What God had planned to do for us through Christ was past finding out until it was revealed. Paul's message was to reveal it (Rom 11:33).
  - b. The Jews could not (totally, or fully) have known God's plan for including the Gentiles. The Gentiles could not have fully known either.
- B. Paul then explains God's plans with the use of the words "the fellowship of the mystery" in verse 9.
  1. The words "to make all men see" literally means *to turn the light on* (Robertson) as used in Eph 1:18 and Heb 10:32.
  2. "Fellowship" is translated in other versions by the word *dispensation* (see ASV), which does not help at all. The ESV uses nine words to translate a single Greek word, but they got the meaning right; *bring to light for everyone what is the plan* (of the mystery).<sup>6</sup>
  3. Paul felt that he was privileged to "bring to light" the mystery. He mentions this mystery twenty times in six books, e.g., Col 4:3.
  4. The New Testament abundantly declares the world was made through Jesus Christ (cf Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:16, 17; Heb 1:2).
    - a. What is not clear is why the basic fact of the creation is inserted at this point in Paul's letter.
    - b. Possibly Paul is building a correlation between the magnitude of the original creation and the sure and undeniable salvation of all men and nations, i.e., if God can create this amazing world and all that it contains He can unquestionably plan for the salvation of all mankind, including the Gentiles (cf Rev 14:6).
  5. Angels, as created beings, did not possess omniscience. They, therefore, were watching with elevated interest the multifarious expansion of the church of Christ.
    - a. As the gospel was preached to all, the eternal purpose of God, in Christ Jesus was revealed (cf Rom 11:33).

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<sup>6</sup> Obviously they did not translate the word, but offered an explanation of the word. As Bible students we need to be warned of the difference between "translation" of Bible words and "Interpretation" of those words.

- b. We should not think it strange that angelic beings are interested in the affairs of men (cf Lk 15:10; 1 Pet 1:12).
    - C. Based on our faith in Christ we have access to God the Father through the one and only mediator (cf Jn 14:6).  
 Note: The rejection of Jesus Christ, as the Messiah, by any world religion eliminates the possibility of the followers of that religion to access the God of heaven. This would include, but not be limited to; Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam (or Muhammadanism), Satanism, etc.
      - 1. This is why our prayers are offered in Jesus' name. It is because of Him we have the possibility to come before God with our petitions and supplications (cf Jn 15:16; 16:23, 26; Rom 1:8).
      - 2. "Boldness" (v 12) is the idea of plain speech (cf Heb 4:16; 10:19).
      - 3. As Christians we can talk plainly to God (cf Heb 13:6).
        - a. Paul did not want the Gentiles to become discouraged because of his confinement in Rome (cf Col 1:24; 1 Thess 3:2, 3).
        - b. He did not want them to "faint" or lose heart (cf Heb 12:3).
        - c. Discouragement is as contagious as encouragement (cf Isa 40:30, 31).
- III. Advancing toward spiritual maturity (14-21).
- A. "For this cause" (reason, NKJ) ties these words back to the same words at the beginning of the chapter. For the actual "cause" we need to digress to Chapter 2; the peace and unity ushered in by Christ.
    - 1. "I bow my knees" is more than merely acceptable posture for prayer, it universally shows reverence (genuflection, see Rom 14:11).
      - a. We can offer prayer in just about any physical posture we desire.
      - b. There are examples of prayer being offered while standing (cf Matt 6:5; Lk 18:11). While kneeling (cf Acts 9:40; 20:36. While lifting up hands (cf 1 Tim 2:8) and possibly other positions (cf Rev 5:8, 14).
      - c. The outward posture is far less critical than the inward attitude. Reverence, humbleness and awe should permeate our being as we approach Him in prayer.
      - d. For this great man of God, dropping to his knees to implore the Father on behalf of his friends at Ephesus, was as humble as he could be.
      - e. Whatever position causes a Christian to be the most reverent is the position we should assume in prayer.
    - 2. "[U]nto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" that the Ephesian Christians be strengthened (cf Phil 4:13; Col 1:11).
      - a. The significance of verse 15 is that the Father makes the family. The context demands that the logic of the same Father would make one family of Jews and Gentiles.

- b. Paul goes beyond the terrestrial considerations and includes the family (or branch of the family) in heaven.<sup>7</sup>
  - c. We must guard against making “is named” (v 15) the name Christian. Those in heaven when Paul penned these words were not members of the church of Christ, therefore they were/are not Christians (cf 1 Pet 4:16).
- B. Paul petitions the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Ephesians might be strengthened in the inner man (v 16).
1. Every human is a composite being. We have the physical, outward element observed by the world daily, and the inner element, which shall live on in eternity.
    - a. It is this inner portion that Paul prays to be strengthened in these Christians.
    - b. Paul asks for this prayer to be answered “according to the riches of his glory” (cf Phil 4:19).
      1. God can answer our prayers from His abundant supplies (cf Matt 7:7, 11).
      2. Why do we ask so little of one who can do so much? His abundance is inexhaustible (cf Mal 3:10).
    - c. The source of the strengthening was “by his Spirit” to the inner man, or the spiritual man.
      1. The Holy Ghost, in the miraculous form, was available to the first century Christian. They had a need then that has been fulfilled via the inspired words of our New Testament today (cf 2 Pet 1:2, 3).
      2. Many claim the direct operation of the Spirit on the hearts of humans today. If those today who make such a claim still sin, whose fault is it? Such claims make the weakness and sins the fault of the Godhead (cf Rev 2:4, 5).  
Note: The letter ends with the responsibility resting fully upon each individual Christian to properly arm themselves (Eph 6:13-17).
      3. The Spirit revealed the truth to those men who faithfully recorded that truth (cf Jn 14:26; 2 Tim 3:16, 17).
      4. The Spirit will give us strength as we learn and adopt the teachings of the New Testament (cf Rom 10:17; 2 Tim 2:15).  
Note: As our knowledge increases our convictions are strengthened. As our conviction grows our determination is magnified (cf Col 1:11-13).
      5. Belief in Christ and being baptized for the remission of our sins does not necessarily mean a person is growing properly. Notice what Paul wrote to members of the church of Christ in the region of Galatia, Gal 4:19.

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<sup>7</sup> The whole family of angels in heaven, saints in Paradise, and believers on earth is named (of the Father); being “the children of God,” a more honorable title than children of Abraham, and depending on him as the Father of the family. John Wesley, One Volume Commentary.

- d. Paul desired that Christ dwell (not be a visitor) in the hearts of the Ephesians by faith.  
Note: The word “dwell” is a compound word meaning *to house permanently* (Strong’s #2730).
  - e. Paul uses both “rooted” and “grounded” to show strength and stability. One metaphor is from agriculture and one from construction (cf Prov 12:3; 1 Cor 3:11).
  - f. Paul will use the idea of this stable foundation for the next statement he makes.
2. Verse 18 begins with “May be able” which has a more powerful meaning than the KJV inserts. It means *to have full strength*. This strength would come from the stable foundation of the last verse.
3. Paul then lists the four dimensional love that God has for mankind:
- a. “Breadth” (width, NKJ)
    - 1. As broad as all humanity.
    - 2. Jn 12:32
  - b. “Length”
    - 1. It is ongoing.
    - 2. Matt 18:22
  - c. “Depth”
    - 1. Measured from the top to the bottom.
    - 2. Rom 11:33
    - 3. Sins run deep, God’s forgiveness runs deeper.
  - d. “Height”
    - 1. Same measurement, but measured from the bottom to the top.
    - 2. 2 Thess 2:4  
Note: The measurement of a well is determined by perspective. If you are at ground level the measurement is depth, if you are in the well the measurement is height. Same measurement, different perspective.
  - e. Three of these four dimensions are recorded in John’s description of the New Jerusalem (cf Rev 21:16, see note above), which may be what Paul wants them to envision. Use that vision as an incentive.
    - 1. Today we might sing with our young children about God’s love being “deep and wide.” That is Paul’s point.
    - 2. His love is not one dimensional, not reserved for one people or one culture. It is all encompassing.
  - f. Paul wanted the Ephesians to know the love of Christ, which was beyond knowing, or at least the magnitude of it was beyond knowing.
    - 1. Maybe the best explanation is an illustration: What would your feelings be toward a person who kills your son? Some would say, “Away with him.” Others might find compassion and say, “I forgive him.” But, who would say, “Let this person become my son instead.” That is what God has done for each of us (cf 1 Jn 3:1, 2).

2. Even if we cannot comprehend every facet of God's love we should believe He loves us, embrace it and trust it (cf Phil 4:7).
- C. This prayer is drawn to a conclusion by giving praise to the supplier and sustainer of all blessings (cf 1 Cor 2:9).
1. With reference to what God is able to do for us in this life Paul uses an interesting phrase in verse 20.
    - a. "[E]xceeding abundantly" (exceedingly abundantly, NKJ), which is a strong expression of largeness, excess and abundance (cf 1 Tim 1:14).
    - b. Adam Clarke described it as, "superabundantly above the greatest abundance."
    - c. F.F. Bruce said it was "another one of Paul's super-superlatives, coined to express God's capacity to transcend all that we ask or think."
    - d. Paul is trying to fill the readers mind with the abundance of what God has to offer His children. He is praising the power of God.
  2. "[T]he power that worketh in us" is the same power discussed in 1:19, 20.
    - a. The power that made us alive (cf Eph 2:1).
    - b. The power that saves us (cf Rom 1:16).
  3. The purpose of the church (the body of Christ) is to glorify God.
    - a. The church's work is to spread the gospel (cf Mk 16:15, 16).
    - b. The church's work is to edify the saints (cf 2 Tim 3:16, 17).
    - c. The church's work is to share in benevolence (cf Gal 2:9, 10).
      1. If the church branches off into human wisdom it is no longer honoring or glorifying God (cf 1 Cor 2:4, 13).
      2. Any departures from His commands dishonors Him, e.g., Moses, Nadab and Abihu, etc. God classifies departures as disobedience.
    - d. No other institution is authorized to glorify His power and abundance.
  4. In each successive generation, "world without end" (cf Jude 25).
    - a. The church has a glorious position in God's eyes. It needs to be exalted in the eyes of every member (cf Eph 3:10, 11).
    - b. It will endure as long as this world endures.
    - c. Israel of old, as God's chosen people, had an expiration date. The Jewish religion was designed to bring people to the church (cf Gal 3:24, 25).
  5. Paul ends Chapter 3 by expressing the super-abundance of God and the great blessing of being part of the church that glorifies Him.
- Note: The subject of the church (the body of Christ) will carry over into the next chapter.



## Ephesians 4

### Unity

The remainder of the book is the practical application to glorify God through the church.

- I. Our calling (1-6).
  - A. He mentions he is a prisoner in verse 1 as he did at the beginning of Chapter 3.
    1. He viewed himself as a prisoner because of his stand for the truth of the gospel (cf Philemon 9).

Note: For information about Paul being a prisoner see page 19.
    2. Paul uses the word “beseech” to help encourage the Ephesians to walk worthy of the life in Christ.
      - a. Paul used this word often in his letters, e.g., Rom 12:1, 1 Cor 4:16, 2 Cor 5:20, etc.
      - b. It is a word filled with kindness, tenderness and concern.
      - c. He did not order them or demand them to walk worthy (as an apostle he could have commanded, cf 2 Thess 3:6) rather, he compassionately urged them to walk worthy (cf Philemon 10).
      - d. Those who are already trying to walk worthy do not need to be commanded, they need to be encouraged (cf Eph 3:16; Col 1:11).
    3. His desire was for them to “walk worthy of the vocation” which was before them.
      - a. The word “vocation” (calling, NKJ) literally means *they should lead a life worth their calling*.
      - b. There can be little doubt that this vocation, or calling, refers back to Eph 1:18 and 4:4 (cf Col 3:15).
      - c. There is an honor associated with being in heavenly places that directly affects every part of our daily lives. Christianity is not a burden, it is a vocation, a calling (cf Rom 8:30).

Note: It has been said that if we understand the vocation of this verse then everything else in this life will automatically become secondary to our Christianity.
    4. What will it take to answer the call of our calling in a worthy fashion?
      - a. Paul lists that we do it with lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearing one another (humility, gentleness, patience and showing tolerance, NAS).
      - b. These three characteristics are to be performed with “forbearing,” which means to endure in them.
        1. “[L]owliness” (humility) was no more practiced in the first century than it is in the twenty first century. It is hard to find humble people.

- a. If we properly understand humility will strive to compare our lives and attitudes with Jesus, not with our fellow humans. That will make us humble.
    - b. Self-examine requires that our standard be the highest standard (cf 2 Cor 10:12).
  - 2. “[M]eekness” (gentleness) is not weakness, but rather strength under proper control.
    - a. Meekness is the proper use of emotions. Not easily provoked. Ready to yield rather than to cause trouble (cf Gal 5:13).
    - b. In our worthy walk as Christians we must learn to deal with people with meekness and fear (cf 1 Pet 3:15).
  - 3. “[L]ongsuffering” (patience) has two meanings.
    - a. Normally we associate the definition with not giving up, never willing to admit defeat, even in the midst of setbacks.
    - b. The word also carries the thought of non-retaliation. To the person who understands the vocation wherewith we are called retaliation becomes insignificant (cf Col 3:12, 13; James 3:15-17).
  - 4. “[F]orbearing one another in love” is the practical application of exercising humility, gentleness and patience in our calling.
- B. Incorporating the attributes listed in verse 2 will contribute to unity and peace among brethren. Unity is God’s order (cf 1 Thess 5:13; Heb 12:14).
 

Note: Modern day preachers in the church of Christ use the following passage to plead for non-denominational Christianity. Paul’s plea had a different design, he was pleading for no divisions within the existing church of Christ. Paul will record, through inspiration, God’s “one-derful” plan for unity.

Note: There is always the danger of discord when people from diverse cultures and backgrounds are brought together. Paul is insisting that the “bond of peace” be the controlling factor in Ephesus.

  - 1. “[O]ne body” (v 4).
    - a. We have established in Chapter 1 that the body is the church (cf Eph 1:22, 23; 5:23).
    - b. The “one body” indicates that the Jewish Christians did not have a body and the Gentile Christians another body.
    - c. The “body” is composed of the saved, all the saved (cf Acts 2:47).
    - d. It is important for the reader (first century or twenty-first century) to understand that the church (body) is essential for salvation.
    - e. As in biology so it is in scripture, one body, by necessity, can have only one head (cf Col 1:18).
  - 2. “[O]ne Spirit” (v 4).
    - a. This is a reference to the Holy Spirit (Ghost), the third member of the godhead. In staying with Paul’s theme of unity the one Spirit would guide the one body (cf Eph 2:22).



Note: All three members of the godhead are mentioned in this passage; Spirit (v 4), Lord (v 5), God (v 6).

- b. Conflicting teachings cannot come from one Spirit (cf Jn 17:20-22).
  - c. A common Spirit will lead all members in a common direction, with common instructions (cf 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:1).
  - d. We do not have access to the miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit today, but we can be guided by Him through the Spirit inspired word (cf 1 Pet 1:22, 23).
3. “[O]ne hope” (v 4).
    - a. All who are directed by the one Spirit have hope. Not a hope, but the hope, singular (cf Tit 3:7).
    - b. His hope is centered in answering the calling of verse 1.
    - c. Hope is the desire for something coupled with the expectation of receiving, or obtaining it (cf Rom 8:24, 25).
    - d. This “one hope” may be a reference to eternal life in general, or it may refer to the resurrection for the dead (cf Acts 23:6; 26:6-8).
    - e. We will all stand together and share the glory of that one hope (cf Rom 5:2; Col 1:27).
  4. “One Lord” (v 5).
    - a. The context dictates Paul is referring to Jesus Christ, the governor of the body (cf Acts 2:36; Rev 17:14).
    - b. Having the same Lord should bind people (in this case Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians) together (cf Rom 10:12).
    - c. This would be true concerning any and every type of prejudice the church might face. Having one Lord should pull us together (cf Gal 3:28).
    - d. The word “Lord” in this passage means *supreme in authority* (Strong’s #2962). We have the chance to voluntarily honor Him as Lord now or be forced to honor Him at the end (cf Jn 13:13; Rom 14:11).
  5. “[O]ne faith” (v 5).
    - a. Paul continues his urgent plea for unity by stating the singularity of acceptable faith. We live in a world of many faiths. Paul wrote that unity requires all true believers to be in one faith.
    - b. The faith Paul mentions is more than just a belief that Jesus is the Son of God (cf James 2:19).
    - c. The concept of “your faith” or “my faith” is completely foreign to the Bible (cf 2 Pet 1:1).
    - d. The unity of the one faith requires like-mindedness based upon biblical truth (cf Phil 1:27; 2:2).
  6. “[O]ne baptism” (v 5).
    - a. When Paul wrote this letter from his hired house in Rome there was only one baptism.
    - b. There had been others in the past:
      1. John’s baptism (cf Lk 3:7; Acts 19:2, 3).

2. Holy Ghost baptism (cf Matt 3:11; Acts 2:4).
3. The baptism of fire is yet future.
4. Baptism for the remission of sins was the one and only baptism pertinent as Paul penned this letter.
5. This one baptism was one that was to last until the end of the world (cf Matt 28:18-20).

Note: There are several other baptisms mentioned in the New Testament, none of which is the one baptism Paul is referencing here.

7. "One God" (v 6).
  - a. Paul's plea for unity culminates in emphasizing unity associated with God.
  - b. Four salient points are stressed in verse 6 concerning the unity of one God:
    1. "Father of all" (cf Mal 2:10; 1 Cor 12:6).
    2. "Who is above all" (cf Rev 4:8-11).
    3. "Through all" (cf Jn 14:23; 1 Cor 3:16).
    4. "In you all" (cf 1 Jn 3:24; 4:12, 13).
  - c. Unity is desired and expected within the church. Unnecessary divisions are folly and weakens the church's influence and impact on the world. Jesus prayed that His followers would be one as He and the Father are one (cf John 17:21).

Note: The scriptural basis for pure Christianity lies in the seven fundamental unities mentioned by Paul at the beginning of this chapter.

## II. Spiritual maturity in the first century church (7-16).

Note: Beginning here and continuing until the end of this powerful letter Paul is instructing the Christians at Ephesus that they (and all Christians) have the responsibility to mature, as well as obligations that must be fulfilled.

### A. The source of the gifts (7-10).

1. Grace is the gift. Christ is the giver of the gift (cf 2 Cor 10:13).
2. The church at Ephesus was young, possibly only about ten years old (established near the end of the second evangelistic tour), and they did not have our advantage of a completed Bible to help them mature (cf Phil 4:19).
  - a. It is likely that the "gift" mentioned in verse 7 is the gracious influence of the Holy Ghost to aid them in spiritual maturity (cf Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:7).
  - b. God supplies all we need, but their circumstance was different than what we face today. The scriptures furnish us with all necessary instruction (cf 2 Tim 3:16, 17).
  - c. Paul begins the verse with "But unto every one of us is given..." which is meant to show the Ephesian Christians that even in giving of the gift no one was left out.
    1. The gifts were not all the same, but everyone shared in the gifts. Unity.
    2. Those gifts, working together in the members, made the church of Christ at Ephesus complete (cf Matt 25:15).

- d. Verse 8 deals with the ascension of Christ to allow the Holy Ghost to descend as a comforter to the Apostles (cf John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).  
Note: Every time the term “comforter” is used in the New Testament it is always with specific reference to the apostles, never to the general membership of the church.
  - e. “He led captivity captive” (v 8) refers to a conqueror’s parade. The captives are paraded before the people to accentuate the victory. In this case our Savior conquered death and the grave to return to heaven (cf Col 2:15).
    - 1. There is an interesting change in verse 8 from the Psalm quoted. The Psalm has it as “received gifts” rather than “gave gifts” (see Ps 68:18).
    - 2. Christ is the conquering King of His kingdom and the Spirit is the guiding force of the subjects (cf 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Pet 1:21).
- B. The variety, purpose and cessation of the gifts (11-13).
- 1. We normally think of spiritual gifts very differently than what Paul records in verse 11. It is obvious that Paul is referring to people at work in the church rather than the gifts themselves. Notice the four categories listed:
    - a. “And he gave some, apostles.”
      - 1. This would refer to the official office of an apostle. Only 14 men held this office throughout the annals of time.  
Note: All of these men were selected by Jesus personally, with the exception of Matthias, who was selected by the Father (cf John 15:26, 27; Acts 1:21-26).
      - 2. It would have been a great gift and comfort to have an apostle to help guide the congregation in Ephesus.
    - b. “[S]ome, prophets.”
      - 1. The prophets were inspired to make known the will of God (cf Acts 21:8, 9; 1 Cor 14:28, 29, 32).
      - 2. Probably used to forth-tell rather than fore-tell, thus speaking forth the truth as it was revealed to them (cf Acts 15:32).  
Note: Some had the ability to fore-tell (cf Acts 11:28; 21:10, 11).
    - c. “[S]ome, evangelists.”
      - 1. A person who was especially endowed with the ability to share the word of God with others.
      - 2. Only two men were given this name by inspiration; Philip and Timothy (cf Acts 21:8; 2 Tim 4:5).
      - 3. It would have been a special blessing for the members at Ephesus to have evangelist among them to share and spread the message.
    - d. “[S]ome pastors and teachers.”
      - 1. Those endowed by the Holy Ghost to feed and teach the flock.
      - 2. The shepherds, the bishops, the pastors are to be the teachers.
      - 3. This would have been important in the young church at Ephesus with the conflict and controversy of prejudice.

4. When the church was growing its strongest, we did not have preaching schools, we had elders who taught the young men of their own congregations to be preachers and then sent them out to do the work of an evangelist (cf 1 Pet 5:2, 3).
2. All this was done to assist the saints in spiritual growth.
    - a. Paul lists three reasons for these gifts to exist:
      1. “For the perfecting of the saints.”
        - a. To help instruct the saints in the complete will of God.
        - b. “Perfecting” only occurs in this passage, but the root word is found in such verses as: 1 Cor 1:10, 2 Cor 13:11, Heb 13:21, etc.
      2. “[F]or the work of the ministry.”
        - a. There was a special work done at Ephesus by those endowed with the Spirit “of the ministry.”
        - b. “Ministry” is the common word used for ministering and administration, but at Ephesus it carried something additional because of the gifts mentioned in the passage.
      3. “[F]or the edifying of the body of Christ.”
        - a. The word “edifying” is the same as building up. (cf 1 Cor 3:9; 1 Cor 14:3, same word for building and edification).
        - b. The building up of the church was important to the godhead.
    - b. These gifts were given for a specific period of time, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith...” (v 13).
      1. The system of faith for salvation is universal (cf Jude 3).
      2. The scriptures guide mankind in understanding and obeying God’s will, but they did not have our advantage of a completed book (cf Phil 3:15).
      3. The miraculous age had an expiration date. Eph 4:13 is the date stamp. The word “Till” is an adverb of time (cf 1 Cor 13:9, 10).
- C. The importance of these gifts in spiritual maturity (14-16).
1. The importance of these gifts to the Ephesians (and probably to other congregations of the 1<sup>st</sup> century) were manifold:
    - a. No more immaturity.
      1. “[B]e no more children” refers to an immature Christian (cf 1 Cor 3:1; 13:11 [4x in the verse]; Heb 5:13).
      2. We must be skilled enough and sufficiently mature enough to handle false doctrine and false teachers.
      3. Without the aid of the Bible the Ephesians could depend on those who were gifted.
    - b. No more instability.
      1. “[T]ossed to and fro” like on the waves of the sea (cf James 1:6).
      2. We can be anchored with the full knowledge of God’s word, they could not. These gifts were vital.

- c. No more gullibility.
    - 1. Some wily teachers had deceived some of the saints with lies (cf Gal 5:1, 7).
    - 2. With these gifted saints in place they could verify the teachings and not be deceived (cf Heb 2:4; 1 John 4:1).
  - 2. The human body is used to explain the proper function of the church (cf Col 2:19).
    - a. The body, working in choreographed synchrony, is a model for the church of Christ. Each member doing the task designated for the good of the body (cf 1 Cor 12:12, 20).
    - b. The gifts bestowed on the early church allowed it to function efficiently. If every member did their part the end result would be a body that glorified the head (cf Col 1:18; 2:19).
- III. Putting off the old man and putting on the new (17-24).
- A. With the word “therefore” Paul returns to the exhortation of Christian unity, which was his subject at the beginning of this chapter (Eph 4:1).  
 Note: “This I say” was a common expression of the mighty apostle (cf 1 Cor 1:12; 15:50; 2 Cor 9:6; Gal 3:17; Col 2:4).
    - 1. Paul uses the word “testify” as something he did, not the Ephesians. The same word is translated as “charged” in 1 Thess 2:11. It means *to take to record*.
    - 2. The charge was that henceforth they do not walk as other Gentiles walk (cf Eph 2:1-3; Col 3:5-7; 1 Pet 4:3, 4).
      - a. They had come out of that life.
      - b. They no longer walked in “the vanity (futility, NKJ) of their minds” (cf Acts 14:15).
      - c. Christianity, properly taught, believed and practiced, will correct the evil in our lives (cf 1 Cor 6:11).
    - 3. The Gentiles suffered by having their “understanding darkened” (v 18), which means they may have had worldly knowledge, but lacked the rudimentary understanding of God’s revelation (cf Rom 1:21-23).
      - a. This ignorance stemmed from the “blindness” or hardness of their hearts. Blindness means *to cover with a callous* (Vines).
      - b. Sin can harden the heart (cf Matt 13:15; John 12:40; 2 Pet 2:14).
      - c. “Past feeling” (v 19) means to become apathetic. Most of the Gentiles were lost in their sins and they did not care.
      - d. Paul then uses three strong words to describe these Gentiles: lasciviousness, uncleanness and greediness (v 19).
        - 1. Lasciviousness is unbridled lust (cf Gal 5:19).
        - 2. Uncleanness is moral impurity
        - 3. Greediness is the desire for more, and in this passage probably refers to sensual or sexual indulgences (cf Rev 18:3).
  - B. The contrast (But ye, v 20) between the old and the new is that the new have been taught differently in Christ (cf Rom 6:1, 2; Titus 2:11, 12).

1. These Gentiles had heard Jesus (by the preaching of the gospel) and had accepted the truth to their own salvation (cf 1 John 5:20).
2. Paul used “Christ” in verse 20 and “Jesus” in verse 21. Possibly referring to the man “Jesus” who lived and died, yet was resurrected from the grave, becoming the Christ. The Ephesians believed the historical facts of His life (cf 1 Pet 1:21).
  - a. Their belief in the resurrection would make putting off the former life easier. God resurrected Jesus and has promised to resurrect me (cf Col 2:12; 1 Thess 1:10).
  - b. The word “renewed” (v 23) is used only here in the New Testament. It means *to make new*, as in regeneration (cf Gal 6:15; Col 3:10).
  - c. How is it possible to take off the old man and put on the new man when formerly they were controlled by the lusts of the flesh? By determining that the “spirit of your mind” would change your life (cf Rom 8:6; 1 Pet 1:13).
  - d. To live the Christian life, we have to make a concerted effort, a commitment of the mind, to honor our contract with God (cf 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Jn 3:9).
3. The concept of putting off the old man and putting on the new man is the characterization of us striving to be godly after the example that Jesus left for us (cf 1 Cor 11:1; Eph 2:10; 1 Pet 2:21).
  - a. Becoming a new man is God’s doing.
  - b. Living as a new man is our doing.
4. There was a fundamental difference between the Gentile’s life and the Christian’s life. The difference is still relevant today.

