



COLOSSIANS

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25 Lantana Lane, Maxwell, Texas 78656

Email: biblestudy@wvbs.org Phone: (512) 398-5211

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INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

Instructor: Russell Haffner

Biography:

Russell Haffner currently serves as the director of the WVBS Online Bible School. He graduated from the Southwest School of Bible Studies in 1993. He is also an alumnus of Texas A&M University where he majored in Architecture. He has served as a minister of the gospel for over 25 years. He has spoken on various lectureships and has held several gospel meetings. He has also published articles in numerous lectureship books.

Russell and his wife Dee are blessed with three children - Ross, John and Kati. Ross and John are both graduates of the Southwest School of Bible Studies and currently serve as ministers in the Lord's church.

INTRODUCTION

In an area located in modern day Turkey there is a region (once called Phrygia) in which lies a beautiful valley where the Lycus River flows. It was in this area there once were three prominent cities of Colossae (or Colosse), Laodicea and Hierapolis. Laodicea and Hierapolis were positioned approximately six miles apart on opposite sides of the Lycus River. Colossae was found on the same side as Laodicea a short distance upstream (10 miles) about three miles from Mt. Cadmus. The history of these three cities has been intertwined through the ages. Colossae was the oldest of the three being positioned on a great highway which spanned the country from Ephesus to the Euphrates valley. According to the historian Herodotus it was already in existence when Xerxes and his army passed through the region in 480 BC (Herodotus *Histories* 7.30).

The three cities provided both stability and commerce for the region. The area around these towns was very fertile with green pastures that produced abundant flocks of sheep. This valley was known not only for the wool but also for the dyeing of woolen clothing. The cities each had their strengths. Colossae was well known for the production of valuable wool called collossinus, which may have been purple in color. Laodicea became very prosperous as the political center of the district and the financial headquarters of the whole area. Hierapolis became a great trade and resort center known for its medicinal baths and spas which some claimed produced remarkable health benefits.

At one time Colossae was as large and prosperous as the other two cities. However, by the time Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians the town had become small and insignificant. The importance of Colossae had diminished over time when the trade route which had passed through the city was moved to Laodicea. The neighboring cities grew in prominence as Colossae suffered due to a lack of commerce.

Religiously the city was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Approximately 2,000 families of Jews were relocated to this region from Mesopotamia and Babylon by Antiochus the Great (223-187 BC). Some have estimated that in the year 62 B.C. the Jewish population was as high as 50,000 (William Barclay, *Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, 93). The Gentiles who lived here were known for their worship of angels (Colossians 2:18). They believed Michael the archangel (Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:7) protected their city and there was even a legend that he once appeared in the city and saved the people during the time of a great flood.

It could be that Paul had never visited the city in person before his letter to the Colossians was written (Colossians 1:4, 7-8; 2:1). The congregation was probably founded after Paul travelled the area during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:24). It seems the congregation had been established due to the efforts of Epaphras and others (Colossians 1:7; 4:9-12; Philemon 1:2, 13, 19). The city may have also been the home of Philemon.

COLOSSIANS OUTLINE

- I. Paul's Greeting (1:1-2)
- II. The Preeminence of Christ (1:3-2:7)
 - A. Thanksgiving for the Colossians (1:3-8)
 - B. Prayer for the Colossians (1:9-12)
 - C. Christ is the head of the church (1:13-18)
 - D. The fullness of Christ (1:19-23)
 - E. Paul's suffering for the church (1:24-29)
 - F. Paul's concern for the brethren (2:1-8)
- III. The Preeminence of Christ under Attack (2:9–2:23)
 - A. The preeminence of Christ restated (2:9-15)
 - B. Warnings on avoiding things which dishonor Christ (2:16-23)
- IV. The Preeminence of Christ Experienced (3:1-4:6)
 - A. Seeking those things above (3:1-4)
 - B. Putting on the new man (3:5-11)
 - C. Adding the essentials of a Christian character (3:12-17)
 - D. His preeminence in the home (3:18-4:1)
 - E. Redeeming the time (4:2-6)
- V. Final Salutations (4:7-4:18)
 - A. Paul commends his fellow Christians (4:7-15)
 - B. Paul's final directions (4:16-18)

Writer

It is agreed upon by almost all scholars that the writer of this epistle is the apostle Paul (Colossians 1:1).

Language

This letter was originally written in Koiné Greek. The word "Koiné" means "common." This is a fitting name because it was the common language used by the people at that time. The New Testament is written in a popular form of the "Koiné" Greek which was spoken by the common people in the cities throughout the whole of the Greek-speaking world during the first century.

Date

The date of writing for this epistle is uncertain but was probably written from Rome between 60 and 64 AD during Paul's first captivity. It may have been written when he was under house arrest (Acts 28:14-31).

History of the Congregation

The congregation may have been established during Paul's "two years" stay at Ephesus, when it is reported that "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:10). It could be that Epaphras, Philemon, Archippus, Apphia, and other natives of Colossae (Philemon 1:2, 13, 19; Colossians 4:9) were converted at Ephesus and started a congregation upon their return to the city.

Key Word

The word "all" is found 32 times (note its use in Colossians 1:17-18).

Key Verses

1:18; 1:23; 2:9; 2:12; 2:14; 2:16; 3:2; 3:16; 3:17; 4:5.

Theme

The Preeminence of Christ - (Colossians 1:18)

The word "preeminence" is the English translation of the Greek word PRŌTEUŌ, which means to be first in rank or influence. It comes from the word PRŌTOS, meaning foremost in time, order, or importance. It is the idea of superiority, the fact of surpassing all others (Ephesians 1:19-23).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. In the first chapter Paul expresses his thanksgiving and prayer for the Colossians.
2. Paul also makes it abundantly clear that Christ is the head of the church.
3. The main emphasis for this chapter is the preeminence of Christ.

DISCUSSION

I. Greeting (1:1-2)

Verse 1

"Paul an apostle" - He was an apostle "of" Jesus Christ and "by the will of God" (Acts 9:15; 22:21). Paul was often called upon to defend his role as an apostle (1 Corinthians 1:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:11-12; Galatians 1:11-2:14).

"Timothy" (English form of the Greek name - Timotheus) - Timothy was a young man of Lystra. He was a companion of Paul on his second and third missionary journeys and was the recipient of two of Paul's epistles.

