

DIGGING DEEPER
COLOSSIANS



Digging Deeper Colossians

Study Guide

Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents

COLOSSIANS *Verse By Verse*

Chapter	Page
1	2
2	24
3	43
4	62

8/1/26
Revision 4

COLOSSIANS

Chapter 1

Christ, the Image of the Invisible God

Introduction

- Paul wrote Colossians as well as Philippians, Ephesians, and Philemon from a prison in Rome.
- At the time of the writing of the letter to the church at Colosse, Paul was a prisoner in Rome. He met a runaway slave named Onesimus who actually belonged to Philemon, a leader in the church at Colosse. Paul led Onesimus to Christ, and then wrote to his friend Philemon asking him to forgive Onesimus and to receive him back as a brother in Christ.
- About the same time, Epaphras arrived in Rome because he needed Paul's help. Some new doctrines were being taught in Colosse, invading the church and creating problems.
- The heresy that was being taught in Colosse was a Jewish-Hellenistic religious syncretism, later becoming known as Gnosticism, which led to devaluing Christ.
- It's interesting to consider that any teaching which detracts from the centrality of Christ is basically a perversion.

A. Paul Greets the Colossian Church

Read Colossians 1:1,

- Notice that Paul describes himself as an apostle (one who is sent) of Jesus Christ. Because Paul was not one of the original twelve disciples who were later called apostles after Jesus' resurrection, some doubted his credentials. Yet Jesus had appeared to Paul and

had commissioned him, and we see that in **Acts 26:12-18**. Paul did have the right to claim authority as an apostle.

- It would also be good to make note of the fact that Paul described himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ “*by the will of God.*” He used the same terminology in **1 Timothy 1:1**.
- In verse 2, we see to whom this letter was written: “*To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse.*” The word “*saint*” does not refer to an individual that has attained some special holiness, but rather it’s more of a common term designating believers (merely means “*separated ones*”).
- In the end of verse 2, we see a phrase Paul used in every one of his epistles from Romans to Philemon. After the initial greeting in each epistle, we read the following: “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”
- Just imagine if you would for a moment that you had grace, unmerited favor/free gifts/blessing from God, as well as peace—total blessing from God and not just “peace with God” (**Romans 5:1**) but “peace from God”; what more could anyone desire in life? This is what Paul desires for all believers everywhere.
- However, there has always been a tendency in the body of Christ to teach salvation by grace through faith and then to attempt to live a holy and righteous life through every imaginable form of legalism. However, legalism forces Christians into a constant striving to avoid failure, while grace eliminates the fear of failure.
- God is made known to us as “*the God of all grace,*” and the position in which we are placed is that of recipients of His grace. The word “favor” is the nearest Biblical synonym for the word “grace.” Grace is favor, and favor is grace, and it finds its greatest triumph and glory in the sphere of human

helplessness. Grace ceases to be grace if God is compelled to withdraw it because of human failure or sin. In fact, grace cannot be exercised where there is the slightest degree of human merit to be recognized. God cannot propose to do less in grace for one who is sinful than He would have done had that one been less sinful. The sin question has been set aside forever, and equal favor/grace is extended to all that believe. Thus, grace cannot be increased or diminished.

- **Romans 5:17** states, *“those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ.”* Furthermore, grace alone can free us, not only from the penalty of sin, but also the power of sin. **Romans 6:14** says, *“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.”*
- Possibly the greatest need in the church of Jesus Christ today is a “grace awakening.” It is our desire, as you study the following lessons that you would *“grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18).

B. Paul Thanks God for the Colossians’ Faith and Love

Read Colossians 1:3.

- Notice Paul uses the phrase *“praying always for you”* in verse 3. Then in verse 4, he reveals what had given him this burden to pray for a group of people that he had never met—he had heard of their faith in Christ as well as their love for the saints. Quite often we hear of a pastor or missionary who has a good ministry in a certain place or we hear of the size of their church or how many they have led to Christ, but rarely if ever,

do we hear of an individual Christian or church that is described by the tremendous faith of the people.

- It is interesting to give thought to the fact that if the Christian life is merely a walk of faith, then why aren't we emphasizing that faith; why don't we describe our churches or fellow believers by their faith? Paul certainly did (**1 Thessalonians 1:8; Ephesians 1:15; Romans 1:8**).
- Wouldn't it be wonderful if our faith defined us and was spoken of in our communities, in our countries, and throughout the world?
- Not only does Paul make note of the people's faith in Colosse, but also their love, which they had for the saints. Keep in mind that true biblical love (**1 Corinthians 13:4-7**) is actually a fruit of faith. Our love for others, as well as our love for the Lord, is not something we are able to produce through any effort of ours. Instead it is a fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22a**) and will only manifest itself in our lives as we depend on the Spirit to hold the flesh with its fruit (envy, strife, jealousy, anger, and divisions) in the place of death.

C. Thanks to God for the Fruitfulness of the Gospel

Read Colossians 1:5.

- Thinking back again to verse 4 and the faith of the Colossian believers in Christ and their love for the saints, Paul knew this faith and love were not human-generated emotions. Rather they were a by-product of their hope (confident expectation) which is stored up for all believers in heaven.
- Why have faith in Jesus Christ if there is no hope for a glorious future? Why love others if it doesn't matter

in the end? Why not instead find a faith that permits us to do whatever we want? If we have no hope stored up for us in heaven, if being a Christian is of no value to us now in this life, then “***We are the most miserable of all creatures***” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

- As we mentioned before, Paul is writing from prison, and so he is writing from the perspective of a persecuted believer. He realized he would have no reason to face persecution for his faith if that faith did not anticipate a great hope laid up for him in heaven.
- He goes on in verse 5 to say that Christ gave this hope, which is stored up for all believers in heaven when they heard and believed the Gospel.
- In verse 6 Paul speaks of the Gospel as something alive, growing, spreading, and bearing fruit. He was not exaggerating when he wrote the words “***all over the world***”; he did not mean that every location on earth had been evangelized but that the Gospel was making headway across racial, national and geographical barriers. And it continues to bear fruit today in all of our lives.
- As I ponder this verse, I can’t help but think back in my own life to the fruit that has come forth from my understanding and believing the Gospel. Looking back over the years before salvation, before knowing, understanding and believing the Gospel, I see no fruit of the Spirit, no fruitful life, no fruitful ministry, nothing of eternal value was coming out of my life. However, it has been interesting to see what God has done through an understanding and faith in the death and resurrection of Christ.
- It might be good for all Christians to consider what the Lord has done in our lives since believing the Gospel. Many of us have been used of Him to bring family members to Christ—mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Mutual submission, selfless love, and servant-

leadership now mark marriages that were once two self-centered people existing in the same house. The frustrations of trying to raise children without Christ, or trying to function in a world system that is built on Satanic principles such as greed, immorality, and power are no longer there as we now have a hope that is laid up for us in heaven. That hope began the day we understood and believed the grace of God in truth.

D. The Commendation and Example of Epaphras' Faithfulness

Read Colossians 1:7.

- Paul is reminding the Colossians that they first heard the Gospel from one of their own, Epaphras, who was a native of Colosse (**Colossians 4:12**).
- Apparently, Epaphras had founded the church at Colosse while Paul was living in Ephesus. Many think he had been converted in Ephesus and then returned to his hometown. Paul refers to him here as a dear fellow-servant and faithful minister of Jesus Christ.
- In Philemon 23, Paul describes Epaphras as a fellow-prisoner. It's unclear from this verse if Epaphras was actually in prison with Paul, or if Paul's words were a reference to his being taken captive by Jesus Christ.
- From verse 8, we can know that Epaphras had told Paul all about the church in Colosse. There was some concern about the heresy that had come into Colosse and was invading the church, but Epaphras had also told Paul about the character of the church. Remember in verse 4 he mentioned their faith in Christ and love for one another. Here in verse 8 greater detail is given regarding the love of the Colossians' "love in the Spirit." True biblical love can only come from the Holy Spirit which is obvious

from **Galatians 5:22** when Paul mentions the fruit of the Spirit “love.”

- Keep in mind that Biblical love is a by-product of our new life in Christ, and that love cannot be produced in the power of the flesh; it will never be produced through man’s effort. As we by faith, rest at the foot of the cross where the old man has been crucified, the Holy Spirit will begin to produce the life of Christ in us. In addition, the fruit of the Spirit, which are the characteristics of Christ including Christ-like love, will be manifested in our lives.

E. Paul Intercedes for the Believers

Read Colossians 1:9.

- How should we pray for a group of people whom we have never seen? That was the situation Paul found himself in. All he knew about the believers in Colosse he had learned from their faithful Pastor Epaphras. Paul knew of the false teaching that was threatening the church, so he centered his prayer on that problem. His prayer focuses on spiritual blessings and not on material or physical matters.
- He begins in verse 9 by praying that the church at Colosse would be “***filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.***” Can you imagine what it would be like to be filled with the “knowledge of God’s will”? Always, always, always knowing what the Lord wanted you to do. Every dollar you spent, you knew it was His will. Every word that you spoke, you knew He wanted you to speak it. Every time you reached out in love, every time you rebuked a brother, you were positive that it was His will.
- But that’s not all. Not only does Paul pray that they would be filled with the knowledge of His will, but

they would be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. A good definition of wisdom is *looking at life from God's point of view*. So Paul's prayer is that not only would the believers in Colosse know what God's will was, but that they would be seeing it the same way God sees it.

- Paul goes on with his prayer in verse 10 by giving five evidences of being filled with the knowledge of His will. The first being ***“that you might walk worthy of the Lord.”*** Now we might say no one can be worthy of the Lord; however, if the Holy Spirit is producing the life of Christ in us and it's “no longer I but Christ,” then we are walking worthy of the Lord.
- In verse 10, we also read, ***“that we might walk worthy of the Lord fully pleasing Him.”*** Of course, we know from **Hebrews 11:6** that the only way we can please God is to believe Him.
- Paul continues with ***“being fruitful in every good work.”*** Imagine if everything we did bore fruit. A fruitful life, a fruitful ministry, the fruit of the spirit is being manifested in our lives—all these things are evidences of being “filled with the knowledge of His will.”
- Paul now ends verse 10 by praying that the Colossians would increase in the knowledge of God. It might be helpful to give serious thought to what is probably one of our greatest needs as Christians. There is one thing on which the foundation of the Christian faith rests. It is the most important factor in this life and walk of faith and that is **knowledge**. In fact, we could even be more specific and say that man has a great or tremendous need of a **TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (John 17:3)**. Notice that Jesus defines eternal life not as a span of time, but rather a **knowledge of God**.