Note: In this section the inspired apostle has dealt in general terms, the putting off of old characteristics and ignorance. In the following section Paul will explicitly deal with sins that will help Christians to move forward in their walk.

IV. The contrast continues with some inspired specifics (25-32).

- A. “Wherefore” (Therefore, NKJ), because the old man has been put off and the new man has been put on.
  1. Because the old man is put away, we will not lie.
    - a. A lie is a statement that is intended to deceive.
    - b. Lies are almost universally accepted on our world, but God has always condemned them and He demands more from us (cf Col 3:9; Titus 1:12; Rev 21:8; 22:15).
  2. Because the old man is put away, we will not stay angry.
    - a. The new man will strive to avoid anger (cf Ps 37:8; Prov 19:11; James 1:19).
    - b. It is not always easy to avoid anger, even Jesus was angry at ignorance and injustice (cf Mk 3:5; 10:14; Jn 2:13-15).
      1. God was angry with Moses (cf Deut 4:21).
      2. God was angry with the people (cf Deut 9:8).

3. God was angry with Aaron (cf Deut 9:20).
- c. If anger does happen in the new man it cannot abide. It can poison the mind if not quickly removed.  
Note: This principle is based in the Old Testament law of settling matters (cf Deut 24:15).
- d. Handle your anger quickly (cf Prov 14:29). Because the old man is put away, we will not give place to the devil.
- e. This passage is directly connected to verse 26 and the releasing of anger.
- f. If we stay angry, we voluntarily give our minds as a workshop for the devil's activities (cf 2 Cor 2:10, 11).
3. Because the old man is put away, we will steal no more.
  - a. Taking property that does not belong to us has been a problem in every generation (cf Ex 20:15; 21:16; Hosea 4:2; Jn 12:4-6).
  - b. Paul is saying that these new men should stop stealing and start working (cf 1 Thess 4:11, 12; 2 Thess 3:11, 12).
- B. The words we speak are just as important as our actions.
  1. Because the old man is put away our words should be used for edification.
    - a. The new man will speak good words for good use (cf Matt 12:35; James 1:26).
    - b. The word "corrupt" means *rotten, like putrid fruit* (Robertson's).
    - c. Paul is telling these new men at Ephesus that they should treat one another fairly. Do not speak evil, speak good words about each other, building up one another and the church (cf Rom 14:19; 1 Pet 2:12).
    - d. "Minister" (impart, NKJ) is the word for "give", or "grant" (same word used in Eph 4:7, 8 and 11).
    - e. The words we use with each other should impart grace (benefit or favor) to our brethren.
  2. Because the old man is put away, we cannot grieve the Spirit of God.
    - a. Unrighteous, unholy words, unchristian actions will cause the Spirit to be saddened (cf 2 Cor 2:2).
    - b. Paul, it appears in this verse, is specifically referring to the words Christians use. We are to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet 4:11). Unkind words are not from the Spirit.
    - c. Possibly a reference to Isa 63:10.
    - d. Grieving the Spirit would be equal to grieving Jehovah (cf Ps 78:40; 95:10; Acts 7:51).
  3. Because the old man is put away Paul lists other attitudes that should also be put away from us:
    - a. Bitterness; *spitefulness or harshness* (cf Rom 3:14; James 3:14).
    - b. Wrath; *fury, bursts of fury* (cf Col 3:8).
    - c. Anger; *hostile anger* (cf Ecc 7:9).
    - d. Clamour; *hostile outcry of passion* (only translated as clamour here; cf Heb 5:7; Rev 21:4).

- e. Evil speaking; *injurious speaking toward brethren, whether the words are true or not*. Paul is condemning the attitude of evil toward those of the brotherhood (cf James 4:11).
  - f. All malice; *evil mindedness*. As Paul ends this list of characteristics the old man has put off, he mentions malice, which here means *the bitter and unjust habits of mind* (cf Prov 6:19; 26:20).
4. Because the old man is put away, we need to put on:
- a. Kindness; *pleasant, gracious*. Christian's courtesy is being Christ-like even when we are bearing the wrong (cf Lk 6:35; Acts 28:2; Rom 12:10). Note: We will not always be treated fairly or kindly, even by brethren. Our obligation is to conduct ourselves as the new man, not the old man.
  - b. Tenderheartedness; *a disposition of compassion and mercy* (the only other time the word *tenderhearted* is used is in 1 Pet 3:8, where it is translated *pitiful*; cf Matt 18:33; James 5:11).
  - c. Forgiveness; *to bestow a favor*. Because of what God has done for us through what Christ endured, we should, in similar fashion, be willing to pardon our brethren (cf Lk 17:3; Acts 2:38; 1 Jn 1:9).
- C. As faithful Christians the Ephesians had continuing responsibilities to themselves and to the members of the church.
- 1. They were to be examples of developing the finer traits of living as Christians.
  - 2. They were to put off the old man and allow the new man to show forth.
  - 3. They were to develop the right attitudes in dealing with other members.
  - 4. Paul will take the foundation of this chapter and use it to discuss the moral issues of the next chapter.



## Ephesians 5

### Walking in love; marriage is symbolic of the church

- I. The character of believers (1-5).
  - A. Be followers (imitators, NKJ) of God (therefore) is tied to “forgiving one another” in verse 32 of the last chapter (be as forgiving as God is forgiving).  
Note: This is a poor place for a chapter break.
  - B. “[A]s dear children” refers to the kind of imitators we are to be.
    1. Children will naturally attempt to imitate their parents (or some adult). We, as Christians, have God as our Father, that is whom we should strive to emulate (cf Lk 6:35, 36).
      - a. We are all going to copy ourselves after someone. Why not imitate the original (divine and perfect) rather than a flawed copy (cf 1 Pet 1:15, 16; 1 Jn 4:11)?  
Note: This knowledge puts additional pressure on parents. We must live in the fashion that we want our children to live.
      - b. The context requires us to ask ourselves how God conducts Himself toward us, and then we should act in the same fashion toward our brethren (cf 1 Jn 3:1, 2).
    2. As dear children, “walk in love.”
      - a. It is possible that earthly parents can be poor or disappointing examples occasionally. This is never true of our heavenly example (cf Matt 20:28; Heb 4:15).
        1. Notice inspired instruction for our “walk” from a positive perspective:
          - a). Walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4).
          - b). Walk after the spirit (Rom 8:4).
          - c). Walk in honesty (Rom 13:13).
          - d). Walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7).
          - e). Walk in good works (Eph 2:10).
          - f). Walk in wisdom (Col 4:5).
          - g). Walk in truth (2 Jn 4).
          - h). Walk after the commandments of the Lord (2 Jn 6).
        2. Now notice our “walk” from a negative perspective:
          - a). Walk NOT after the flesh (Rom 8:4).
          - b). Walk NOT after the manner of men (1 Cor 3:3).
          - c). Walk NOT in craftiness (2 Cor 4:2).
          - d). Walk NOT by sight (2 Cor 5:7).
          - e). Walk NOT in the vanity of the mind (Eph 4:17).
          - f). Walk NOT disorderly (2 Thess 3:6).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Goebel Music

- b. This example was culminated in His sacrifice, which is termed “an offering” (v 2).
  - 1. Noah did this in a literal sense (cf Gen 8:20, 21).
  - 2. The nation of Israel did it in a literal sense (cf Lev 1:9, 13, 17).
  - 3. Jesus’ atoning sacrifice became the last literal sacrifice God required (cf Heb 9:12; 10:12).
  - 4. Our “offering” is to “walk in love” (cf 1 Thess 2:12).
  - 5. This “sweetsmelling” aroma, which raises up to our Father, is pleasing to Him because it indicates obedience to His will. The culmination of this obedience was demonstrated by Jesus, the Christ, in His offering. His life was not taken, but rather, given as an offering (cf Gal 1:4; 2:20; Eph 5:25; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14).
- C. In verses 3 and 4 Paul switches from this delightful theme of God’s children walking in love to a list of vices commonly practiced by pagans.
  - 1. In verse 3 Paul list three words (sins) that should “not be once named among you.”
    - a. “[F]ornication.”
      - 1. Fornication is a broader term than adultery (Mk 7:21) that includes all unlawful sexual intercourse, within the context it would have to do with those things associated with pagans (cf Acts 15:20, 29).
      - 2. It is used in a literal and in a figurative sense throughout scriptures (literally) 1 Cor 5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2 (figuratively) 10:7, 8 (metaphorically) Rev 17:2, 4; 18:3.
      - 3. It is the word Jesus uses in Matt 19:9 (*porneia*) as the one and only reason for divorce. Even then God does not want divorce, he wants people to repent and work things out (cf Mal 2:14-16).
      - 4. Under the Old Testament law, the Jews were considered the spouse of Jehovah (cf Jer 3:6-10). Therefore, worshipping at any other altar was spiritual fornication. The same principle is true for the “bride” of Christ.  
 Note: There was an obvious problem with fornication among the 1<sup>st</sup> century Gentiles. Christians had/have to live differently than those around them.
    - b. “[A]ll uncleanness.”
      - 1. This would be unnatural and perverted indulgences (cf 2 Pet 2:10).
      - 2. It can be used of physical uncleanness or moral uncleanness (physical) Matt 23:27; (moral) 2 Cor 12:21.
    - c. “[C]ovetousness.”
      - 1. Is the desire to have more (greediness), whether the desire is good or bad (the good, cf 1 Cor 12:31; 14:39; the bad, Lk 12:15; 2 Pet 2:14).
      - 2. It is unbecoming for God’s people to be covetous (cf 1 Sam 8:3; Jer 6:13; Lk 12:15).
  - 2. In verse 4 he lists three more words:

- a. “[F]ilthiness.”
  1. Any vile thing, words or action (cf 2 Pet 2:7).
  2. The word means “to shame or disgrace” (Vine’s).
- b. “[F]oolish talking.”
  1. Senseless or frivolous talking (cf James 3:5-8).
  2. Such as might be characteristic of fools.
- c. “[J]esting.”
  1. Witticism in a vulgar sense (Strong’s).
  2. The word was once used for quick movements, but later it came to mean smuttiness or vile language (cf Ecc 10:13).
- d. These six words, Paul warns, are “not convenient” (NKJ, which are not fitting) for the Christian character.
- e. Proper words and character for the Christian is the giving of thanks (cf Col 3:17).
- f. Paul is most concerned that the Ephesian Christians do not demonstrate conduct that would be considered inappropriate by those who observed them.

D. In verse 5 three examples are given of those who will have no inheritance in the kingdom.

1. “[W]horemonger,” (NKJ, fornicator) which denotes a man who indulges in fornication<sup>9</sup> (cf 1 Cor 5:9-11).
2. “[U]nclean person,” which refers to moral purity (cf 1 Cor 7:14).
3. “[C]ovetous man,” which means one who is eager to gain or is greedy. To have what belongs to others<sup>10</sup>.

Note: All three of these words can be, and probably should be in this case, related to idol worship. Notice the word “idolater,” which means “an image worshipper.”<sup>11</sup>

II. True followers of Christ will walk as children of light (6-14).

A. When Paul records, “Let no man deceive you” he is probably referencing the Gnostic teachers of the early centuries.

Note: Gnosticism (briefly stated) is the belief that salvation is obtained through a secret knowledge by which individuals come to know themselves. All matter is corrupt and, therefore, could not have been created by God. There was no harm in indulging in fleshly desires since the body is utterly corrupt and beyond redemption anyway. This was the “modern thinking” of Paul’s day.

1. People are often tempted to rationalize sin (cf Col 2:4, 8).
  - a. “Everyone’s doing it...nobody cares...you’re only young once...you only live once...you’ve got to have some fun once in a while...etc.”
  - b. These might be a balm for our sore conscience, but they will not remove the sin (cf Prov 28:13).

<sup>9</sup> Vines, Vol 4, page 125, “ pornos”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, Vol 1, page 253

<sup>11</sup> Strong’s #1496

2. Sin brings “the wrath of God” (cf Rom 1:18; Col 3:6).
  - a. The wrath of God is made daunting by examples in the Old Testament, i.e., the flood of Noah’s day (Gen 6); Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19), etc.
  - b. He is no less formidable in this dispensation (cf Jn 3:36; Rev 14:10). He still hates sin.
- B. Paul’s sage advice in verse 7 is not to partake in sin.
  1. Since it is common knowledge that God’s wrath will be poured out on those who practice sin, do not get caught up in them (cf Phil 2:15).
  2. It should frighten us to think we might be found in sin.
    - a. The time and date of His return and the end of all things terrestrial is unknown (cf Matt 24:36).
    - b. To avoid living in fear we should practice living without sin.
- C. The Ephesian Christians had once been in darkness, now they were not classified as being “in light”, but rather they were light (NKJ, you *are* light), and Paul urges them to live worthy of their new direction (cf Col 1:13).
  1. Three examples of the fruit borne of this light are listed.
 

Note: The KJV has “Spirit” in verse 9. In every other passage where this Greek word is used it is translated as “light” with but two exceptions. In both of those passages it is translated as “fire.”<sup>12</sup> It would do no harm to the beginning of this verse to translate it “For the fruit of light is...”

    - a. Goodness, in contrast to wickedness (cf Rom 15:14).
    - b. Righteousness, in contrast to injustice (cf 1 Tim 6:11).
    - c. Truth, in contrast to lies or hypocrisy (cf Eph 6:14).
  2. These three characteristics would show fruit of walking as children of light (cf Jn 8:12; 12:36, 46).
    - a. This conduct would serve as a test or as proof of a worthy life.
    - b. This inspired letter would serve as the standard for their Christian lives.
 

Approximately 2,000 years later it is still the same, unwavering standard.
- D. In contrast to this fruit is the “unfruitful works of darkness,” which produces nothing of lasting value or quality of life (cf Rom 6:21; Gal 6:8).
  1. The sins listed in verses 3-5 were to be reprov’d (exposed, NKJ) rather than fellowshiped.
    - a. We should not limit this admonition to pagan worship. It is a shameful thing for one who has come out of darkness to get caught up again in that darkness (cf 2 Pet 1:4; 2:20-22). How quickly some forget.
    - b. Having “no fellowship” (v 11) is closely connected to the “not...partakers with” (v 7). Vine’s gives these two phrases the same definition<sup>13</sup>, i.e., “joint partaker.”
  2. Verse 12 probably has specific reference to the secret sins involved in pagan rituals (cf 2 Cor 6:14; 1 Pet 4:3).

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<sup>12</sup> Mk 14:54; Lk 22:56

<sup>13</sup> Vines, Vol 3, page 161, 162

- a. We should see from this that it is not enough to silently ignore sin. We must be willing to speak out against sin (cf Gal 6:1; 1 Tim 5:20).
  - b. We are not being helpful or kind to sinful men if we allow them to feel that they are safe in their sinful condition. Like a cancer, sin has to be removed (cf Ps 119:22, 29).
  - c. The “shame” might refer to the lewdness and lasciviousness associated with pagan worship. Many of these Ephesians would have come out of that environment (cf 1 Cor 4:14; 6:5).
  - d. The word “secret” (v 12) means *private*. Probably referring to sins committed in the dark corners of the pagan temple (cf Lk 8:17).
  - e. No New Testament writer ever failed to expose error. No New Testament teacher should ever refrain from exposing error (1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Rev 3:19). We are here to save souls, not to make the lost feel good about their undone condition.
3. Verse 14 is a quote from an unknown/unrecorded source. Paul was inspired, so he did not ‘misquote’ Isaiah or anyone else.
    - a. “Awake thou that sleepeth” (v 14) is addressed to those who were practicing sin and still lost in error (cf Rom 13:11, 12).
    - b. In the depths of darkness Christ shall give the necessary light (cf Jn 8:12; 2 Cor 4:6).

### III. We must regulate how we walk (15-21).

#### A. Paul instructs the saints in proper conduct and responsibilities (cf Phil 1:27).

1. Walking suggests movement, moving forward and making progress in their lives (cf Col 1:10).
  - a. Paul contrasts this forward movement with “not as fools,” (v 15) which seems to be a strong statement (cf Gal 3:1).
  - b. Probably referring to a lack of earnest consideration in matters so vital for unity in the church (cf Col 4:5).  
Note: The word “circumspectly” means *accurately, carefully, diligently*.<sup>14</sup>
  - c. Proper conduct, carefully thought through, will cause the church to move forward. Foolish conduct can and will harm the church.
  - d. Conducting our lives “as wise” means we will pay attention to what is going on around us and move forward with understanding.
2. “Redeeming the time” (v 16) deals specifically with taking advantage of opportunities. Once an opportunity has passed it is gone (cf Gal 6:10).
  - a. The responsibilities of a Christian to redeem the time are manifold:
    - 1). To God; He has work for us to do.
    - 2). To family; provide, protect, train, show example.
    - 3). To others; hospitality, benevolence, teach.
    - 4). To self; study, pray, grow, develop spiritually.

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<sup>14</sup> Vines, Vol 1, page 25

- b. In general, the Christian is exposed to evil each day, which is dangerous for our eternal souls (cf 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5).  
Note: The word “redeeming” is a term that comes directly from the market place. It deals with purchasing something that is seasonal.
  - c. For those who received this information in the 1<sup>st</sup> century the meaning might be more immediate (“because the days are evil”), e.g., Nero’s persecution of Christians, destruction of Jerusalem, etc. (cf Eph 6:13).  
Note: This could be a possible explanation of “the time is short” in the context of 1 Cor 7:29.
  - d. Because the days are evil, and the opportunities are “seasonal,” we need to see the greater need for our teaching the gospel and of saving souls.
  - e. Christians have a serious responsibility toward those outside the body of Christ (cf Matt 5:13, 14; Rom 2:19, 20).
- B. The “[W]herefore” of verse 17 calls the Ephesians to understand the will of the Lord (cf Ps 119:130).
- 1. Paul has cautioned them not to walk as fools (v 15) and here (v 17) they are to be “not unwise.”
    - a. The converse of being “unwise” would be “understanding what the will of the Lord is.”
      - 1). This would require wanting to know His will (cf Jn 7:17; Col 1:9).
      - 2). A willingness to accept the truth (cf Acts 17:11, 12).
      - 3). Being unwise is contrasted to understanding. Being drunk is contrasted to being filled with the Spirit (v 18).
    - b. Regulating how we walk (our conduct) would include abstaining from intoxicating drink, “wherein is excess.”
      - 1). “[E]xcess” in the KJV is translated by *riot, debauchery, dissipation, ruin, etc.*
      - 2). Probably a direct reference to heathen temple worship practices, but the evils of beverage alcohol are too well documented to ignore (cf Prov 20:1; 23:29-35).
    - c. Being filled with the Spirit would indicate proper conduct.
      - 1). Not filled with spirits, but filled with the Spirit.
      - 2). These Ephesians had Christ dwelling in their hearts (Eph 3:17) and had been sealed with the Spirit (Eph 1:13; 4:30). I believe Paul is saying that every part of their lives was to be permeated by the Holy Spirit.
  - 2. In that context, the well-regulated Christian may express joy via song (cf James 5:13).  
Note: The phrase ending verse 18 and beginning verse 19 are separated by a semi-colon (comma, NKJ) not a period. This indicates the elements of these two verses are part of a unit.

3. "Speaking to yourselves" requires words (speaking to one another, NKJ). It comes from a verb which means *to talk*.<sup>15</sup> Reciprocal action. The first three words of this verse eliminates choirs, mechanical instruments of music, humming or anything else that is non-verbal.
  - a. Psalms may be the use of Old Testament psalms adapted as songs, e.g., compare the beginning notes of Psalms 1 and 2 with Psalms 3 and 4.
  - b. Hymns may be songs primarily to praise.
  - c. Spiritual songs may be songs relating to spiritual up-lifting.
  - d. There is little, if any, difference in these three designations.  
Note: The point is to contrast this behavior with the drunken excess of verse 18.
4. Since the type, or kind, of music in our worship services has been the point of much contention over the years, it would be good to carefully consider the scriptures on this subject. The following is a list of every passage the New Testament has on the subject of music:
  - a. Matt 26:30
  - b. Mark 14:26
  - c. Acts 16:25
  - d. Rom 15:9
  - e. 1 Cor 14:15
  - f. Eph 5:19, 20
  - g. Col 3:16
  - h. Heb 2:12; 13:15
  - i. James 5:13
  - j. Rev 5:8, 9; 14:2, 3; 15:2, 3 (Heavenly, not earthly)
5. All of the Ephesians were to actively take part in "making melody...to the Lord."
  - a. The required instrument designated by inspiration is the "heart" (cf Isa 65:14; Matt 15:8).
  - b. The use of mechanical instruments of music has a much deeper principle than the instruments themselves. It is the attitude toward the Bible and allowing the inerrant word of God to govern us.<sup>16</sup>
- C. "Giving thanks always" was the best example the Ephesians could demonstrate. Not being fools, unwise or drunken with wine and excess.
  1. If we keep this phrase in context it appears the giving of thanks is associated with their singing.
  2. Our access to the Father is only through Jesus, the Christ. We need to give thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is often done in the songs we sing.
  3. Verse 21 ends the sentence with the idea of submission to one another.

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<sup>15</sup> Strong's # 2980

<sup>16</sup> For additional information on mechanical instruments of music in worship see Appendix A, pages 174-178.

- a. “[I]n the fear of the Lord” remains a healthy mental position in every age (cf 2 Chron 19:7; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Pet 2:17).
  - b. The idea of doing all these things out of reverence for Christ might be Paul’s way of tying his instructions together.
  - c. Paul had just stressed that Jesus had become a servant of all (cf Mk 10:45).
- IV. The relationship of Christ and His church explained by the illustration of husband and wife (22-33).

Note: Through the rest of this chapter, and on into the first nine verses of the next chapter, Paul will instruct the Ephesians on three pairs of relationships in the ancient household: wives to husbands, children to parents and slaves to masters.<sup>17</sup> These teachings are part of what he taught in Eph 4:1, “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye were called.” They had to be different now that they were Christians. The husband-and-wife relationship is the subject before us beginning with verse 22.

- A. “Wives, submit yourselves...” (22-24).
- 1. There has never been an effective social unit that did not have a leader.
    - a. We know this to be true in the home, the military, business, schools, clubs and even in the natural world, e.g., bees, ants, canines, lions, horses, etc.
    - b. God has established that the man (male) be the head of the family unit. This arrangement was established all the way back to Eve’s temptation in the Garden (Gen 3:16).
    - c. To argue against this or to try and usurp this arrangement is to argue with God. We are to conduct ourselves “...in the fear of God” (v 21).
  - 2. Staying within the context, the submissive wife would show the heathen observers a peaceful and harmonious family unit in the Christian home.
    - a. Subjection does not mean inferiority (cf Gal 3:27, 28).
    - b. Christ is not inferior to the Father (cf Jn 1:1, 14).
    - c. Subjection does mean cooperation to a greater end. Just like on the job or in school, everyone has to answer to someone (cf 1 Cor 11:3).
    - d. The lack of voluntary subjection has caused many problems in the family unit. “My rights” should be substituted with “my duty” because of the worthy walk (cf Titus 2:4, 5).
    - e. As Yoder put it, “There is no ‘difference in worth’ but in the family, for its order and its unity, there must be leadership, and the responsibility of leadership is that of the husband and father.”<sup>18</sup>
  - 3. “...as unto the Lord” (v 22) does not mean that the husband takes on the same deference as Christ, but that deliberate subjection to her husband is the duty they owe to the Lord (cf Col 3:22, 23).

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<sup>17</sup> In all three cases the one who is to be submissive is mentioned first.

<sup>18</sup> J. H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, page 185.



4. God has designed the family to be a happy place. Following His instructions will not only makes a Christian home a slice of heaven on earth, it will show the world what a better place this can be if Christian principles guide all of us. Note: The wife ought to think of her husband as the greatest guy on earth. She should do more for him than any other. She should look her best for him, have her best personality and disposition for him. He should be her earthly focus.
  5. The motivation for voluntary submission by the wife is stated in verse 24.
    - a. In the beginning she was created from man and for man, to be his “help meet” (cf Gen 2:18, 23).
    - b. The church places itself in subjection to Christ. The wife does the same thing because it is right to do so (cf 1 Pet 3:1, 2).  
Note: 1 Pet 3:1 probably has reference to wives married to non-believers. The admonition to be in submission to the husband would apply in that situation as well. All the more reason to choose carefully who you marry.
    - c. A wife that will not submit to her husband is like a church that will not submit to Christ. A futile and unsatisfactory situation.
- B. “Husbands, love your wives...” (25-27). The duties of the husband.
1. The strongest love ever demonstrated is the love Christ had/has for the church. There is no danger in loving your wife too much (with the one possible exception of loving her more than God).
    - a. He willingly gave Himself for the church (cf 1 Jn 3:16; Rev 21:2).
    - b. Using Christ as the example, the husband should understand his duty to support and provide for his bride. To go before her in danger or peril, to be ready to save her in dire situations.
  2. Man has the God-given right to be the king of his castle as long as he treats his wife as the queen! She is not his servant, but his partner in the worthy walk of Christianity.  
Note: The love of Christ for His church is such that He feels Himself incomplete without her (cf Eph 1:22, 23).
    - a. The husband has duties that must be fulfilled: to take the lead, to give direction and spiritual guidance (cf 1 Pet 3:7).
    - b. A husband not willing to take care of his obligations has missed the point of this passage, the example of the worthy walk.  
Note: “Only so far as the husband shows the like love in perfect sympathy, in chivalrous forbearance, in abhorrence of tyranny, in willingness to self-sacrifice, has he any right to claim lordship,”<sup>19</sup>
    - c. It is an ignorant husband, in deed, who demands his wife be in subjection to him, when he has not placed himself in subjection to Christ.
  3. Christ gave Himself in death on the cross to “sanctify and cleanse” (v 26) His beloved church (cf Acts 26:18; Heb 10:10).
  4. This was accomplished by two agencies:

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<sup>19</sup> Ellicott’s Commentary

- a. “[T]he washing of water” which refers to the act of baptism (cf Jn 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21).
  - b. “[T]he word” which likely has reference to the spoken word. At the time of the writing of these words, there were few inspired letters and they were scattered over a large geographical area. The members at Ephesus were converted by the spoken word (cf Jn 15:3; 1 Pet 1:23).
  - c. Verse 26 is a reiteration of what Jesus said while He prayed for His apostles (cf Jn 17:17).
5. All brides want to look beautiful on their wedding day. Great effort and expense go into the bride’s preparation. The results are often spectacular!
- a. A close examination of verse 27 reveals that all the preparations of the glorious church to be Christ’s bride were done by Him (cf Jude 24)!
  - b. The church, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (v 27) is probably a reference to the wedding garment (cf Rev 7:14).
- C. The husband’s love needs to be sensitive (28-30).
- 1. A loving husband is sensitive to the needs of his wife because they have become one flesh (cf Gen 2:24; Col 3:19).
  - 2. The husband has different needs than the wife.
    - a. Men seem to have the need to feel important, successful and accomplished.
    - b. Wives who take the time to complement their husbands on their hard work and extended hours of effort are showing wisdom.
    - c. By showing he is important she is fulfilling a real need in his life.
  - 3. Wives, on the other hand, need to be shown love and tenderness, to be told they are loved and then have that love demonstrated.
    - a. Husbands can get so wrapped up in the providing and protecting part of marriage that they neglect the love and tenderness part.
    - b. When a man properly loves his wife, it is a demonstration of his love for himself, for she is truly part of him (cf Gen 2:21-23; 1 Cor 11:8).
    - c. Paul did not say that Christ was *as* the head of the body (v 23), but He *is* the head of the body. The husband is connected to the wife in the same vital manner.
    - d. The word “nourisheth” means to *nurture, of the care of one’s own flesh.*<sup>20</sup>
    - e. “Cherisheth” means *to soften by heat; then to keep warm, as of birds covering their young with feathers.*<sup>21</sup>

Note: The tense of both words is present tense, continuous. Once we start the nurturing and warming in the marriage relationship, we never allow it to stop. Christ is our example of continuous care for His bride.
- D. The sustaining love of marriage is in reality a metaphor for the sustaining relationship of Christ and His church (31-33).