Timothy was of both Jewish and Greek ancestry. He was the son of Eunice, a believing Jewess, by a Greek father who may have been dead when Paul first visited their home (Acts 16:1). Timothy was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:2).

Timothy was a faithful and trusted servant of Paul (Philippians 2:19). He had been sent by Paul to Corinth in 1 Corinthians 4:17. In 1 Corinthians 16:10-11, Paul commanded the Corinthians to allow Timothy to dwell with them with no fear because "he does the work of the Lord" and that he was not to be despised (1 Timothy 4:12). From childhood Timothy had known the holy scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15). His grandmother Lois, and mother Eunice clearly saw their duty to train him in the Old Testament scriptures (the New Testament had not yet been written (2 Timothy 1:5).

Verse 2

"saints" - The Colossian brethren are called saints. The word "saint" is an English translation of the Greek word HAGIOS which means consecrated, sanctified and set apart for a holy use. All Christians are saints (1 Peter 1:15-16). The use of this word in the New Testament emphasizes the Christian's unique relationship with God (1 Corinthians 1:2). Being holy requires conduct that corresponds to that relationship (Matthew 5:8; John 15:19; 1 Timothy 5:22).

"faithful" - Notice the use of this word which shows the importance of the Christian's faith and obedience (James 2:17-18; Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24; 1 Corinthians 4:2; Revelation 2:10). True faith requires both trusting and trustworthiness.

"in Christ" - The Bible clearly teaches how we can be "in" Christ (Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 John 5:11; Romans 8:1; Revelation 14:13; Ephesians 1:3; 1:1-14; 2:6).

"Grace to you and peace" - Paul wished for them to receive God's grace and peace. Grace is the unmerited favor they received from God (Romans 5:8). Peace with God only comes when one is cleansed from their sins in the blood of Christ (Isaiah 59:1-2; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Romans 6:3-4). This obtained peace with God only continues when one remains faithful (Revelation 2:10).

In the New Testament we are told the Father is the "God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10) and the "God of peace" (Hebrews 13: 20). It is equally significant that "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17) and "He is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14).

II. The Preeminence of Christ (1:3-2:7)

A. Thanksgiving for the Colossians (1:3-8)

Verse 3

"we give thanks" - Paul was thankful for these faithful brethren. Christians should always rejoice in the faithfulness of their brothers and sisters in Christ. Faithfulness has a powerful influence on others (Matthew 5:16). We must be willing to live in such a way that those around us are only influenced for good (1 Corinthians 8:19-23; Romans 14:19-23). If we are truly thankful for the faithfulness of others we will also be evangelistic

(Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; 2 Timothy 2:24) and we will have concern for our brethren who have fallen away (Luke 15).

"to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" - Christians are to be people of prayer (Matthew 21:13; Isaiah 56:7) and the Bible teaches us that our prayers should be addressed to the Father through Jesus Christ. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray He said, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven" (Luke 11:1-2). It is clear that our prayers are through Christ (John 14:13-14; 15:16; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1). Christians are blessed to have direct access to the Father by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:19; 4:16; John 16:20-23).

Verse 4

"heard of your faith in Christ Jesus" - Paul had heard of their faith because their faith had been demonstrated daily as they lived a righteous life (Romans 1:17; Habakkuk 2:4; Galatians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:3). The faith of the Colossians was working and active (James 2:17-20).

"your love" - (Galatians 5:22; 1 Peter 2:17; John 15:12-13; 1 Corinthians 16:14; 1 Thessalonians 1:3)

The word "love" in this verse is a translation of the Greek word AGAPĒ which is the highest form of Christian love (1 John 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; John 3:16). There are actually three different Greek words found in the New Testament which are sometimes used for love:

- AGAPĒ - a selfless, sacrificial love extended to all people.
- PHILEO - love between friends or companions, brotherly love.
- STORGE - the affection that naturally occurs between parents/children, husbands/wives and siblings.

The Greek language also included three other words sometimes used for love which are not found in the New Testament:

- EROS - a romantic love which represented the idea of sexual passion and desire.
- LUDUS - a playful love which would include the affection between children or young lovers (flirting and teasing).

- PRAGMA - the deep understanding love that developed between long-married couples who were willing to make compromises to help the relationship work (showing patience and tolerance).

"all the saints" - Their love for their brethren had also been seen by their actions (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:18; Revelation 3:19; 1 Peter 4:8; James 5:19-20). True love is both expressed and shown.

Verse 5

"hope" - (Proverbs 14:32; Hebrews 6:18-19). Notice their hope is in heaven (Ephesians 1:18; 1 Timothy 1:1; Hebrews 6:18; Hebrews 9:24; Acts 2; Revelation 3:21; Romans 8:24). Biblical hope includes desire, expectation and patient waiting (James 5:7).

"heard" - They had heard through the word (Romans 10:17; John 20:30-31). God's word is necessary for our salvation (1 Peter 1:22-23; John 3:1-8; John 6:63; James 1:21-22; Acts 20:32).

We see in this verse that "word," "truth" and "gospel" are linked together and spoken of as being one in the same (2 John 1:9; John 15:1-8, 8:31-32).

Verse 6

"has come to you" - Paul explains this to the Colossians to instill in them a sense of gratitude that the gospel had come to them also. The gospel had not been limited to the Jews. The good news of salvation was for all, Jew and Gentile alike (Mark 16:15; Acts 10:34-35).

"all the world" - The gospel was preached to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23; Acts 19:10, 19:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; Philippians 1:12; Romans 10:18).

"fruit" - The gospel produces fruit (Romans 7:4; John 15:1-8; 2 Peter 1:5-10; Galatians 5:21-22).

"grace of God in truth" - The word "grace" means unmerited favor.

Verse 7

"Epaphras" - Notice this individual is described by Paul in several ways. Paul calls him "our dear fellow servant" (Colossians 1:7), "a faithful

minister of Christ" (Colossians 1:7), "a bondservant of Christ" (Colossians 4:12) and "my fellow prisoner in Christ" (Philemon 1:23).

The phrase "fellow servant" is the English translation of the Greek word SUNDOULOS which means a co-slave or servant of the same master. The word "minister" is from the Greek word DIAKONOS which means one who carries out the commands of another (especially a master). It can be used to describe the servant of a king or a deacon in the church. The word "bondservant" (Colossians 4:12) is the English translation of the Greek word DOULOS which means a slave or bondman. This is used to describe one who gives himself up to another's will. It is one who is devoted to another without regard to one's own interests.