- **Ephesians 1:17** is Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian church. Notice that he does not pray for anything new, but rather for God to reveal Himself to them. Then in verse 18, Paul goes on praying that He would open the eyes of their understanding (heart) so that they would **know**.
- We could say this: We are unable to trust someone if we don’t know them; but on the other hand, we can’t help but trust someone if we really do know them. No effort is required—it just comes naturally. Therefore, we could say that *our trust will always be in proportion to our knowledge*, which means that *to the degree that we don’t know God, we will trust in other things*. “***How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?***” (**Romans 10:14**).
- It’s almost as if Paul is building to a crescendo in **Colossians 1:9-11**. He begins in verse 9 with being filled with the knowledge of His will, then mentions walking worthy, all pleasing, fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; now he prays that the Colossians would be “***strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.***”
- Our natural thinking would be that God will strengthen us for the purpose of doing great things for Him. That is not what we read here. Paul’s prayer is that God would strengthen not only the Colossian believers, but all believers so that we are able to “patiently endure with joy”—we can put up with all the horrible wrong that is going on in this fallen world. There are millions of babies being aborted each year as well as child abuse and terrorist attacks. All over the world we witness terrible atrocities, so Paul prays that believers will be able to patiently endure all of this with joy.
- Of course joy is a fruit of the Spirit; joy is something that only the Holy Spirit can produce in our lives. It’s not that God won’t ever strengthen us to go out and

do great and wonderful things for him. He may do that, but meanwhile He wants to produce joy in our lives in the midst of some rather difficult circumstances so that others may see that manifestation of the life of Christ in us and will be drawn to the Lord.

- In **Psalm 84:1** we read, “***How lovely are your tabernacles O Lord of hosts.***” The word *tabernacle* refers to dwelling places. We could re-phrase the verse to read, “How lovely are your dwelling places.” Those places where we are abiding with Christ—those places where we are trusting and resting and depending on Him. Could it be in the area of finances or possibly our marriage or raising our children or our job? Are we trusting and resting in Him moment by moment, day by day, in these areas? How lovely are those dwelling places. However, those places where we are not trusting/dwelling/abiding in Him are not lovely places; there is frustration, impatience, worry, fear, stress, anxiety, etc.
- He goes on in verse 2, “***My soul longs, yes even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh cries out for the living God.***”
- In verse 4 we read, “***blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You.***” And then that little word “Selah” (which means, “think on that awhile).
- Moving on to verse 5, we read, “***Blessed is the man whose strength is in You.***” Not “partly in You and partly in me.” “***Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.***” In other words, this man has a heavenly focus; he has set his affection on things above (**Colossians 3:1-2**); his hope is in heaven (**Colossians 1:5**); he is occupied with Christ.
- Blessed is the man whose strength is in the Lord. He is occupied with abiding in Christ and in verse 6 we read he is “***passing through the Valley of Baca***” (a

- dry desert land—at best that is what this life/world is, a “Valley of Baca”).
- But notice the man whose strength is in God and is abiding with Him will make this Valley of Baca a “well.” In other words, he is like an oasis for others—a place where one goes to get a cool drink of water—a place where people are drawn for the purpose of being spiritually refreshed. Have you ever met one of those godly old saints who always seems to encourage/refresh you?
 - Verse 6 goes on: “*the rain also covers it with pools.*” The one whose strength is in the Lord and is occupied with Him, never goes dry. In verse 7 they “*go from strength to strength*” (they just keep getting stronger and stronger as they go), unlike many of us Christians who are like a falling star on a course heading for burn-out.
 - I believe this is what Paul is referring to back in **Colossians 1:11**: “*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power,*” so that we can patiently endure with joy; we are an encouragement to others and just keep getting stronger and stronger as we go.
 - **James 1:2** is a very familiar Scripture: “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience*” (patiently enduring with joy) “*but let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*” Let endurance have its perfect work.

F. Thanksgiving to God for the Father’s Part in Our Redemption

Read Colossians 1:12,

- Here Paul is giving thanks to God the Father. Why? Because through Jesus Christ, He made it possible for all believers to share in the inheritance of the saints

(Romans 8:17a—“*Joint heirs with Jesus*”—everything He is and everything He has is ours). In addition, we are enabled only because God, by His grace, has enabled us, has made us fit to be partakers.

G. The Reconciling Work of God the Father Through God the Son

Read Colossians 1:13.

- In Scripture, darkness is a metaphor for evil; it is the dominion of those who are without God. True believers, however, have been transferred from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from guilt to forgiveness, and from the power of Satan to the power of God (**Acts 26:17-18; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 5-7**).
- We have been rescued from a rebel kingdom to serve the true King. That King, the Son God, is described in the following verses where the focus is all on Jesus Christ. Remember we mentioned that the problem in Colosse was a devaluing of Jesus Christ, and Paul now brings all attention to Christ.
- In verse 13 we see that God has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated/transferred us into the kingdom of His Son. Now keep in mind that the Bible has one interpretation and many applications; we could look at this that He has delivered us from the power of darkness (taken us out of Adam) and He has placed us into His Son Jesus Christ. That's our position in Christ; we are no longer in Adam—we are now in Christ.
- However, we can also apply this to our daily lives. He has delivered us from the power of darkness, from that dominion/power that the world, flesh and devil have over us: ***“And having spoiled [disarmed] principalities and powers, He made a show of them***

openly, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:15).

- So we could say He has delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us into Christ, where the Holy Spirit now begins to influence and control our lives.

Read Colossians 1:14.

- Paul continues the focus on Christ. “Redemption” means to buy back or to save from captivity by paying a ransom. That is the way God chose to free sinful people. He bought us with the price of His own blood, and through that purchase forgave all.
- In verses 12 through 14, Paul lists five benefits that God gives to all believers through Christ:
 1. He made us qualified to share in His inheritance.
 2. He rescued us from Satan’s dominion of darkness.
 3. He brought us into the eternal kingdom of His Son.
 4. He redeemed us, bought our freedom from sin and judgment.
 5. He forgave us all our sins.

Read Colossians 1:15.

- These verses are regarded as some of the most important in the New Testament establishing the Deity of Christ. Jesus is not only equal to God—He is God (**Philippians 2:6; John 10:30, 38; 12:45; 14:1-11**).
- As the image of the invisible God, Christ is the exact representation of God. He is not a copy but the very embodiment of God’s nature. He not only reflects God, but as God, He reveals God. Some verses to consider: **John 1:18; 14:8-9; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Hebrews 1:1-3.**

- As the first born over all creation, He has all priority and authority of the first born prince in a king's household (**Hebrews 1:2**).

Read Colossians 1:16.

- Lest anyone misunderstand that “firstborn” in the previous verse meant that Jesus was merely the first thing that God had created, Paul went on here to explain that all things were created in, through, and for Christ. That little word “for” reveals to us the goal of all creation—to glorify Christ (**John 1:3**).
- Because the false teachers believed that the physical world was evil, they thought that God Himself could not have created it. If Christ were God, they reasoned, He would be over the spiritual world only. But Paul explained that all the thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, whether in heaven or on earth, of both the visible and invisible world (physical government and spiritual forces) are under the authority of Christ Himself.
- Throughout verses 16 through 19, the focus remains on Jesus Christ.
- In **Revelation 4:11**, we read: *“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”*

Read Colossians 1:17.

- Christ is before all things, both in time and rank. He is not only the Creator of the world, but also its Sustainer.
- Paul's point here is that because Jesus is the creator of all things, He is able to hold it all together—if He lets go, the whole universe flies apart.

- Because Christ is the Sustainer of all life, nothing in creation is independent of Him.

Read Colossians 1:18.

- While verses 15-17 unveiled the Son's relationship to the "old creation" (the world), this verse describes His relationship to the "new creation" (the church).
- ***"He is the head of the body, the church."*** The church exists because Christ is its beginning, its source, its head. He is the head; He is the boss; He is the brains of this body (the church). In addition, we are all a part of the body—hands and feet, eyes and ears, fingers and toes.
- The church is composed of many types of people from a variety of backgrounds with a multitude of gifts and abilities. Despite the differences, all believers have one unifying principle: faith in Christ. On this essential truth, all believers find agreement.
- Paul is saying because Jesus is the head, we all need to be looking to Him. Why? He tells us at the end of verse 18, ***"[He] is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."*** The thought here is that not only is Christ the beginning, but He is also the firstborn from the dead; He was the first to die and come back to life. He was the first born in both time and rank; there will be many more who will live forever after physical death—all who trust in Christ will also defeat death and rise again to live eternally with Him (**1 Corinthians 15:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:14**). Jesus Christ will always have preeminence; in other words, He will always be the first/hold first place.
- The resurrection assures us that Christ is not a legend, He is alive and ruling His kingdom; therefore, we should give Him first place in all our thoughts, activities, etc.

Read Colossians 1:19.

- The little word “for” explains why Christ will have first place in everything. God’s desire was to have all of His fullness/His completeness/His totality dwell/live permanently in Jesus (**Colossians 2:9**).
- Paul wanted to explain that Christ is God’s dwelling place; therefore, Jesus Christ is divine, sovereign, and preeminent. All of God, including His attributes, characteristics, nature, and being, indwells the Son. When we have Christ, we have all of God.
- Again, any teaching that devalues Christ is a perversion. He is totally and fully God.

Read Colossians 1:20.

- Paul explains that God’s fullness dwells in Christ, and in that fullness, He reconciled all things unto Himself. Remembering that the penalty for sin is death; therefore, Christ’s death on the cross paid that penalty and provided reconciliation for all things.
- What did Paul mean by “*all things*”? Let’s first consider what this reconciliation means for humanity. There can be no peace between sinful man and a holy God. Because people are born into sin, they cannot become good enough to be acceptable to God. In Old Testament times, God accepted symbolic offerings; Jesus had not yet been sacrificed, so God accepted the death of an animal in the place of the death of a sinner. When Jesus came, He substituted His perfect life for our sinful lives, taking the penalty (death) that we deserved. We are guilty, but Jesus took the punishment; thus, He redeemed us from the penalty of sin and reconciled us to God.
- Going back to our question, what does this reconciliation mean for all things? Besides humans, let’s give some thought to creation. Creation was

corrupted when Adam sinned. Sin has caused all creation to fall from the perfect state in which God had created it; thus, the world is subject to decay so that it cannot fulfill its intended purpose; one day, all creation will be reconciled and set free from the curse (**Romans 8:19-21**).

Read Colossians 1:21.

- Paul here gives the reason why we need reconciliation. All believers have at one time been alienated/separated/estranged from God and were His enemies; our thoughts and behavior have revealed not apathy or ignorance, but rather hostility toward Him. However, now He has reconciled us (brought us from the place of an enemy to the place of a friend) in the body of His flesh through death. Why? So that He could present us holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight (**Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:4**).

Read Colossians 1:23.

- Keep in mind that verse 23 is a continuing thought. He has reconciled us for the purpose of presenting us holy and without blame in His sight assuming that we continue in the faith and not move away from the hope of the Gospel. Paul is not implying that a true believer could move away from the faith. What he is saying is that if we are truly born again, we'll be grounded and settled and never move away from the hope of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- As Paul closes this introductory section, he makes one final stab at exposing the doctrine of the false teachers by declaring that the gospel has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. This did not mean that every person had heard the gospel, but rather that it was available to all people, regardless of nationality,

language, age, race, gender, etc. Spirituality was not, as the false teachers claimed, available only to a select group of intellectually elite people. The hope of the gospel is available to all people.