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<sup>20</sup> Vines, Vol 3, page 118

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, Vol 1, page 184

Note: The English word “sustain” carries three definitions: *to carry (to bear on the shoulder or support the weight of)*; *to nourish*; *to defend*,<sup>22</sup> which would be applicable to both the husband to his wife and Christ to His church.

1. The marriage relationship supersedes all other earthly relationships because the man and woman become one flesh.
  - a. This is a quotation from Gen 2:24, which both Jesus and Paul had taught previously (cf Matt 19:5; 1 Cor 6:16).
  - b. Since Paul refers to the creation account of the husband’s leadership in the home, this is not a cultural teaching, as some would suggest.  
Note: The word “man” in verse 31 is the word for mankind, not the word for male of the species.
  - c. The husband and wife have entered into a full and total commitment to their partner. All other earthly relationships are now classified as lesser relationships. Similar to Jesus’ statement as recorded in Matt 10:37.
2. “[M]ystery” does not mean mysterious, but, rather, previously unrevealed<sup>23</sup> (cf Eph 6:19; Col 2:2).
  - a. The husband, as the head, demonstrates sacrificial love. An example of the church and its head (cf Isa 54:5; 62:4, 5; Rev 19:7).
  - b. Since inspiration uses marriage to illustrate the connection of Christ to the church is there any wonder why God hates divorce (cf Mal 2:16; Matt 19:3-6)?
  - c. “The divorce evil may be considered as our greatest social peril. This evil threatens the dissolution of the family, the disturbance of society, the perversion of the institution of marriage, and the spiritual development of the people of God.”<sup>24</sup>  
Note: The divorce rate in America for first marriage, vs second or third marriage. **50%** percent of first marriages, **67%** of second and **74%** of third marriages end in divorce, according to Jennifer Baker of the Forest Institute of Professional Psychology (emphasis in original, jb).<sup>25</sup>
  - d. Paul’s objective is to direct the readers mind to the lofty relationship between Christ and the church.
3. To paraphrase verse 33, Paul is saying, “Yes, I am dealing with Christ and His church, but everything I have said about the marriage relationship is true.”
  - a. The practical application for the wife is to reverence (respects, NKJ) her husband in the same fashion the church is to reverence Christ (cf Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:6).

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<sup>22</sup> Webster’s New World Thesaurus, pages 732, 733

<sup>23</sup> Vines, Vol 3, page 97; “...it denotes not the mysterious, but that which, outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known by Divine revelation...”

<sup>24</sup> H. Leo Boles, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, page 17.

<sup>25</sup> According to Sarah Jacoby (2/2/2017) the two most important factors in avoiding divorce is waiting until you are at least 25 years of age and earn a college degree before you marry.

- b. The practical application of this information to the husband is to love your wife. In every way we see Christ providing for, protecting and defending the church, we should do the same for our wives (cf Col 3:19).
- c. Let us pray for husbands and wives who will look to God's word for guidance and instruction in their daily lives.

## Ephesians 6

### Additional relationships and the Christian conflict

Note: In the beginning of this chapter Paul will continue the instructions of “submitting yourselves,” which he began in Eph 5:21.

- I. The relationship of children and parents (1-4).
  - A. Our Father in heaven expects obedience (cf Matt 7:21; Jn 14:15).
    1. He has always required children to obey their parents (cf Deut 21:18-21).
      - a. The obvious reason for a child to obey their parents is the experience the parents have gained by living longer than the child (cf Lk 2:51, 52).
      - b. On average, about 25 years more life experiences allows them to have wisdom far beyond what the child knows (cf Prov 1:8; 30:17).
      - c. Being disobedient to parents receives some of the harshest condemnations listed in scriptures (cf Rom 1:30; 2 Tim 3:2).
    2. “[I]n the Lord” has reference to proper conduct within the Christian’s home. That is who he was writing to and what the context demands (1:1).
      - a. As long as a child lives in the home they are obligated to obey their parents.
      - b. Why? “For this is right.” Col 3:20 is a parallel passage.
      - c. When children obey their parents it makes the household run smoother and sets a good example for others to see.
      - d. We cannot set a poor example and expect to have a good influence on those outside the body. The family government is designed to mimic the Divine government of the church.
  - B. “Honour” (v 2) includes respect, reverence and obedience.
    1. Honoring parents is “the first commandment with promise.” A reference to the 5<sup>th</sup> of the Ten Commandments listed in Ex 20 (cf Ex 20:12).
    2. The words “with promise” probably refer to the first commandment with a promise attached to it.
    3. Verse 3 is additional information to Ex 20:12, which is recorded in Deut 5:16, the second time the Ten Commandments are listed by Moses (Mk 7:10).
  - C. In the child/parent relationship there are responsibilities for the parents also (cf Col 3:21).
    1. Specifically, this verse refers to the actions of the father. In first century culture the man was in charge of every aspect of home life.

Note: Every time this Greek word is used in the New Testament (419x) it is translated as father(s) with the exception of Heb 11:23, where it is translated “parents.”

      - a. The children were required to be obedient, but they were not to be goaded into resentment or discouragement.

- b. The translators inserted the words “to anger” in Col 3:21. The words are not in the original, but the word “provoke” carries this thought, as does the word “wrath” in Eph 6:4.
- 2. Instead of provoking a child to wrath they should be brought “up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (cf Heb 12:7-10).
  - a. Nurture means *training* (NKJ). They should be educated to know God’s will in their lives.
  - b. Admonition means *instruction*.
  - c. We could paraphrase this as ‘fathers, give them the instruction and the correction to cause your children to show good Christian upbringing’ (cf Prov 4:1-5; 2 Tim 3:16).
  - d. The greatest teaching tool a man possesses is his example.

II. The relationship of servants to masters (5-9).

A. Paul addresses his third common household situation of this chapter, the servant or slave/master relationship. In light of the context we should probably think of converted slaves (bondservants, NKJ, which means they belonged to their masters, not merely employed by them) in the home.

Note: According to Barclay there were approximately 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire at this time.<sup>26</sup> It has also been suggested that as much as 25% of the population (one out of every four people) in Italy were slaves during the time Paul wrote this letter.<sup>27</sup>

- 1. The apostle Paul was a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, not a minister of politics. The Bible does not directly endorse, oppose or condemn slavery (cf Col 3:22; 1 Tim 6:1). It simply deals with it as a matter of fact.
- 2. Slavery has been commonplace from the beginning of humans dealing with humans.
  - a. Under the Law of Moses, a man could sell his daughter into slavery (cf Ex 21:7; Neh 5:5).
  - b. A widow’s children might be sold into slavery to pay their father’s debts (cf 2 Kgs 4:1).
  - c. A man could even sell himself into slavery (cf Lev 25:39, 47).
  - d. The standard price of a slave was thirty shekels of silver (cf Ex 21:32).
  - e. More often than not the slaves were captured from war.
- 3. Paul tells those who were Christian slaves how to conduct themselves as representatives of the Lord’s church.
  - a. Be obedient (cf Titus 2:9).
  - b. Respect your masters according to the flesh (cf 1 Pet 2:18).
  - c. Serve your masters as you would serve Christ (cf Col 3:23).
  - d. “Eyeservice” denotes service only given under the master’s eye. Diligently performed when he is watching, but neglected in his absence.

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<sup>26</sup> Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, page 212

<sup>27</sup> Scheidel, Walter, “The Roman Slave Supply,” page 6

- e. This, of course, can be carried over into every aspect of the Christian's standard of work and service in any age.  
 Note: Earnest efforts are offered to an earthly master, but Paul says our attitude is with "fear and trembling" that we please our heavenly Master.
- B. Paul also addresses proper conduct in the masters, or owners (cf Col 4:1).
  - 1. Members of the church of Christ, as slave owners, were required to demonstrate proper treatment.
  - 2. Masters were to be motivated by the same principles of right conduct, i.e., "the same things unto them" (cf James 2:13).  
 Note: The gospel has the power to enable believers to live noble lives regardless of their legal or social standing (cf 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28).
    - a. "[F]orbearing threatening" (v 9) or stop threatening the slaves with punishment. The Greek word means to *relax* or *loosen*.<sup>28</sup>
    - b. The masters had a Master in heaven to answer to.  
 Note: A paraphrasing of the thought here might be "both their Master and yours is in heaven."
  - 3. God does not look upon our earthly position. He looks at the inward person (cf Rom 2:11).
  - 4. Paul deals with this point in 1 Cor 7:21-23. If a person was a slave and had a chance to become free they should exercise that opportunity. If not, then they should take heart that they now belong to Christ.  
 Note: Slavery was a hot issue in this country in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Our pioneer preachers did not ignore the issue, they preached what God's word said and encouraged the brethren not to allow this issue to divide the church of Christ. That powerful preaching worked. We were one of the very few religious groups that did not allow slavery to divide us during or after the Civil War.
- C. Suppose that Paul would have advocated the slaves revolting in the Roman Empire. It would have created a chasm between the masters (Christians) and the slaves (Christians) that would have never been bridged (not to mention a generally detrimental name throughout the Empire for the church of Christ). Instead of dividing the church Paul advocated peace and respect, and by the power of the gospel the problem was eradicated and eventually dissipated through its teachings (cf 1 Pet 1:17).  
 Note: "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."<sup>29</sup>
  - 1. This passage (verse 5-8) deals with servants or slaves while only one verse deals with masters (v 9).

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<sup>28</sup> Barnes, NT Commentary

<sup>29</sup> Gullledge, Dennis, The Book of Ephesians, page 219

2. Why so many verses for slaves compared to masters? It is a lot harder to be the servant. He was offering them the resources to deal with the injustices they had to endure (cf 1 Tim 6:1; Titus 2:9).

D. All of these principles will apply to a study of the book of Philemon. Philemon was a church of Christ slave owner and Onesimus was his runaway slave, converted to Christ by Paul in Rome. The book deals with proper conduct between these two for the glory of Christ (cf Philemon 9, 10, 15, 16).

Note: It is possible for these very circumstances to exist today. An estimated 35.8 million people today are enslaved. The nation of India has 14.3 million slaves and China has 3.2 million. As the gospel spreads in these countries it is possible that some would find themselves in exactly the situation Paul is addressing.<sup>30</sup>

### III. The Christian soldier preparing for war (10-13).

A. “Finally, (drawing the letter to a close) my brethren, be strong in the Lord” (cf 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:8).

Note: Paul takes all of the classes of people he has been directing since Chapter 5: wives and husbands (5:22-33); children and parents (6:1-4); servants and masters (6:5-9) and puts them together in the same class, they were all soldiers. They all had to bravely stand up and fight.

1. To tell someone who is not strong to be strong simply will not work. So Paul gives a way for all people to be strong, no matter who we are, we can be strong “in the Lord” (cf Eph 1:19; Phil 4:13; 1 Pet 5:10).

2. We are to “gear up” for our battle with the devil.

Note: Paul used most of Chapter 4 telling us to put on the new man. Here he tells us to “put on the whole armour of God.”

- a. It is not a carnal war we fight (cf 2 Cor 10:3, 4).
  - b. We must be prepared to fight a “good warfare” (cf 1 Tim 1:18).
  - c. Good soldiers of Christ will suffer hardship for their Commander-in-Chief (cf 2 Tim 2:3).
  - d. Our service requires the avoidance of any entanglement in the affairs of this world that will keep us from proper service (cf 2 Tim 2:4).
  - e. We are to resist the devil rather than surrender to him (cf James 4:7).
3. “You’re in the army now,” prepare for spiritual conflict.

- a. “[W]iles” (v 11) could be translated *method of trickery*. The word is only used here and Eph 4:14 (cf Mk 13:22; 2 Cor 11:13-15).

Note: The word “wiles” (schemes, NASV) is the word we get *method* from. It refers to a crafty, deliberate strategy in seeking out our most vulnerable point. There is great folly in underestimating our foe.

- b. The more serious we are about serving God the harder the devil will work to get us to give up, i.e., surrender or desert our post.
- c. It was after His baptism that Jesus was confronted by Satan (cf Mk 1:12, 13; Col 1:13).

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<sup>30</sup> Hess and Frohlich, 2014, [www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com),



- d. His trickery and deception will be different against each soldier. He will allure with pleasures, or cast away our concerns as harmless. He will find the weakest link in our individual armor and hammer away at it.
- 4. Satan has many tricks and deception to either penetrate our armor or to get us to lower our armor so he can attack.
  - a. Satan tries to get us to distrust God (cf Gen 3:1-4).
  - b. Satan tries to get us to give up by making life hard (cf Job 1:6-12; 2:4-7).
  - c. Satan tries to get us to trust ourselves (cf Matt 23:29-31).
  - d. Satan uses peer pressure (cf Mark 14:54, 66-72).
  - e. Satan tries to get us to be worldly (cf Rom 12:2).
  - f. Satan tries to attack through doctrinal confusion and false teaching (cf 1 Tim 6:3-5).

Note: Abraham Lincoln once said, “I am not so concerned if God is on our side, but whether we are on God’s side.”

- B. Our war is not with flesh and blood (humans), but with spiritual evil in the Christian religion (cf 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2).
  - 1. Paul specifically writes that our fight is not with humans. The battle is with the devil and his agents (cf 2 Cor 10:4).
    - a. While Jesus was on earth He often referred to the devil as the prince of this world (cf Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).
    - b. Paul and John reiterated the same thought (cf 2 Cor 4:6; 1 Jn 5:19).
  - 2. Consistency requires us as students to understand that “principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places” are not people, but the devil’s trickery in spiritual matters.
    - a. “[H]igh” (heavenly, NKJ) is the same word translated as “heavenly” in Eph 1:3, 20; 2:6 and 3:10.
 

Note: This Greek word is used 20 times in the New Testament. In every case it is translated as either heavenly or celestial, except here.

Note: It is possible that the KJV translators were contemplating the “high places” of the OT in verse 12 (cf 2 Kgs 18:4; 2 Ch 21:11; Jer 19:5).
    - b. In order for us to fight this battle Paul will insist we dress in the panoply God supplies (cf 2 Cor 6:7).
    - c. This battle the Christian soldier must fight is ‘heaven or hell’ combat. It is far more important than ‘life or death.’
    - d. “[H]aving done all, to stand” means that with God’s armor, properly arrayed, we withstand the assault. We stand victorious over our spiritual enemy (cf Col 4:12).
 

Note: The key word in this section of scripture is the word “stand.” It is used three times (once with a prefix, to make it “withstand”). To “stand” in no way indicates an assault or an attack by Christians. Instead we are to defend, to hold the citadel of our soul (cf Rev 6:17).

IV. The specific equipment of the Christian soldier is enumerated (14-20).

Note: Paul begins verse 14 with the established principle of “stand.”

- A. At the writing of this letter Paul had probably been chained to, or was at least in the close company of Roman soldiers for three or possible four years, consecutively. His words are inspired, but he also had first-hand knowledge of how armor worked (cf Acts 28:16, 20; Phil 1:13; Col 4:18; Phile 10).
1. “Having your loins girt about with truth” (cf Isa 11:5).  
 Note: The girdle was of supreme importance to the soldier. Not only was it the place to carry the sword and other equipment, but it united the rest of the armor and gave support and strength to the soldier.
    - a. The girdle Paul writes of is not made of leather, it is made of truth (cf John 8:32; 17:17)!
    - b. The truth of God’s word produces a truthfulness and honesty in His soldiers. Living without deceit and hypocrisy (cf 2 Cor 4:2).
    - c. We are to encircle ourselves with truth and cinch it up tight to encase us from attack (cf 1 Pet 1:13).
  2. “[H]aving on the breastplate of righteousness” (cf Isa 59:17).
    - a. The breastplate covered the soldier from neck to waist, therefore protecting the vital organs.
    - b. Not a breastplate of brass or iron, but rather a protective plate of righteousness in our conduct (cf Ps 119:172; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:7).
    - c. Our righteous character is necessary to defend ourselves from the devil. A defect in our character, a lack of commitment to our Lord, will be the opening Satan is looking for to pierce our armor (cf 1 Kings 22:34).
  3. “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” would be foot-wear offering firm footing in the conflict.
    - a. The Christian soldier was to stand and fight, so solid footing would be necessary (cf Rom 5:2).
    - b. The word “preparation” means *to make ready* (Robertson). That would be preparedness for the onslaught of our adversary (cf Lk 22:31; 1 Pet 5:8).  
 Note: Heavy-soled, hobnailed sandals were issued to the Roman soldiers for sure-footedness in battle (*caliga*).
    - c. The word “peace” in this verse probably means the peace of mind we have that furnishes us with courage and alacrity in the defense of our souls (cf Rom 5:1; Phil 4:7; Col 3:15).
  4. “Above all, taking the shield of faith” which would stop the enemy’s fiery darts.
    - a. “Above all” means *over all the rest of the armor* (Clarke). The shield the Ephesians would see in their minds would be a large, oblong object that would offer protection to all the rest of the body.
    - b. Paul makes sure they understand he is not talking about a literal, door shape shield. He has reference to their faith (cf 2 Cor 1:24; 1 Pet 5:8, 9).
    - c. The word “darts” means any type of projectile, e.g., an arrow, spear, stone, javelin, etc. Basically, any assault that can be hurled at you.

- d. In our world we do not have to guard against literal projectiles, but we do have to guard against many things that could harm or damage our faith:
  - 1). Words (usually from fellow Christians) that would discourage us or make us feel like abandoning our faith.
  - 2). Impurity in fellow Christians.
  - 3). Doubt, fear and disappointment.
  - 4). “The wiles of the devil” will come in many forms. Our “shield of faith” is how we will quench them or deflect them away.
- 5. “And take the helmet of salvation” (cf 1 Thess 5:8).
  - a. The helmet would be protection for the head. It would be unsafe to face the enemy without head protection.
  - b. Paul specifically mentions this is the helmet of salvation, or maybe more properly stated, the assurance of salvation, which gives us confidence (cf Col 1:12-14).
  - c. The daily struggle with the devil warring in our lives requires steadfastness. We need to be reminded of our salvation in Christ Jesus in order to continue the fight (cf Rom 2:7).
- 6. “[S]word of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” which is our only weapon in this fight (cf Heb 4:12).
  - a. It is the sword of the Spirit because it comes from the Spirit.
  - b. It is the only weapon Jesus used against the devil’s temptations (cf Matt 4:1-11).
  - c. For our own defense we must be able to use the sword of the Spirit properly (cf 2 Tim 2:1).
  - d. We often sing of the panoply of God. This armor is what that means.
- B. Praying will have an active part in our successful fight against the wiles of the devil (cf Phil 4:6).
  - 1. Paul included four “all’s (always) in this passage:
    - a. Always (cf 1 Thess 5:17).
    - b. In all prayer and supplication (cf Phil 4:6).
    - c. All perseverance (cf Lk 18:1).
    - d. For all saints (cf 1 Tim 2:1).
  - 2. Then Paul requests prayers for himself, which was common for him to do (cf Col 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1). What did he want them to pray for?
    - a. That he might boldly preach the gospel (cf Phil 1:20; 1 Thess 2:2).
    - b. This was written while detained in Rome (cf Acts 28:31).
    - c. He did not pray for deliverance from danger or suffering. His request was for the advancement of the saving message (cf Acts 4:29; 9:29).
    - d. The “mystery” was how God included the Gentiles in the saving gospel of Christ, as we discussed in Chapter 3.
  - 3. Paul declares that he is an “ambassador in bonds” (cf 2 Cor 5:20).
    - a. An ambassador is a highly regarded representative of a government.

- b. The word used here has the same root word, in the original, as the word “elder” in most New Testament passages (cf 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5).
  - c. It appears Paul is referring to himself as old or mature (cf 1 Tim 5:1, 2, 19; Philemon 9).
- V. Paul’s final words are of peace, love and grace (21-24).
- A. Paul had a close and personal relationship with these brethren. He was in Ephesus on his 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> evangelistic journeys (cf Acts 18:18-21; 19:1; 20:31).
- Note: He, most likely, spent more time with this congregation than any other.
- 1. Tychicus was a faithful and trusted messenger who would carry this letter to the Ephesians and also the letter to the Colossians (cf Col 4:7).
  - 2. When Tychicus would arrive in Ephesus he would tell them of Paul’s condition and circumstances in Rome.
    - a. He was from the province of Asia (Acts 20:4) and was therefore, going home (cf 2 Tim 4:12).
    - b. Titus 3:12 indicates the trust Paul had in this man as a minister. Either he or Artemas would fill in for Titus on the island of Crete.
- B. Paul ends the letter by expressing three qualities or attributes he wished for the Ephesians through prayer.
- 1. “Peace,” which is a word that means *all prosperity* (Strong’s).
    - a. He wanted them to continually increase and to grow stronger in the Lord (cf Rev 1:4).
    - b. In staying with the context of the letter, peacefulness in these brethren would eliminate discontent and rivalry in the congregation.
  - 2. “[L]ove with faith.” As Christians, love springs forth from faith (cf Gal 5:6; Philemon 5).
  - 3. “Grace” is for those who love our Lord Jesus Christ and continue to obey and follow Him.
    - a. Ending a letter with the grace of God being mentioned is characteristic of the apostle (cf Col 4:18; 2 Tim 4:22; Titus 3:15).
    - b. “In sincerity” means *in incorruptibility* (Clarke). The demonstration of the proper Christian walk (cf Titus 2:7).
  - 4. Then the prototypical ending, “Amen.” So be it.

# The Book of Philippians

## Introduction

Paul, during his confinement in Rome, wrote four letters or epistles. They are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Those four books, in that order, will serve as the continuation of the study of the Book of Acts.

This congregation at Philippi was founded by Paul and his traveling companions (Luke, Timothy and Silas) as they answered the “Macedonian call” (Acts 16:9, 10). Through the providence of God, Paul was the ideal apostle to cross over the Aegean Sea and preach the gospel on European soil for the first time. The evangelism started with Lydia and her household, quickly spreading to the Philippian jailer and his family.

This is a letter of rejoicing. Paul uses joy or rejoice some 16 times in 104 verses. Some have referred to Philippians as Paul’s love letter. It is full of joy. That fact is magnified when we remember he wrote this letter while incarcerated in Rome for nothing more than preaching the gospel.

The city of Philippi was a city of “firsts.” As was mentioned, it was the first recorded time the gospel was presented on European soil; the first time the words, “what must I do to be saved” were expressed; the first time conflict occurred between Christians and heathens; the first time preachers were confined outside of Jewish jurisdiction and, in addition to these firsts, the first fruits in Europe were women in Philippi.

From the account in Acts we know Paul went to the riverside outside the city, which was used as a place of prayer on the Sabbath by some Jewish women, and taught them the New Testament will of God. These women displayed an abundant desire to please Jehovah by worshipping the best they could despite not having men to take the lead. As long as Paul could do so, in keeping with the Lord’s will, he always went to the Jews first, before teaching the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-47). Lydia and her household were immediately baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 16:12-15).

The congregation at Philippi was very close to and often supported the apostle’s efforts. Near the end of this letter Paul mentions their continuing desire to subsidize him, “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity” (Phil 4:15, 16).

All Bible references are taken from the King James Version of the Bible, except where noted.



# Philippians 1

## Paul is thankful for the Phillipian church

- I. Paul's greeting (1, 2).
  - A. Paul sends greetings from himself and Timotheus (Timothy, NKJ) who would have been with Paul on both of his visits to this city (cf Acts 16:1-4; 20:4-6).<sup>31</sup>

Note: This is one of the few times Paul does not begin a letter by establishing or defending his apostleship (in 9 of 13 letters he does).

    1. Paul describes them as "servants," which means *a slave, either literally or figuratively*.<sup>32</sup> Both of these great men had put themselves into voluntary subjection or subservience to Christ's wishes.
    2. The letter is addressed, first of all, "to all the saints," *or the separation of the believer from evil things and ways*.<sup>33</sup>
    3. In addition to all the saints, the bishops and deacons are addressed.
      - a. The bishops (overseers) comes from the Greek work for superintendent. It is a word that is used in the plural, as God intended.

Note: "An overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, a curator, guardian or superintendent."<sup>34</sup>
      - b. Deacons served under the bishops, the word means servant, and is most often translated as "minister" (cf Col 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7).
  - B. Grace (v 2) is asked by Paul for them. Grace is simply favor not deserved (cf Titus 2:11, 12).
    1. Grace alone will not save us anymore than faith alone will (cf James 2:17, 24).
    2. Scriptural peace only comes through obedience to Jesus Christ (cf 2 Thess 3:16).

Note: Grace and peace often occur together in the New Testament. In every passage (except Rom 16:20, where they occur in two different sentences) grace always precedes peace, e.g., Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; Gal 1:3, etc.
- II. Paul's thankfulness and friendship of the Philippians (3-8).
  - A. Proper thanks for our brethren is offered to God (cf Rom 1:8, 9; 1 Cor 1:4).
    1. We thank God for those who mean so much to us. Those who edify and make us better Christians and better people (cf 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3).
    2. The word "remembrance" is often translated as *mention* (Rom 1:9; Eph 1:16, etc.), but here it means his recollection of them <sup>35</sup> (cf 2 Tim 1:3).

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<sup>31</sup> David Boren references four salient points in the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 verses: The Slaves, Paul and Silas; The Saints, those in Philippi; The Shepherds and Special Servants, Elders and deacons; The Salutation. A Study in Philippians, page 1.

<sup>32</sup> Strong's

<sup>33</sup> Vine's

<sup>34</sup> Thayer

<sup>35</sup> It has been said that, "God has given us memory so that we might have roses in December." Paul's fond memory.