Verse 8

"love in the Spirit" - (Galatians 5:22). Obviously not all "love" is good (1 John 2:15-17). However, the love of the Colossians was "in the Spirit" (Mark 12:30; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 John 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; Matthew 5:43-48). Their love was not carnal or worldly, it was within the Holy Spirit's guidance (New Testament).

B. Prayer for the Colossians (1:9-12)

Verse 9

"do not cease to pray for you" - Paul was a man of prayer. He had continual love and concern for the brethren (1 Timothy 2:1; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

"may be filled with the knowledge of His will" - It is interesting that Paul not only prays that they may know God's will, but that they may be "filled" with the knowledge of His will (James 1:21-22; Ecclesiastes 12:13). We are filled with knowledge when we study and meditate upon God's word (Psalm 1:1-2; Acts 17:10-11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 3:18). There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom (James 1:5).

"in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" - The wisdom spoken of here is godly wisdom not the wisdom of the world (Colossians 3:16; James 3:13-18; Ephesians 5:17-18). The Pharisees had worldly wisdom. They knew how to deceive and manipulate and using these methods they were able to have Christ crucified. However, they did not have godly wisdom and could not understand spiritual things (Matthew 13:13-15). Each of us must be careful to always seek that wisdom which is from above. We must open our ears to spiritual truth (Luke 8:18; Matthew 7:7-8).

It is interesting to see in this one verse the words: knowledge, wisdom and understanding. These words are not used interchangeably. There is a difference in the way these three words are used. This difference is very important for our understanding of the text.

- Knowledge is the obtaining of the facts (Proverbs 9:10, Proverbs 18:15, Colossians 2:8, 1 Timothy 2:4).
- Understanding is the ability to acquire meaning and significance from the facts (Psalm 119:130, Proverbs 3:5-7, 18:2, Philippians 1:9-10).
- Wisdom is being able to know the right thing to do with an understanding of the facts in a given circumstance (Ecclesiastes 8:1, James 3:17).

Verse 10

"walk worthy of the Lord" - Often the Bible describes the Christian's life as a walk. The word "walk" emphasizes that action is required (Ephesians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 4:1; 1 John 2:6).

Notice some characteristics of the Christian's walk:

- New Life

Romans 6:3-4, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

- Faith

2 Corinthians 5:7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight"

- Spiritual

Galatians 5:16, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

- Love

Ephesians 5:2, "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."

- Caution

Ephesians 5:15, "See then that you walk circumspectly (*exactly, accurately, diligently*), not as fools but as wise"

- Christlikeness

1 John 2:6, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

"fruitful in every good work" - There are several passages which teach the importance of a Christians fruitfulness with good works (Matthew 7:15, 21; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9, 11; Romans 7:4; John 15:1-8; 2 Peter 1:5-10).

"increasing in the knowledge of God" - Knowledge is always an important aspect to our faithfulness and spiritual growth (Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 5:13; 2 Peter 3:18; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15).

Verse 11

"strengthened with all might" - The gospel provides strength (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Psalms 10:7-11).

Knowledge of God's word has great benefit. It produces faith (Romans 10:17), it equips us to overcome temptation (Psalm 119:11; Matthew 4:1-10), it builds us up and gives us an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 20:32) and it saves our souls (James 1:21).

Strength is needed so we can fulfill our responsibilities as a Christian (bear trials, resist temptations, discharge duties and live a life of faith).

"according to His glorious power" - Our God is all-powerful (Ephesians 1:19-23).

In this passage we find "strengthened" (DUNAMOŌ), "might" (DUNAMIS), and "power" (KRATOS). These words all convey the idea of power and strength.

"patience" - This is from the Greek word HUPOMONE which means steadfastness, constancy and endurance. This is having patience when confronted by certain circumstances. Someone once said, "Patience is not the ability to wait, it is how we act while we are waiting." We must not lose heart or courage when we face great trials, difficulties and hardships (Romans 5:3; 2 Corinthians 1:6).

"longsuffering" - This comes from MAKROTHUMIA which means patience, endurance, perseverance, forbearance and slowness in avenging wrongs. This is having patience when confronted by certain people. Christians must not allow themselves to be provoked to unrighteous anger.

"joy" - Followers of Christ should not allow the difficulties of life to cause them to show an attitude of gloom and discouragement. The Christian life is a life of joy! The world should see the joy in the Christian's life even when trials are faced.

There is a difference between having joy and being happy. Happiness comes by chance and is dependent on one's condition or circumstance (happenstance). However, joy is what Christians will experience. It is not tied to one's condition or circumstance.

Verse 12

"giving thanks" - There are several passages in the Psalms which emphasize the importance of our thanksgiving to God (Psalms 7:17; 9:1; 95:2-3; 100:1-5; 106:1; 107:1-9, 22; 118:1-7, 21, 28-29; 136:1). In the New Testament we also find several passages which emphasize the importance of giving thanks to God (2 Corinthians 4:15; 9:11-12; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 3:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:1; 4:4-5).

"to the Father" - The prayers of the Christians are to be directed to God the Father through Jesus Christ the mediator (1 Timothy 2:1-5).

"qualified us" - How had they been qualified? To find the answer it will help us to see what the Christians at Ephesus had been told (Ephesians 2:1-16). There is really no reason for the confusion in the religious world today concerning the issue of works (Ephesians 2:8-10). There is a difference between works of merit (Ephesians 2:9) and works of obedience (Ephesians 2:10). We are saved by God's grace and could never earn our

salvation. But the religious world does not seem to understand. One extreme says faith only and the other extreme says works only. The Bible is clear that neither extreme is correct. God's word teaches we are saved when faith and works combine (Galatians 5:6; James 2:18, 22). Today, we follow the example of Abraham by having an active, obedient, working faith (James 2:21-23). Even the prophets desired a greater understanding of this great plan of redemption (1 Peter 1:9-12).

"inheritance" - The inheritance we seek comes with our obedience to God's word (Acts 20:32) and by the resurrection of God's Son (1 Peter 1:3-5). Christians are adopted into the family of God becoming joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16-17).