- Paul now mentions the ministry that the Lord has given him in verses 24-25.

H. Paul's Ministry

Read Colossians 1:24.

- The little word “now” communicates more than just providing a transition. Paul could rejoice in prison; he had encouraged the Philippians by explaining that suffering was a privilege (**Philippians 1:29**), and that the early apostles had rejoiced when they were considered worthy to suffer for believing in Christ (**Acts 5:41**).
- Paul informed the churches to whom he wrote that his suffering was not a punishment, nor was it accidental (as though God had somehow lost track of him). Instead, Paul was honored to be suffering, and he rejoiced at how the Lord was using his suffering to develop courage and faith in the believers and churches by watching Paul's example.
- Possibly the false teachers were pointing to Paul's imprisonment as proof that his leadership and his teaching were in question. Paul explains that instead, his imprisonment proved the truth of his words, and he could rejoice in that imprisonment knowing that it was all a part of God's plan “*filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.*” The thought here could be that Christ suffered and died so all men could be saved and our role as ambassadors for Christ is to die to ourselves through our co-crucifixion with Christ so that others can know Him (**2 Corinthians 4:10-12**).

- And all *“for the sake of His body, which is the church.”*

Read Colossians 1:25.

- Paul mentions that God gave him a ministry. Paul was keenly aware of who had commissioned him, to whom he had been commissioned, and what he had been set apart to do (**Acts 9:15; 1 Timothy 1:12; 1 Corinthians 9:16-17**).
- As a well-trusted servant, Paul was entrusted with a special task—he was commissioned to make the Word of God fully known.

I. The Mystery of the Indwelling Christ (God the Holy Spirit)

Read Colossians 1:26.

- Paul’s special message had to do with what he calls a mystery. Today, we think of a mystery as something eerie and frightening, but this was not the way the word was used in Paul’s day. The false teachers used this word to describe the inner secrets of their religions—kind of like a sacred secret. So in verse 26, Paul clearly states that the mystery which had been hidden from ages/dispensations and generations, was now being made manifest to those who believe, that is, to the saints.

Read Colossians 1:27.

- To these believers, New Testament saints, God chose to make His mystery known among the Gentiles. These words would have been wonderful news to Paul’s Gentile audience.

- Now Paul tells us what this mystery is: “***Christ in you, the hope of glory.***” That’s the mystery. “***Christ in you.***”
- The moment we trust Christ as our Savior, we step out of life in Adam and enter into life in Christ (**1 Corinthians 1:30a**). The phrase “in Christ” is the key to the whole New Testament. It or its equivalent is used 130 times. These two words are probably the most important ever written to describe the relationship between Christians and Christ.
- To be “in Christ” determines our position, privileges, and possessions. To be “in Christ” is to be where He is, what He is, and to possess what He has.
 - Where is He? He’s in the heavenlies. Where are we? We are in the heavenlies also (**Philippians 3:20**). It is God’s desire for us to begin to live in heaven now (**Colossians 3:1-2**).
 - To be in Christ is to be what He is in **1 John 4:17**.
 - To be in Christ is to possess what He has. (**Romans 8:17, 32**).
- We should be living like spiritual millionaires (love, joy, and peace) so that others will desire our spiritual wealth, but instead we live like spiritual paupers (anger, depression, frustration, etc.).
- We’ve looked at “in Christ,” now let’s turn our focus back to **Colossians 1:27** and the mystery, “***Christ in you, the hope of glory.***” (**Galatians 2:20**) Notice the progression here. First, I have been crucified and then Christ lives in me. The death of self must precede the Christ-life (**Luke 9:23**).
- The real Christian life is to possess the life of Christ in such a way that we can say with Paul, “***To me to live is Christ***” (**Philippians 1:21**). The real Christian life is to have Jesus Christ filling our mind, will and emotions in such a way that my thoughts are really His thoughts, my will is His will and my emotions are coming from Him. It is Jesus Christ filling my life until I have no life apart from Him.

- “Christ in you” was the heart of Paul’s message to the churches, and he made it very clear in all his teaching and preaching. Paul had one goal and that was to see Christ formed in every believer (**Galatians 4:19**).
- The Christian life (the Christ-life) can be defined in these two simple phrases:
 - In Christ
 - Christ in you
- What God has really done through all this is to bring Christ and the Christian into oneness in such a way that Christ is both in the heavenlies and on earth. Likewise, the Christian is both on earth and in the heavenlies. Christ in the heavenlies is the invisible part of the Christian, while the Christian on earth is the visible part of Christ.
- **“No longer I, but Christ” (Galatians 2:20).**
- Paul switched from “I” to “we” so that he could include his co-workers Epaphras and Tychicus who served the Colossian church, while excluding the false teachers.
- Paul and his co-workers were proclaiming Jesus, who was indwelling every believer, by warning and teaching. The warning is that without an understanding of the mystery, “Christ in you,” there will be no spiritual maturity. The teaching is that spiritual maturity is available through faith in Christ.
- Paul says it is this Christ that we preach, and the warning and teaching always has one goal in mind: “That we may present every man mature in Christ.”

Read Colossians 1:29.

- **“Therefore I also labor, striving,”** but not in his own power, not through his effort—striving according to His working.
- It appears that **Romans 10:2** points toward this problem of striving, laboring to live the Christian life. I heard a man describe this verse as “racetrack Christianity”—there is a lot of activity but no advance.

We just keep going around and around and get nowhere. Racetrack Christianity leads to one thing—burned out, beat down, faithless and fruitless Christians with no power in their lives to carry on.

- There is an often used word in Christianity today and that word is *commitment*. This word *commitment* carries with it the idea of serving the Lord through our own efforts, in our own power. “Commit your life to the Lord,” we are told. “Re-commit your life to the Lord,” we are told.” “Re-dedicate your life.” It’s clear from Scripture that this is not God’s way to live the Christian life (**Romans 7:18; John 6:63**).
- This is not a new problem, but rather a problem that has plagued the church since the beginning (**Galatians 3:1-3; 5:7**).
- What is the answer to racetrack Christianity? We’re designed to run on God’s power, not the power that we can crank out. Follow are some scriptures that might help: **1 Corinthians 15:9, 10; Philippians 2:13; Colossians 1:29**.
- There are many Christians today who are failing miserably in ministry because they are running on their own power. Pastors, missionaries, and Sunday school teachers all over the world are beat down, burned out, faithless, and fruitless Christians. **John 15:4-6; Acts 5:38, 39: IF IT IS A WORK OF MAN, IT WILL COME TO NOTHING. BUT IF IT IS A WORK OF GOD, IT CANNOT BE STOPPED.**
- *“Faith is dependence upon God. And this God-dependence only begins when self-dependence ends. And self-dependence only comes to its end, with some of us, when sorrow, suffering, affliction, and failed plans bring us to that place of self-helplessness and defeat. And only then do we find that we have learned the lesson of faith; to find our tiny craft of life rushing onward to a blessed victory of life and power and service undreamed of in the days of our fleshly strength and self-reliance.”* Author Unknown

COLOSSIANS

Chapter 2

Complete In Christ

A. Paul's Warfare for Believers to be Grounded in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

Read Colossians 2:1.

- Consider Paul's opening statement here in Chapter 2: ***"I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you."*** Paul makes a similar statement in **Galatians 4:19**.
- The great inner struggle came for Paul over the concern that prompted the writing of this letter—knowing that false teaching was threatening the Colossian believers from maturing in the faith.

Read Colossians 2:2.

- Paul's desire was that all Christians would be encouraged in heart as well as united in love, so that they might have a full understanding of God's mystery which he mentioned before in Chapter 1:26-27—***"Christ in you."*** Notice the strong terminology that Paul uses here: attaining to wealth/riches that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of the mystery of ***"Christ in you."***
- We could say it this way: *The encouragement/comfort believers receive when they united together in love, gives them a rich and full understanding of God's mystery—"Christ in you."*

Read Colossians 2:3.

- Paul declares that in Christ are hidden all the treasures/riches/valuables which come from wisdom and knowledge.

- Turning back to **Proverbs 24:3-4**, we read: “***By wisdom a house is built, by understanding it is established, and by knowledge shall the rooms be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.***” A good definition for wisdom could be looking at life from God’s point of view; and as we begin to look at life from His point of view, **our spiritual house is built**. As we continue on through life growing in God’s wisdom, we come to a crossroads where we have an opportunity to apply biblical wisdom in a certain situation or go the world’s way. So we decide that we’ll go with God, and when we do, we see God’s hand in it resulting in an understanding of how the Lord works in this life. At that point of understanding, **our spiritual house is being established or strengthened**. Let’s take this one step further. “By knowledge,” which is familiarity gained through experience. We’ve looked at life from God’s point of view; we’ve applied it to our lives and now we “know.” The outcome of this progression from wisdom to understanding to knowledge is that **the rooms of our spiritual house are filled with all precious and pleasant riches**. We’re not speaking of physical riches (**Ephesians 1:3; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:3**).
- Again, remember that the heresy being taught in Colosse was a devaluing of Christ; thus, Paul’s emphasis is on the treasures/riches/value of a full knowledge of Christ.

Read Colossians 2:4.

- The believers in Colosse already knew what they needed to know to be saved, but now it was a matter of growing to maturity in faith.
- Here Paul gives the first of three warnings regarding false teachers in this chapter; the other two are in verses 8 and 18 (**2 Peter 2:1-2**).

B. Paul Expresses Faith in God Answering His Prayer

Read Colossians 2:5.

- Remember that Paul is writing to warn the Colossians against false teaching, and although he could not be with them, his thoughts and prayers were with them because they were united through the Holy Spirit.
- After the strong warning in verse 4, Paul encourages the Colossians by telling them he is rejoicing to see the steadfastness of their faith resulting in orderly, disciplined lives which was evidence that they had not embraced the heresy.
- However, he wanted to insure that they would not give in and believe the lies of the false teachers, so he launched into a full-scale rebuttal of the false teaching.

C. Basic Instruction in Living the Life of Faith

Read Colossians 2:6.

- This is a Scripture that the Lord has used in many Christians' lives to introduce them to a walk of faith. I had lived a legalistic Christian life for almost twenty years when the Lord opened my eyes to this verse. Freedom came when I finally realized that it's as easy to live the Christian life as it is to get saved (**Galatians 5:1**).
- We could say that the single most important principle of spiritual growth is faith. Without faith, any desire of ours to walk with the Lord and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely hopeless (**Hebrews 11:6; 10:38; Romans 14:23**) We

could probably say that the Christian life is nothing more than a walk of faith.