- a. As humans were are continually erecting monuments so we will remember, e.g., Washington Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Wall.
- b. God, in His infinite wisdom, gave us a weekly reminder of His Son's sacrifice, lest we forget the cost of our redemption (cf Rom 8:32).
3. In a setting that would be far less than joyous (confinement in Rome) Paul's prayers and supplications for the brethren at Philippi caused him joy (cf Phil 2:2; 4:1).
4. The word "fellowship" (v 5) has a stronger meaning than what we use in our modern world. We often think of fellowship as a meal or maybe visiting for a few minutes.
  - a. Strong's definition of the word means partnership with a secondary definition of participation (same word used in Acts 2:42).
  - b. It has also been defined as, "A relationship between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other."<sup>36</sup>
  - c. It is the same word translated "contribution" in Rom 15:26 and "distribution" (sharing, NKJ) in 2 Cor 9:13.
  - d. The context probably refers to the efforts the Philippians were making in spreading the gospel (see v 7).
5. The confidence that Paul had in the Philippians was based on what "he" had begun in them. The "he" is probably a reference to God, working through Christ by the words Paul shared with them (cf 2 Thess 2:13, 14).
  - a. This, by necessity, requires that those in fellowship are one in Christ (cf 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Jn 1:3, 6, 7).  
Note: A person cannot believe a lie, obey a lie, practice a lie and then expect to be right in God's sight or in fellowship with those who believe, obey and practice the truth.
  - b. Paul fully expected the Philippians to continue spreading the gospel "until the day of Jesus Christ," until the Second Coming (cf 2 Pet 3:10).
  - c. The words "will perform" (will complete, NKJ) are from a single Greek word which means *to finish*<sup>37</sup> (cf 2 Cor 8:6).
  - d. Nothing in this life (short of death or His return) should keep the faithful Christian from accomplishing God's will (cf Matt 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15).
- B. Paul's great affection for these brethren is seen in verses 7 and 8.
  1. This is the second time he has used "you all" in the opening sentences (v 5). Not just a closeness to the congregation in general, but an affection for the people individually.

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<sup>36</sup> Vincent

<sup>37</sup> Strong's



2. The apostle was thankful upon any remembrance of the Philippians for their being “partakers,” a word that means *participants* or *sharers*, in his bonds and in the defense of the gospel (cf Eph 6:20; Col 4:18).
    - a. Some have said that the gospel does not need to be defended. This inspired apostle did not know that, the Holy Ghost did not know that (cf Jude 3).
    - b. The gospel will always need to be defended against false teaching and false teachers (cf 2 Tim 1:13; see pages 63, 64 this outline, D, 2).
    - c. Paul’s mention of “confirmation” may be a reference to the miracles they witnessed in the city on his first visit, i.e., the spirit possessed woman and the miraculous earthquake that freed them from prison (cf Acts 16:16-18, 26). These are things they had seen and would share.
    - d. God is called to be Paul’s “record” (witness, NKJ) of the tender affection (bowels) he had toward the Philippians.
- III. Paul’s desire for the future of the Philippians (9-11).
- A. Paul was thankful for their past and prayed that their future would abound “yet more and more” (cf 1 Thess 4:9, 10).
    1. The church, in any age, needs to abound more in love (cf 2 Cor 8:7; 1 Pet 1:22).
    2. Two areas the apostle mentions for growth are:
      - a. Knowledge (cf Hos 4:6; 2 Pet 3:18).
      - b. In all judgment (cf Rom 1:32).
      - c. In them at Philippi, as in us, there is always room for improvement.
  - B. Increased knowledge and judgment would allow them to “approve,” which means *to test*<sup>38</sup> or *an approval that comes from examination*<sup>39</sup> “that are excellent.”  
 Note: Augmenting our knowledge and judgment will help us to see clearly the difference between right and wrong, which is what the Greek word translated “that are excellent” means.
    1. A testing, an examining, an approving is necessary in everything we are taught in religious matters, and doubly important in everything we accept to follow in faith (cf 1 Thess 5:21).
    2. The modern day church has failed in this warning, we have far too little testing and examining of the doctrines we practice or the messages we hear (cf 1 Jn 4:1; Rev 2:2).
      - a. In light of proper testing and full examination of teachings they would find themselves “sincere,” which has a literal meaning of holding up to the light of the sun to examine for flaws.<sup>40</sup>  
 Note: In ancient times wax would be used to cover flaws or cracks in marble. The word “sincere” literally means *without wax*.
      - b. This examination was not a temporary or part-time testing. It was to be continued until “the day of Christ” (cf 2 Pet 3:10).

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<sup>38</sup> Strong’s

<sup>39</sup> Harrell

<sup>40</sup> Matthew Poole’s Commentary

3. If we use our enhanced understanding it will lead to “being filled with the fruits of righteousness” (vs 11).
    - a. Similar to the “fruit of the Spirit” (cf Gal 5:22, 23).
    - b. Righteousness is right living. Paul has mentioned several characteristics in this section which would lead them/us to be more righteous (cf James 3:17, 18).
    - c. Paul ends this section with the words, “unto the glory and praise of God.” We are to glorify God through the church Christ died to establish (cf Eph 3:21).
    - d. The church is a divine institution established to glorify God. Membership in that blood-bought organization is one of the greatest blessings on earth (cf Acts 20:28).
    - e. To fail to glorify God in the church would be a detriment to our own souls.
- IV. The furtherance of the gospel (12-18).
- A. Paul’s misfortune (his confinement in Rome) was not unfortuitous (12, 13).
    1. In an effort to remove any anxiety that might be in the minds of the brethren at Philippi, Paul assures them that the events of his detainment in Rome had, by divine providence, worked to the furthering of the gospel (cf 2 Tim 2:9).
    2. The Bible reveals a myriad of mighty examples of divine providence, e.g., Joseph being sold into slavery, yet it was the Lord paving the way for Jacob’s family to prosper in Egypt (Gen 50:19-21); Peter and John being thrown into prison, but emerging from that incarceration to be even bolder (Acts 4:3, 13, 19, 20); even the severe persecution of Saul on the early church caused the greater advancement of the gospel (Acts 8:1, 4).  
 Note: This would also be true of his time in Caesarea before Felix, Festus and King Agrippa, as revealed in Acts 23-26.
      - a. The brethren may have feared the worst concerning Paul’s living condition in Rome. He was trying to alleviate their concerns (cf Eph 3:13; 6:21).
      - b. He tells them that because of his being placed in protective custody by the Romans the gospel had gone into all the palace (palace guard, NKJ).  
 Note: The word “palace” (praetorium)<sup>41</sup> is used seven other times in the New Testament, and always refers to a place, not to people (Matt 27:27; Mk 15:16; Jn 18:28 [twice], 33; 19:9; Acts 23:35). This probably denotes the gospel going throughout Caesar’s household (cf Phil 4:22).
      - c. If “palace” means Caesar’s household (including the whole edifice and camp)<sup>42</sup> then “all other *places*” would greatly expand the happy influence of the gospel in Rome.
      - d. In other words, as Paul wrote to Philippi he was saying, “do not worry about me or the gospel.”
  - B. Paul’s bravery, courage and success was contagious (14).

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<sup>41</sup> Vine’s, Vol 3, page 155

<sup>42</sup> Strong’s

1. The people at Philippi had witnessed Paul's boldness firsthand (cf 1 Thess 1:5; 2:2).
  2. This positive influence was so great that "many" (most, NKJ) were much more bold to speak the truth of the gospel without fear (cf Eph 6:19, 20).
    - a. "Much more" is to a greater degree.
    - b. "Without fear" is to be at ease with speaking the truth.
  3. The stronger we become individually in the proclamation of the truth the stronger we become as a church.
  4. We need an epidemic of boldness in the modern church (cf Acts 4:29; 13:46; 2 Cor 7:4)!
- C. Some brethren had improper motives for preaching (15, 16).
1. These brethren were not preaching "another gospel" (Gal 1:6), neither were they trying to lead brethren back into the Old Testament law (Acts 15:1, 5).
  2. There was nothing wrong with the doctrine they taught, otherwise Paul would not have said, "I therein do rejoice" (v 18).
    - a. It appears that their problem was with Paul, for some unspecified reason.
    - b. He does mention "envy and strife" as their motivation.
      - 1). "[E]nvy" means *jealousy* or *spite* (cf Matt 27:18; James 4:5, 6).
      - 2). "[S]trife" means *selfish rivalry* or *quarreling* (same word used in 2 Cor 12:20 translated "debates" and in Titus 3:9 translated "contentions").
    - c. "[C]ontention" (selfish ambition, NKJ) is a factor added in verse 16.  
Note: Some translations reverse the order of verses 16 and 17.
    - d. This was done "to add affliction to my bonds."  
Note: Whatever the motives behind the envy, strife and contention Paul was not the last gospel preacher to suffer hardship and ill will from brethren. He did not allow the ill will of some people to deter him from his divinely appointed task (cf Acts 9:15).
      - 1). How they intended "to add affliction to my bonds" is unknown, but it is general thought that they would strive to make his incarceration more difficult.
      - 2). According to Vincent's Word Studies it means *to waken or stir up affliction. The phrase is striking in the light of the original meaning, namely; pressure. They would make his bonds more heavily and gall him.*
  3. It is possible, even today, for some to preach with improper motives. If souls are being saved then the power of God's word is working (cf 2 Tim 1:8).
  4. Thankfully, the power of the gospel does not depend primarily on the character of the proclaimer (cf Isa 55:11).
  5. Jonah would be a good example of a misguided and unmotivated preacher presenting a saving message to sinners (cf Jonah 3:10; 4:1).
- D. Paul rejoices in the preaching of the gospel (17, 18).
1. He begins verse 17 with the converse, some were preaching out of love. Possibly a love for Paul as well as a love for Christ.
  2. Paul then declares, "I am set (appointed, NKJ) for the defence of the gospel."

Note: Anytime a person tries to alter, eliminate or circumvent the gospel it needs champions to defend it. Wherever liberalism or antism exists there is a need to defend the gospel (cf Gal 1:8).

3. “The only antidote for evil is good, and the only antidote for error is truth... Bearing witness to the truth in this error-ridden world is a business of strenuous belligerency: not of ‘dignified silence’ or ‘masterly inactivity’.”<sup>43</sup>
  - a. Most of the brethren knew that Paul was not sent to Rome because he was evil, but rather because he was “set for the defence of the gospel” (cf Acts 22:1; 26:1, 2).
  - b. The knowledge of the gospel being spread, no matter the motivation, caused Paul to rejoice.
  - c. Let every faithful servant of the risen Christ prepare themselves to be set for the defense of the gospel (cf 1 Pet 3:15).
- V. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (19-26).
  - A. Paul rejoiced at the preaching of the gospel because it added to his feeling of safety. The Jews had portrayed him as an enemy of Rome, but now they knew this was not the case.
    1. The word “salvation” (deliverance, NKJ) does not refer to his eternal salvation, Paul was already saved (Acts 22:16). It is the same word used in Acts 27:34, where it is translated “health” (survival, NKJ).
    2. This deliverance would be accomplished through the prayers of the saints and the help of the Spirit.
      - a. Paul coveted and depended on the prayers of the brethren (cf 2 Cor 1:11).
      - b. It appears he expected the Spirit to help him in all the trials he faced (cf Gal 4:6).

Note: It is possible that the “supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, but rather to the kind of spirit Jesus had that allowed Him to endure the trials and problems while on earth. Paul was baptized with the Holy Ghost well before his confinement (cf Acts 19:6; 2 Tim 1:6). What additional gift could he expect?
      - c. “Shall turn to my salvation” (v 19) solidifies the fact that Christians are saved in Christ, but must maintain their position before God so we “shall be saved” (Matt 10:22).
    3. The determination of this detained saint is expressed in his magnification of Christ, through his body, even in that situation (cf Rom 6:13; 1 Cor 6:20).
      - a. “Earnest expectation” comes from a single word which means *intense anticipation*, which when coupled with hope would be enough to keep him from being ashamed in Rome (cf 1 Tim 6:6).
      - b. He was resolved to magnify Christ in his body, which probably means by his actions and conduct in a detrimental environment (cf 1 Pet 4:16).

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<sup>43</sup> B.J. Radford’s introduction to Jesus As A Controversialist by Nathaniel S. Haynes.

- c. “[W]hether it be by life, or by death” shows his undaunted persistence in boldness without regard for consequences (cf 2 Cor 2:14-16).
    - 4. No matter what the future would bring to Paul, life or death, it was going to be “gain” (cf Rev 14:13).
      - a. “[T]o die is gain” is not the act of dying, but rather the state after death. The reaping of the reward for a faithful life (cf Rom 8:35, 36).
      - b. The calm tranquility that Paul faced death with should give us the mettle to face our own earthly demise with the hope of better things to come (cf Ecc 7:1; 2 Cor 5:1).
    - 5. Paul states he is “in a strait betwixt two” (hard-pressed, NKJ) indicating the intense struggle in his mind, i.e., which is better, life or death?
      - a. Getting out of this world and all the problems associated with it is “far better” (cf Ps 73: 24-26).
      - b. Being a teacher, helper, defender and example to the Philippians was needful for them. Hence, his hard-pressed position.
      - c. His statement to the Ephesian elders applies here; “...after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you...” (Acts 20:29).
  - B. His own desire notwithstanding, Paul felt confident he would remain in the flesh (cf Phil 2:24).
    - 1. There was a double benefit for Paul remaining in the flesh; their “furtherance” (advancement or progress) and their “joy of faith” (v 25).
    - 2. His abiding and continuing (living in the flesh) would further their faith.
    - 3. Verse 26 ends with Paul making plans to see them again. Whether this is a personal desire or prophetic utterance, this statement was sure to boost the Philippians’ morale (cf Rom 1:11, 12).
- VI. Living a life worthy of the gospel (27-30).
- A. Paul stresses that the manner of their Christian lives be expressed in three areas:
    - 1. That their Christian life be observable.
      - a. That they live in such a manner that others will be talking about them (cf Eph 1:15; Col 1:4).
      - b. People are going to talk about us. Let’s give them something good to talk about (cf 1 Thess 3:6; 3 Jn 3).
    - 2. That it is lived in unity.
      - a. The spirit of contention and disunity is not the mind of Christ.
      - b. Compromising the truth is never grounds for unity. Paul requires them to have unity in standing fast (cf 1 Cor 15:58; 16:13).
      - c. Union is not unity (cf Eph 4:3).
    - 3. That it be done in the faith of the gospel.
      - a. Christians must walk in faith.  
 Note: We have one book in the New Testament on conversion (Acts) and twenty-one books on how the Christian needs to live their lives (Romans-Jude). This is not by accident!

- b. This effort of living in an acceptable fashion is made easier when we strive to do it together (cf Col 2:19; 1 Thess 5:11).
- B. The Christians at Philippi were not to be terrified by their adversaries (v 28). The word “terrified” refers to a frightened horse who runs off wildly.
  - 1. We are not told, specifically, whom the adversaries were, but it is possible they may have been of the same Gentile heathens that had Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned while at Philippi (cf Acts 16:19-24).
  - 2. Verse 30 reveals that they were familiar with his suffering, and had heard of his suffering in Rome (cf 1 Thess 2:2).
    - a. The word “conflict” means *struggle, fight, and opposition*.
    - b. “There is a great fellowship of suffering, which reaches vertically to share in Christ’s agony, and horizontally to include all believers.”<sup>44</sup>
  - 3. Paul has already said, “...there are many adversaries” (1 Cor 16:9). Satan is certainly our main adversary, but he cannot work on us directly, i.e., supernaturally.
    - a. But, he can and does use such means as:
      - 1. False teachers (cf 2 Peter 2:1).
      - 2. False philosophies (cf Col 2:8).
      - 3. Worldly friends (cf Prov 13:20).
      - 4. Various physical and /or mental illnesses.
      - 5. Even members of our own homes (cf Matt 10:36).
    - b. “Those who envision a following of Christ that has no hardship, creates no enemies and brings no pain, are thinking of something other than the life the gospel demands.”<sup>45</sup>
    - c. Satan strives to place fear in the hearts of faithful Christians (cf Matt 10:28; Rev 21:8).
    - d. While in confinement in Rome, Paul is offering encouragement to the Philippians to faithfully endure conflict and opposition.

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<sup>44</sup> Harrell, page 82

<sup>45</sup> Bill Jackson, The Book of Philippians, page 117

## Philippians 2

### Work out your own salvation

- I. Christlikeness demonstrated through unity and humility in the Philippians (1-4).
- A. The word “if” occurs four times in the first verse of this chapter. It is not an expression of doubt, but an appeal to the very things Paul considered most certain in the Christian’s life.
- Note: The same use of the word “if” is found in Matt 4:3. The devil knew exactly who Jesus of Nazareth was. The meaning is not, “If thou be the Son of God...” but rather, ‘Since thou art the Son of God...’ The four “ifs” in verse 1 are not an impugnation, but an expression of acquired characteristics.
1. “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ,”
    - a. “[C]onsolation” is translated as exhortation in some places (1 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 4:13, etc.), and some translations use the word encouragement.
    - b. “I am now persecuted and afflicted. In my trials it will give me the highest joy to learn that you act as become Christians.”<sup>46</sup>
    - c. This consolation was the prophetic promise of the coming Messiah (cf Lk 2:25, which fulfills Isa 25:9).
    - d. Since there is no doubt of the encouragement we get from the risen Christ, it should motivate all Christians to greater service (cf 2 Cor 1:5, 6).
  2. “[I]f any comfort of love,”
    - a. The definition of the Greek word translated “comfort” (v 1) is closely related to the word *consolation*. It means the instrument as used by the agent <sup>47</sup> (cf Col 2:2; 1 Thess 4:18).
    - b. The example of Jesus’ love for His disciples and His willingness to give His life to purchase the church should prompt the church to emulate His love (cf Jn 15:10-12).
  3. “If any fellowship of the Spirit,”
    - a. “[F]ellowship” means “*that which is partaken of together*” (cf 2 Cor 13:14, same word).
    - b. This was a call for unity in the congregation (cf Eph 4:4).
    - c. No doubt, the Philippians were blessed with many gifts of the Spirit. Those differing gifts were all from the same Spirit (cf 1 Cor 12:4).
    - d. We, today, live in an age when those spiritual gifts are no longer available (1 Cor 13:10), but we can seek “the tie that binds” through the Spirit given word.
  4. “[I]f any bowels and mercies,” (affection and mercy, NKJ)

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<sup>46</sup> Albert Barnes’ NT Commentary, page 1028.

<sup>47</sup> Vine’s, page 207, Vol 1

- a. “Brethren who share genuine affection and are able to fully sympathize with one another will inevitably find a way to be together, work together, build together and pull together.”<sup>48</sup>
  - b. The term “bowels” literally means the *inward parts* or *entrails* (cf Acts 1:18). It is used figuratively to mean the inner most affection between brethren (cf Phil 1:8; Phile 20).
- B. The Philippians were in a position to replete Paul’s joy by being “likeminded” (cf Jn 3:29; 1 Cor 1:10).
1. Four innate attributes requested by Paul were like-mindedness, having the same love, being of one accord and having one mind.
  2. There is a possibility that the seeds of discord were sprouting in the congregation at Philippi (cf Phil 4:2).
  3. This seems to be a plea for unity within the body rather than a gathering of forces against a common enemy, as the last chapter ended.  
Note: Possibly similar to Romans 12:10. The word “preferring” means “to try and outdo one another in showing respect.”<sup>49</sup>
  4. A great deal of ethnicity existed in the church at Philippi, i.e.;
    - a. Lydia and her companions were Jews (Acts 16:13-15).
    - b. A slave girl (Acts 16:16).
    - c. A heathen jailer and his household (Acts 16:32, 33).
  5. The Philippians could not be motivated by “strife or vainglory” (selfish ambition and conceit, NKJ) if unity were to exist in that congregation (cf Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3).
    - a. The spirit of contradiction and contention will not help the church of Christ (cf James 3:16).
    - b. Wishing for admiration for one’s self takes away the concept of giving all praise to God (cf Prov 13:10).
    - c. “...let each esteem other better than themselves” is not conceding moral or intellectual superiority to the other, it is the higher consideration of temporal dignity to enhance unity (cf Lk 18:14).
    - d. The mentality of “me and mine” is replaced by the far better “ours.” The meaning is for Christians not to look on their own things only.  
Note: The “agree to disagree” mentality of some in the brotherhood is destroyed in the next section Paul writes. Fellowship is based on followers having the same “mind” or mentality as Jesus of Nazareth. No one can have the mindset of Christ Jesus and ignore the teachings of scripture.
- II. The mind of Christ in us (5-8).
- A. The word “mind” in verse 5 is not referring to intellectual ability. It is a compound word that means we are to apply a Christ-like character, especially when dealing with our brethren (the context).

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<sup>48</sup> Grady Miller, The Book of Philippians, page 138.

<sup>49</sup> Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon.



Note: Verse 5 should be thought of as a transitional verse between the four verses before it and the three verses that follow it. A “transition from exhortation to illustration.”<sup>50</sup>

1. Paul uses the same Greek word (mind) twice in Rom 12:3 then, again, two more times in Rom 12:16 (the first four words of Col 3:2 are translated from this same compound word).
2. Paul is stressing the example of Christ here, but what example are we to see from the context?
  - a. It is the example of self-denial and humility.  
Note: This passage is often taken out of context to teach obedience. Obedience is essential, and certainly Jesus was obedient in all things as a human, but the text is not dealing with obedience. The Philippians were already Christians (cf Phil 1:3-5).
  - b. These Christ-like attributes (self-denial and humility) would strengthen the Philippians unity.
- B. Verses 6 through 8 may be the greatest passage in the New Testament for our understanding of the incarnation of Christ (also see Jn 1:1, 14; Heb 1:1-4).
  1. Paul, through inspiration, is establishing the deity of Jesus, of Nazareth (cf Isa 9:6; Jer 23:6; Matt 1:23).
  2. “Who, being in the form of God...” (v 6) means that before His embodiment He was of the nature of God.
    - a. After His incarnation He was still God, but added to that nature the physical appearance of man (cf Jn 8:58; 10:30, 38).
    - b. He did not stop being God, He has always been God, but He did give up (temporarily) His previous glory (Jn 17:5).
    - c. William Barkley said, “He emptied Himself of His deity to take upon Himself His humanity.” That is wrong, and is false doctrine (cf Col 1:15).
  3. “...thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” means that He understood (for our sakes) that His deity (in the purely spiritual form) was not something He needed to hold on to.
    - a. Again, emphasizing His humility in being willing to give of Himself to help mankind.
    - b. He did not so highly regard His position as equals with the Father that He would rather hold on to that situation than to rescue us (cf 2 Cor 8:9).  
Note: The Father was not the Father until there was a Son. God, as the Father, is not referred to as the Father in the Old Testament.
    - c. Some translations use the word “grasp” or “to grasp at,” which conveys the wrong thought. You do not grasp at something you already possess.  
Note: The Jehovah’s Witnesses use this verse to teach that Jesus did not consider it proper to reach for, or grasp for, the nature of deity.
  4. Jesus, as God incarnate, now took three steps for all mankind:

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<sup>50</sup> Hawthorne, page 80

- a. He made Himself of no reputation.
  - 1). The words, “made...of no reputation” come from a single Greek word which means *to make empty*<sup>51</sup> and is used in Rom 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17, etc.
  - 2). According to Barnes it is used when someone lays aside their rank and dignity in order to assume a more humble station in life (cf Matt 8:20; 17:25-27).
- b. He took upon Himself the form of a servant.
  - 1). He took on the nature of a slave and served mankind as well as serving His purpose to the Father (cf Matt 12:18; 20:28).
  - 2). This is the significance of “mind” in verse 5. The attitude of service and humility (cf Jn 13:5-9, 12-16).
  - 3). “[I]n the form of God” in verse 6 is exactly the same Greek word used in verse 7 “the form of a servant.”
- c. He was made in the likeness of men.
  - 1). He appeared on earth as a human child, conceived by the Holy Ghost, according to prophecy (cf Rom 1:2, 3; Gal 4:4).
  - 2). God created man, and now God walked among men as a man (cf Jn 1:3; Eph 3:9).

Note: He became like us to help us, think like us and to be able to sympathize (have compassion) with us.
- 5. The word “fashion” (v 8; appearance, NKJ) is a different word than “form” and means there was a contrast between what He was and what He appeared to be (cf Lk 9:29).
  - a. He appeared to be totally human. He became hungry, thirsty and sleepy, just like we all do.
  - b. Many of the Renaissance paintings depict Him as having a halo. This entire concept is total fallacy.
- 6. His humbleness caused Him to be obedient unto death by the excruciating and accursed cross (cf Gal 3:13).
  - a. He “made himself of no reputation” to show us what God is like, and to show what men ought to be, servants of God and others.
  - b. There was no sacrifice too great for Him to make, no humility too painful for Him to endure, in order to secure for us the chance to escape the fires of hell.
 

Note: Some might be willing to humble themselves even to the point of death, if the death would be glorious or honorable. But, the death of Jesus, of Nazareth, was shameful, painful and humiliating. The worst possible death imaginable, yet His humble persona prevailed.
  - c. From the exalted throne of God He descended all the way to the lowest rung of the ladder, the cross (cf Heb 12:2).

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<sup>51</sup> Strong’s

Note: The form or type of death Jesus endured was a death the Romans reserved for slaves and thieves, and was considered a curse under Old Testament Law (cf Deut 21:22, 23; Gal 3:13).

- d. Jesus' death was God's ultimatum to mankind. We shall not escape punishment if we dismiss what God, in the form of Jesus of Nazareth, has done in His humiliation (cf Heb 5:9).

### III. The exalted Christ (9-11).

#### A. In His humility He was exalted (cf Acts 5:31; Heb 12:2).

1. He was given "a name" (the name, NKJ) which is "above every name." What name? Which name? There are dozens of names and/or titles given to Jesus in scriptures. God, Lord, Word, Firstborn from the dead, Alpha and Omega, Savior, Redeemer, Lamb of God, Mediator, Prophet, King, etc.

2. The context may reveal the name referred to here is "Jesus" (v 10).

Note: I would urge caution in being too dogmatic about Jesus being the one and only name. In verse 11 Paul uses both "Jesus Christ" and "Lord."

- a. His humiliation lifted Him to the highest, loftiest position in God's mind (cf Heb 1:4).
- b. Not only is Jesus the peacemaker between God and man, He is the only way that men can travel on the way back to God (cf Jn 14:6; 2 Cor 5:18, 19).
- c. The principle of receiving a reward is exemplified in Jesus' exaltation (cf Matt 10:41, 42; 16:27).
- d. In His humiliation Jesus became victorious. He was/is a winner for Himself and for us (cf 2 Cor 2:14).

#### B. "[E]very knee should bow", "every tongue should confess" the exalted name of Jesus "to the glory of God."

1. We "should" do it now and honor Him, but if we chose not to do it now we will be compelled (forced) to do it at some future point (cf Rom 14:11).
2. The word "bow" (v 10) means *to bend*,<sup>52</sup> as in worship (cf Eph 3:14).  
Note: The bowing of the knee is not literal. It illustrates the synecdoche of an appreciative attitude for His sacrifice.
3. "[T]hings" (those, NKJ) in heaven, earth and under the earth possibly refer to the realms of celestial, terrestrial and hadean. All beings, whether human or spirit, should honor and revere Jesus for His humble commitment.  
Note: On Judgment Day there will be no atheists, agnostics or infidels, only those filled with the joy of His return and those filled with the horrid reality of chances squandered and eternal punishment.

### IV. Shine as lights in the world (12-18).

Note: The word "[w]herefore" is used to draw a conclusion from the previous information given in the text.