"saints" - The word "saint" is an English translation of the Greek word HAGIOS which means consecrated, sanctified and set apart for a holy use. All Christians are saints (1 Peter 1:15-16).

"in the light" - The light shines brightly in the darkness (John 1:1-5, 8:12; Ephesians 5:7-13; 1 John 1:5-7).

C. Christ is the head of the church (1:13-18)

Verse 13

"delivered us" - Christians have been rescued (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 6:12). God's word often speaks of redemption. Jesus paid the ransom price for our release from the captivity to sin and its consequences (Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6). He was willing to give His life in exchange for ours. The Bible is clear that redemption is only possible through His blood (Colossians 1:14), that is, by His death (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 1:5).

"conveyed us into the kingdom" - We see from this verse that the kingdom (church) had already been established (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:6-8; 2:38, 41 and 47). These Colossians had been "conveyed" (transferred) into the kingdom. This would not be possible if the kingdom did not already exist.

Verse 14

"in whom we have redemption" - The word "redemption" is the English translation of the Greek word APOLUTRÖSIS which is defined as a release which takes place because a ransom is paid. Redemption is only found in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 John 5:11).

We find three points of redemption in the scriptures:

1. Something which was once possessed is lost (Matthew 18:3; Isaiah 59:1-2).
2. A ransom (price) must be paid to purchase it back (1 Peter 1:18-19; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
3. The captivity (power) is broken (Mark 3:27; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

"through His blood" - (Hebrews 9:22; Leviticus 17:11)

"the forgiveness of sins" - Sin separates us from our God (Isaiah 59:1-2). We needed someone to solve our sin problem (Jeremiah 3:25; Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21). We are blessed to have a God who delights in mercy and is willing to forgive us (Micah 7:18-19; Isaiah 1:18-20).

Verse 15

"image of the invisible God" - In Jesus we see God (John 14:8-11; 1:1, 14 and 18; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 1:1-3).

"firstborn over all creation" - This is NOT saying that Jesus is the first created being. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is God (John 1:1-3). In this passage, as well as Colossians 1:16, the Bible states that everything which was made was made through Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-2). If Jesus had been created (made) that statement would be false. Even Jesus made it clear that He is eternal when He said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:58). In Revelation Jesus explains, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). This is the same phrase attributed to God, the Father, in Revelation 4:8 and 21:6.

The word "firstborn" is emphasizing the position of Jesus. He is above everything and in all things He has preeminence. The emphasis is on His position, not the order of His birth. In many cultures we see the firstborn (oldest son) having special honors and privileges. It was common for the oldest son to receive the estate and title of his father upon his death. In the days of the patriarchs when the father died the firstborn son would become the officiating priest for the family. In this verse in Colossians we see that Christ occupied a place of preeminence similar to the usual distinctions

and honors of the firstborn. The text is not saying that, in all respects, he resembled the first-born in a family; nor does it say He was created. The illustration is only being used to emphasize His first position.

Verse 16

"For by Him all things were created" - (Isaiah 44:24; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2)

"All things were created through Him and for Him" - All things were made for Him. We were created to serve and glorify Him with our bodies and souls (John 12:26; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Isaiah 43:7; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Many people today are serving the creation not the creator (Matthew 6:24).

Verse 17

"And He is before all things" - (John 1:1, 14)

"in Him all things consist" - Christ upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). It is in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

Verse 18

"He is the head of the body, the church" - See Ephesians 1:21-23 for Paul's detailed discussion of the dominion of Christ (Matthew 28:18). Notice that the word "body" is simply another way to describe the "church." The Bible teaches there is only one church (1 Corinthians 12:20; Ephesians 4:4; Matthew 16:15-19). Christ is the one head of the one body. It would be a monstrosity to have a head with many bodies, or a body with many heads. Christ does not have many bodies (denominations).

"the firstborn from the dead" - Jesus was the first who was raised from the dead to never die again (Romans 1:4; 1 Peter 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 20). Others have been raised, but they faced death again.

"in all things He may have the preeminence" - This statement serves to summarize what Paul is teaching - Christ is preeminent, first ranked, supreme (Colossians 1:27; 2:10; 3:1-3; 3:11; 3:16-17).

D. The fullness of Christ (1:19-23)

Verse 19

"in Him all the fullness should dwell" - (Colossians 2:9; John 1:1, 14; Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 2:9-11). Jesus shares fully in the divine nature. For more information concerning this phrase please see the notes for Colossians 2:9.

Verse 20

"reconcile" - (Matthew 5:23-24; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:16; Hebrews 2:17)

"things on earth or things in heaven" - To reconcile the two would bring harmony between the things in heaven and earth (Ephesians 1:10).

"having made peace through the blood of His cross" - It is sin that separates us from our heavenly Father (Isaiah 59:1-2; Habakkuk 1:13) and it is only through the blood of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus that we can have peace with our God (Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:14). It is the blood of the Savior that provided a remedy for the problem of sin. The sacrifice of His blood took place at the cross (1 Corinthians 2:2). Therefore, those who were once enemies of God can now be at peace with the Father.

Verse 21

"once were alienated" - In the past, their wicked works had separated them from God (Ephesians 2:1-3, 4:17-19; Romans 6:17-18). They had been shut out from fellowship with God (Romans 11:22).

"enemies in your mind by wicked works" - We notice in this verse the destructive nature of those "wicked works" which change the way we think (Romans 1:21-22, 28; Mark 7:18-23). Those things we think in our minds will eventually be seen in our actions. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."

"He has reconciled" - They had been reconciled to God by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (verse 22). Christians are reconciled so they may teach others who can be reconciled as well (2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Ephesians 2:1-7).

Verse 22

"in the body of His flesh through death" - This shows to us the importance of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2).

"to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach" - They had been cleansed by the blood of Christ, however after the cleansing of past sins they were expected to maintain lives of holiness (1 Peter 1:13-16). Christians will be held accountable for the choices they make in this life (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) We should fear God with complete reverence and respect (Psalm 76:7, 11; 89:7; Hebrews 10:31; Luke 12:5). Our reverence for God should motivate us to live holy lives (1 Peter 2:9-12; Romans 12:1-2).

Verse 23

"if" - Being presented "holy, and blameless, and above reproach" is conditional on their obedience. To obtain the desired result the conditions must be met (John 8:31).