- The Christian life is not a walk of me producing/performing, but rather receiving by faith.
- An interesting thought to consider is this: it is only natural in this production-oriented society to balk at a walk of faith. We are taught from childhood to produce/do the right things, or life will not go well.
- We hear things like, “the Lord helps those who help themselves.” This is not a true statement. What we find true from the Bible is that the Lord helps those who trust in Him.
- It is important that we know this problem is not unique to the twenty-first century, but rather a problem that has plagued the church and Christians since the beginning (**Galatians 3:1-3**).
- The faith by which we were saved is the same faith by which we are to “stand,” (**1 Corinthians 16:13**) and “walk,” (**2 Corinthians 5:7**) and “live” (**Galatians 2:20b**).
- The same way we were saved (by grace through faith), we are to walk (by grace through faith). Paul continues in verse 7 describing that walk.

Read Colossians 2:7.

- Paul used several metaphors in this verse: rooted, built up, and established.
- **Rooted:** As we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, our roots must go down deep into Jesus Christ. Whenever a seed is planted, the way up is down; the roots must grow down deep into the soil (deep into Jesus Christ) before the plant will be **built up** or **grow up** out of the ground to be seen.
- **Rooted** in Him, **built up** in Him, in order that the Colossians, as well as all believers may be able to stand firmly (by faith) against any false teaching (**John 15:4-**

- 5). True understanding of what Christ has done on our behalf can lead to no other response than gratefulness.
- Ponder **Romans 10:17** – *So then, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.* As the Holy Spirit roots us down into Christ and occupies us with Him, the natural by-product will be a strong faith in Him as well as gratitude, deep appreciation, and thankfulness. However, verse 8.

D. Warning! The Enemies of Our Faith

Read Colossians 2:8.

- And now we have the second warning regarding the false teachers that were spreading their heresy in Colosse. ***Watch out! Be on the alert!***
 - Lest any man take you captive through philosophy (the highest form of intellect).
 - Lest any man take you captive through vain deceit (nonsense).
 - Lest any man take you captive through tradition (we've always done it that way).
 - Lest any man take you captive through the rudiments of this world (anything we place ahead of Christ).
- Beware lest we are taken captive by anything and not taken captive by Jesus Christ. In reality, many Christians are taken captive by money, power, education/knowledge, houses, vehicles, computers, the opposite sex, and the list goes on and on and on, but rarely do we find Christians who are captivated by Christ (**Ephesians 4:1; Philemon 1:1**).
- *“One source of man’s weariness is the pursuit of things that can never satisfy; but who of us has not been caught up in that pursuit at some time in life? Our passions, possessions, and pride—these are dead things. When we try to get life out of dead things, the*

result is only weariness and dissatisfaction.” Max Lucado

- As the Lord continues to deepen our understanding of the Christ-life, I have recently given much thought to Paul’s comment in **Philippians 3:7**: ***“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”*** What a total change of attitude in this man’s life. As Saul, before his conversion, he had much worldly gain. He had gathered many honors for his name. He had made progress in Judaism beyond many of his peers. He had achieved a legal righteousness in which no man could find a flaw; his zeal, his knowledge, and his morality were of the highest order. However, from the moment Christ was revealed to him on the road to Damascus, everything changed (**Acts 9:3-4**).
- Notice his two remarks in Acts 9:5-6: ***“Who are you”*** and ***“What would have me to do.”*** All of a sudden, what had previously been gain—his righteousness, education and morality had now turned to rubbish (**Philippians 3:8**).
- The revelation of the glory of Christ had so completely changed the entire thought life, attitude and being of Paul, that those things which he had once esteemed positive gain were not considered as positive loss.
- Why? Simply because he had found his all in Christ. He was taken captive by Christ. Jesus Christ had supplanted everything in Paul’s heart. Christ now displaced all that once belonged to Paul.
- As we grow in our understanding of all that the writer to the Hebrews had in mind in Chapter 12, verse 3, when he said, ***“Looking unto Jesus,”*** the more completely we are stripped and emptied of everything in which “we” could glory or consider gain. Whatever there may be that tends to exalt self, whether it be righteousness, morality, respectability, wealth, glory, or intelligence, it is an absolute hindrance to our enjoyment/occupation with Christ.

E. The Believer Is Complete in Christ

Read Colossians 2:9.

- And this is why we should not be taken captive by anything other than Jesus Christ because in Him dwells all the fullness of God. Nothing can be added to fullness; He is totally and completely God.
- From verse 9 through 13, we continually read the words “in Christ” or “in Him,” “with Christ” or “with Him” to show that Christ is the center of all that God is doing. In this verse, Paul is clearly stating that Christ was not just another deity along with God, nor was He less than God, not one in a hierarchy of angels who would act as intermediaries between people and God; Jesus Christ was totally and completely God.
- The false teachers said that Christ could not have been both God and man, but Paul clearly reveals in this verse that He was indeed the God-Man.

Read Colossians 2:10.

- And by the way Paul says, just in case you are not aware of it, **“you are complete in Him.”** As nothing can be added to fullness (verse 9), neither can there be anything added to completeness. He is fully God and we are complete in Him, and God wants us to know (fully understand) this truth: **WE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM.** This is a positional truth as we, by faith, rest in our position of “completeness”—the Holy Spirit works that “completeness” out in our condition.
- Many times in Scripture the Lord uses a natural or physical picture to teach us a spiritual truth. This is true in the area of being complete in Him. He first teaches us that we are complete in Adam before we can understand what it is to be complete in Christ.

- The key for our understanding in all this is a little phrase used repeatedly in **Genesis 1** which is, “*after its kind.*” **Genesis 1:11-12** and **21-25**—As it is with plants and animals, so it is with man *after His kind* (**Genesis 1:26, 27**).
- However, after the fall (**Genesis 5:3**), every believer must first learn that he is complete in Adam (after His kind). We came from him and we are like him.
- Inside of each of us is a self-centered sin nature, the flesh, an inward desire to do wrong. In the book of Romans the word *sinner*, which we all are, is brought to our attention in Chapter five, and it is important to notice how it is introduced. Look again at verse 19. We see that a sinner is a sinner because he is born a sinner, not because he commits sins.
- From the first half of verse 19 it is very clear that in the natural, we are complete in Adam, but now look more closely at the last part of that verse.
- Remember **Colossians 2:9** and **10a**: “*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in Him.*” By Him we are made righteous.
- Jesus Christ is the Source of our Christian life. We were born into Him and God has made us complete in Him (**2 Corinthians 5:17a**).
- As we by faith rest in this truth, it becomes a reality in our daily lives (little by little), and we receive what is already ours. The important thing to know and believe is that all is ours—we are complete in Him now (**2 Peter 1:3; Romans 8:17; Ephesians 1:3**).
- We could say it this way: When a person is born again into the family of God, he is born complete in Christ.
- It may help to think of it this way: Is Christ complete? Yes. Nothing needs to be added to Christ because He is already the fullness of God (**Colossians 2:9**); and as we believers by faith rest in our position in Christ we also are filled with all the fullness of God (**Ephesians 3:17-19**).

- Since we are complete in Jesus, it will not do to try and add to that finished work.
- Our part is not production but reception of our life in Christ.
- It is really to translate/transfer Christ's life unto man, which in reality is forming men of God.

F. Our Co-Crucifixion with Christ

Read Colossians 2:11.

- The Word of God presents the illustrations of circumcision and baptism; circumcision to depict our being cut off and removed from Adam in order to be baptized (spiritually born) into living union with Christ. Our Heavenly Father did not stop at circumcision and baptism, but went on to position us in the heavenlies in the ascended Lord Jesus.
- In the Old Testament, Jewish males were circumcised as a sign of the Jew's covenant with God (**Genesis 17:9-14**). Circumcision symbolized the "cutting off" of the old life of sin (**Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Ezekiel 44:7**). With the death of Jesus, bodily circumcision was no longer necessary to be identified as God's people.
- However, the Jewish false teachers in Paul's time gloried in physical circumcision, the "cutting off" of useless physical flesh.
- Here Paul addresses spiritual circumcision: as believers we have received a spiritual circumcision, the cutting off of the wretched flesh, which is not done by man, but rather happens at the cross where we are co-crucified with Christ (**Romans 6:6**).
- Through our co-crucifixion with Christ, we have been set free from the reign of the flesh, thereby making it possible for us to walk in the Spirit.

- The moment we trust Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit baptizes/places us into Christ (**1 Corinthians 1:30a**); therefore, whatever has happened to Christ has happened to us. He was crucified and buried. When He went to the cross, we also went to the cross. When He went to the grave, we also went to the grave and now our flesh, which was co-crucified with Him, is held in that place of death and made inoperable as we, by faith, rest in this truth.
- And that's not all—He was raised and ascended. When Christ came out of that grave, we also were raised; and when He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father, that is our new position in Christ (**Ephesians 2:6**).
- Since He was raised to new life, we also have been made a new creation with a new nature, which is His very life (**Romans 6:3-5**).

Read Colossians 2:13.

- Since the Colossians were Gentiles, they were uncircumcised; however, this was not the cause of their spiritual death. Their uncircumcised sinful nature made them dead in their sins (**Colossians 2:11-12**).
- In **Deuteronomy 10:16**, Moses told the people of Israel to circumcise their hearts; in other words, go beyond physical surgery to the heart. They needed to submit to God in their hearts as well as in their bodies (**Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:29**). Paul taught that real circumcision is a matter of the heart.
- We were separated from God because of our sins and lived under the constant control of our flesh. But, through Christ, we have been made alive and have not only received the forgiveness of our sins (**Ephesians 2:12-13**), but also we have been delivered from the power of sin. To defeat death, God made us alive; to deliver us from sin, He made us alive with Christ.

- As opposed to being dead alone in their sin, being alive together with Christ means that believers do not need to live any longer under sin's power.
- How did this happen? He forgave us all our trespasses. God's forgiveness opens the way for believers to experience new life in Christ.

Read Colossians 2:14.

- At the cross, Jesus paid for all of our sins—past, present and future—and therefore has also freed us from the condemnation of the law. Anything in our lives that the law could condemn has been paid for at the cross by Christ.
- This verse could be translated as “erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands.” Paul is explaining here the nature of Christ's forgiveness. In forgiving all our sins, Christ erased the record of our trespasses against the law that stood against us. Humanity could not pay the debt for these offenses, so God wiped out the record of our sin.
- Christ cancelled the written record against us by taking the ledger to the cross and nailing it there. Jesus took care of our indebtedness to God.

Read Colossians 2:15.

- Not only did Christ's death on the cross pay for humanity's debt to God, but it was also Christ at the cross that overcame/disarmed principalities and powers (**Colossians 1:13; 1 John 3:8**). In **1 Peter 5:8**, we are told that Satan is a roaring lion; after the cross that's all he can do—just ROAR. He is totally under the sovereign control of God and can only do what the Lord permits (**Job 1:6-12; 2:6**). The same goes for demons (**Matthew 8:28-32**). All were **disarmed** at the cross.