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<sup>52</sup> Strong's

- A. These saints at Philippi had no real problems to mention: no divisions, no schisms, nothing to correct doctrinally. They had obeyed God’s will and were continuing to obey it as His servants.
1. To “work out your own salvation” means “to carry out to completion what is begun”<sup>53</sup> (cf 2 Pet 1:5-10).
    - a. The word translated “work out” is a compound word which means to *do work fully, or to finish*.<sup>54</sup>
    - b. Christians have work (toil) to do (cf Matt 11:28; Heb 6:10, 11).
    - c. By God’s grace we have been saved, but not by grace alone (cf Rom 2:7; 1 Cor 15:58).
  2. Paul modifies the working out of our own salvation with the words, “with fear and trembling” (cf Heb 12:28, 29).
    - a. Our souls are our most important possession.
    - b. We should demand the very best of ourselves for our own soul’s sake.
    - c. Why fear and trembling? Because we are going to be dead a lot longer than we will be alive. (cf Ps 2:11; 119:120).
    - d. Paul used these two words together in two other places (2 Cor 7:15, Eph 6:5) and in all three places he is stressing the relationship Christians have with reference to continued obedience (cf 1 Cor 10:12).
  3. When decisions are made with our soul’s eternal good as our focus it is God working in you (cf 2 Cor 3:5).
  4. Salvation is dependent on both the divine side and the human side fulfilling their respective responsibilities (cf Heb 13:21), e.g.:
    - a. Noah (Gen 6:5ff).
    - b. Naaman (2 Kings 5:9ff).
    - c. The blind man at the pool of Siloam (Jn 9:7).
    - d. A sinner’s salvation (Acts 22:16).
    - e. Faithful living (Col 1:29).
    - f. God works in us through His word. When we work the plan of God out in our lives we simply produce the works of the Spirit by our obedience (cf 2 Thess 1:11).
- B. Without murmurings and disputings (grumbling and doubting).
1. There is a right way and a wrong way to carry out God’s will.
    - a. Complaining about fulfilling our duties will never please God. He will not accept coerced service. We are not conscripted into Christ’s army, we volunteered to serve.
    - b. Murmurings is “an expression of dissatisfaction, grumbling, muttering in a low voice...it is the kind of grumbling action that promotes ill will instead of harmony and good will.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ellicott’s

<sup>54</sup> Strong’s

<sup>55</sup> Rogers and Rogers, page 452

- c. Not only would the murmurings and disputings mar their own service to God, but it would influence, in a negative way, any who were observing them (cf Acts 6:1).
  - d. We have some in the brotherhood that seem to like to keep things stirred up. Arguing for the sake of arguing. God does not want that.  
Note: Efforts to keep the church pure and doctrinally sound would fall into another category. We need to always be ready to contend for purity.
  - e. According to the text this would include “all things” to be done without murmurings and disputings. According to Strong’s the word “all” means *any, every, the whole* (cf 2 Tim 2:24).
2. The necessity to put off these harmful attributes is stated in verse 15.
- a. “That you may be blameless and harmless” (that you may become, NKJ) may be in counter distinction to “murmurings and disputings.”
  - b. “Blameless” means free from fault or from reason to accusation.
  - c. “Harmless” means unmixed or pure.  
Note: The Greek words associated with these two words are basically synonymous, the distinction here may be between external and internal qualities.<sup>56</sup>
3. The qualities of “blameless and harmless” can and must be done in adverse conditions, i.e., “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation” (generation, NKJ) (cf Acts 17:17; 1 Pet 2:12).
- a. The darkness of our world makes the light of Christianity that much brighter (cf Matt 5:14-16).
  - b. “It is of very great importance always and everywhere to be without blemish; but when surrounded by people whose views of truth, whose ideas of life, and whose general course of conduct are always wrong, it is of importance beyond estimate to be rightminded and straightforward and clean.”<sup>57</sup>
  - c. Paul inserts, “the sons of God” to remind the readers that a child who loves their father will honor and obey that father. They will allow him to direct them (cf Eph 5:1).
  - d. “[C]rooked and perverse” are words, respectively, that mean to turn away from truth and to reach moral depravity (cf Deut 32:5).
  - e. We live in a nation that is becoming increasingly more crooked and perverse.
- C. This is a possibility, even in our sinful world, if we will hold forth (fast, NKJ) the word of life.
- 1. It is true that God lights up the wicked world with the message of salvation.
  - 2. It is not enough for us to save ourselves, we must extend the effort to others.

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<sup>56</sup> Harrell page 98

<sup>57</sup> J.W. Shepherd, David Lipscomb, Commentary on Philippians, page 188

3. The church of Christ has a world-wide obligation to send and defend the message of salvation (cf Mk 16:15).
  4. However, the context seems to demand the use of holding fast rather than holding forth.  
 Note: Strong's gives a definition of the Greek word translated "holding forth" as *to retain; to detain; to pay attention to*.
    - a. Paul is admonishing the Philippians to continue their Christ-like conduct in the difficult setting of 1<sup>st</sup> century Macedonia.
    - b. The obvious application is if they were expected to maintain, we are also expected to maintain (cf Phil 1:27).
    - c. Their continued faithfulness would cause joy in the apostle (cf 2 Cor 1:24; 1 Thess 2:19).
  5. We hold on by means of "the word of life" (cf Heb 4:12).
    - a. Paul compares preaching to running (v 16; cf Gal 2:2).
    - b. There is and should be great effort in spreading the gospel (cf Gal 4:11).
- D. Paul then mentions himself as a sacrifice upon an altar (v 17).
1. If the sacrifice of his earthly life was necessary to make their faith and continued service acceptable to God, he would do just that.
  2. It is unclear if Paul is making reference to a pagan sacrifice (which most of the members in Philippi could related to) or a Jewish sacrifice (which he was very familiar with).
    - a. The KJV has "offering," while the NKJ inserts the italicized words *as a drink offering*.
    - b. The Greek word means *to pour out as a libation*.<sup>58</sup> The only other time this word is used in the NT is in 2 Tim 4:6.
    - c. According to Ex 29:40, 41 a drink offering was ¼ part of a hin. A hin was approximately five quarts. That would make a drink offering about 40 ounces.<sup>59</sup>
    - d. It was an important part of Jewish worship, but was also used in heathen worship (cf Deut 32:38), so either could apply.
    - e. Regardless of which reference was in the mind of Paul, he was not afraid to go to the altar of sacrifice if it would mean their continued faithfulness (cf Phil 1:20).
  3. Paul urged the Philippians to rejoice with him (v 18). We (Christians) know the remedy for sin, the blood of Jesus the Christ. A forgiven people should be a happy people. God's people have reason to rejoice (cf Phil 3:1; 4:4).

V. Timotheus (19-24).

- A. Paul's tender affection for Timothy is revealed on numerous occasions, e.g., "my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord" (1 Cor 4:17); "my own son in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2) and "my dearly beloved son" (2 Tim 1:2).

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<sup>58</sup> Strong's

<sup>59</sup> This measurement varies widely, depending on the source.

Note: Timothy was likely converted on Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> evangelistic tour (cf Acts 14:20, 21), or possibly shortly thereafter. By the time Paul came back through the region on his 2<sup>nd</sup> tour (maybe three to six years later) Timothy was mature enough to get involved in spreading the gospel at Paul and Silas' side. The saints at Philippi knew Timothy well. (cf Acts 16:1, 9-12).

1. Since Paul was prevented from going to the brethren at Philippi first hand, he did the next best thing; he sent someone who had the same interest and concern for the people.

Note: This is not the only time this trusted associate was used in this fashion: Timothy was sent from Athens to Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:1, 2) and possibly from Ephesus to Macedonia, and then on to Corinth (1 Cor 16:5, 10).

- a. Paul wanted to know their "state," which comes from two Greek words that mean *the circumstance*. A literal translation would be *the things concerning you*.<sup>60</sup> (Same Greek word is used in Phil 1:27)
  - b. How best to find out? Send someone who was likeminded and cared for them as he did. Timothy's motives would be genuine and pure (cf 1 Thess 2:8).
  - c. Paul could have sent anyone, but he wanted an intimate knowledge of their condition, so he sent someone who would know them on site, and they would know him.
  - d. The statement in verse 21 makes me ponder just who is in Paul's proximity as he writes this letter.<sup>61</sup> Maybe those who had no connection to the brethren at Philippi, or possibly those who attempted to serve God with a perfunctory attitude toward spiritual responsibilities.
2. The "proof of him" (proven character, NKJ) or, the evidence of his conduct.
    - a. "[P]roof" originally was associated with the idea of testing, and when the testing proved positive it was connected with character (cf Rom 5:3, 4).  
Note: The word comes from the idea of testing gold or silver coins to insure they are genuine.<sup>62</sup>
    - b. Like a son who has the same interests as his father.
    - c. Paul is a wonderful example of an older preacher adding in the training of a younger preacher for more effective service.
    - d. Timothy is also a wonderful example of a younger preacher knowing his place and submitting to the leadership of Paul.
    - e. The child is not greater than the parent, the student is not greater than the teacher and one sent is not greater than the sender (cf Jn 13:16).  
Note: Timothy is the only person addressed as a "man of God" in the entire New Testament (cf 1 Tim 6:11). I believe it is an injustice to tell our young members that they are "the future" of the church. If old enough to be a Christian then they are the church. We should encourage activity.

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<sup>60</sup> Kenyon, Philippians, page 33

<sup>61</sup> Albert Barnes speculates that possibly Paul had asked others to go to Philippi and they had declined.

<sup>62</sup> Knight, page 329

3. “How it will go with me” (v 23) appears that something was still hanging in the balance concerning his Roman incarceration.
    - a. It is unclear what he was expecting, but possibly some news which would be pertinent to the brethren at Philippi.
    - b. The only two things which come to mind are either his release from confinement or condemnation by Caesar and death. The next verse (24) reveals his inner most desire.
  - B. Paul has used the words “I hope” and “I trust,” possibly delineating his desires and the providence of God in his present situation.
    1. We simply cannot know what he meant by using the word “shortly.” It is the same word that was used in verse 19 concerning the dispatching of Timothy (also used in Lk 16:6, Gal 1:6, 1 Tim 5:22, etc.).
    2. The word “trust,” (v 24) is often translated by various forms of the word *confidence* in the book of Philippians (cf Phil 1:6, 14, 25).
- VI. Epaphroditus (25-30).
- A. Paul now turns his attention to another co-laborer.
    1. Epaphroditus is not mentioned in any other book of the New Testament (he is mentioned twice in this book; here and 4:18).
    2. Epaphroditus was a Christian sent from Philippi to Rome.
      - a. He brought unknown gifts to Rome from the church of Christ in Philippi.
      - b. He was allowed to stay with Paul and assist the aging apostle during his confinement.
    3. For only being mentioned in two passages we know so much about this man. Paul gives a pentagon of attributes with respect to this man:
      - a. “My brother.”
        - 1) The common term used by inspiration to indicate the close relationship within the body (cf 1 Cor 7:15; James 2:15).
        - 2) The term “brother” implies having the same parents. All who are brethren are born of the same “spirit” (cf Jn 3:5; 1 Cor 6:11).
        - 3) We only have Jesus as our brother and God as our Father if we have been obedient to the New Testament instructions for salvation (cf Eph 3:14, 15).
      - b. “Companion in labor.”
        - 1) The meaning here is one who labors with another for a common cause. In this case, fellow workers in the truth (cf Col 1:7; 4:11).
        - 2) When we work together to expand the borders of the Son’s kingdom this phrase could apply to us (cf 1 Thess 3:2; Phil 24).
      - c. “Fellowsoldier.”
        - 1) This word means *co-campaigner*.<sup>63</sup>
        - 2) God wants faithful soldiers, willing to go to battle side by side.

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<sup>63</sup> Strong’s



- 3) Our enemy has not changed; our armor has not changed; our manual has not changed; our Commander in Chief has not changed.
  - 4) Epaphroditus should be an example.
  - d. "Your messenger."
    - 1) Trusted enough by the brethren at Philippi to take gifts to Paul in Rome; a journey of approximately 800 miles over land and sea.
    - 2) The word for "messenger" is the same word used in 2 Cor 8:23.
  - e. "Ministered to my wants."
    - 1) Epaphroditus cared for Paul's wants (needs, NKJ) at Rome (cf 2 Cor 11:8, 9).
    - 2) It appears that the generosity of the church at Philippi kept Paul's situation in Rome from being a burden to other congregations.
    - 3) While Jesus walked among men He taught, "...whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (Matt 20:26).
- B. Epaphroditus had been sick and the brethren back home were concerned about his health.
1. He was troubled and felt sorrow because they would now be worried about his physical condition.
    - a. He was "full of heaviness" (distressed, NKJ). We can know the extent of his distress when we learn that the only other times this word is used is in connection to Jesus' suffering in the garden (cf Matt 26:37; Mk 14:33).
    - b. How sick was he? Verse 27 says, "...nigh unto death." We are given no information about his illness or how long it lasted.
  2. Two important side notes can be drawn from this passage:
    - a. Paul did not use his super-natural healing abilities to heal his dear friend because the power of the Holy Ghost was not for personal use (cf 1 Tim 5:23; 2 Tim 4:20).  
Note: Those super-natural powers had a two-fold purpose: to reveal God's will for mankind, and to confirm the message and/or the messenger.
    - b. The second insight is Paul could not have written this letter early in his confinement. Enough time had to pass that the church in Philippi learned of his needs, collected the "gift" and then dispatched Epaphroditus with it to Rome. The news of Epaphroditus' illness had time to travel back to Philippi and then the news traveled back to Rome that they were concerned.
    - c. "God had mercy on him..." and he recovered. His restored health avoided "sorrow upon sorrow."
  3. Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi so the brethren would see their friend and be reassured.

- a. “Easing the mind of the Philippians and imparting gladness of heart to them meant more to Paul than any personal service he might have been able derive by the continued attendance upon him of Epaphroditus.”<sup>64</sup>
  - b. The words translated “the more carefully” (the more eagerly, NKJ) comes from a single Greek word that means *sooner than otherwise*.<sup>65</sup>
  - c. Joy was Paul’s wish for the Philippians at the return of Epaphroditus.
4. The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus to Rome to do a work. His return should be a moment of great gladness.
- a. They were to hold him in esteem or honor (v 29). The same word is translated as “precious” in 1 Pet 2:4, 6.
  - b. Epaphroditus had done for him what the people in Philippi could not do.
  - c. They could not physically assist him because of geography.
  - d. They had done more for him than any other congregation (cf Phil 4:14-18).
  - e. “Epaphroditus was their envoy to him, their way of telling him that they cared enough to send their very best.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Hendriksen, page 143

<sup>65</sup> Strong’s

<sup>66</sup> Hawthorne, page 120

## Philippians 3

### Press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus

- I. Warnings about Judaizing teachers (1, 2).
  - A. Half way through this letter Paul uses the word “[f]inally.” He will use it again in 4:8. It is simply used here to change from one subject to another (cf 1 Cor 7:29; 1 Thess 4:1).<sup>67</sup>
    1. “[R]ejoice” is the theme of the letter.
      - a. The right relationship with God will bring rejoicing.
      - b. It matters not our station in life or what privileges might be ours, if we are not right with God we will never have true rejoicing.  
Note: “To write the same thing to you” may indicate an unknown letter to these brethren. Or, it may be the reiteration of things taught while he was with them.
    2. He did not apologize for covering the same ground (cf Heb 5:12).
      - a. Truth always needs to be taught enough to be understood. This was the “safe” way to insure clear understanding.  
Note: Repetition is the time honored tool of educators.
      - b. Biblical examples about stating and then restating basic information are replete, e.g., 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles; Matt, Mark, Luke; Timothy and Titus, etc.
  - B. A series of warnings were issued.
    1. Paul takes level aim at the false teachers of his day.
    2. In writing these things Paul says it “is not grievous” (is not tedious, NKJ) or, it is not tiresome, to repeat what will keep you safe (cf 2 Pet 1:12; 3:1).
    3. He then uses three descriptive terms; all pertaining to the same group of people:
      - a. “Beware of dogs”
        - 1) Not four legged dogs, but people who were behaving like dogs (cf Gal 5:15).<sup>68</sup>
        - 2) Dogs were generally thought of as unclean animals. They were scavengers in the cities and villages, often eating garbage and corpses (cf 1 Kgs 14:11; 21:19).
        - 3) This was a severe term of reproach, whether used figuratively or literally (cf Deut 23:18; Isa 56:10, 11). Jesus used it as a generalized reference to a woman from Canaan (cf Matt 15:24-27).
      - b. “Beware of evil workers” (evildoers or mischief-makers)

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<sup>67</sup> Some unknown person said that Paul was the first preacher to use the words “finally” to begin another 30 minutes of preaching.

<sup>68</sup> I once read that Paul used the term “dog” because: they were barking out false doctrine, hounding Paul from city to city, biting and devouring all they could, and like rabid dogs, their bite was poisonous and spiritually fatal.

- 1) Zeal (zealous workers) is important, but zeal must be properly controlled (cf Matt 23:15; Rom 10:2).
- 2) To pretend that these energetic people were not destructive to the church, or to individuals, would not make them any less destructive.
- 3) No matter how likeable, jovial or well-known a false teacher is, they are still dangerous. Paul says they are “evil workers” (cf 2 Cor 11:13).
- c. “Beware of the concision” (mutilation, NKJ).
  - 1) The word “concision” literally means *to cut up*.<sup>69</sup>
  - 2) The word for circumcision is a different word in the original (v 3). Paul substitutes that word for one that means mutilation.
  - 3) This is the reason it is generally thought that Paul is making reference to warnings about Judaizing teachers. Requiring the Gentile Christians to observe at least part of the Law of Moses (cf Gal 5:2, 3).
  - 4) These Judaizing teachers had serious problems with Paul’s apostleship and God-given authority (cf Acts 9:15; 22:21).
  - 5) Adding to the gospel (or taking away from it) will make the gospel null and void (cf Rev 22:18, 19).
- d. The same types of warnings Paul gave to the Philippian church should be given to churches today (cf Col 2:8; 2 Pet 3:17).
  - 1) Warnings can prevent problems (cf Titus 1:10).
  - 2) They need to be presented in simple enough language to be easily understood and applied.
  - 3) Let us always be alert to spiritual dangers and well-versed enough to recognize those dangers.

## II. The ineffectiveness of earthly privileges (3-6).

A. Paul says that true Christians are “the circumcision.” Not fleshly circumcision, but inwardly, spiritually circumcised (cf Col 2:11).

1. This is not a reference to national Israel, *per se*,<sup>70</sup> but an indicator of separation and dedication to God.
  - a. Abraham was separated from the people around him by circumcision hundreds of years before Israel became a nation (cf Gen 17:9-11).<sup>71</sup>
  - b. Paul uses “Jews” in several passages as a way of teaching Jewish Christians and those influenced by Judaizing teachers (cf Rom 2:28, 29).
  - c. Physical, literal Israel has been replaced (superseded) by spiritual Israel, i.e., Christians (cf Gal 6:15).
  - d. Those misguided people who believe in the false doctrine of premillennialism have a problem with the plain language that makes literal, national Israel inconsequential to His final plans.

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<sup>69</sup> Thayer’s Lexicon

<sup>70</sup> Latin for *by itself*.

<sup>71</sup> According to Ussher’s biblically time line there were approximately 506 years between the promise to Abraham and the law given at Mt. Sinai. Dickson’s New Analytical Bible, pages 1452, 1453.

Note: Consider Israel's role in God's plans for our redemption from its conception:

- 1) The nation of Israel formed an instrument to bring the Messiah into the world. That has already happened.
  - 2) Israel's position with God was conditional (Deut 28:1).
  - 3) There is no New Testament passage which speaks of the restoration of Israel, as a nation.
  - 4) Many passages reveal a gloomy future of physical Israel: The nation would be cut down at the root (Matt 3:10); be left barren (Matt 21:19); be left desolate (Matt 23:38); be trodden down (Luke 21:24).
2. Having "no confidence in the flesh" is a direct reference to the Jews thinking that the act of circumcision gave them advantages and privileges with God (cf Matt 3:9).
- a. The mighty apostle will use himself as an example of spurious privileges in the flesh, as a Jew, over the next several verses.
  - b. The word translated "confidence" in verse 3 is the same word used in Heb 2:13 translated "*put my trust in.*"
  - c. Any law that man has devised, or any law the God has superseded, is not worthy of our trust (cf Eph 2:15; Col 2:14).
- B. Paul's personal pedigree (4-6).
1. The point he is making is that if anyone had a right to boast, based on human position, it would have been him.  
Note: In this abbreviated, personal autobiography, Paul uses the pronoun "I" fifteen times in verses 4-14.
  2. Circumcision held a tremendously important place in the minds of the Hebrews.  
Note: The rite of circumcision was first given to Abram (his name was changed to Abraham as a result of this covenant) as a visible sign of the covenant God made with him in Gen 17.
    - a. Having been circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day would fortify his nationality. He was no proselyte Jew, he was born a Jew (cf Acts 22:3).
    - b. Even before his ability to follow the Law of Moses, he was in exact compliance with its teachings.
  3. "[O]f the stock of Israel" refers to Abraham's grandson and not the nation.
    - a. Jacob's name was changed to Israel after he wrestled with God/angel/man before his reunion with his brother (cf Gen 32:28).
    - b. This is why the nation that would spring forth from his descendants would be known as Israelites.
  4. Specifically, from "the tribe of Benjamin."
    - a. Jacob had twelve sons by two wives and two concubines.
    - b. His favorite wife was Rachel, who bore him Joseph and Benjamin (cf Gen 29:30; 30:24; 35:18).

- c. Being from the tribe of Benjamin not only put Paul in the lineage of Israel's most honored wife, but the tribe of Benjamin was one of only two faithful tribes after the national division.  
 Note: Jeroboam took control of the ten northern tribes and established a reprobate nation. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, under the leadership of Rehoboam remained faithful (cf 1 Kgs 12:21).  
 Note: This means that the tribe of Simeon probably had to relocate to the north after the nation was divided.  
 Note: The Jews considered Jerusalem to be the "holy city" (Neh 11:1; Matt 4:5; 27:53).
  - d. It appears that Paul is claiming to be the best Jew from the best tribe Israel had to offer.  
 Note: The city of Jerusalem was inside the ancient tribal borders of Benjamin.
5. A "Hebrew of Hebrews" would emphasize his heritage. We might call this our family tree.
- a. Abraham was the first person in the Bible to be called a "Hebrew" (Gen 14:13) and this passage in Philippians is the last passage that specifically mentions the Hebrews, as a nation.
  - b. This heritage would normally be a great source of pride.
6. In addition to all that lineage, he was also a Pharisee.
- a. The Pharisees were an interesting sect. They came into existence somewhere between the books of Malachi and Matthew.
  - b. There is no biblical evidence of the origin or establishment of the Pharisees.  
 Note: The first mention of the sect is in Matt 3:7 as John was baptizing.
  - c. Historians say that the sect was born to resist the Jews accepting and adopting the Greek (or Roman or even Babylonian) culture into their lives, possibly during the Babylonian captivity.
  - d. The strictest of the strict, but they went beyond that. They added traditions to the law (cf Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13; Acts 26:5).
7. He then illustrates his commitment to this sect by relating his zeal in persecuting any who might violate the Law of Moses (v 6).
- a. His zeal stemmed from his belief that he was right (cf Acts 26:9).
  - b. He considered Christianity false and evil. He was defending his Jewish heritage (cf Acts 22:4).
  - c. Paul lacked knowledge. Many who oppose pure, unadulterated Christianity today simply lack knowledge and understanding of the scriptures (cf Rom 10:2).  
 Note: Merely thinking something to be true, is dangerous. Many thought the Titanic unsinkable. Thinking you are right does not make you right.

8. He also uses the word “blameless,” which means *faultless* (the word does not mean sinless). He was so determined to follow the law that he became the envy of his peers.
- III. All these advantages and privileges of his former life Paul now counted as loss<sup>72</sup> for Christ (7-11).
- A. His heritage, education and strict conformity to the law had become a deterrent in accepting Jesus as Christ.
    1. Paul’s actions had turned into crimes against the people. Sins he deeply regretted (cf Acts 22:4; 26:11).
    2. He considered himself to be the “chief” (1 Tim 1:15) of sinners because of his actions against Christ and His body.
      - a. In Christianity all Christians are equal:
        - 1). The same door of admittance, baptism; Mk 16:15.
        - 2). The same requirements for life, faithful living all our days; Matt 10:22.
        - 3). The same reward promised, heaven; Col 1:5.
      - b. Philemon and Onesimus are wonderful New Testament examples of this mind-set (cf Philemon 16, 17).
    3. This is made personal to Paul when he writes, “I have suffered the loss of all things” (v 8).
      - a. When he left Judaism and becoming a Christian he may have become a disgrace to his family.
      - b. To the sect of the Pharisees he became a deserter.
      - c. To the Jews, in general, he became a traitor (cf Acts 9:22-24).
  - B. Paul gave up something to obtain something greater, as is true in the life of every Christian (divinely illustrated in Matt 13:44-46).
    1. Those things in his life he once cherished are now considered as dung (rubbish, NKJ).  
Note: Lightfoot says that the word “dung” refers to scraps of food or garbage thrown to the dogs, and may have a connection to verse 2.
    2. He learned not to trust in his own righteousness, or even the righteousness of the old, defunct law (cf Matt 16:24, 25).
    3. What any of us have given up to become Christians more than pales in comparison to what we have gained in Christ (cf Matt 16:26).
  - C. The words “That I may know him” (v 10) refer to the idea of full acquaintance with the nature, character, work, etc. of the Messiah (cf 2 Tim 1:12).
    1. We, today, cannot know Christ through our empirical senses. We have never seen Him, heard Him, touched Him, yet that does not take away from the fact that He is real.
      - a. You may have never been to Hawaii. How do you know it is real?

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<sup>72</sup> Things which he formally valued, Vine’s

- b. You may have trusted friends that have gone there and they bear witness to its existence. We might turn to authoritative information published about the island's existence.
- 2. We can know, through the evidence of trusted source, all we need to know about Jesus as our Christ and God the Father (cf 1 Chron 28:9; Job 19:25).
- 3. The end of verse 10 leads us into verse 11. "[C]onformable unto his death" means to be like Him, in agreement with Him (cf 2 Cor 4:10, 11).
  - a. We even go so far as to reenact His death, burial and resurrection in baptism. We came up out of the watery grave in the likeness of His resurrection (cf Rom 6:3-5).
  - b. His agony in Gethsemane and His subsequent agony at Calvary were not an accident.
  - c. It lead the way to His glorious resurrection, just like our enduring the suffering of this world will open the door of the like resurrection for us some great day (cf 1 Pet 1:3).
- D. The "resurrection of the dead" (v 11) substantiates Paul's hope of being resurrected in the fashion Jesus was resurrected (cf Lk 20:36).
  - 1. "If by any means" does not imply doubt. It is a strong statement of longing for and a great determination to obtain the same type of resurrection as Jesus.
  - 2. The empty tomb had to occur in one of three ways:
    - a. The body was removed by His enemies.
    - b. The body was moved by His disciples.
    - c. The body was raised by the power of God.
  - 3. The enemies of Jesus had the body right where they wanted it.
    - a. They had no intention in moving it or letting anyone else move it (cf Matt 27:62-66).
    - b. If they did move it they would have known where it was moved to and would have produced it.
  - 4. The disciples may have wanted to take possession of the body, but that was rendered impossible by the guards.
    - a. Guards are changed at regular intervals. Eliminating the possibility of the guards sleeping.
    - b. Falling asleep on guard duty is a serious offense. These guards were never charged or tried for an offense <sup>73</sup> (cf Matt 28:11-15).
    - c. At this point there was no desire or any reason for the disciples to take the body. They were still expecting an earthly ruler (cf Acts 1:6).
  - 5. The only possibility is the bodily resurrection, witnessed by hundreds of people (at least 516) (cf Mk 16:9-14; 1 Cor 15: 5-7).
  - 6. That resurrection was Paul's hope. It is our hope, if we have been added to the Lord's church through baptism (cf Eph 2:12, 13).