"continue in the faith" - The implication to this is: if they do not continue in the faith they will not be presented holy, blameless and above reproach. They would be lost. The key is to continue in faithfulness until the end (1 Corinthians 15:58; Matthew 10:22; Galatians 6:9; Luke 8:11-15).

"not moved away from the hope of the gospel" - Falling from their salvation is shown to be a real possibility and danger to avoid (1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Peter 3:17; 1 Corinthians 9:26-27; Galatians 5:4). It is only through the gospel that man has any hope (1 Timothy 1:1; 1 Peter 1:3).

"which you heard" - The value of the gospel only comes when it is heard and obeyed. This shows to us the importance of preaching and evangelizing (Romans 10:14-17).

"which was preached to every creature under heaven" - The good news of the gospel had spread to the known world (Colossians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; Romans 10:18).

"I, Paul, became a minister" - Paul is not using the term "minister" to describe an exalted office, title or position. The word "minister" actually means servant. Religious leaders should reject titles like Rabbi, Father, Apostle, Reverend, Very Reverend, Right Reverend, Most Reverend, etc. Jesus made it clear we are not to exalt ourselves with such designations (Matthew 23:8-12) The word "Reverend" is used only once in the Bible

(KJV) where it describes God (Psalm 111:9). It is not appropriate to apply this to men. All such self-glorifying, religious titles should be avoided (Matthew 11:29; 20:27).

E. Paul's suffering for the church (1:24-29)

Verse 24

"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you" - Suffering and hardships are a part of every Christian's life (Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12). Suffering can either help (James 1:2-3) or hinder (Ephesians 3:13). We can rejoice in the trials and hardships we face when we use them for our own growth (Acts 5:40-41; Philippians 4:4).

"what is lacking" - He does not mean there was anything lacking in the sufferings of Christ, but that there was still more suffering on his part which he would endure for the church (Acts 9:15-16; 1 Peter 4:12-16).

Verse 25

"stewardship from God" - The word "stewardship" is a translation of the Greek word OIKONOMIA which means to manage or administer. Here it refers to the stewardship committed to him "to fulfill the word of God" (Galatians 2:7; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 9:17-18).

Verse 26

"mystery" - The mystery was concealed, but now it has been revealed. Now they knew "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:3-6).

Verse 27

"riches" - The word "riches" is a translation of the Greek word PLOUTOS which is defined as wealth, abundance or that which is valuable (Ephesians 1:18).

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" - This is the culmination of Paul's discussion concerning the mystery. The Gentiles would be united with the Jews to have Christ, the hope of glory, dwelling within them (Galatians 3:26-29).

Verse 28

"Him we preach" - We see from this verse that the preaching of Christ involves both warning and teaching (Acts 8:5, 12, 35-36). When Christ is fully preached the lesson will not leave out the doctrine of Christ.

"warning every man" - In Ezekiel 3 and 33 we see the importance of giving warning to others about approaching danger. 2 Corinthians 5:11 says, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." As Peter was concluding his sermon in Acts 2 the text states, "And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation'" (Acts 2:40).

"teaching every man in all wisdom" - We cannot overestimate the importance of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 2:6-20). Those things which are learned should be taught to others (2 Timothy 2:2; Matthew 28:18-20).

"perfect in Christ Jesus" - Our perfection (completeness) can only be found in Jesus through the teaching found in the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:2; Psalms 119:9-16). The key phrase in this verse is "in Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

Verse 29

"to this end" - The work Paul did was to bring the hope of the gospel to the world. There is work to do if we are to have perfection (completeness) in Christ (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12-13).

"striving" - In this we see the zeal Paul had to reach the lost with the soul saving good news of salvation which is found in Christ. Who would dare compare their dedication to the dedication of Paul (2 Corinthians 11:23-27)?

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION

1. In the second chapter Paul expresses his concern for the Colossian brethren and again emphasizes the preeminence of Christ which had come under attack.
2. Paul also provides a warning to avoid those things which would dishonor Jesus.
3. The main emphasis for this chapter is the preeminence of Christ.

DISCUSSION

F. Paul's concern for the brethren (2:1-8)

Verse 1

"great conflict I have for you" - The word "conflict" is translated from the Greek word AGŌN which was used to describe the assembly of the Greeks at their "Olympic" games. Generally, the word would denote any struggle or contest for a prize (a battle). This is Paul expressing his care and concern for their spiritual condition (2 Corinthians 11:24-28; Romans 1:9-12).

"Laodicea" - Laodicea was located a short distance (10 miles) upstream (Lycus River) from Colossae (Colossians 4:16; Revelation 3:14-22).

"as many as have not seen my face" - This phrase seems to imply that Paul had not seen the Colossians and therefore, was not the one who had established the congregation. For more information concerning this please see the "History of the Congregation" in the introduction.

Verse 2

"that their hearts may be encouraged" (comforted) - Paul understood how much they needed encouragement and comfort considering the trials they faced (2 Timothy 3:12; Philippians 1:29). The comfort he could provide to them would come from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." Christians do not live in anxiety (Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7) because they have the greatest comfort which comes from God (Psalms 46:1).

"knit together" - This phrase is a translation of the Greek word *SUMBIBAZŌ* which means to walk together (Amos 3:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Genesis 5:22-24; 6:9). We also notice that the element which knits them together is love (John 15:12-13; 1 Corinthians 16:14; 1 Peter 1:22). In the King James Version the word love was often translated as charity. The translators did this to emphasize that the love of the Bible is a love that requires action (1 John 3:18).

"understanding" - It is only through the understanding of the truth ("knowledge") that they could obtain that wealth of full assurance. We can be assured of our faith when we understand the word of God (Romans 10:17).

"knowledge of the mystery" - This calls for a proper knowledge and acceptance of the mystery (the Jews and Gentiles united in the Lord's church, Colossians 1:26). This also calls for the ability to recognize the difference between truth and error (Hebrews 5:12-14; 2 John 1:9-11).

Verse 3

"in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" - God ("both of the Father and of Christ") is the source of wisdom and knowledge (Proverbs 2:6; Job 12:13; Matthew 7:24). All spiritual blessings are found in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). We must appreciate the value of God's word and what it can accomplish if it is obeyed (James 1:21; Acts 20:32; Romans 1:16).

- Knowledge comes from a study of God's word (Proverbs 2:1-5).
- Wisdom is the correct application of that knowledge (Job 12:12).