- It is interesting the confusion many have regarding Satan. I heard a missionary pastor say, “That guy has more medals for things he didn’t do. He gets credit for most of the problems that occur in this life.”
- On the other hand, I remember someone sharing a true story of a young man who had gone to a tattoo parlor to receive his first tattoo. When the young man entered the door of the shop, he was confronted with a big decision—what would he choose to have tattooed on his arm? After looking at many options, he settled on a picture of the devil with horns, in a red suit and carrying a pitchfork. Later that day, the young man went bowling and had rolled up his shirtsleeve to reveal his new tattoo. Suddenly from the next bowling lane, he heard a woman’s voice saying, “Look at that cute little devil.” That is exactly what Satan would like for us to believe of him...that he is a cute little devil.
- Isn’t it interesting that in reality Satan is a murderer who hates God and desires to destroy every man, woman, and child who God loves, including you and me? So what does man do? He tattoos Satan’s picture on his arm and calls him a “cute little devil.”
- Satan can appear as an angel of light (**2 Corinthians 11:13-14**). He can make what is bad look good—abortion, for instance. On the other hand, he can make what is good look bad—spanking children, for instance.
- Some comments by the Apostle Paul:
 - **1 Corinthians 7:5** – Tempter
 - **2 Corinthians 2:11** – Apparently he can gain an advantage.
 - **Ephesians 4:25-27** – He can gain ground.
 - **Ephesians 6:11-12** – Schemer
 - **1 Thessalonians 2:18** – He can hinder.
 - **2 Thessalonians 2:9** – He’s actively working.
 - **1 Timothy 3:6-7** – He can ensnare.
 - **1 Timothy 5:15** – Some turn aside to him.

- **2 Timothy 2:26** – He can hold men captive (of course this is done through ignorance or unbelief).
- If this was all that was written to the church about Satan, it would appear that we are in big trouble.
- Well, praise the Lord. There is much more to be said.
- Let's draw a true, biblical picture of Satan:
 - **1 Peter 5:8** – Roaring/angry lion – wants to destroy
 - **John 8:44** – Liar/murderer – he destroys lives by deceiving folks, not by knifing them.
 - **Revelation 12:7-10** – This Scripture reveals how he operates – (deceives the world/accuser)
 Examples:
 - Job – **Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6** – Accuser; notice that Satan is under the sovereign control of God.
 - Eve – **Genesis 3:1-6** – Deceiver/liar/murderer
 - Jesus – **Matthew 4:1-3** – Tempter; He can't force us, just tempt us (**1 Thessalonians 3:5**).
- Keep in mind that Satan is under the sovereign control of God; he would like to throw Christians into the fiery furnace to destroy them, but our loving Heavenly Father only permits the ropes that bind us to be consumed (**Daniel 3:1-28**).
- Satan would like to grind us to powder, but the Lord only allows the chaff to be separated from the wheat (**Luke 22:31-32**): “*Simon, Simon, Satan wants to sift you like wheat.*”
- The greater majority of Christians who are blood bought, heaven bound, and set free live in fear and bondage to the devil—living in retreat and defeat, unaware of the total victory of the cross, crucified to the devil (**Genesis 3:15; John 12:31**).
- A powerful verse: **John 8:32**
- A comment from C.A. Coates: “*The forgiven man is on an altogether new ground with the Father; he is on the ground of Grace, which is given to us through Jesus Christ who is ‘full of grace and truth.’*” The

- apprehension (taking hold) of this puts the soul beyond the reach of the oppression and harassing of the devil.
- The cross is the solution to anything that our external enemy can do. He was defeated/crushed/disarmed at the cross (**Colossians 2:15**).
 - Another interesting Scripture: **Ephesians 6:10-14a**
 - Notice the number of times that Paul uses the word “stand.” If we were to look at that word “stand” in the Greek, it has the idea that the ground is already taken and we are to merely hold our ground. But how? By faith (**1 Peter 5:8-9a**).
 - **Ephesians 4:27**: *“Don’t give place/ground to the devil.”*
 - What gives place to the devil? **Unbelief – Stand** (Hold your ground) **firm in the faith.**
 - **James 4:7** is significant. Notice the order here: submit (trust, depend on God), then resist the devil by faith.
 - According to the Word of God, our Heavenly Father is sovereign not to Satan, not the demons. God the Father rules over all no matter what Satan does.
 - Many, many believers, not knowing or abiding in their position in Christ the Victorious One, attempt to fight against the devil and his demons. Before long, Satan looms larger and stronger in their minds, while Jesus seems to become smaller and weaker.
 - Soon they imagine there are demons everywhere.
 - They become obsessed with warfare and before long, they begin to experience defeat and breakdown in the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual realms.
 - If Satan can bluff us Christians into becoming more occupied with him than the Lord Jesus, the inevitable result is a defeated Christian.
 - However, it was Christ at the cross who overcame/disarmed principalities and powers. Our part is to believe.

G. Conclusion: How Knowing and Believing Who We Are in Christ Impacts Our Lives

Read Colossians 2:16.

- Because Christ had cancelled the written code (2:14), and had disarmed evil powers (2:15), believers have been set free from legalistic rules. Paul's point: don't give up freedom for legalism.
- Jesus Christ has provided everything that mankind will ever need:
 - He is fully God and in Him we have been made complete.
 - Through Him we have received freedom from our flesh and a new nature.
 - Through Him we have been forgiven of all sin.
 - Through Him we have been set free from the law.
 - Through Him we have been delivered from Satan's power.
- In light of all that Christ has done for man, it only stands to reason that we have been set free from legalistic Old Testament dietary laws or observing celebrations, etc. (**Galatians 3:1-3; 5:1**).

Read Colossians 2:17.

- Anything that is not Christ or found in Christ is a shadow or unreal. At one time these laws were needed as the ceremonial and civil regulations of Judaism set God's people apart from the world. Through Christ, however, God was preparing a new people for Himself, a worldwide family.
- Old Testament laws and holy days were a shadow of things to come; the reality of all is found in Jesus Christ. What the Old Testament promised, Christ fulfilled.

Read Colossians 2:18.

- By turning the Colossian believers from the reality back to the shadow (false humility/self-denial, teaching that God can only be approached through angels, taking great pride in signs, wonders, and visions, as well as observing dietary laws and celebrations), false teachers led many down a road of destruction (**2 Peter 2:1-2**). This ultimately results in loss of reward (**1 Corinthians 3:13-15**).

Read Colossians 2:19.

- The fundamental problem with the false teachers was that they were not connected to/occupied with Christ. Had they been “holding the Head”/looking unto Jesus,” they would not be teaching false doctrine.
- Keep in mind that we are all part of Christ’s body/the church, and as the members of our physical body must be connected to the head/brain at all times, so must the members of Christ’s body remain connected to “The Head.” Had the false teachers been connected to “The Head,” they would not have been false teachers.

Read Colossians 2:20.

- Because we have died with Christ, we are no longer under the power of the principles of this world system (**Galatians 6:14**). Our death with Christ has freed us from our former slavery to this world system. Paul wondered why these Colossian believers would even think about submitting themselves to a defeated foe/conquered power.
- Let’s take a moment to define this term “world,” which in all reality is rather difficult to define.

- It actually refers to the world system which is dominated by satanic principles such as deceit, greed, ambition, selfishness and sinful pleasure.
- No wonder the Lord says, “***Love not the world***” (1 **John 2:15**).
- Notice John doesn’t say, “Love not the world too much.” He simply says, “Don’t love it at all.”
- **1 John 2:16** – Basically, this is all that the world (world system) has to offer.
- Every sin boils down to one of these:
 - **Lust of the flesh** – alcohol, drugs, immorality, overeating, etc.
 - **Lust of the eyes** – greed, materialism, occupied with opposite sex, etc.
 - **Pride of life** – judgmental, critical, anger, inflated with self-importance, boasting, self-righteousness, etc. (touch not, taste not, handle not, fit into this category)
- It’s interesting to see what the serpent used to deceive Eve in **Genesis 3:6**.
- It is also interesting to see that Satan used the same worldly tactics to tempt Jesus in **Matthew 4:1-11**.
- Self-centered man, whether he be unsaved or a carnal Christian, will seek satisfaction through one of these three forms of worldly lust, but to all of them the Christian has been crucified (**Galatians 6:14**).
- It is very important that we understand our relationship to the world. **After the cross...**
 - This world is not our home – **Hebrews 11:13**, we are strangers and pilgrims on earth.
 - Our citizenship is in heaven – **Philippians 3:20**.
 - Jesus makes it very clear in John 17 that we are not of this world – **John 17:14**. **John 7:7** – Why couldn’t the world hate them here? Because at that time, *before the cross*, they were still of the world. **They had not been crucified to it.**

- Remember **1 John 2:15**: “*Love not the world, neither the things of the world.*”
- Now turn to **James 4:4**. Notice the terms used: *adultery/enemy*. James is saying that friendship with the world/world-system is **spiritual adultery**. Notice what Paul has to say in **2 Timothy 4:10**.
- What is the solution to spiritual adultery?
- The cross. **Galatians 6:14** – “*I have not desire for the world, and it has not power over me.*” And our part is to believe (**Colossians 2:6**).
- And so Paul wondered in **Colossians 2:20-22** why these Colossian believers would even think about submitting themselves to a defeated foe/conquered power.

Read Colossians 2:23.

- To the Colossians, as well as to many Christians today, the legal demands of the false teachers appear to be good. Notice that Paul said obeying these rules gives an appearance of wisdom (just an appearance) in self-made religion. Following a long set of religious rules to gain acceptance by God is not God’s way. It’s a man-made religion, which began way back in the book of Genesis when Adam and Eve tried to make themselves acceptable to God by putting on fig leaves. It’s as unacceptable to God today as it was back then.
- An interesting quote from Robert Farrar Capon: “*For the Gospel of Grace is the end of religion, the final posting of the CLOSED sign on the sweatshop of the human race’s constant struggle to think well of itself; for at best, that is what religion is: Man’s well meant, but dim-witted attempt to gain approval for doing odd jobs that he thinks God will thank him for...Religion, therefore, is a loser...It has a failed past and a bankrupt future...There was no religion in Eden, and there will be none in the New Jerusalem; and in the*

meantime, Jesus has died and risen to persuade us to knock it off right now. He has made it real clear that as far as God is concerned, we're all home free already, and there is not a single religious thing that you or I have to do...We are simply invited to believe it."

- Let's face this truthfully. Legalism attracts many. Multitudes of Christians enjoy sacrificing and playing the martyr for the simple reason that it gives a feeling of accomplishment, acceptance, and satisfaction. However, as Paul points out, all of man's efforts to carry out Christian conduct and live the Christian life are of no value against fleshly indulgences. In other words, it will in no way be of any help in the battle against the flesh. Why? Because ***"the battle is not ours, but the Lord's"*** (2 Chronicles 20:15b).