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<sup>73</sup> UCMJ Article 113, "Should a service member of the United States Armed forces misbehave while performing the duties of a lookout or sentinel-- whether due to drunkenness, sleeping upon his or her post, or leaving before properly relieved... you may be executed for failing to uphold your duties..."



- IV. We must press on toward the mark of the high calling of God (12-16).
- A. Paul fully understood that as long as he was in the flesh there was a possibility that could fall short of his goal.
1. The mighty apostle is stating that he knows full well he has not yet won the prize (cf 1 Cor 9:24).
    - a. The word “perfect” (already completed, NKJ) means complete (cf Heb 5:9) and is translated as “are of full age” in Heb 5:14.
    - b. He had not yet “attained,” but was following after (press on, NKJ) toward his eternal reward in the next life. He had won the prize, but had not received it yet. Like winning a race or gaining a major promotion and then having to wait for the awards ceremony.
    - c. The risen Christ laid hold of Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Christ took hold of Paul (apprehended) and Paul took hold of (apprehended) the promises Christ offered.
    - d. The race had to be finished in order to get the prize. His conversion, like ours, was the beginning of the race, not the end.
  2. “...but this one thing I do...” (v 13) indicates his whole life was concentrated in a single purpose.
    - a. He did not seek to obtain earthly honor and wealth while simultaneously endeavoring for a heavenly crown and glory (cf Matt 6:33).
    - b. Distraction from our main purpose (heaven) will often cause us to miss out on heaven completely (cf Jn 6:27).
    - c. Holy Writ is replete with warnings of starting our Christian journey, but not following through to the prize (cf Heb 6:4-8).
    - d. Peter graphically writes about the same sore subject (cf 2 Pet 2:20-22).
    - e. When Paul records “this one thing” it is an accurate indication of what our singleness of purpose should be (cf Matt 6:22).  
Note: What does it take to be a good educator, doctor, cook, engineer, golfer, piano player, ad inf.? Dedication and hard work. How can we expect to be good Christians without the same effort?
    - f. Most people have plans for school, higher education, family, business and even retirement, but what then? Have we put first things first (cf Matt 22:37)?
    - g. The main thing is to make sure the main thing is the main thing.
  3. “[R]eaching forth” means *to stretch oneself forward*.<sup>74</sup>
    - a. Possibly Paul had in mind the finish pole used in the Grecian games. We might imagine stretching for the “brass rings” of a century ago.
    - b. Great power in focusing our attention and intention (cf Rev 3:21).
    - c. Looking back might hinder us from reaching the prize out in front of us.
    - d. Looking back in a race may cause us to fall.

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<sup>74</sup> Strong’s

- e. Think of the things that were in Paul's past; things he no longer looked at: a noble ancestry, a once respectable religion, personal accomplishments, physical injuries, miserable mistakes, etc. (cf 1 Cor 9:24-26).
  - f. God arranged our human anatomy with the eyes in front. We move forward. If God would have wanted us to look back He would have moved the eyes (cf Ex 14:15).
4. The eagerness and determination (v 14) of each contestant (Christian) to win the prize is the focus of the verse (cf Heb 12:1).
- B. The word "perfect" in verse 15 is used in a different sense than in verse 12.
    1. We all have room to improve and develop, but if we are "in Christ" we are classified, by scripture, as being perfect (cf Matt 5:48; 2 Cor 13:11).
    2. Paul is admonishing the Philippians not to be satisfied with their level of spiritual maturity, but to progress in their walk.

Note: The last six words of verse 16 appear to be added by the translators.
- V. Our citizenship is in heaven (17-21).
- A. In verse 17 Paul encouraged the Philippians to use him as an example and to also "mark" (note, NKJ) others who were walking correctly as those they could emulate (cf 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 4:9).
    1. Paul uses the same word (with a completely different context) in Rom 16:17 concerning those to be marked and avoided for "divisions and offences."
 

Note: There is far too little marking that occurs in the modern church.
    2. "[T]ogether" (join in, NKJ) is significant. We can always do more together than we can separately; stronger as a unit (cf 1 Cor 1:10).
  - B. The Philippians knew how he had lived, his conduct and teachings (cf 1 Thess 2:10-12).
    1. People should be able to use us (followers of Christ) as examples.
    2. Can they? Should they? How would they turn out?
  - C. The KJV (and a few other versions) have verses 18 and 19 as a parenthetical insert. Assumedly, to accentuate verse 17 and the significance of noting good examples of Christian conduct.
    1. There were many people that chose to walk improperly (cf Gal 2:14; Eph 4:17).
    2. Paul had often warned them, even with tears, not to follow the enemies of the cross (cf Gal 5:21; 1 Thess 4:6).
      - a. The most serious enemies of Christianity often come from within the body (cf Acts 20:30, 31; 1 Tim 5:1).
      - b. The damage that can be done by a member who is involved in scandal or hypocrisy can harm the church far greater than those on the outside scoffing and ridiculing.
    3. In our modern world there are "enemies of the cross" who are offering false teachings on such topics as: authority; the authority of God, the Bible, the eldership, etc.; false teaching on worship (all that we do is worship); fellowship; marriage, divorce and remarriage; theistic evolution, etc.

- a. The “end” (the issue or fate<sup>75</sup>) of people like this is eternal destruction (cf 2 Pet 2:1).
  - b. These people can be denoted by their self-pleasing appetites. “[W]hose God is their belly” comes from a word that metaphorically means *the inner most part of a man*<sup>76</sup> (cf Jn 7:38).
  - c. It is the same category of people Paul makes reference to as he ends the book of Romans (cf Rom 16:17, 18).
  - d. Unbridled lust, which is a shame, was something they were glorying in (cf 1 Cor 5:2; Gal 6:13).
  - e. “[W]ho mind earthly things” is an admonition to keep us from being centered in and for this present world (cf Mk 4:18, 19).
- D. Verses 20 and 21 express the converse of the previous people.
1. Our “conversation” (citizenship, NKJ) affirms that this world is not our home. We are destined to live in a different, much better world.
    - a. Like any citizen, we must meet the requirements of citizenship in that world. Our new world requires complete and total obedience. (cf Matt 28:19, 20; Rom 6:16).
    - b. Without faithful living we can lose our citizenship. The biblical examples of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1) and Demas (2 Tim 4) should be sufficient.
  2. These “vile” bodies (lowly, NKJ) are subject to sickness, pain and death. As citizens of heaven our corruptible bodies will put on incorruption (cf 1 Cor 15:53).
  3. Oh, what a day that change will be!

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<sup>75</sup> Vine’s, page 26, Vol 2

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, page 118, Vol 1



## Philippians 4

### Salutations and praise

- I. Paul begins to draw this great book to a close (1-3).  
Note: A casual reading of this text would indicate that verse 1 should have probably been connected to the end of Chapter 3 rather than the beginning of Chapter 4. It is of no consequence, but serves as a reminder that man divided the text, not inspiration.
- A. In spite of the threat of false teachers and his deep concern that some might fall away, especially in the face of persecution, he exhorts them to “stand fast in the Lord.”
1. He refers to them as his “dearly beloved and longed for” (NKJ omits dearly).
    - a. Having been established under Paul’s own ministry (Acts 16) he had a particular affection for these brethren (cf Phil 1:3).
    - b. When Paul expresses a longing for them it may indicate his personal suffering because of the forced separation (cf Phil 1:8).
  2. “[M]y joy and crown” refers to his delight with this congregation.
    - a. They brought joy to him via continued obedience and much needed help in his existence in Rome (cf Phil 4:15).
    - b. The word “crown” is not the kingly crown, but rather a crown of victory (Gr. *stephanos*) (cf 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 5:4).  
Note: The word *diadem* (kingly crown) is never used in the New Testament with reference to Christians.
  3. They were to “stand fast” in what they had been made through the Lord Jesus Christ (cf Eph 6:13, 14).
    - a. Standing firm on the foundation of the Lord is the only chance we have (cf Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:10, 11).
    - b. The straight and narrow road is not always easy, but it is always required (cf Matt 7:13, 14).
- B. Paul then turns his attention to two women at Philippi. We would have to assume that Epaphroditus brought this information to him at Rome (cf Phil 2:25).
1. He uses the word “beseech” (implore, NKJ) before each name. This indicates they were both required to set forth the necessary effort to fix the unknown problem and be in unity (cf Phil 2:2).
    - a. Whatever the issue was, they were both to be involved in mending the situation (cf 1 Pet 3:8, 9).
    - b. The common idiom is that ‘it takes two to tango.’ The same is true of a quarrel. If one person is antagonistic and the other is not, there is no dispute.
    - c. Paul’s way of dealing with this situation indicates it was not a doctrinal problem, but if left unchecked it could disrupt the unity of the church.
    - d. Reconciliation is necessary between brethren, so this is a call for unity (cf Eph 4:3).

2. Paul beseeched (urge, NKJ) for an unknown “yokefellow” to get involved and help settle this matter (cf Philemon 9).

Note: This is the only time that “yokefellow” is used in the scriptures.

Whomever it was, they had a special place in the apostle’s mind.<sup>77</sup>

3. Clement was a common name in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. No additional information is available about this man. The name is not used in any other passage.

- a. He, and many others at Philippi, were labeled as “fellowlabourers” in the gospel.

- b. God knows the faithful workers in the church, their names are recorded in “the book of life” (cf Rev 13:8; 21:27).

Note: We can be thankful the true record is kept in heaven. There will be no mistakes in that divinely authored book (cf Lk 10:20).

- c. The true laborers in every faithful congregation are the servants of God who fill the pews.<sup>78</sup> Those true laborers, often unnamed, but always known (cf Dan 12:1).

- d. Having ones name written in “the book of life” in no way validates the false doctrine of unconditional salvation (cf Rev 3:5).

Note: Division is wrong (cf Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 1:10; etc.), but not all division is wrong (cf Acts 15:1, 2; 18:27, 28; Gal 2:5; etc.). Christians must be governed by Romans 14:1, but when God draws a line in the sand we must be on the right side of that line, doctrinally. The ‘unity’ movements, the new hermeneutic movement or any other movement that has, as its intent, to make the church of Christ more like the denominational world, are attempts to strip the Lord’s church of its distinctiveness. We are to be a peculiar (special people, NKJ) people (cf Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9).

## II. Rejoice in the Lord (4-7).

Note: Phil 4:4-7 has been called “the antidote to anxiety.”

A. The Philippians were given a command to “[r]ejoice in the Lord.”

1. This does not mean the faithful Christian will never feel sorrow, but because of their relationship with God through Christ they can rejoice in any situation.
  - a. We find the apostles leaving the Jewish council after a beating and then rejoicing (cf Acts 5:41).
  - b. Jesus warned those who might become His disciples that they would experience hardships (cf Matt 5:11, 12; Lk 6:22).
  - c. Ironically, Paul, from his confinement, was encouraging (commanding) free Christians to rejoice in their situation.

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<sup>77</sup> It is possible, and even probable, that the word translated “yokefellow” is a proper name. A man named Synzygus, or Suzuge (the Greek word in the text). Otherwise, how would the brethren in Philippi know of whom Paul was speaking? This is emphasized by the fact that Paul used proper names both before and after “yokefellow.”

<sup>78</sup> “Christian service may pass unnoticed on earth, but the important thing is that God takes note, and will praise at the last.” R.P. Martin, NT Commentary, Philippians, page 167.

2. Rejoicing is modified by “in the Lord.”
    - a. Rejoice in being part of His body (cf 1 Cor 12:13).
    - b. Rejoice in the salvation He provides (cf 2 Tim 2:10).
    - c. Rejoice in His service (cf Eph 6:7).
    - d. The context would require our rejoicing because our names are written in the book of life.
  3. The command is emphasized by “always, and again I say, rejoice.”
    - a. The word “always” means *at all times*,<sup>79</sup> which would apply to afflictions and distresses encountered in any age (cf James 1:2-4; 1 Pet 4:13).
    - b. The command was repeated for one of two reasons. Either it was important enough to repeat, or Christians are slow to heed it.
    - c. Eliminating worry in our lives will go a long way in our disposition and personal health.  
 Note: We need to be reminded that no matter what may change in our lives, God’s promises are always there for us to rejoice in.
  4. “Moderation” (v 5) which means *reasonableness or gentleness*.<sup>80</sup>
    - a. An even and mild temperament is essential to continued rejoicing.
    - b. The reason for this command is that “The Lord is at hand.”
    - c. Probably not a reference to His second coming, although that is always a day nearer than yesterday.
    - d. The context lends itself to a closeness of the Lord, to be able to call upon Him for help and comfort (cf Ps 119:151; 145:18; Acts 17:27). This thought is supported by verse 6.
    - e. Some have abused this passage. “All things in moderation” is not a license to sin a little. Sin is sin. All are grievous in God’s eyes.
- B. Verse 6 begins with the admonition “Be careful (anxious, NKJ) for nothing.”
1. In reading the New Testament we often find that we are told to not do something, or to leave something out, so that we can do everything else (cf Rom 12:1, 2; Tit 2:11, 12; Heb 13:5, 6).
    - a. This passage does not mean we are to exercise no care about worldly matters (cf 1 Tim 5:8). It does mean we are to have such confidence in God as to free our minds of anxiety as we depend on Him (cf Lk 8:14).
    - b. Anxiety, or worry, should not control our minds. As His children we should cultivate a calm mind (cf Lk 10:41; 1 Pet 5:7).
    - c. This is not always easy, and often has to be learned, but Paul did insert the words “nothing” and “every thing.” Both Greek words have basically the same definition: *all, every, any, the whole*.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Vines, Vol 2, page 46.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, Vol 2, page 117

<sup>81</sup> Strong’s #3367 and 3956

2. Our God is omniscient (all knowing), omnipotent (all powerful) and omnipresent (all present). That should be enough for us to place our trust in His jurisdiction.<sup>82</sup>
  - a. Prayer: The original term indicated more of the mood of the petitioner than the petition. The inherent confidence in the mind of the petitioner.
  - b. Supplication: In the context this word would indicate the expression of those cares into words.
  - c. Thanksgiving: This would be thanksgiving connected to our prayers. One of the primary elements of our prayers should always be the expression of our thankfulness to God.
3. Then verse 6 ends with, “let your requests be known unto God.” But, does not God already know everything? He is omniscient.
  - a. This section is still dealing with the ‘antidote for anxiety.’
  - b. God always knows our needs, but nothing can be a “request” until it is requested (cf Rom 1:10).
4. Verse 7 can be seen as the result of the proper execution of verse 6.
  - a. Peace, as used here, is the state of the tranquil soul that arises from the favor of God through obedience (cf Jn 14:27; 16:33).
  - b. This affords His children a peace “that passeth all understanding” (cf Ps 119:165; Rom 5:1).
  - c. 1<sup>st</sup> century persecution was often beyond our scope of imagination. Christians calmly prayed as they were bound to a cross for crucifixion or sang as wild animals were released to maul and murder them in the arenas.
  - d. The only reasonable explanation for this phenomenon was a deep comprehension of the peace that “passeth all understanding” (cf Ps 55:22).
  - e. “[S]hall keep (guard, NKJ) your hearts and minds” means *the thoughts and feelings* (hearts) along with *the intellect* (minds).<sup>83</sup>

### III. Things that should fill our minds (8, 9).

- A. Our ability to think makes us superior to all other creatures. We are not animals, but were placed over the animals from the beginning (cf Gen 1:26; Heb 2:6-8).
  1. You have the ability to control your thoughts. You can control what stays on your mind (cf Prov 23:7).
    - a. You can think on things high and holy, or you can allow thoughts to drop to the low and vile.
    - b. The fact that you can exercise control over thoughts makes you accountable for them. Paul is referring to what a Christian might dwell on, what they might ponder or fill their minds with.
    - c. Someone might argue that the thoughts just “pop into my mind.” Then pop them out! You are in control.
  2. The word “finally” (v 8) probably means *it follows then*.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> The last book of the Bible is replete with such references, e.g., Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 19:6, 15; etc.

<sup>83</sup> Strong’s #2588 and 3540

<sup>84</sup> Kenyon, Philippians, page 57



- B. Paul sums up rejoicing in a single sentence:
1. “[W]hatsoever things are true:” true in action, true in thought, true in word. Christ is truth (cf Jn 14:6).
    - a. As Christians everything stands on truth (cf 1 Jn 3:18).
    - b. If we are false in our lives we disgrace Christ.
    - c. If we are false in our doctrine we are not of Christ.
    - d. It is not insignificant that “true” is first on the list.
  2. “[W]hatsoever things are honest:” (noble, NKJ) revered, to worship or to be respectable.
    - a. Same word that is translated as *grave* (reverent, NKJ) in 1 Tim 3:8, 11; Tit 2:2).
    - b. “Whatsoever things are dignified, reputable, by all who esteem high standards of action, who scrupulously conform their lives to an exalted rectitude.”<sup>85</sup>
  3. “[W]hatsoever things are just:” fair, honest and innocent (cf Acts 10:22).
    - a. Just in our dealings with others (cf Lk 23:50).
    - b. We can do much harm to the cause of Christ when we are not just in our dealing because we are always on trial by those observing us.
  4. “[W]hatsoever things are pure:” a moral purity that would include the idea of chaste (cf 1 Tim 5:22; Tit 2:5).
    - a. Pure in thought and in deed (cf James 3:17).
    - b. To lift ourselves out of the defilement of the world.
  5. “[W]hatsoever things are lovely:” pleasing or attractive to good people. The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.
    - a. Not pretty to behold, but an inner beauty (cf 1 Pet 3:4).
    - b. To show forth a lovely disposition.
  6. “[W]hatsoever things are of good report:” uttering words of good omen. This Greek word also occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.
    - a. That which is fit to hear (cf Acts 22:12).
    - b. Probably has to do with verbal purity (cf Matt 15:11).
  7. “[I]f there be any virtue:” any form of moral excellence.
    - a. According to Strong’s definition the thought of manliness or valor is connected to this word.
    - b. The same word is translated by *praises* in 1 Pet 2:9 and by *virtue* in 2 Pet 1:3, 5.
  8. “[I]f there be any praise:” (anything praise-worthy, NKJ) the mind should be filled with praise-worthy thoughts (cf Rom 13:3; 2 Cor 8:18).
    - a. Being praised for doing praiseworthy deeds.
    - b. Anything worthy of praise that is associated with us.
  9. “[T]hink on these things.”
  10. We can only be as good as our thoughts are (cf 1 Thess 5:21).

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<sup>85</sup> J.W. Shepherd, Lipscomb Commentary on Philippians, page 224

Note: Someone unknown has said, “You sow a thought and you reap a deed; you sow a deed and you reap a habit; you sow a habit and reap a character; you sow a character and reap a destiny.”

11. When we control our thoughts we control everything else.
  - a. We cannot entertain impure thoughts without becoming corrupt.
  - b. Conversely, we cannot think good thoughts without becoming purer.
  - c. Remember, you are not what others think you are. You are not what you think you are. But, what you think, you are!
- C. Paul used the example of his own life among them (v 9).
  1. The things learned, received, heard and seen in him.
  2. How many of us could measure up to this standard?
  3. If the members at Philippi would think on these things, how could they possibly miss the mark?
- IV. How to live a happy, successful life (10-13).
  - A. Paul begins to specifically express his thanks to the Philippians for all they had done for him.
    1. Every good thing comes from God, either by way of His grace or through His providence. Hence, Paul “rejoiced in the Lord greatly” for the Philippians care (cf 2 Cor 7:6).
      - a. “[A]t the last” (now at last, NKJ) probably has some type of hindrance attached to its meaning. Maybe something had kept them from their ability to aid the apostle for a period of time.
      - b. The three English words “at the last” come from a single Greek word which is often translated as *in time(s) past* (cf Eph 2:2, 3, 11).
    2. Their “care of me hath flourished again.”
      - a. A word that is often applied to plants and flowers that are growing green again, or to revive, like spring time in the north.
      - b. The word “careful” indicates an earnest desire to help, literally *to be mentally disposed to assist*, but had lacked opportunity.
      - c. It is possible that the absence of opportunity was a direct result of their “deep poverty” (cf 2 Cor 8:1, 2).
      - d. Maybe the problem was the unavailability of a trustworthy messenger, like Epaphroditus, to take the gift to Rome.
      - e. The fact is, when the opportunity presented itself, they blossomed into action.
  - B. He reveals the source of his contentment in adverse circumstances.
    1. Paul is stating that he had been so disciplined by his experiences that no matter what might befall him he could be content therein (cf Heb 13:5).
      - a. It was something he had learned (cf Phil 3:8).
      - b. Paul had acquired this knowledge through use and practice (cf 2 Cor 11:9).

- c. Immediately after his conversion in Acts 9 it is recorded that the Jews in Damascus wanted to kill him. He had to escape their evil desires via a large basket at night (cf Acts 9:23-25).
- d. Most of the remaining chapters in Acts reveal some hardship or other he suffered.
- e. Therefore, we see Paul cultivating a contented mind. Content, here means *self-sufficient* or *to be independent of circumstances*.  
Note: This is a reference to having a contented mind with things that are beyond our control (cf 1 Tim 6:6).
- f. Contentment in this world stems from three basic thoughts:
  - 1) The realization that nothing of an earthly nature lasts or permanently satisfies.
  - 2) Confidence in the wise and loving providence of God. God has a plan for every life. He knows what is best, even if we cannot see it.
  - 3) Nothing finite is needed to supplement our hold upon the infinite.
- 2. Paul knew “how to be abased” or, to be brought low. He also knew “how to abound” or overflow.
  - a. The word “content” in verse 11 should modify this verse.
  - b. It requires as much self-control to keep the heart right in being abased or in abounding (cf 2 Cor 12:7-10).
  - c. How did the mighty apostle find contentment in his life? He learned to accept, with gratitude, those things that became his lot in life.
- 3. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” is a declaration that Paul truly believed that it was impossible that life, people or even the devil himself could confront him with anything that he and the Lord together could not handle (cf 2 Cor 3:4, 5)!
  - a. “[A]ll things” would include, but not be limited to: endure any trial, perform any duty, meet all temptations, subdue any evil, etc. How? Through Christ.
  - b. The word, “strengtheneth” is a present tense word (as indicated by the “eth” ending). He keeps on strengthening.
  - c. We will never be given more than we can handle (cf 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Pet 2:9).

V. Paul praises the Philippians for their work (14-20).

Note: The closing paragraph of a letter often contains the deepest feelings and greatest emotions of the writer. That is the case with this remarkable letter of joy.

A. Paul expresses his appreciation with the words, “ye have done well.”

- 1. The word “communicate” (shared, NKJ) means to participate with someone (cf 1 Tim 6:18).
  - a. This same word is translated “fellowship” in Eph 5:11.
  - b. It is rendered “partakers of” in Rev 18:4.
  - c. A form of the word is translated as “contribution” in Rom 15:26 and is what Paul means here. They had been partners in the gospel (cf Phil 1:7).

2. In verse 15, when Paul says “in the beginning” he is probably referring to that portion of scripture we read in Acts 17 and 18. Paul had left Macedonia to go to Athens and then on to Corinth.
    - a. The churches of Christ in Macedonia consisted of congregations in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea (cf Acts 20:4). Possibly others we know nothing about.
    - b. But, the only congregation which had sent support to Paul was the congregation at Philippi.  
 Note: The diligent Bible student will immediately grasp the need for rationalization between this passage (no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only) and the information inspiration records in 2 Cor 11:8, “I robbed other churches (plural), taking wages of them...”
      - 1) Paul is clearly referencing these very churches in Macedonia in 2 Cor 11 and the finances they supplied as indicated in verse 9.
      - 2) This does not change the inspired fact that only the church in Philippi had sent gifts to him.
      - 3) The only way this scenario can be rectified is if the congregations of Macedonia sent money to Philippi, who alone (only) kept the funds and distributed those funds to Paul, i.e., a sponsoring congregation.
      - 4) Notice the words, “giving and receiving” (v 15). Brother Wayne Jackson said that these words mean “debit and credit.” The Philippian church kept track of what came in for Paul’s use and what went out for his use.
      - 5) Therefore, the “anti-cooperation” doctrine is not only wrong, but according to the principle of binding where God has not bound, it is sinful.
  3. Thessalonica was the next stop in his travels (v 16) and corresponds with the information Luke records in Acts 16:40-17:1.
    - a. “[O]nce and again” or at least twice at Thessalonica. Again later while at Corinth, as previously mentioned in 2 Cor 11:9.  
 Note: Scriptures do not tell us how long Paul worked at Thessalonica, but it was long enough for him to be helped “once and again.”
    - b. While in Thessalonica Paul labored of his own accord (cf 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8) as a tentmaker (cf Acts 18:3).
    - c. What Paul did not do or could not do for himself the brethren at Philippi provided. They have been a wonderful example for 20 centuries.
- B. The motive for praising the Philippians was not to get more of their kindness and generosity.

1. When Paul writes, “I desire fruit (the fruit, NKJ) that may abound” it may be a word play that indicates the interest on the money they had given.<sup>86</sup> Hence, the sentence ending with the words, “to your account.”
    - a. Fruit is often used to refer to growth or abundance in scriptures (cf Rom 1:13; James 3:18).
    - b. It is used both positively and negatively (cf Matt 7:17; 12:33).
  2. Paul is saying that he wants this put down on their account when they come before God in judgement.
    - a. Let that sink in. When we give help to someone in need they will benefit, but so will we. When we give, we get (cf Lk 14:12-14).
    - b. This applies to every aspect of Christian living, but the context has reference to helping in spreading of the gospel.
    - c. When brethren give as they should they are doing more than supporting the cause, they are bearing fruit to their own account.
    - d. Everyone benefits and God is glorified (cf Heb 6:10).
- C. Paul used three expressions to indicate that they had cared for all of his needs:
1. “I have all.”
    - a. I have all I need or want.
    - b. His physical desires have all been fulfilled.
    - c. This word is used by Jesus in a negative way in Matt 6:2, 5, 16 (“they have,” meaning this is their only reward).
  2. “[A]bound.”
    - a. He was in abundance.
    - b. They had exceeded all needs.
  3. “I am full.”
    - a. A strong expression denoting that nothing was lacking.
    - b. The gift that Epaphroditus brought to him satisfied his every need.  
Note: These three similar expressions are giving the brethren at Philippi a hearty “well done.”
- D. Then Paul’s writing switches to the figure of an Old Testament sacrifice.
1. He viewed their gift to him the way God would view an acceptable sacrifice under the old law (cf 2 Cor 2:15, 16).
  2. In the Old Testament both the animal sacrifice and the sacrifice of incense were considered a “sweet smell” to our Father (cf Gen 8:21; Ex 30:7).
    - a. It was the act that was done in accordance with His will that made it sweet.
    - b. Under the old law it was the priests, the sons of Aaron, who were responsible for offering sacrifices for the people (cf Lev 6:14).
    - c. Under the new law every Christian is a priest (cf Rev 1:5, 6).