Verse 4

"deceive you with persuasive words" - We must avoid those who will try to lead us away from the truth with their deceptive words (Romans 16:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:10; 2 Peter 2:3).

Verse 5

"absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit" - Paul was separated from them physically, but his mind was constantly thinking about the spiritual well-being of his brethren (2 Corinthians 11:24-28).

"rejoicing to see" - Paul was overjoyed to see their "good order" (orderly walk and behavior, which reflected the Gospel of Christ - 2 Thessalonians 3:6) and "steadfastness" (1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10).

Verse 6

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus" - How had they received Christ? They had "received Christ" when they obeyed the things they had been "taught" (Colossians 2:7) concerning the gospel's plan for salvation. God's plan for man's salvation has two parts.

God's Part:

1. Great love for man (John 3:16)
2. Giving His Son, Jesus Christ, as the Savior (Luke 19:10)
3. The Gospel as "the power" unto salvation (Romans 1:16)
4. He provided atonement (forgiveness of sins) by the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9)

Man's Part:

1. Hear the Gospel (Romans 10:17, John 8:32)
2. Believe the Gospel (Hebrews 11:6, John 20:31)
3. Repent of past sins (Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30)
4. Confess faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:10, Matthew 10:32)
5. Be Baptized (Galatians 3:27, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38)
6. Be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10)

"so walk in Him" - They were commanded to continue their Christian journey being steadfast in the faith (1 John 1:7; Ephesians 4:17-19).

Verse 7

"rooted and built up in Him" - The parable of the talents shows the importance of roots (Luke 8:11-15). When the Colossians heard they received the word with joy. Paul now encourages them to take root so they will grow and be spiritually prosperous (Psalm 1:1-3).

"established in the faith" - The word "established" is from the Greek word BEBAIOŌ which comes from the root word BEBAIOS which means to be stable, firm, steadfast and sure (Romans 16:25; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; 3:3; James 5:8; 1 Peter 5:10).

Paul would often encourage Christians to remain faithful. In verse 16-23 of this chapter he gave warnings concerning the dangers

they must face. He taught how the word (John 8:31-32) and love (1 Corinthians 16:14; Romans 12:9-10) had power to keep them faithful.

"as you have been taught" - We see that faith comes by being taught (Romans 10:17; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2).

"abounding in it with thanksgiving" - They are told to thrive in the faith with an attitude of thanksgiving (1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14).

Verse 8

"Beware" - We often find two different Greek words which are translated as "beware" (PROSECHŌ and BLEPŌ). PROSECHŌ is defined as to pay attention to or to be cautious about (Matthew 7:15; 10:17; 16:6). BLEPŌ is defined as to look at, behold, perceive or take heed (Mark 8:15; Mark 12:38; Philippians 3:2). In Colossians 2:8 the Greek word translated as "beware" is BLEPŌ.

"cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit" - The word "cheat" is a translation of the Greek word SULAGŌGEŌ which means to lead away, to take as a captive or slave. In the King James Version it is translated "spoil" as in the spoils of war.

David Lipscomb - noted minister, editor, and educator (1831-1917) is reported to have said, "All the philosophies of men, all the deceits of human wisdom, and all the rudiments of the world discovered by human reason spoil men, ruin their souls, lead them to everlasting death by leading them away from God and His salvation." [Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *A Review of the New Versions* (Fort Worth, Texas: Foy E. Wallace Jr. Publications, 1973), p. 448.]

The word "philosophy" is a translation of the Greek word PHILOSOPHIA which means the love and pursuit of wisdom. Does this mean the pursuit of wisdom is a bad thing? No, obviously this is referring to earthly wisdom (James 3:13-18; Proverbs 1:2; 2:4).

"deceit" - This means to trick, cheat or delude.

"the tradition of men" - Traditions in and of themselves are not bad (2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6). The problem is in when men make their traditions into law (Mark 7:3).

"principles of the world" - This is the same Greek word which is found in Galatians 4:3 and is defined as elements. Notice how this same

expression is used in Colossians 2:20. From the context we see that this is referring to the ceremonial laws of the Jews.

"and not according to Christ" - This is the key to understanding this section of scripture. Paul was warning them to not leave the doctrine of Christ for the traditions of men and principles set forth in Judaism.

III. The Preeminence of Christ under Attack (2:9–2:23)

A. The preeminence of Christ restated (2:9-15)

Verse 9

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" - (Colossians 1:19). Jesus shares fully in the divine nature. He became flesh to live as a man (John 1:1-3, 14). In the Bible the word Godhead is used three times in the KJV (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9) and twice in the NKJV (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). Other versions often substitute the words Deity, Divine, Divine Being, Nature or Divine Nature for Godhead in these verses. Nearly all versions including KJV use Divine Nature in 2 Peter 1:4. Godhead means three distinct Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in one distinct God. We must be careful to not view the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as "attributes" of God. Each of the three Persons in the Godhead is called God. The three Persons in the Godhead are not attributes of God, but they each have ALL the attributes of God. The Bible tells us there is only one God, and yet there is distinctly God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit. There are several verses where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all mentioned in one passage (Matthew 28:19; John 6:62-65; 1 Peter 1:2). What can we conclude from these verses? There is only one essence of God (Deity), but there are three Persons within that essence. The Godhead means three distinct Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in one distinct God.

"bodily" - This refers to the human form Jesus took upon Himself while living on this earth (Philippians 2:5-8; John 14:9-11). He still had all the attributes of deity while human (Hebrews 1:3).

Verse 10

"complete in Him" - There is nothing lacking "in" Him (John 8:36; 4:14; Philippians 4:19).

"head of all principality and power" - Once again Paul reminds the Colossians of the preeminence of Christ (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:15-

18). How important is it today for us to recognize that Christ is the head? What problems will we avoid when we submit to His authority and rule?

Verse 11

"circumcision made without hands" - This is a spiritual circumcision as opposed to a physical operation (Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 2:7). In a spiritual sense it refers to the separation of sins from our life by the obedience to the Gospel (Romans 6:1-6). The original institution of circumcision called for the operation to take place on the eighth day after the birth of the child (Genesis 17:12). However, what we find for spiritual circumcision is different (Luke 9:23; Hebrews 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-21).