COLOSSIANS

Chapter 3

Risen with Christ

Introduction

- We have seen death with Christ applied to the danger that faced these Colossian believers. Why were they subject to ordinances? They ought not to be, for in Christ they were dead to the rudiments of this world and therefore had nothing to do with ordinances.
- Keep in mind that the Christian is positionally dead due to the virtue of the cross of Christ; this is all a matter of faith. Of course he is alive naturally and will only see old thoughts and habits revived if not occupied with Christ.
- Now the Christian is looked at as a dead man; yes, dead to the world doing its best, even the religious world. The best the natural man can pretend to do is in not touching, tasting, and handling. Such is its only way of getting the victory, which is really no victory at all but merely abstinence from certain things or a system of fleshly restrictions.
- This is totally different from Christian principles. Christians look for the victory of grace. For the death of Christ has delivered us from the entire ground of nature, in not touching, tasting, or handling. Christianity does not merely avoid evil within and around but applies death to it all. Christ has died to it, and we Christians should know ourselves to be dead to all that is of the world whether it is moral or immoral, religious or gross, intellectual or foolish.
- In Chapter 3 we advance a step further. Paul reasons from our being risen with Christ. It is not merely that we shall die and rise but that we are dead and risen.

- The Christian faith brought a whole new concept into pagan societies: What we believe has a definite connection with how we behave. Faith in Christ brings with it oneness with Christ (in Christ and Christ in you). He cannot live in us by His Spirit and have no influence on our lives.

A. Our Position As Believers

Read Colossians 3:1.

- Paul's assumption here is that his readers understood their co-crucifixion (**Romans 6:6**) as well as their co-resurrection (**Ephesians 2:6**) with Christ which he had mentioned back in **Colossians 2:11-12**.
- Now in Chapter 3, Paul shares how faith in our identification with Christ should be affecting our daily lives; we are no longer occupied with the things of this world, but rather our occupation is with Christ (**Isaiah 26:3**; **Psalms 121:1-2**; **123:1-2**).
- This occupation with Christ is a progressive growth process that actually begins the moment we trust Christ as our Savior. It might be good for us to look at four phases of the Christian life.
- **PHASE #1 is an occupation with our own fleshly desires (James 4:1-3).**
- Quote from Dr. W. J. Prost: *"The essence (predominant quality) of true Christianity is not to have either high or low thoughts of self, but rather not to be thinking of self at all."* And then he quotes **Philippians 1:21** – **"For me to live is Christ."**
- Let's give some thought to this: Man is an **object** of God's blessing/free gifts/grace. God is the **source** of man's blessing (**John 3:27**; **James 1:17**).
- If the blessing/gifts/grace becomes man's **object**, then God, the source of it, is overlooked. Read **Job 1:8-11**.

Notice what's happening here. Satan is insisting that God's blessings were Job's **object** and not God Himself.

- This tendency in man goes all the way back to the fall. It was by proposing to Eve that she would receive a benefit/blessing/personal gain that Satan trapped her (**Genesis 3:4-6**). Notice personal gain was the primary object in her mind and in order to obtain it, God was overlooked.
- Now, if this snare/trap was successful in a perfect environment like the Garden of Eden, how much more likely is it to be successful in our present fallen world? When God's blessings become all important, He Himself is **out of the picture**. This was the warning that the children of Israel received when they came into the Promised Land (**Deuteronomy 8:12-14**).
- And so it happened—the blessings given actually turned their hearts to themselves and the consequence was that God was not only forgotten, but rejected, which eventually led to idolatry/idol worship.
- Think back to those early years of our Christian lives where most of us will see a lot of childish self-centeredness, which God patiently tolerated. (I remember praying for health, wealth, good days, etc. My focus was **me**.) I was occupied with **my** pleasure, **my** joy, and **my** relief.
- I looked for **freedom** from the guilt of **my** sin, and desired from Him the **peace, joy, and benefits** of **my** life in Christ.
- However, if we are going to grow spiritually, the way up is down.
- Therefore, in God's own time, the Lord will use that self-centeredness for the purpose of revealing to us a sinful malignancy/rotten cancer that dwells within each one of us. At some point, we will begin a downward spiral into the terrible defeat of Romans 7.

- **PHASE #2 – Occupation with the wretchedness of our flesh (Romans 7:15-24).**
- As Christians, we are going to be influenced and ultimately controlled by one of two powers: the self-life or the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The first will make life hell and the second, heaven (**Jeremiah 17:5-8**).
- The flesh/self is the fleshly, self-centered carnal nature that we inherited from Adam, and we all have one. It's ugly, it's horrible, and we got it at birth. It will be with us until death and will never change. Vines' definition of the flesh or self, is "human nature deprived of the Spirit of God and dominated by sin."
- To make matters worse, God sees nothing good in the flesh (**Romans 7:18a**). Even the very best which the flesh can produce, God rejects.
- Unlike Paul, few Christians are willing to admit that the flesh/self is controlling their lives; there is a blindness to the subtle, clever, deceitful workings of the flesh.
- If the more horrible sins are absent from our lives, then we tend to rest in a complacent sense of goodness (self-righteousness). We fail to realize how obnoxious to God are the more "culturally acceptable" sins such as embellishing stories, sarcasm, impatience, worry, etc. Few people come to **Romans 7:24**.
- Martin Luther once said, "I am more afraid of my own heart than of the Pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great Pope self." And we have within us a wretched tyrant that gives commands and we obey.
- **PHASE #3 – However, in time, in GOD'S TIME, the Spirit of Truth/the Holy Spirit will begin to reveal our need for relief from this wretched self-life and will begin to open our eyes to a deeper truth regarding our co-crucifixion with Christ (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20).**
- This begins Phase #3 – **Occupation with the cross.**

- Death is required to become a Phase #4 spiritual man.
- The cross must come first (**Luke 9:23; Leviticus 8:22-30; Colossians 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:22-24**).
- Many Christians pray for God to make them stronger to overcome sin/the flesh, but this is not God's way. God's way of delivering us from this wretched evil is not to make us stronger and stronger, but by making us weaker and weaker (**2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Isaiah 40:29**). God sets us free from the dominion of sin, not by strengthening our old man, but by crucifying him.
- Remember the day when we saw clearly that Christ died for us; we all should be equally clear as to the time when we saw that we died with Christ and then reckon it so.
- Notice the repeated statements in Chapter 6 of our actual identification with the death of Christ (verses 2-8; 11 and 13).
- Miles Stanford wrote: *"Fruit springs out of death. Self-centeredness is always barren and solitary. The way of victory is the way of the cross. The Christian names that are honored in history are names that stand over graves where the old man was buried long before the body died."*
- It is obvious from Paul's Epistles that his entire life hung on the fact that he was crucified with Christ.
- **PHASE #4 – As we begin to exercise faith in our co-crucifixion with Christ, reckoning ourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God (Romans 6:11), the result is a growing freedom from the power and reign of sin (Romans 6:18, 14, 7, 6).**
- However, in the midst of all this growth in "deeper truth," most of us are still more aware/occupied with the beneficiary than the **Benefactor**. We are more occupied with the result of spiritual growth than with the one who grows us.

- As the Holy Spirit begins to open our eyes to this truth, we are about to enter into **PHASE #4 – Occupation with the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:1-3).**

Read Colossians 3:2.

- Have you ever tried to set your mind/affections on something only to find your thoughts/affections drifting to other things? So you try harder to think on those things, but once again your mind wanders.
- Paul’s remedy for this dilemma is to reckon on our co-crucifixion/co-resurrection with Christ, which will render the flesh powerless and therefore unable to influence man’s soul (mind, will, emotions). In its place, the Spirit now becomes the influential one, the motivator, the power source in one’s life enabling us to occupy our minds with “things above.”
- Remember **Galatians 5:17** which describes the battle between the flesh and spirit: *“the flesh lusts/wars against the spirit, and the spirit lusts/wars against the flesh.”* What are they fighting over? The control of man’s soul (mind, will, emotions).

Read Colossians 3:3.

- The Greek aorist tense in the phrase *“for you died”* connotes that we died when Christ died, which our baptism confesses or proclaims. In Christ’s death, all believers died (**Galatians 2:20a**).
- Paul further explains why Christians are able to set their affections/minds on things above: because of their position of co-crucified with Christ, they are dead to this world as well as to the things in it (**Galatians 6:14**) and their lives are positionally “hid with Christ in God.” For now it is hidden; Christ has not yet allowed His glory to be seen by the world. Therefore, a Christian should be content to be, for a little while, an object of rejection and scorn.

- Notice the double protection, “*with Christ in God.*” Satan can’t tempt Christ, and he can’t tempt us as we rest in our position in Christ.

B. Our Resulting Condition Based on Knowing and Believing that Christ Is Our Life

Read Colossians 3:4.

- Let’s consider Paul’s statement, “*Christ who is our life.*” Christ Himself gives divine life to all believers. He is the source, power, and goal of all Christian growth.
- In **John 15:1**, the Lord explains our position in Christ by using the analogy of a tree. We read, “*I am the true vine,*” or we could say, “He is the source of life.” He continues on in the second verse referring to Christians as branches attached to the “true vine” to the source of life. The idea here is that if the branch is severed from the vine, it dies. Thus, Paul’s statement, “Christ who is our life” (**John 11:25**).
- An interesting quote by J.B. Stoney: “*I have the life of the One in whom I died. (Christ, who is my life – Colossians 3:4) I am not a bit dead myself. ‘Holiness by faith’ people say I am dead; but that is not true. Others talk about dead to nature. Another novel notion that has come out is that I must apply the death of Christ to get power over sin. All are wrong. The truth is, I have died with Him, and now I am in His life.*”
- Here is a further truth: “*When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*” Christ is not always, as now, to be hidden. He is about to be manifested; and when He is, we too, who are in Him, shall be manifested with Him in glory.

- Because we are positioned in Christ, where He goes, we go. Therefore, when He appears in glory, we shall also appear (**1 Corinthians 15:42-43**).

Read Colossians 3:5.

- Because you are dead, and because you have this new life, even Christ, mortify your members which are upon earth. If the Colossian believers were to live out the Christ life, then certain manifestations of the earth-life must be held in the place of death.
- Although these believers had positionally died with Christ and had been raised with Him, they were still susceptible to temptation and the evil desires of the flesh. Just like diseased limbs of a tree, these practices need to be cut off—which takes a conscious, by faith, daily appropriation of our co-crucifixion with Christ, the remedy for the earth-life.
- In **1 Peter 4:1**, we are told to have the same mindset as Christ who suffered in the flesh, and the reason for this is that ***“He who has suffered in the flesh/denied the flesh, has ceased from sin.”*** In other words, stop giving the flesh what it wants (**Luke 9:23**).
- Since we have received a new position in which we are seated with Christ in the heavens, Paul is imploring us to, by faith, appropriate our co-crucifixion and new position in Christ, thereby taking away sin’s power.