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<sup>86</sup> Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, *the interest that is accruing to your credit.*

Note: For our sacrifices to have that “sweet smell” they have to be something we sacrifice. Do we offer God our best, or do we give whatever is left over? Time, money, effort; our “firstfruits” (cf 2 Cor 8:1-3).

3. We know that after the return from exile the people reached a point where they stopped offering the best (cf Mal 1:8, 13).
  - a. The people simply grew away from keeping the law due to their own desires.
  - b. It is easy to see a similar attitude in our modern time:
    - 1) Some among us would offer gimmicks instead of gospel.
    - 2) Emotionalism instead of evangelism.
    - 3) New forms instead of the “old paths.”
    - 4) It was a total reversal of God’s desire; “Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord” (Mal 2:17).
    - 5) In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we call adultery and fornication “love.” We are told that chastity and fidelity are unhealthy and outdated.
    - 6) Many have stopped being the “sweet smell” God requires.
4. Just as the Philippians had supplied Paul’s every need, God would supply their needs (cf Mal 3:10).
  - a. What we sow is what we reap (cf 2 Cor 9:6).
  - b. The giver is always the one who is blessed (cf Prov 3:9, 10; 11:25; 22:9).
  - c. We will never be able to out-give God!
5. Let us freely and gladly give God the glory for all things we have and that we enjoy on His earth (cf 1 Tim 1:17; Rev 14:7).

## VI. Paul ends this letter with a salutation (21-23).

### A. Verse 21 starts with the word “[s]alute” (greet, NKJ).

Note: The origin of the hand salute is uncertain. Some historians believe it began in late Roman times when assassinations were common. A citizen who wanted to see a public official had to approach with his right hand raised to show that he did not hold a weapon. Knights in armor raised visors with the right hand when meeting a comrade. This practice gradually became a way of showing respect and, in early American history, sometimes involved removing the hat. By 1820, the motion was modified to touching the hat, and since then it has become the hand salute used today.

1. Salute, or greet, every saint is Paul’s way of encouraging love and respect for the brotherhood.

Note: In Rom 16:3-16 Paul uses the two words (salute and greet) interchangeably 17 times. All translated from the same Greek word.

- a. Christianity is a religion of good will.
  - b. When the Savior was born an angel announced “peace on earth, good will toward men” (cf Lk 2:14).
2. “The brethren which are with me salute you.” He does not mention who these brethren are.

- a. Since Colossians and Philemon are also “letters from Rome,” we could conclude that the men mentioned at the end of those books are the same brethren he is referring to here, i.e., Col 4:10-15; Philemon 23, 24.
  - b. There is no way to determine, specifically, which of these saints were with him at the time of his writing.
3. It appears that verse 22 adds two additional sub-sections of brethren sending salutations to Philippi.
- a. “All the saints” could be the church of Christ in Rome. That congregation had been established long enough for Paul to write a letter to them possibly 6 or 7 years before this letter was written.
  - b. And, those “of Caesar’s household.” The infamous Nero was the ruling Caesar at this time in history (54-68 AD).
  - c. I see this as a statement of encouragement to the brethren at Philippi, hence the word “chiefly” (especially, NKJ). Letting those saints know how well the gospel message had been taught and received, it had even entered the household of Caesar (Phil 1:12, 13). This term would mean the residence rather than the family of Caesar (cf Acts 18:7).
  - d. Even in unfavorable conditions Paul, and those with him, did the best they could for the Lord. We have the Old Testament examples of Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar’s court, Vashti and Esther before Ahasuerus, etc. Tough times are no excuse for us to be less of a servant of our Savior.
- Note: The world at its worst needs Christians at their best.
- B. Paul begins and ends this letter in the same fashion; the grace that is from above (cf Phil 1:2).
- 1. Grace, often misused in our modern world, is simply unmerited favor. Through God’s grace we are given the capacity to believe; we are shown what to believe and presented with ample testimony to produce faith.
  - 2. “Amen” or so be it.





## **The Book of 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, or near, 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

### Paul is thankful for the Colossians' faithfulness

- 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 Timothy 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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) “[I]n 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 “[w]e,” 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 up in.
  - 4. Verse 4 probably has reference to Epaphras (v 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” (v 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.”<sup>87</sup> 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 (vv 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 104 this outline).
  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 Rome; Eph 1:15-19, Eph 3:14-19, Phil 1:3-11 and here.

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<sup>87</sup> Strong’s #4889

- c. He was a great example of his own teaching (cf 1 Thess 5:17).
- 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, to put in the work of obtaining the knowledge.
  - 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” (v 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?<sup>88</sup>

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 (v 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).<sup>89</sup>
  - 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.

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<sup>88</sup> 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.

<sup>89</sup> 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.



- 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) 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.<sup>90</sup> 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*<sup>91</sup> 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.”<sup>92</sup>
      - 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).

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<sup>90</sup> 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).

<sup>91</sup> Strong’s #629

<sup>92</sup> William Barclay, page 118

- 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.”
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 31:9<sup>93</sup> 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.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ephraim was the youngest son born to Joseph while in Egypt. Preeminence should be obvious in such an example.

<sup>94</sup> 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.

4. “Thus the two words, *image* and *firstborn*, stand for Christ’s perfect manhood and perfect deity.”<sup>95</sup>
- C. “[B]efore all things” in order of existence (cf Jn 17:5).
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 (v 17). He, and only He is; all else was created.<sup>96</sup>
    - b. The word translated “consist” means *to hold together*,<sup>97</sup> or *the universe is upheld by the Lord*.<sup>98</sup>
    - 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.<sup>99</sup>
  4. The “fullness” of Christ (v 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 (v 15)
      - 2) Firstborn (v 15)
      - 3) Creator of all things (v 16)
      - 4) Head of the body (v 18)

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<sup>95</sup> J.B. Coffman, page 358

<sup>96</sup> Ellicott’s Commentary on Colossians.

<sup>97</sup> Robertson’s NT Word Pictures

<sup>98</sup> Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol 1, page 230.

<sup>99</sup> Three were raised from the dead in the Old Testament, five raised in the New Testament; three before Jesus’s resurrection and two after.

- 5) Preeminent (v 18)
- 6) Fully divine (v 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 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” (v 20) is a strong word in the original and means *to change from one condition to another*.<sup>100</sup>
  - 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).

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<sup>100</sup> Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol 3, page 261.

- 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).
  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” (v 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.<sup>101</sup>  
 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).

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, Vol 1, page 131

- 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 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.<sup>102</sup>
  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 (v 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 then 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).

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<sup>102</sup> 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: 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."

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 redemption<sup>103</sup> (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" (v 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.

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<sup>103</sup> See notes in An Outlined Study of the Book of Ephesians, Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, same author.

- 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 fashion<sup>104</sup> (cf Rom 8:10; 1 Cor 3:16).
  - 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*.<sup>105</sup>
- 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*<sup>106</sup> 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*<sup>107</sup> 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.

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<sup>104</sup> 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?

<sup>105</sup> Barnes

<sup>106</sup> Strong’s #2872

<sup>107</sup> 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),<sup>108</sup> 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 often 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.
      - c. That is how we obtain 1<sup>st</sup> century unity today.

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<sup>108</sup> See class notes and maps on Paul’s third evangelistic journey from The Book of Acts, An Outlined Study, this author.

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” (v 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*.<sup>109</sup>
    - a. “And this I say” (v 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 “stedfastness” are military terms.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Vol 1, page 112.

<sup>110</sup> 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 “stedfastness” 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*<sup>111</sup> (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.”<sup>112</sup>  
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.”<sup>113</sup> 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”<sup>114</sup> (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”<sup>115</sup> (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.<sup>116</sup>
    - 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.”

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<sup>111</sup> Strong’s #4052

<sup>112</sup> Matthew Poole’s Commentary

<sup>113</sup> Robertson’s NT Word Pictures

<sup>114</sup> Barnes’ Notes

<sup>115</sup> Ellicott’s Commentary

<sup>116</sup> 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.<sup>117</sup>  
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" (v 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).

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<sup>117</sup> 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,” v 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.*”<sup>118</sup>
  - 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 (v 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” (v 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*.<sup>119</sup>
  - b. What was erased? Approximately 613 Old Testament Laws (that is the totality of the old law) handed down from God to Moses.<sup>120</sup>
  - 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).

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<sup>118</sup> Strong’s #4891

<sup>119</sup> Idib. #1813

<sup>120</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613\\_commandments](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).<sup>121</sup>
- 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.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, page 30, this author.

<sup>122</sup> 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 (v 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.”*<sup>123</sup> Ellicott adds, *“Robbing the victor of his prize.”*<sup>124</sup>
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

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<sup>123</sup> Vine’s, page 110, Vol 1.

<sup>124</sup> 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.”<sup>125</sup>

- 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*<sup>126</sup> (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).<sup>127</sup>
- 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).

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<sup>125</sup>Bengel’s Gnomens, “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).”

<sup>126</sup> Strong’s #5448

<sup>127</sup> 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 (verses 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*.<sup>128</sup>
    - 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.<sup>129</sup>  
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.

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<sup>128</sup> Strong’s #1378 and #1379

<sup>129</sup> 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."<sup>130</sup>
  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*.<sup>131</sup> 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.

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<sup>130</sup> Matthew Poole's Commentary

<sup>131</sup> 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, opposed to located preachers, opposed to cooperating in assistance to Christians and non-Christians, opposed to women teaching in classrooms to children, opposed to age appropriate 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).<sup>132</sup>
  - 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 (v 1).
- B. We have ‘heavenly affections,’ (v 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.”<sup>133</sup>
    - 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,’ (v 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).

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<sup>132</sup> 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>

<sup>133</sup> Robertson’s NT Word Pictures.



- c. We abide in His word (1 Jn 2:24).
- 3. Verse 3 sets the tone for most of the rest of the chapter: Those hid in Christ will be:
  - a. Sexually pure (v 5).
  - b. Emotionally balanced (vv 8, 9).
  - c. Helpful to others (vv 12, 13).
  - d. Live a life of love (v 14).
  - e. Live a life of peace (v 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’ (v 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.<sup>134</sup>
    - b. There is no need to speculate the when of Christ’s return. It is simply unknowable (cf Matt 24:36; Rev 3:3).<sup>135</sup>
    - 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.

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<sup>134</sup> 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.

<sup>135</sup> 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

- b. The glory is the crown of victory we wear in the future life (cf 2 Tim 4:8; James 1:12).
- 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.<sup>136</sup>

1. Fornication; which includes all illicit<sup>137</sup> sexual intercourse.<sup>138</sup> 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.<sup>139</sup>  
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.

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<sup>136</sup> 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.

<sup>137</sup> Webster’s New World Dictionary defines illicit as, “not allowed by law, custom, rule, etc.; unlawful; improper; prohibited; unauthorized.”, page 672

<sup>138</sup> Vine’s, page 125, Vol 2.

<sup>139</sup> See The Book of Acts, An Outlined Study, page 90, this author.

- a. The apostle often ranks this sin with those detestable passions afore mentioned (cf Rom 1:29; Eph 5:3).
  - 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 (v 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 (v 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.”<sup>140</sup>
  - 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).

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<sup>140</sup> E.E. Ellis, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, page 797.

- b. Modern congregations that want only positive messages preached are guilty of rejecting the whole counsel of God (cf Acts 20:27).
  - c. We might want to live in an “*I’m ok, You’re ok,*”<sup>141</sup> 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.<sup>142</sup>
  - 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.

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<sup>141</sup> A self-help book authored by Thomas Harris, 1967.

<sup>142</sup> See class note from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, pages 34, 35. this author.

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).
  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” (v 9) carries two important factors. According to one brother,<sup>143</sup> 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 (v 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).

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<sup>143</sup> Noel Merideth

- 2) Occasionally we still see race related barriers in the church today. Thankfully, they are scarce and dissipating.
- b. “[C]ircumcision nor uncircumcision.”
  - 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*.<sup>144</sup>  
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.<sup>145</sup>
  - 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.<sup>146</sup>
  - 2) Slaves made up a significant portion of the early church. Slavery did not exclude them from the hope of heaven.<sup>147</sup>
- 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 v 10).
  - 1. The Christians at Colosse were called, “elect of God, holy and beloved...”<sup>148</sup>
    - 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.

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<sup>144</sup> Vine’s, page 99, Vol 1.

<sup>145</sup> International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

<sup>146</sup> Slavery in Ancient Rome; [en.m.wikipedia.org](http://en.m.wikipedia.org).

<sup>147</sup> There is more information concerning slaves on page 44, this outline.

<sup>148</sup> 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.

- 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).
- 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.<sup>149</sup>
- 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*.<sup>150</sup>
  - b. The noun form of this word means *patience with regard to adverse things*.<sup>151</sup>
  - 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...” (v 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).

<sup>149</sup> Strong’s gives this word the definition of “mildness.” #4240.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, #430

<sup>151</sup> Vine’s, page 116, Vol 2.

- 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.
- 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 (v 16)? When it fills our hearts and molds our thoughts (cf Jn 15:7).
    - a. The word “richly” means *abundantly*,<sup>152</sup> and is translated so in Titus 3:6 and 2 Peter 1:11.

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<sup>152</sup> Strong’s #4146



- b. The context indicates the adverb “richly” is connected to “in all wisdom” (cf Eph 1:17; 5:17).
3. “[T]eaching and admonishing” are parallel to “[s]peaking to yourselves” (Eph 5:19) and carry the same thought.<sup>153</sup>  
 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*.<sup>154</sup>
  - 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 sounds like mechanical instruments, it simply reads “singing.”<sup>155</sup>
- 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).

<sup>153</sup> See class note on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, page 43, this author.

<sup>154</sup> Strong’s # 3560

<sup>155</sup> See class notes on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, page 43, point 4, this author.

- a. To do all things, “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is to have His authority in all we do<sup>156</sup> (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).<sup>157</sup>
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*.<sup>158</sup> 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*.<sup>159</sup>
    - 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

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<sup>156</sup> 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).

<sup>157</sup> See class notes on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, pages 44-48, this author.

<sup>158</sup> Strong’s #5293

<sup>159</sup> 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"<sup>160</sup> (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).

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<sup>160</sup> 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.”<sup>161</sup>
      - 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.”<sup>162</sup>
      - 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.

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<sup>161</sup> 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.”

<sup>162</sup> 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.<sup>163</sup>
  - 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.<sup>164</sup>
- 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.

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<sup>163</sup> Dennis Gullede 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.

<sup>164</sup> [http://www.theworldcounts.com/stories/Modern\\_Day\\_Slavery\\_Statistics](http://www.theworldcounts.com/stories/Modern_Day_Slavery_Statistics)

- 2) When we faithfully serve here on earth, we faithfully serve our Lord in heaven.
- 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 13<sup>th</sup> century (1228 A.D.,<sup>165</sup> it was divided into chapters by a man named Stephen Langton, the archbishop of Canterbury)<sup>166</sup>) 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.

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<sup>165</sup> Holy Bible, KJV, New Clarified Study Edition, Royal Publishers, Inc., page 302.

<sup>166</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen\\_Langton](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.”<sup>167</sup>
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*.<sup>168</sup>
  - a. Paul was requesting prayers for himself and his companions<sup>169</sup> 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" (v 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?<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Added notes by J. W. Shepherd, A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, by David Lipscomb, page 307.

<sup>168</sup> Strong’s #260

<sup>169</sup> He will note those with him at the end of the chapter.

<sup>170</sup> 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).<sup>171</sup>
  - 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.

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<sup>171</sup> 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 (v 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 (v 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*.<sup>172</sup>
    - 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."<sup>173</sup>
  - 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 instruction them to "receive him" in full fellowship.
- D. Then "Jesus, which is called Justus" is mentioned (v 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.

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<sup>172</sup> Strong's #4869, which is a compound word from #4862 and #164

<sup>173</sup> 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*<sup>174</sup> 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.”<sup>175</sup>
  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*,<sup>176</sup> 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.

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid page 206, Vol 2

<sup>175</sup> See page 51, this book, “C” for additional information on “fellowprisoner.”

<sup>176</sup> 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.<sup>177</sup>

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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).<sup>178</sup>
- 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).

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<sup>177</sup> Robertson’s NT Word Pictures

<sup>178</sup> See The Book of Acts, An Outlined Study, pages 98, 127-128 and 170, this author.

- A. Since we know what has been recorded in Revelation 3:14-16, we know these Christians were in danger.
  - 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 “fellovsoldier.”
  - 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 “take 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.





## The Book of Philemon

### A request to a slave owner for kindness and forgiveness

#### I. Paul's greeting (1-3).

Note: This is a private letter (the fourth one in a row, the letters to Timothy and Titus, preceding it) and one of four one-chapter books in the New Testament.

#### A. Paul, the writer of this letter (vv 1, 9, 19), classified himself as a "prisoner" (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 2 Tim 1:8).

1. He was a political prisoner, held against his will. There is no specific biblical evidence he was ever actually in a prison at any time, with the exception of Acts 16:24, in the city of Philippi.

Note: Paul does mention imprisonment (same Greek word as in Acts 16:24) in 2 Cor 6:5 and 2 Cor 11:23.

Note: Paul typically starts his letters with establishing his apostleship. In this letter he begins with "a prisoner" because he wants a friend to hear his impassioned plea for another Christian. Philemon would have to muster substantial strength and charitable character to follow Paul's requests.

- a. He was held in Jerusalem, in the Roman garrison, for his own protection (cf Acts 21:31-34).
  - b. He was transported to Caesarea and was confined, with liberty, for a period of approximately two years (cf Acts 23:33; 24:23, 27).
  - c. He appealed to Caesar and was subsequently moved to Rome, where he stayed in his own hired house for another two years (cf Acts 28:30).  
Note: Most scholars write about a "second imprisonment" based on the last half of 2 Timothy 4. Again, since there is no solid biblical evidence, this "second imprisonment" appears to be based on inference.
2. A Roman centurion may have been the one who held the key to Paul's chains, but he was "a prisoner of Jesus Christ." He became a prisoner for standing strong for his convictions and for preaching the truth.
    - a. The Roman government had nothing against this man. He had broken none of their laws (cf Acts 26:31, 32).  
Note: He was protected by Roman officials on several occasions.
    - b. It was the leaders of the Jews (and sometimes the Jewish mobs) who were his enemy.
    - c. In the four letters we commonly refer to as the "prison epistles" (a misnomer) Paul mentions either "chains" or "bonds" in each of them (cf Eph 3:1; Phil 1:13, 14; Col 4:18; Philemon 13).

#### B. Paul includes Timothy in his greeting.

1. A "brother" because they belonged to the same spiritual family. Another wonderful example of our relationship in Christ

- a. Acts 16 reveals Timothy joined the apostle on his 2<sup>nd</sup> evangelistic journey and in verse 6 of that chapter it says “they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia.” Colosse was located in Phrygia.
  - b. His name was recorded at the greeting because the people in Colosse knew him (cf Col 1:1).
2. Paul refers to Philemon as “our” dearly beloved. There was a deep relationship between these three men.
- a. The genuine love these men held for each other was based on the scriptures.
    - 1) Some religious people today compromise the truth of the gospel and call it love.
    - 2) They embrace those who embrace the devil, and then force their ideas under an umbrella of pseudo-love.
  - b. Real Bible love is based on scripture. Obeying, following, and promoting the scriptures (cf Jn 14:15; 15:14).
3. “[F]ellowlabourer” because they labored in the same cause, for the same purpose, promoting Christ and His kingdom (cf Phil 4:3; 1 Thess 3:2).
- a. Are we “fellowlabourers?” Are we working together, like Paul, Timothy and Philemon to promote the gospel?
  - b. Or, have we been caught up in the denominational concept of “it is the preacher’s job?”
- C. Paul then mentions a woman by the name of “Apphia.” The name means “fruitful.”
- 1. Many assume Apphia is Philemon’s wife.  
Note: With no additional information it is impossible to know for sure, it is certainly a possibility.
  - 2. “Archippus our fellowsoldier.” The same people that assume Apphia was Philemon’s wife, assume that Archippus was their son.
    - a. Archippus had a “ministry” in the local church at Colosse, and he was to “[t]ake heed” to it (cf Col 4:17).
    - b. Those who received the letter to the Colossian church were to use words of encouragement and exhortation toward Archippus.
    - c. Imagine the emotional lift Archippus would receive if all the brethren at Colosse showered him with encouragement (cf 1 Tim 4:16; 6:11-14).
- D. “[A]nd to the church in thy house.”
- 1. It is possible the church of Christ at Colosse gathered at Philemon’s house to worship (cf Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15).  
Note: If not, then another congregation at Colosse gathered at Philemon’s house who were in close connection to the other congregation.
    - a. Church buildings are a relatively modern concept.
    - b. The building is nothing more than an expedient. When the building becomes the focal point then we have lost our true focus.

- c. We spend millions of the Lord's dollars to build nice buildings to please ourselves and to draw the community.
  - d. The mind-set of some is, 'if we build it, they will come.'
  - e. What it should be is, 'if we preach it, they will be saved.'
2. It took several centuries for meeting houses to become popular. In the beginning Christians met wherever they could; synagogues, houses, catacombs, etc.
- a. In some places the church building has become where most of God's money is spent.
  - b. Could we meet out under the trees? Yes, of course. How many would?
  - c. Would it be too hot? Too cold? Too windy? Is it about our comfort?
  - d. A comfortable building makes worship pleasing to us.
  - e. But, what about the evangelists that cannot get the money to preach and teach the gospel?
  - f. What about the young man who cannot get the necessary funds to attend school in order to gain preaching knowledge?
  - g. What about the family working overseas or unevangelized locations in this country that cannot stay in those fields because of the lack of funds?
- E. It was common for Paul to include "grace" and "peace" (v 3) at the beginning of his letters (cf Rom 1:7; Eph 1:2).
- 1. Grace was the common Greek manner of salutation.
  - 2. Peace was the Hebrew equivalent.
    - a. Colosse was a mixed congregation, so Paul included both words.
    - b. Grace and peace come from God and our Lord Jesus Christ (cf 2 Cor 1:2).
- II. The love and faith for Philemon is commended (4-7).
- A. "I thank my God" (v 4) are words of encouragement.<sup>179</sup>
- 1. Paul's prayer life was two-dimensional.
    - a. His prayers went up to God, thanking Him
    - b. They also went out for his brethren, thankful for them.

Note: No doubt, his prayers included himself. But, prayers for himself were less significant than his thankfulness for God and his brethren.
  - 2. Emulating Paul's prayer life will benefit all of us.
- B. It was Paul's habit to make mention of individuals in his private prayers (cf 2 Tim 1:3).
- 1. It is never wrong to mention people, specifically, in our prayers.
    - a. However, some amount of caution should be exercised in our public prayers.
    - b. If we mention some and neglect others, feelings can be hurt.
    - c. We, like Paul, should save most of the specifics in our prayer life for our private prayers (cf Eph 1:16; Phil 1:3).

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<sup>179</sup> Robert R. Taylor Jr wrote, "The words THINK and THANK are nearly alike in the English spelling save for one letter's difference. In reality if a person thinks, he will be thankful. Those not thankful have not done enough real thinking!" The Living Way Series, page 98

- d. Paul always mentioned Philemon in his prayers. I am sure each of you pray similarly (cf Col 1:9).
- 2. Notice the words, “making mention of thee always” (v 4).
  - a. Paul was a prisoner, probably chained to Roman guards. Yet, he was praying for Philemon “always.”
  - b. His prayer life was active, but it was also without privacy. Strangers were always around. Would we offer fervent prayers, or wait for a more convenient time to approach God in prayer?
  - c. Because Paul did not falter in his petitions to God, some of Caesar’s own household became Christians (cf Phil 1:12, 13; 4:22).
  - d. His example should inspire us to allow people to see our Christianity.
- C. Information had traveled to Rome about the deep love and faith of Philemon.
  - 1. It is probable that Epaphras was the one that brought Paul this news (cf Col 4:12; Philemon 23).
  - 2. Philemon is said to have “love and faith.” Most likely, this refers to his faith in Christ Jesus, and his love for the brethren (the construction of the sentence is admittedly difficult).
    - a. It is impossible for a Christian to love Jesus and not love the brethren (cf 1 Jn 4:20, 21; 5:2).
    - b. Jesus, Himself, gave the “new commandment” (cf Jn 13:34).
    - c. By the same token, we cannot be pleasing to God without proper faith (cf Heb 11:6).
      - 1) First, our love is vertical, towards God, then horizontal, toward the brethren.
      - 2) If there is no vertical love, there can be no horizontal love. If no horizontal love, then there can be no vertical love (cf 1 Jn 3:23).
    - d. “[A]nd toward all saints” indicates no partiality, no prejudice and no favoritism in our love for the brethren (cf Eph 6:18; Heb 13:24).
- D. In verse 6 “the communication of thy faith” (the sharing of your faith, NKJ) literally means to make Philemon’s faith known to others.
  - 1. His good works should be made known (cf Matt 5:16).
  - 2. The word “effectual” (effective, NKJ) means *energetic* or *active*.<sup>180</sup>
  - 3. Paul wanted Philemon’s faith to be expressed by good fruits.
  - 4. How did Paul desire this to be done? “[B]y the acknowledgement of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus” (cf 1 Pet 2:12).
    - a. This is a beautiful statement, made by inspiration, on Philemon’s behalf (cf Phil 4:8).
    - b. By effectively sharing his faith the seed would be planted and fruit would grow unto Christ (cf 1 Pet 1:23).
  - 5. The Christian’s good deeds need to be done in such a fashion as to give glory and honor to Christ, through the church.

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<sup>180</sup> Strong’s #1756

- a. Man-made institutions and organizations cannot, and do not, glorify Christ (cf Eph 3:21; 2 Thess 1:4).
  - b. He died for one and only one institution, the church of Christ (Rom 16:16). Our good deeds and efforts must be done “in Christ” (cf Gal 3:26-29).
  - c. A saving faith begins in the heart, changes our earthly direction and is expressed in actions that honor Christ Jesus (cf James 2:14, 17).
    - 1) Soup kitchens, the Good Will, the Salvation Army, the Shriners, etc. all serve a need, in one form or another, but as unauthorized religious organizations, they do not glorify Christ.
    - 2) Christians need to do good works through the church, the authorized organization by which Christ can be glorified.
6. Notice that Philemon’s name has not been used in this section of scriptures (vv 4-7). Yet, it is clear that Paul is pulling the mind of Philemon in a specific direction with this instruction.
- a. Philemon’s salvation had come from an obedient faith in Jesus Christ (cf Eph 2:8).
  - b. He had received mercy and grace which was extended by the Savior (cf 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2).
  - c. Paul is laying the foundation to get Philemon to do something unprecedented in ancient Rome.
  - d. To take back a runaway slave and then to treat him like a brother.
- E. That which fills a person’s heart with joy is a true measure of their character.
- 1. Paul, and those with him, would have joyful hearts when thinking of Philemon and the others receiving this letter (vv 1, 2).
    - a. What did Paul have great joy in? Philemon’s love, his conduct and his attitude toward the saints (cf Phil 1:4).
    - b. They had joy in others doing well.
    - c. Our joy should be great in our brothers’ and sisters’ accomplishments.
  - 2. The second half of verse 7 reads, “because the bowels (hearts, NKJ) of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.”
    - a. “Bowels” is a word which means *spleen* or *intestine*<sup>181</sup> (always used in the plural) and is translated “inward affection” in 2 Cor 7:15.<sup>182</sup>
    - b. Paul is saying that the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by Philemon (cf 2 Tim 1:16).
    - c. Obviously, the love Philemon had for the brethren found a way of being expressed. He did not simply say it, he showed it (2 Cor 7:13).
  - 3. Paul ends the verse with the term “brother.” He and Philemon were members of the same family.