"Putting off the body of the sins" - (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Verse 12

"buried with Him in baptism" - (Romans 6:3-4)

"you also were raised" - (Romans 6:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

"through faith in the working of God" - God the Father, who raised Christ from the dead (Romans 1:4; Ephesians 1:20; 1 Peter 1:3-5), washes our sins away with the blood of Christ when in obedient faith we submit to be baptized (Matthew 26:28; Acts 2:38; Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16). Baptism is a necessary part of God's plan for our salvation (Galatians 3:27; Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16). We cannot be raised if we are not first buried (Romans 6:3-4).

Verse 13

"dead in your trespasses" - The word "trespasses" is another way of saying "sins" (1 Timothy 5:6; Revelation 3:1). Sin causes spiritual death (Luke 15:24; Romans 6:23) which separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

"uncircumcision of your flesh" - They were spiritually uncircumcised during that time since their sins had not been cut off.

"made alive" - Once being dead in sin the sinner is made alive through the sacrifice of Christ (John 5:21; Romans 4:17; John 10:10; 14:6).

David Lipscomb wrote, "The same mighty power that was laid upon the body of the dead Christ, and raised Him from the dead to the highest seat at the right hand of God, is now laid upon those who were dead in trespasses and sins, to share by faith the glories of

eternal life" (*A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, Ephesians Philippians, Colossians, Page 38*).

"having forgiven you" - (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Micah 7:18-19; Isaiah 1:18)

Verse 14

"having wiped out" - This is a translation of the Greek word EXALEIPHŌ which means to obliterate, erase and blot out.

"handwriting of requirements" - This refers to the old law (Ephesians 2:15). The enforcement of the old law had been wiped out because it could not deal with man's limitations (Romans 7; Hebrews 10:4). It is called "handwriting" because God first wrote it with His own fingers on the stone (Exodus 31:18). The old law could point to sin, and warn against sin, but it could not provide the eternal solution for sin.

"which was contrary to us" - The old law clearly demonstrated the problem, but it did not contain the complete remedy (Galatians 3:19; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11).

"nailed it to the cross" - The sacrifice of Jesus put an end to the enforcement of the old law (Acts 15:10-11; Galatians 3:10; Romans 6:14; 7:4; Galatians 3:19-25; Hebrews 8:6-13). From the cross Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30; Hebrews 10:10).

Verse 15

"Having disarmed principalities and powers" - (Romans 8:38; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:10).

"made a public spectacle of them" - Jesus was crucified in the view of the world (John 12:32-33).

"triumphing over them in it" - The cross which was seen by many to be His defeat was actually His victory as He triumphed over it in His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Romans 1:4). It was a complete conquest (John 12:30-32; Titus 2:14; Matthew 12:29; 25:41; Hebrews 2:14).

B. Warnings on avoiding things which dishonor Christ (2:16-23)

Verse 16

"let no one judge you" - God has provided to us a standard of judgment (John 12:48; John 7:24; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8). The old law, which included dietary restrictions, feast days and holy days, is no longer the standard.

"in food or in drink" - All dietary restrictions found in the old law were abolished at the cross (1 Corinthians 8:1; Romans 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:23-25).

"sabbaths" - The Sabbath was not observed in the days of the Patriarchs. It was incorporated into the Mosaic system (Exodus 20:8-11). It is not a part of Christ's covenant (New Testament).

Notice 3 important points concerning the Sabbath:

1. The Sabbath did not apply to anyone prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:2-3). Nowhere in the Bible will you find even a hint that anyone observed the Sabbath from the time of Adam to the days of Moses.
2. The purpose of the Sabbath was a sign between God and the nation of Israel (Exodus 31:16-17). The Sabbath was FOR Israel.
3. The Sabbath was instituted to remind Israel how God delivered them from their Egyptian bondage (Deuteronomy 5:15). This was a special observance between God and Israel. It has nothing to do with following the law of Christ today (1 Corinthians 9:21).

Verse 17

"shadow of things to come" - (Hebrews 10:1; Galatians 3:24-25)

"the substance is of Christ" - (Matthew 26:28 versus Hebrews 8:5; 10:4)

The author, E.M. Zerr (1877-1960), wrote: "The lexicon explains the original for shadow to mean, 'an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object,' and body is from SOMA, which the same lexicon of Thayer defines as, 'the thing itself which casts the shadow.' The ordinances of the Mosaic law were types or shadows of those to be given through Christ, and that is the reason He is said to be the body that casts the shadow. By insisting on the ordinances of the old law, the Judaizers were preferring the shadow

of something to the thing itself" (*Zerr Bible Commentary Vol. 6, 1 Corinthians - Revelation*, Page 138).

Verse 18

"Let no one cheat you of your reward" - (Colossians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 11:3)

"false humility and worship of angels" - There is a stark difference between true humility and false (pretended) humility (Philippians 1:3-4; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5-6; Obadiah 3; Proverbs 16:18).

The worship of angels is strictly forbidden in the scriptures (Matthew 4:14; Hebrews 1:5; Revelation 19:10).

Kenneth Wuest wrote, "The worship of angels involved a show of humility, an affectation of superior reverence for God, as shown in the reluctance to attempt to approach God otherwise than indirectly: in its assumption that humanity, debased by the contact with matter, must reach after God through successive grades of intermediate beings" (*Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament for the English Reader - Volume One*, Page 211).

"things which he has not seen" - In other words, "They really don't know what they are talking about."

"puffed up by his fleshly mind" - This shows that the humility was really false. These ceremonies were invented by men who claimed this outward show was pleasing to the angels. However, the imaginary importance of these things was simply a creation of their own carnal puffed up minds.

Verse 19

"not holding fast to the Head" - The "Head" is Christ the center of all authority (Colossians 1:18; 2:10). These false teachers had no authority for the things they taught. They had abandoned the authority of Christ.

"grows with the increase that is from God" - The proper control and growth of the body (church) can only occur when it is taking direction from the head (Ephesians 1:1-14, 22-23).

Verse 20

"if you died with Christ" - Since (Colossians 2:12-13) they had been released from their obligation to the ordinances of the old law Paul asks

why would they still subject themselves to the former regulations as if they were still binding on them (Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 4:10; 2 Timothy 2:11; Galatians 2:14-16).