Read Colossians 3:6.

- The ***“wrath of God”*** refers to God’s judgment on these kinds of behaviors.
- Paul further explains that these are the very things for which God will judge the unsaved.

Read Colossians 3:7.

- Therefore, those things that we walked in before we were saved and given a new position are not

appropriate behavior for those who are seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

C. Practicing By Faith Who We Are in Christ

Read Colossians 3:8-10.

- It's wonderful to see how the truth of being dead with Christ is brought in as deliverance from all fleshly strongholds. It is the judgment of the first Adam as a whole, nothing is spared. The "you" in verse 9 is very strong: ***"Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."***
- Our Father intends us to know and understand that He has already provided in Christ our life, everything required for our Christian life both in time and eternity. He is patiently teaching us to have no faith in the old man (self) and to exercise all of our faith in the new man (Christ). We are told to do in faith what our Father has already done in fact. At the cross, He freed us from the reign of sin and self; in the resurrection, He united us to the risen Lord Jesus. By faith in the work of the cross (our co-crucifixion), the old man is put off; by faith in our heavenly position in Christ, the new man is put on. Hence we are free to dwell within the very source of every spiritual blessing with which our Father has blessed us.
- By considering/believing the old man to have been crucified at Calvary, he is "put off" daily (**Romans 6:11a**). By considering/believing ourselves as newly created in the risen Lord Jesus, we "put on" the new man (**Romans 6:11b**). As we escape self's reign of death, we enter into Christ's reign of life.

1. Put Off the Old

a. Fact

“Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him” (**Romans 6:6**, NASB). “Seeing that ye have put off the old man” (**Colossians 3:9**). Positionally, we were separated from the old Adamic nature in our identification with Christ on the cross.

b. *Faith*

“That you put off concerning the former conversation [manner of life]) the old man” (**Ephesians 4:22**). By faith in our new, sanctified position, we turn from; we consider as crucified the principle of sin and self within. We count ourselves to be new creations in Christ, having died to sin and self. That is our part in putting off the old man which God positionally put off from us at the cross.

2. Put On the New

a. *Fact*

“For as many of you as have been baptized [spiritually] into Christ, have positionally put on Christ” (**Galatians 3:27**). *“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”* (**Colossians 3:10**). At our new birth we were recreated in Christ, and our Christian life is now hid with Christ in God (**Colossians 3:3-4**).

b. *Faith*

“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (**Romans 13:14**). *“...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (**Ephesians 4:24**). By faith in the positional fact that our Father has placed us in His Son, we abide in Him; we acknowledge our place in Him. By faith, we stand in the position He has already given us. *“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth”* (**Ephesians 6:14**).

- In **Ephesians 4:22-24** we see a similar scripture; at first glance, it appears that the progression of thought in Ephesians is different than **Colossians 3:8-10**. However, after taking a closer look, it is identical.
- The basic progression is as follows: “*put off the old man*” (**Romans 6:6**); followed by the renewing of the mind (as influence of the “old man/flesh” over our minds is diminished, the Spirit then begins to influence/renew the mind); what follows is the Spirit’s work of putting on the “new man” (molding us into the image of Christ); the outcome is Godly Christian conduct (stop stealing, anger, bitterness, lying, grieving the Holy Spirit, etc.)

D. No Cultural or Racial Differences in Christ’s Body, the Church

Read Colossians 3:11.

- There are no cultural difference “in Christ.” There should be no barriers of nationalities, race, education level, social standing, wealth, gender, religion, or power in the Church of Jesus Christ (**Galatians 3:26-28**).
- Paul points out four groupings that were of particular importance in the Greek culture: (1) Racial/national (2) Religious (3) Cultural (4) Social/economic. Jesus Christ broke down all barriers; He accepts all who come to Him, and it is wrong to build the church on human distinctions (race/color/social standing), and not on Jesus Christ.
- It’s imperative for us as Christians to value nothing but Christ. As Christ is all, and in all, we must prize in one another only what is of Him. Christ is the only thing worth my thoughts, affections, labor, and life.

- If I love and prize Christ, such will be my feeling toward Christians.

E. Practicing by Faith Who We Are in Christ (Continued)

Read Colossians 3:12.

- Paul begins this section by reminding us of the grace of God: “***Therefore, as the elect of God...***” The word “elect” means “chosen; chosen of God.”
- Divine selection is not limited only to God choosing who will receive eternal life because we see it everywhere in the universe. There is variety in everything God created. There are classifications among the angels. One star is bigger and brighter than another star. Men are not born of the same race with the same advantages, nor with the same abilities. Let’s add this also: man’s will has no part in any of this. Men do not choose their race or their life conditions, such as where they are born, being rich or poor, healthy or sick, having a position of honor or dishonor.
- Any system of religious thought which suggests that God is limited by the thoughts, prayers, or actions of man is just plain foolishness. The order of truth is seen in the first phrase of the Bible: “***In the beginning God.***” It is God who planned—He executed it, and it is He who will do His good pleasure.
- The true system of biblical thought begins with this: an is conformed to the plan and purpose of his creator, not the other way around. Something else for us to consider is that God is never obligated in the exercise of His grace. He chooses whomever He pleases. (**Romans 9:20-21**). He sees absolutely no good in

man which might form a basis for His blessing (**Romans 3:10-18**).

- Paul continues in these verses explaining that when believers are resting by faith in the fact that the “old man” has been put off and the “new man” put on, the heart attitude will manifest the characteristics of Christ.
- Paul seems to be emphasizing the positive moral qualities of Christ (the tone, spirit, and inward feelings of Jesus), which will become the attitude of our hearts. The attitude of tender mercy/compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering/patience, forbearing one another/tolerance, forgiveness, and love, all of which are a fruit of faith.
- “Putting on Christ” by faith affects every attitude of the heart, which Paul explains are perfectly bound together in love. Love pulls together the other attitudes of the heart in unity; it is the basis of every right attitude and motive (**Romans 13:14**).

Read Colossians 3:15.

- There are three kinds of peace mentioned in the Bible: peace with God (**Romans 5:1**), peace from God (**Romans 1:7b**), and here we see the peace of God.
- **Peace with God** – In **Romans 5:6, 8, and 10**, we are told that natural man is ungodly, a sinner, and an enemy of God. However, in **Romans 5:1**, Paul states that through faith, we have made “peace with God.”
- **Peace from God** – In each of Paul’s 13 epistles, after the initial greeting, he makes the following statement: *“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- **Peace of God** – However, here in **Colossians 3:15**, as well as **Philippians 4:7**, Paul mentions another peace, the “peace of God. It’s wonderful to meditate on the fact that we are no longer enemies of God and that by

grace through faith we have made peace with God. And it's even more encouraging to consider that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can actually receive peace from God. However, to ponder the awesome fact that the sovereign God of this universe desires to give all Christians His peace, the peace of God, is an overwhelming thought.

- When Paul begins this verse with “***let the peace of God rule***,” he is not suggesting that this be done through man's effort or choice, but rather through faith in the finished work of the cross which he taught in verses 9 and 10.
- Because the “old man” is put off, and the “new man” is put on, we now have the Lord Jesus Christ as the object of our affection and the result is the peace of God ruling (**Isaiah 26:3**).
- The word translated “rule” is an athletic term and can actually mean “umpire.” Paul wanted the believers to let God's peace umpire/referee in their hearts/souls (mind, will, emotions). Having the peace of God, or not having the peace of God, should be the ruling/determining factor that indicates whether we are operating in the flesh or spirit.
- “To which” refers back to “the peace of God” which enables us to be unified as well as thankful.

F. The Fruit of Letting the Word of Christ Dominate Our Hearts and Minds

Read Colossians 3:16.

- Again, the word “let” assumes we are appropriating the truth of verses 9 and 10; therefore, Paul boldly encourages all believers to by faith, “***let the word of God dwell in you richly***.” Keep in mind **John 1:1**

and 14: *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”*

- Is it possible that here in **Colossians 3:16**, the Word is referring to the indwelling Jesus Christ? Consider that the written Word and the living Word are one in the same and will dwell in us richly as we rest in our identification with Christ.
- This enables us to teach and admonish/warn one another in wisdom and in a gracious, lighthearted manner.
- It might be good at this point to consider **Ephesians 5:18-19**. We have taught previously that the literal translation of the phrase *“filled with the Spirit”* is actually *“keep on getting filled by the Holy Spirit.”* The Spirit is the agent that does the filling, and He is actually filling us with the Lord Jesus Christ, the *“Word that was made flesh.”*
- Notice the similarity in the fruit of our being filled by the Spirit in **Ephesians 5:19** as well as letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in **Colossians 3:16** (*“...teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*)

G. How God’s Indwelling Word Positively Impacts Our Activities and Relationships

Read Colossians 3:17.

- In modern society we pay little attention to names, but in the ancient world a man’s name was of utmost importance.
- When Paul wrote, *“whatever you say or do, do all in the name of the Lord,”* the phrase *“in the name of the Lord”* links it to the person of Christ.

- If we say or do something in someone's name, then we have their approval.
- In **John 14:13** the sole condition for prayer to be answered is praying "*in My Name*," and we can only pray in His name if we know what His will is. Likewise, we can only "*do in word or deed in His name*" if we know His will; and as we discovered in our earlier studies, we can only know His will at the cross where our will/desires are crucified.
- The words, "*in My Name*" signifies Christ Himself giving His approval, and that will only take place at the foot of the cross where the "old man" is crucified enabling us to walk in the Spirit.

Read Colossians 3:18.

- Basically, a wife's submission involves an attitude of *lovingly giving up her rights*. The reaction that the idea of submission generates among women is normally very negative. Often, it is viewed as inferiority or loss of identity.
- It actually generates fear in the hearts of many women. The main reason for this goes right back to Genesis 3. Women naturally want to rule/control their lives and to place themselves under the control of another, particularly a man who is not showing leadership qualities, is frightening.
- However, the biblical view of submission is very different from this.
- Referring again to **Colossians 3:18** and **Ephesians 5:22**, notice that the submissive attitude of the wife toward her husband is qualified by the phrase, "*as to the Lord*."
- Turning now to a very interesting scripture, **1 Peter 2:21-23**. Jesus actually set the example for submission by enduring injustice and trusting Himself to God's care. Look what God is saying here: *A wife can submit to her less than perfect husband, while entrusting herself to God's care.*

- **1 Peter 3:1-2** – A wife’s submission can influence a husband.
- **1 Peter 3:3-6** – Notice the word *fear*. A wife who truly knows and trusts her God will not be afraid to submit. (**1 John 4:18; 2 Corinthians 5:14a**).

Read Colossians 3:19.