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<sup>181</sup> Vine’s page 144, Vol 1

<sup>182</sup> “The internal parts of a person. Symbolically, the bowels were considered the seat of emotions and feelings, much like the word “heart.” Nelson’s Bible Dictionary.

- a. It is not only wrong, but unscriptural, to use this family term for anyone outside the body of Christ, in a spiritual sense, i.e., members of denominations are not our brothers and sisters. That term is for family.
  - b. If a person has not put on Christ in baptism (Gal 3:27) and been added to the one true church of the Bible (Acts 2:47) they are not part of God's spiritual family.
4. Paul is now ready to set an appeal before Philemon. That appeal is for Onesimus. The next section, in its entirety, is that appeal.  
 Note: One 16<sup>th</sup> century commentator wrote that Paul was softening Philemon up (Scipio Gentilis).
- III. Paul's plea for Philemon's love needed to be applied to Onesimus (8-22).
- A. "Wherefore" indicates that Paul is now done plowing the field. He is ready to plant the seed.
- 1. Paul's position as an apostle gave him much boldness in Christ (cf 2 Cor 3:12; 1 Thess 2:2).
    - a. Could Paul have not just ordered Philemon to take Onesimus back?  
 Note: The NKJ renders this verse, in part, "...I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting" (emphasis added, jb).
    - b. Yes, it is possible. I imagine that Philemon would have complied and not questioned the apostle's demand or authority (cf Heb 13:22).
    - c. Why then does not Paul just make a blanket statement that all slave owners must take their delinquent slaves back, no questions asked?
    - d. God's wisdom plays a vital role in this letter (cf James 3:17; 2 Pet 3:15).
    - e. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not about social anarchy. If such an edict were declared, slaves would flock to the church for the wrong reason.
    - f. The government of Rome would be forced to place harsh sanctions on the church of Christ and the cause of Christ would suffer.
    - g. God always knows best.
    - h. The great persecution of the church was just on the horizon at the time of this writing (possibly only a year or two away) and it needed no accelerant.<sup>183</sup>
  - 2. This section of scripture not only presents a model of effort to lead a person on the right path, but also unveils the proper spirit of Christian conduct.
    - a. A gentle love and persuasive demeanor will do much for defusing a possibly volatile situation.
    - b. What right did Paul have to come between a man and his slave? None, according to the Roman law. His authority was only "in Christ."
- B. Verse 9 reveals he, for love's sake, beseeched Philemon (appeal, NKJ) to hear his plea (cf Eph 4:1).
- 1. Not by command, not by force, but by common sense and Christian love.

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<sup>183</sup> The Roman persecution of the church, under Nero's government, started in 64 AD, after the great fire in Rome, and lasted, in various forms, until 313 AD.

2. The Greek word Paul uses here for love is “agape,” the highest form of love.
    - a. Love is grossly misused and misapplied in modern vernacular.<sup>184</sup>
    - b. It is fascinating that the word translated “beseech” is often translated as “comfort” or “comforted,” e.g., Col 4:8; 1 Thess 3:2, 7.
  3. “Paul the aged” are the next words in verse 9.
    - a. We have no idea exactly how old Paul was when he penned these words, but he does classify himself as “aged.”
    - b. We do know that Jesus was born around 5 or 4 BC<sup>185</sup>, and the church was established about thirty-three years later, in approximately 29 AD (cf Luke 3:23).  
 Note: His earthly ministry lasted about three years, which can be established by the number of Passover Feasts He attended after His baptism, i.e., John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55.
    - c. The church had been in existence for a few years when Saul of Tarsus is introduced in Acts 7:58 as an influential member of the Jewish society (cf Acts 26:4, 5).  
 Note: It appears that the Hebrew priests were considered to be a man at thirty years of age, e.g., Num 4:3, 23, 30, 35; 1 Chron 23:3, etc.
    - d. If this age is the standard then Paul would have been born at approximately the same time as Jesus and John, the baptizer (cf Lk 1:36).
    - e. If this speculation is true, that would make the apostle somewhere in his mid to late 60’s.<sup>186</sup>  
 Note: When the angel Gabriel came to Zacharias in the temple to tell him he was going to become a father (of John, the baptizer), Zacharias disputed with him by reasoning he was “an old man” (Luke 1:18); it is the same Greek word Paul uses to describe himself.<sup>187</sup>
    - f. The argument of being aged is designed to sway Philemon’s heart to listen to the impassioned plea of Paul for Onesimus.
  4. He adds “a prisoner of Jesus Christ” to his “aged” plea.
    - a. We have already discussed the point of him being a prisoner (see page 19 of this outline).
    - b. He was held captive, but was not in prison (cf Acts 28:30).
- C. In verse 10 Onesimus is mentioned for the first time in this letter.  
 Note: He is also mentioned in Col 4:9, the only other place in scripture.<sup>188</sup>
1. Paul begins with the word “beseech” (appeal, NKJ), which means *to call to one’s side or to call to one’s aid*.<sup>189</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Thayer defines love as affection, good will, benevolence. Usually defined as seeking the best for another.

<sup>185</sup> Use any search engine to establish this historical fact. An error in dating calculations was made by a Scythian monk named Diocletian Exiguus. By the time the error was discovered it was too late to make any corrections.

<sup>186</sup> About 66 years after Jesus was born; approximately 62 AD (when the book was written) plus four years (4 BC).

<sup>187</sup> The word “aged” is the same term from which we get “elder” (Greek= *presbuteros* or *presbutes*).

<sup>188</sup> Ellicott (and others) suggested that Paul withheld Onesimus’ name until Philemon’s was completely engaged.

<sup>189</sup> Vine’s page 119, Vol 1

2. In this appeal to Philemon, Paul calls Onesimus his son, a reference to Onesimus being his spiritual child.  
 Note: It is the same word that Paul uses in reference to both Timothy and Titus (cf 1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4).
    - a. “I have begotten” comes from a single Greek word which means *to procreate*,<sup>190</sup> and is used here, and in other places, metaphorically (cf John 3:3-8, the same word is used eight times in that passage, “born”).
    - b. Even in “bonds” (chains, NKJ) Paul was able to win this man for the cause of Christ.
  3. It is not revealed how Paul came in contact with Onesimus, but there is always a special bond between a teacher of the gospel and the one that obeys the truth under their tutelage (cf 1 Cor 4:15).
    - a. A soul has been saved from the fires of hell.
    - b. Joy as deep as bringing a child into this physical realm.
  4. Onesimus was described as “unprofitable” to Philemon in the past (v 11).
    - a. If a slave ran away, he or she would indeed be unprofitable to the owner (cf Matt 25:30).
    - b. Conversely, now, as a Christian, Onesimus would be of great profit to Philemon (cf Titus 3:8).  
 Note: The name Onesimus means *profitable*, although the word used in verse 11 is a different word, where it means *useful*.<sup>191</sup>
    - c. Because of his conversion, Onesimus would now render a much greater service to his master. Not one of eye-service, but of service to Christ (cf Eph 6:7; Col 3:22).
    - d. There is a wonderful lesson for us all just under the surface of these verses. We all fall short of living as we should on occasion.
      - 1) We might give into temptation, or fail to hold up under the pressure of peers.
      - 2) Far too often we become unprofitable, or not as profitable as we should be. The power of the gospel can change the unprofitable into the profitable (cf 2 Tim 2:21).
    - e. John Mark is an example from Paul’s own life. He departed the work in Acts 13:13, and in Acts 15:38 Paul thought it “not good to take him with them, who departed from them...” He became unprofitable. Some twenty (or more) years later Paul wrote, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry”<sup>192</sup> (2 Tim 4:11).
- D. Paul sends Onesimus back, and asks Philemon to receive him as his “own bowels” (heart, NKJ).
1. Why did Paul send him back? He was a Christian now. Some might ask, should not his baptism wipe away his former years?

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<sup>190</sup> Strong’s #1085

<sup>191</sup> Vine’s, page 218, Vol 3.

<sup>192</sup> Paul uses the same Greek word for *useful* when referring to John Mark as he did for Onesimus.



- a. Baptism has repentance as a prerequisite (cf Acts 2:38; 3:19).
  - b. Baptism washes away our former sins, but not our legal responsibilities.
  - c. Onesimus was a slave under the Roman government. As a Christian, he was obligated to obey God's laws and Rome's laws (cf Rom 13:6, 7).
2. Baptism does not undo a sinful situation or sinful circumstances in our lives.
    - a. A baptized bank robber cannot keep the money.
    - b. A baptized adulterer cannot continue to live in adultery.
    - c. A baptized man, with multiple wives, cannot keep those wives.
    - d. A baptized homosexual cannot continue in that sinful life-style.
    - e. Baptism does not sanctify unscriptural relationships.
    - f. Onesimus was now a baptized believer, but he was still Philemon's slave, and had legal obligations as a Christian (cf Rom 13:1).
    - g. How do we know it was right for Onesimus to return to Philemon? Because the Holy Ghost inspired Paul to pen these words. That should settle the matter (cf 2 Tim 3:16).
  3. Onesimus can, and should, be a monumental example for twenty-first century Christians.
    - a. He knew it was the law of the land and that he must return to his former master (cf Lk 20:25).
    - b. Paul could not force him to comply, but I am convinced he encouraged Onesimus to do what was right (cf 1 Pet 2:13).
    - c. It would be difficult, dangerous and potentially deadly, but it was right (cf Rom 13:5).
    - d. Sometimes we have decisions to make about our lives. Even when those hard decisions are made we must make them based on what is right.
  4. It seems clear that the mighty apostle exercised extreme prudence by sending Onesimus and Tychicus together with the letters (cf Col 4:7-9).
    - a. There would be safety, companionship and encouragement for Onesimus in such an arrangement.
    - b. It was not only a benefit for Onesimus to have the godly Tychicus with him in his travels, but Tychicus could then return to Paul with news of how Onesimus was received by Philemon.
- E. According to verse 13, if Paul would have done what he wanted to do instead of what was right, Onesimus would have stayed with him in Rome.<sup>193</sup>
1. Onesimus had become profitable to Paul.
  2. It appears Paul is saying that if Philemon would have been in Rome he would render service to Paul as Onesimus was doing, "in thy stead."
  3. It was a sacrifice for the "aged" Paul to send him away.
    - a. Christianity is our willing sacrifice and service (cf Eph 6:5-8).
    - b. There is nothing forced about it.

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<sup>193</sup> The literal translation of this verse could have been, "Whom I did wish to retain to myself, that in thy behalf he might minister to me in the bonds of the good news."

- c. If a Christian feels forced in rendering service to God there is either a lack of commitment in their lives, or Satan is at work in them (cf Rom 12:1).
- 4. When Paul pens, “without thy mind would I do nothing” (v 14) it means nothing would be done without Philemon’s knowledge and blessings.
  - a. Remember, Philemon did not know where Onesimus was at this point.
  - b. Paul and Onesimus could have just kept their mouths shut about this runaway. Many in our world would do just that.
  - c. To do so was not right and Christians do right (cf 1 Tim 6:2).
  - d. Paul could not violate one brother to help another brother and be right before God.
  - e. To properly understand the last phrase of verse 14 we need to know that the word “necessity” means *distress*<sup>194</sup> (compulsion, NKJ).
  - f. This same word is translated by “distress in Lk 21:23, 1 Cor 7:26 and 1 Thess 3:7.
  - g. The Christian life is not one of distress. Our lives should be characterized by willingness (cf 1 Cor 9:17; 2 Cor 8:12).
- F. It seems that in verse 15 Paul is trying to get Philemon to see Onesimus’ running away as a case of divine providence.
  - 1. We never know if God’s providence is at work while we are in the midst of it, e.g., Joseph and Esther.
    - a. No doubt, Philemon did not think of a runaway slave as anything good.
    - b. Paul could see a good outcome in the situation, and was bringing it to Philemon’s attention.
  - 2. “For perhaps he therefore departed for a season” means Onesimus was gone for an unknown period of time.
    - a. There can be little doubt that his “season” was quite long. Sufficient time had to pass that Onesimus was able to travel to Rome (most likely on foot, and as out of sight as possible), be converted and end up in Paul’s service.
    - b. Paul contrasts “a season” (how long he had been gone from his service) with “for ever” (how long he would have him as a friend and brother in the next life).
    - c. Philemon could receive Onesimus anew, and it would be an act that would last throughout eternity (cf 2 Thess 2:16).  
Note: With the words, “[f]or perhaps” Paul claims no divine insight as to whether this is God’s providence or not.
  - 3. “Not now as a servant, but above a servant” (v 16) does not mean Onesimus’ legal responsibility was removed (cf Eph 6:5-7).
    - a. It may help our understanding to insert a word just before the comma in this verse. “Not now as a servant *only*, but above (more, NKJ) *than* a servant...” (words in italics and emphasis added, jb).

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<sup>194</sup> Strong’s #318

- b. Because Onesimus was now a Christian he was more than just a slave (cf 1 Tim 6:2).
  - c. “[S]pecially to me” indicates the special interest Paul had in this man and in the outcome of this unusual relationship.
  - d. It is possible that Paul had taught both of these men and led them to the Lord through obedience.
  - e. There is often a close connection between teacher and student.
  - f. The last half of verse 16 is powerful information that should draw Christian people together.
  - g. No matter what our personal feelings or differences might be, we have a common cause that should/must unite us (cf Jn 15:15).
- G. Paul starts verse 17 with the word “[i]f.” This is a very strong argument for Paul to make.
1. Were Paul and Philemon spiritual partners? Absolutely. (vv 1, 5, 7, 21, 22 all show partnership).
    - a. All Christians are in spiritual partnership. The common goal of edification and of spreading the good news to the lost.
    - b. The same word is translated by “partakers,” (1 Cor 10:18) “fellowship,” (1 Cor 10:20) and “companions” (Heb 10:33).
    - c. We are all in this together (cf 2 Cor 8:23; 2 Pet 1:4).
  2. Paul then cements Philemon and Onesimus’ partnership with the words, “receive him as myself.”
    - a. Refusing Onesimus would be the same as refusing Paul.
    - b. There was simply no way Philemon would turn Paul away (cf v 12).
    - c. Picture the most respected member of the brotherhood, in your opinion. Then picture turning that person away if they came to your door.
  3. Paul tries to soften feelings with the word “[I]f” at the beginning of verse 18. Of course, Onesimus had “wronged” Philemon. He ran away from his service.
    - a. The situation had to be defused, it had to be made better, it had to have a Christian direction. We can do great things in our world by approaching situations with the mind set of “I am going to make this better, not worse.”
    - b. The phrase, “or oweth thee ought” (or owes anything, NKJ), may refer to the neglected service Onesimus could not do because he ran away. Philemon may have been out additional money in having to hire (or buy) someone to fill the place of Onesimus.<sup>195</sup>
    - c. In an effort to sooth the circumstances, Paul offers to pay whatever amount Philemon felt was fair to put Onesimus back in his good graces.
      - 1) Paul was not guilty, or blameworthy; in any sense, but was willing to bear the consequences for Onesimus to create peace between these two brethren. (cf 2 Pet 3:14) There is a lesson there for us.

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<sup>195</sup> Many commentators feel that Onesimus may have robbed Philemon before he ran away. There is no evidence to support this.

- 2) Jesus was not guilty, or blameworthy; when He went to the cross, but He was willing to bear the consequences of our sins to make it possible for us to be at peace with the Father (cf Heb 4:16; 1 Jn 3:5).
  - 3) Peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22); and is what Paul requested for the Colossian brethren (cf Col 3:15).
  - 4) Peace is the “fruit of righteousness” (cf James 3:18).
4. Then Paul skillfully, (via the Holy Ghost) reminds Philemon of a much greater debt (v 19).
    - a. For Paul to write this letter “with mine own hand” is unusual. He commonly used an amanuensis (cf Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 16:21, etc.).
    - b. “I will repay *it*,” (v 19) means Paul will be the security for anything that is owed, as a promissory note or co-signer.<sup>196</sup>
    - c. Paul was removing the possibility of any ill-will for financial loss Philemon might be holding.
    - d. The last half of verse 19 reveals that Philemon owed his own self, his new self, to Paul, who had converted him (cf James 5:20).
    - e. As Robertson states, “He used every available argument to bring Philemon to see the higher ground of brotherhood in Christ about Onesimus.”<sup>197</sup>
  5. Philemon is again called “brother” in verse 20. Why a brother? Because he has the same Father and the same brother, therefore the same family (vv 3, 7).
    - a. The new birth puts us in the family of God (cf Jn 3:3, 5). Continued obedience will allow us to remain in that family forever (cf Matt 24:13).
    - b. These biblical terms are often misused today. A person is not a Christian unless they are part of the body of Christ, a member of the church of Christ (cf Rom 16:16). By the same reasoning, a person is not a brother/sister unless they are in the same family (cf Eph 3:15).
    - c. We all get “in Christ” the same way, by being baptized into Him (cf Gal 3:16, 27-29).
    - d. It has always been intended that the use of brother/sister be considered an exalted and discriminating privilege.
    - e. In verse 20 Paul pleads with Philemon for a specific outcome.
      - 1) What would bring “joy” to the apostle? For Philemon to receive the runaway slave in the grand fashion he had outlined in these verses.
      - 2) Paul wanted this account to have a happy ending.
      - 3) It could end happily, but it depended on Philemon’s disposition (cf Phil 2:2; 3 Jn 4).
      - 4) How often are we in control of another’s happiness (cf 1 Thess 2:19, 20; 3:7, 8)?  
 Note: This is the third time in this letter Paul has mentioned “bowels” (heart, NKJ, vv 7, 12, 20). There was a deep, earnest longing within

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<sup>196</sup> The Greek word is used only here in the NT, and has a meaning of *to pay off, as a fine*. Vine’s, page 279, Vol 3.

<sup>197</sup> Robertson’s NT Word Pictures.

Paul that Philemon could “refresh” him, which means *to free from sorrow or care*.<sup>198</sup> Philemon could remove any anxiety Paul felt.

6. The marvelous confidence Paul had that Philemon would conduct himself correctly is evident in verse 21.
  - a. Writing this letter demonstrates that confidence.
  - b. The second half of this verse draws to mind some interesting possibilities: what could be meant by “that thou wilt also do more than I say” (more than I ask).
    - 1) What could be more than what has already been asked?
    - 2) Receive him as my “own bowels” (v 12)?
    - 3) Receive him “above a servant” (v 16)?
    - 4) Receive him as “a brother” (v 16)?
    - 5) Receive him as if he were the apostle himself (v 17)?
  - c. It is impossible to know the answer to this question this side of heaven, but it is interesting to ponder.
    - 1) Some think that this is a veiled attempt to influence Philemon to free Onesimus from servitude. There is no evidence to that end.
    - 2) The context inclines toward even greater kindness than that expressed by Paul’s words (cf 2 Thess 3:4).
7. “But withal” (But meanwhile, NKJ) Philemon was asked to prepare lodging for the apostle.
  - a. Paul wanted Philemon to prepare the ‘guest room,’ or a place of lodging, for him.
  - b. The only other place this word “lodging” is used in scripture is in Acts 28:23, where it refers to Paul’s “own hired house” (Acts 28:30) in Rome.
  - c. Paul knew that Philemon, and others, had been praying for his release. He felt confident (trusted) that these prayers would be granted (cf 2 Jn 12; 3 Jn 14). Similar to his declaration to the church of Christ in Rome (cf Rom 15:24).

Note: There does not appear to be any divine insight to his release, just calm confidence and comfort that “[t]he effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).
  - d. Paul was preparing Philemon to see him face to face (cf Phil 2:24).
    - 1) This is a marvelously persuasive argument for Philemon to accept Onesimus.
    - 2) If Paul is planning to visit Philemon there is no way he can refuse to grant Onesimus full fellowship.
    - 3) What a wonderful advantage to have the Holy Ghost guiding the pen of the apostle. This difficult situation could not help but to work out to God’s glory.

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<sup>198</sup> Albert Barnes’ NT Commentary.

- e. We know that Paul was released from his Roman captivity after two years (cf Acts 28:30).
    - 1) We do not know where he went or who he visited after his release.
    - 2) It is very possible he took advantage of Philemon's 'guest room' and revisited his close friend upon release, but it is undocumented.  
Note: Everything about Paul's life, after his release from Rome, is shrouded in mystery, tradition and speculation.
- IV. Paul's closing wishes (23-25).
- A. Epaphras is a man we encountered twice in the study of Colossians (cf Col 1:7, 8; 4:12, 13).
    - 1. He received high praises from Paul through inspiration, therefore, high praises from the Holy Ghost.
      - a. This man was one of the true 'unsung heroes' of the scriptures.
      - b. He is described as a "fellowservant" and a "faithful minister" (Col 1:7) and here a "fellowprisoner" from Colosse.
      - c. It is not known if he was an actual prisoner or if this word is used in a metaphorical fashion. Both concepts are possible.
      - d. He was the selected individual who traveled from Colosse to Rome to report the condition of the church there. Obviously, he was well respected by the local brethren.
  - B. In addition to Epaphras, verse 24 contains a quartet of "fellowlabourers" who also send greetings.
    - 1. "Marcus" is John Mark (cf Acts 12:12).
      - a. He went on the first evangelistic tour with Barnabas, his cousin, and Saul (Paul) (cf Acts 12:25).
      - b. This is the same man who deserted them just one chapter later (cf Acts 13:13).
      - c. He is the source of the great confrontation between Barnabas and Paul (cf Acts 15:37-39).
      - d. We see that the problem was fixed and fellowship was restored, as it always should be (cf 2 Tim 4:11).
      - e. While Paul is confined at Rome, John Mark was at his side.
    - 2. "Aristarchus" was from Macedonia (cf Acts 19:29).
      - a. It is evident that he was a well trusted brother because he was selected to accompany the relief funds being sent across the Roman Empire for the needy saints in Jerusalem.
      - b. As more than two full years in Jerusalem and Caesarea passed with tension, trouble and tumult in the apostle's life, Aristarchus was still with him as he begins the journey to Rome.  
Note: That means he was numbered with the 276 souls that were shipwrecked with Paul (cf Acts 27:1, 2, 37).
      - c. He was still with Paul as this letter was written, and is called a "fellowprisoner" in Col 4:10.

- d. Aristarchus is the epitome of dedication to the cause of Christ.
3. “Demas” is also mentioned in Col 4:14 and 2 Tim 4:10.
  - a. As Paul writes these epistles from Rome he has good things to say about this man. He is grouped with the “fellowlabourers” here.
  - b. He seemed to be well known by the brethren in Colosse, as referenced in this passage and Col 4:14.
  - c. At some point he made the arduous journey to Rome to be with the apostle.
  - d. At some later point, we know that Demas took a turn toward “the weak and beggarly elements” (Gal 4:9) of this world (cf 2 Tim 4:10).
  - e. If we compare the spiritual paths of John Mark and Demas we see men headed in very different directions.
  - f. As time and opportunities pass us by, let us strive to be better (like John Mark) and not worse (like Demas), spiritually speaking.
4. “Lucas” whom we know better as Luke.
  - a. This giant of the faith was the writer of the book that bears his name and the book we know as Acts.  
 Note: It is not commonly known, but Luke is the one who wrote most of the New Testament.<sup>199</sup>  
 Note: The only Gentile writer of the New Testament wrote more than any of the other writers. Fittingly, more Gentiles were converted to Christianity than were Jews.
  - b. Luke becomes connected with Paul in Acts 16 just before they crossed over the Aegean Sea going to Macedonia (cf Acts 16:9, 10).
  - c. Acts 16:10 is the beginning of the famous “we” passages of Acts, indicating that Luke is traveling with Paul (cf Acts 16:10-13).
  - d. Jesus is commonly referred to as ‘the great physician,’ (the term is not used in scriptures) Luke is called “the beloved physician” (cf Col 4:14).  
 Note: The term ‘physician’ is used in reference to Jesus on four occasions, but never with the term ‘great,’ i.e., Matt 9:12; Lk 4:23.
  - e. His dedication to Paul is seen as he boards the ship bound for Rome with him, as did Aristarchus.
5. These four men would be a source of encouragement to Paul, but they would also serve as his feet, hands and voice to those who could not come to him in his confinement.
  - a. We need to always be alert to ways we can aide the advancement of the gospel.
  - b. If we cannot be the “eye” let us be the “feet” (cf 1 Cor 12:21).
  - c. There is work for all of us (cf 1 Cor 12:23-27).
  - d. Paul has high praise for his companions at Rome.

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<sup>199</sup> Paul wrote 2,031 verses of scripture while Luke wrote 2,358. Paul wrote 43,402 words while Luke wrote 50,194. For additional information see An Outlined Study of Acts, page 1, same author.

- C. It is common for Paul (through inspiration) to end his letters as he begins them, with the thought of grace (v 3).
1. There is simply no better way to draw this short letter to a close than to wish God's grace on Philemon and his decisions.
  2. Something which is difficult to see in our English translations is the word "your" is in the plural.
    - a. Paul wants Philemon, and everyone else involved in Onesimus' return, to be filled with "[t]he grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."
    - b. He ends with "Amen." So be it.



## 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. 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).

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.<sup>200</sup> 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,

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

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<sup>200</sup> 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.

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.<sup>201</sup>

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.<sup>202</sup>

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).<sup>203</sup>

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.<sup>204</sup>

The Catholic church did not use or authorize mechanical instruments of music and up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century were working hard to abolish their use entirely.<sup>205</sup>

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.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Vol 10, pp648-652, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10648a.htm>

<sup>202</sup> Transcribed by Ferruccio Germani, Vol X, pp 657-688

<sup>203</sup> <http://www.bible.ca/H-music.htm>

<sup>204</sup> Thomas Aquinas, Bingham's Antiquities, Vol 3, P137

<sup>205</sup> Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, II, 1702

<sup>206</sup> Constantine Cararnos, Byzantine 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,”<sup>207</sup> 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.<sup>208</sup>

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.<sup>209</sup>

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

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<sup>207</sup> <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaaith/articles7053.asp>

<sup>208</sup> McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia, Vol 6, p762.

<sup>209</sup> <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.<sup>210</sup>

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

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<sup>210</sup> 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.<sup>211</sup>

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.

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<sup>211</sup> Thanks to Allen Webster for compiling much of the historical information used here.