- In **Ephesians 5:23** Paul explains that a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the Church, and He is the Savior of the body. What kind of Savior did we have? A selfless, sacrificing, suffering servant-Savior. He goes on in verse 25 to say that husbands are to also love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Therefore we can see from these verses that Jesus Christ is the role model for all husbands (**Mark 10:42-45**).
- Christian men/husbands, our leadership role, whether it be in the church or home is made very clear in this Scripture: **primarily it is death to self, which will manifest itself in servant-leadership and selfless love.**
- The price of servant-leadership is high and hard; he lays down his life for the sheep. True spiritual servant-leadership involves this principle: ***“Death working in me works life in you”*** (**2 Corinthians 4:12; 12:14-15**).
- It might be good if we took a moment to address the problem of bitterness and, in particular, bitterness toward our wives. **Hebrews 12:15** makes it very clear that bitterness comes from our failure to appropriate God’s grace. *If we fail to appropriate/take possession of the grace of God, bitterness sets in; it troubles us and affects everyone around us.*
- For example, often husbands become frustrated with what appears to them as unreasonableness in their wives. Then in their fleshly frustration, they fail to appropriate God’s grace to cope with the situation and

the outcome is bitterness, which troubles them and affects the entire family.

Read Colossians 3:20.

- The word for “obey” is different than the word “submit” used for wives. The wife occupies a place of equality with her husband and submission is merely a question of headship. However, the child is to obey as a servant is to obey. This is the same word as used in verse 22.
- Disobedience to parents is one of the last forms of lawlessness to occur on earth (**2 Timothy 3:1-2**). Other Scriptures to ponder: **Ephesians 6:2-3**.
- Many times parents compel their children to obey and often they do obey under pressure, but their attitude is one of disrespect. The Lord makes it very clear in these verses that children are not only to obey, but they are to do it with the right attitude.
- By nature a child is selfish and does not want to obey and honor his parents. Somehow parents think that their children should be able to obey just because they say so. However, both children and parents need to understand what the Bible teaches: the disobedience and disrespect is caused by the child’s flesh and Jesus has made a way for them to overcome this as they walk by faith in the truth of **Romans 6:6**.
- It’s interesting to read that obedience, which we saw in **Romans 1:5**, is actually a **fruit of faith**, and therefore is pleasing to the Lord (**Hebrews 11:6**).

Read Colossians 3:21.

- Fathers have several responsibilities toward their children. One is mentioned here: he is not to provoke his children to anger. In other words, do not use parental authority to provoke and tear down a child, but rather to encourage and build up (**Ephesians 6:4**). There is nothing that discourages a child more than a parent’s continual fault finding.

- The mother is not so exhorted here, for as a rule, her general fault is to spoil them.

Read Colossians 3:22.

- It is estimated that several million slaves played a significant role in Roman society during the time of Paul's writings. Slavery was sanctioned by law and was part of the society's social make up. Because many slaves and slaver owners had become Christians, the early church had to deal with the master-slave relationship.
- Paul's statement neither condemns nor condones slavery; he was merely addressing the issue of Christians, whether slaves or employees, should no longer work for human approval (**Galatians 1:10; Ephesians 6:6; Proverbs 29:25**).
- In those days, many Christian slaves served heathen masters. No matter, the great thing is to remember the Lord Jesus and His will. We belong to Him, for the purpose of doing His will.
- It's interesting to ponder that believing slaves were not set free from serving their masters, but they were set free from slavery to sin.

Read Colossians 3:23.

- Slaves had a variety of tasks: errands, teaching, cleaning, cooking, etc. Paul gave their jobs new dignity through focusing them on Christ as their master.
- Echoing his words in 3:6, Paul once again explained that God will deal with all wrongdoing. The condition of the Ephesian church was such that Paul could encourage them through the love of Christ. However, the Colossians, not being in such a spiritually mature condition, are exhorted on a lower ground. Paul's appeal was more through the conscience.

COLOSSIANS

Chapter 4

Life and Fellowship In Christ

A. The Indwelling Word's Impact on Relationships (Continued)

- It's rather evident that the first verse of Chapter 4 belongs to the end of Chapter 3. Three pairs of appeals are presented: wives and husbands, children and fathers, and now servants and masters.

Read Colossians 4:1.

- There is a difference to be noted that husbands and wives existed from the very first. Not so the relation of master and servant. The relation of masters and slaves was a result of the entrance of sin into the world. We don't hear of bondmen before the flood, though Noah predicts it of Canaan soon after.
- If this is so, there is a rather interesting progression here in these relationships: husbands and wives in paradise; children born after the fall, but before the flood; servants not heard of until after the flood.
- The point to ponder here is that it is well to see that the master-servant relationship followed not only the fall, but even the great judgment of God executed on the earth. Therefore, we could conclude that men having fellow men as property or slaves is far from being according to God. And yet we read here in verse 1, "***Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair.***"
- Whether a servant was a believer or not, Christian masters were to treat all their slaves fairly, keeping in mind that Paul did not say that they should free all slaves.

- And then Paul's reminder that we all are accountable to our Heavenly Master.

B. Final Instructions on Worship and Prayer

Read Colossians 4:2.

- Turn to **1 Thessalonians 5:17** (*pray without ceasing*); **Ephesians 6:18** (*pray always*); **Romans 12:12** (*devoted to prayer*); **Acts 6:4** (*give ourselves continually to prayer*); **Luke 18:1** (*men ought always to pray*); **Psalms 55:16-17**.
- Pray continually/pray at all times/pray morning, noon and night. What does God expect from us? Does He want us to be monks on a mountaintop who never eat or sleep?
- Let's give some serious thought to all of this because there is a slight possibility we don't even know what true biblical prayer is.
- It might be helpful to stop a moment and define prayer. **What is it?**
- We could spend many hours looking up definitions of prayer, and to be quite honest, we'll probably find that most are rather shallow.
- Of all the definitions, John Darby seems to help us see the true meaning of prayer (paraphrased): *"Prayer is the great means by which we are practically kept in awareness of the Father's presence. It is the proper expression of our weakness to the Father and of our confidence in His love and care day by day and evermore. Prayer is confessing our constant need of dependence upon Him."*
- True biblical prayer is acknowledging and depending on God.
- It would appear that true biblical prayer is not an action, but rather a life which maintains a dependence

on Him at all times. Thus **Colossians 4:2** makes sense.

- Paul exhorts the believers in Colosse to “***keep alert in prayer with thanksgiving.***” Paul may have been referring to being sensitive to the Holy Spirit as we pray; (**Romans 8:26**) praying in the Spirit (**Jude 20**).
- Praying in the Spirit will produce gratitude and thankfulness for all things (**Philippians 4:6-7**).

C. Paul Requests the Believers at Colosse to Pray for His Ministry

Read Colossians 4:3.

- Even though Paul was in chains for preaching the Gospel, he is requesting prayer for himself and Timothy that God would give them opportunities to share the message even in prison.
- We see no indication that Paul was discouraged, even at this late day.

Read Colossians 4:4.

- Paul asked for not only an open door to share the “message of grace,” but also that he would speak it clearly.

D. Final Instruction on Managing Earthly Relationships in the Light of Who We Are in Christ

Read Colossians 4:5

- He further requests that he would make the most of every opportunity and respond to each person as he ought.

- If we walk in the flesh, we are not living a life that would draw others to Christ and our speech will be full of impatience, anger, and self-centeredness which will inevitably drive people further from the truth and Christ. But if we walk in the Spirit, the Spirit will manifest the life of Christ in such a way that many will be drawn to Christ through our Christ-like speech and behavior.
- In the Spirit, our speech will be gracious giving us a rich glow of divine favor as well as seasoned with salt (a preservative, guarding God's holiness); therefore, it is appropriate for every situation.
- We do not read, "Always with salt and seasoned with grace," but rather, "Always with grace and seasoned with salt." Grace should always be the groundwork of all that we say. It's this combination of God's love with an uncompromising guarding, maintaining, and preserving of God's holy and righteous will that teaches the Christian not merely what, but how to answer each one as he ought.

E. Paul's Final Greetings

- Wherever Paul went, he stood out as a great leader; he never lacked followers. In the shipwreck on the way to Rome (**Acts 27**), when it seemed inevitable that all would be lost, it was Paul who stood out as the leader. Paul, the prisoner, gave orders to the centurion soldiers and sailors in verses 30-35. Such was his personality and authority that the whole crew obeyed his orders without question.
- When he stood on trial for his life before King Agrippa, it was the prisoner who sentenced the judge (**Acts 26:27-29**).

- Paul poured his life into a small number of men with leadership potential; he did not try to exert control over them but ultimately relied on the Holy Spirit to bring them to maturity. It's amazing to see the affection his followers had for him (**Acts 20:36-38**).
- Here in Colossians, Paul closed his letter as he often did by sending personal greetings to individuals in the church. The names of various key leaders who helped and encouraged Paul give us an outline of his relationships and widespread ministry.

Read Colossians 4:7-8.

- Tychicus had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem with the collection for the church (**Acts 20:4**). Paul sent him to Ephesus a couple of times (**Ephesians 6:21-22; 2 Timothy 4:12**) as well as to Colosse with this letter. Paul refers to him as a fellow servant.

Read Colossians 4:9.

- Onesimus was a runaway slave who was a native of Colosse and had been saved through Paul's prison ministry. His master was Philemon, an elder in the church at Colosse. Paul refers to Onesimus as a dearly loved brother both here and in Philemon 16. The letter to the Colossians and the letter to Philemon were written at the same time.

Read Colossians 4:10.

- Aristarchus was from Thessalonica and had accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey. He had been arrested along with Gaius during the riot at Ephesus (**Acts 19:29**). In **Philemon 23**, Paul calls Aristarchus a fellow prisoner.

- Mark (also called John Mark) had started out with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (**Acts 12:25**) but had left in the middle of the trip for unknown reasons (**Acts 13:13**). It appears that Paul wanted the Colossians to know that he had confidence in Mark at this time.

Read Colossians 4:11.

- The phrase “*who are of the circumcision*” could mean that only Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus were Jewish. Whatever the meaning of that phrase, they had been a comfort to Paul in his life and ministry.

Read Colossians 4:12.

- Epaphras, like Onesimus was “*one of you*,” meaning he was a Colossian and may have been converted under Paul’s teaching in Ephesus. He had founded the church in Colosse and was one of the believers who the Lord had used to keep the church together despite growing troubles. Paul calls him a “*bondservant of Christ*.”

Read Colossians 4:13-14.

- Luke had spent much time with Paul, accompanying him on most of the third missionary journey. He also had remained by his side during this imprisonment, as well as Paul’s final imprisonment (**2 Timothy 4:11**). It’s assumed that Luke was a Gentile.
- Apparently, Demas was faithful during this time (**Philemon 24**) but later had deserted Paul, “*having loved this world*” (**2 Timothy 4:10**).

Read Colossians 4:15-16.

- Paul now turns from sending other's greetings to sending his own.

Read Colossians 4:17.

- Paul's letter to Philemon was also addressed to Archippus (**Philemon 2**) where Paul called him a "fellow soldier."

Read Colossians 4:18.

- Paul ends his letter just as he began it—with grace.



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