Verse 21

"Do not touch...taste...handle" - This verse is not a command of Paul. He is using these as examples of human ordinances from which they had been made free through Christ (Galatians 4:8-10; Romans 7:5; Galatians 3:3).

Verse 22

"according to the commandments and doctrines of men" - Why do you subject yourselves to the commandments and doctrines of men? The point being that these teachings were from men not Christ.

James Burton Coffman wrote, "Again reference is made to the great Magna Carta of the Christian religion in the Gospel of Matthew, where the Savior equated human traditions with the precepts of men saying, 'In vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men'" (*Coffman's Commentaries on the Bible, Colossians 2*). (Matthew 15:8-9; Mark 7:14-19)

Verse 23

"an appearance of wisdom" - This teaching was merely a show of wisdom and not the true wisdom which is from above (James 3:13-18).

"self-imposed religion" - In the King James Version we find the phrase "will worship" to show that these practices were not according to God's will, but following one's own will.

"humility and neglect of the body" - This is an allusion to the misguided practice of "asceticism" which is defined as the belief that a person can obtain an exalted spiritual and moral state by practicing rigorous self-denial, extreme abstinence and austerity.

CHAPTER THREE

INTRODUCTION

1. In the third chapter Paul explains how Christians can experience the preeminence of Christ in their life.
2. Paul encourages them to seek things above and to put on the new man.
3. He also begins to address the preeminence of Christ in the home.

DISCUSSION

IV. The Preeminence of Christ Experienced (3:1-4:6)

A. Seeking those things above (3:1-4)

Verse 1

"If then you were raised with Christ" - The word "if" (better translated as "since") does not imply any doubt as to their condition (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3-4; Ephesians 2:1-6).

Christians are dead to the world (Colossians 2:11) and alive in Christ (Romans 6:17-18). Christians do not have their own life, because their life is the life of Christ (Philippians 1:21; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:6).

"seek those things which are above" - The "things which are above" are highlighted in the first two verses of this chapter as well as many other New Testament passages (Colossians 3:2; Philippians 3:20; Matthew 6:19-24)

"where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Acts 2:30; Revelation 3:21; Acts 7:55-56).

Verse 2

"Set your mind on things above" - The mind of the Christian should be filled with the right thoughts (Philippians 4:8; Proverbs 4:23; Romans 12:2).

"not on things on the earth" - The vain, fleeting things of this world must not distract us from our faithfulness and service to Christ (1 John 2:15; James 4:4; John 15:19).

Verse 3

"For you died" - When they obeyed God's plan of salvation they put to death their old life of sin and were risen alive in Christ (John 12:24-25; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21). The blessings of salvation bring the responsibilities of obedience.

"your life is hidden with Christ" - It is hidden like a treasure is hidden (2 Timothy 1:12). We do not hide our faith (Matthew 10:32-33).

Verse 4

"Christ who is our life" - Paul explains to the Colossians that their life is hid in Christ (John 1:4; Romans 6:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 2:10-11).

"will appear" - (Acts 1:11; Revelation 22:20; 2 Peter 3:9-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9)

"Then you also will appear with Him in glory" - (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Romans 8:18)

B. Putting on the new man (3:5-11)

Verse 5

"put to death" - (Galatians 5:24)

"fornication" - (Greek - PORNEIA): illicit sexual intercourse; often associated with pagan idolatry (Galatians 5:19).

"uncleanness" - (Greek - AKATHARSIA): the impurity of lustful, luxurious, licentious living; morally unclean (Ephesians 4:19).

"passion" - (Greek - PATHOS): an affection of the mind, a passionate desire (Romans 1:26; 1 Thessalonians 4:5).

"evil desire" - (Greek - EPITHUMIA): a longing, desire or lust for what is forbidden (Romans 7:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:5).

"covetousness, which is idolatry" - (Greek - PLEONEXIA): a greedy desire to have more (Ephesians 5:3; Luke 12:15-21; 1 Timothy 6:6-18).

Verse 6

"the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience" - God's word warns of the punishment which is to come to those who disobey (Romans 1:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 6:16-17; 11:22). This one verse is enough to prove that the theory of predestination is wrong. The wrath of God comes only on people who are guilty. God does not arbitrarily condemn some and approve others regardless of their obedience.

Verse 7

"in which you yourselves once walked" - Paul reminds the Colossians that they were once living in sin but are now disciples of Christ, having been baptized into Him. The words "walked" and "lived" in this verse are used in the same way. It shows us that our walk is classified by how we live (Ephesians 2:1-3; Ephesians 5:8; Titus 3:3; Amos 3:3).

"when you lived in them" - There are some who teach that it is not possible to live in sin. They use this argument in an effort to justify those who continue to live in an unauthorized marriage. However, Paul makes it clear that it is possible to live in fornication (Colossians 3:5). An adulterous marriage is an ongoing sin which requires not only repentance, but also leaving the unauthorized relationship.

Verse 8

"put off all these" - The things mentioned previously as well as the sins mentioned in this verse. This would include all sins.

"anger" - (Greek - ORGE): indignation, vengeance

"wrath" - (Greek - THUMOS): This is also indignation, but with an added degree of fierceness.

"malice" - (Greek - KAKIA): This word means ill-will, desire to injure, wickedness, depravity. This is a wickedness that is not ashamed to break laws.

"blasphemy" - (Greek - BLASPHEMIA) - This would be evil speaking, railing against that which is holy (Ephesians 4:31).

"filthy language" - (Greek - AISCHROLOGIA) This is vile conversation, foul speaking, low and obscene speech.

Verse 9

"Do not lie to one another" - Their lives were to be lived as examples of truth (John 8:44; Revelation 21:8; Ephesians 4:25).

"since you have put off the old man" - The "old man" is a figurative description of the kind of life the Colossians had lived in the past. They had put off their lives of sin when they obeyed the gospel (Romans 6:6; Galatians 5:17; 1 John 2:15-17; Hebrews 11:25; Revelation 12:9).

Verse 10

"put on the new man" - The actions of a new man (a righteous life) are prompted by a new mind (Matthew 15:19).

"renewed in knowledge" - If there is no knowledge of the truth there can be no renewal and no understanding of what is right (Ephesians 4:18, 20-21; Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 4:8).

"image of Him" - The new man is modeled after the divine pattern of the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 12:1-2; Genesis 1:26-27; 1 Peter 2:21).

Verse 11

"where there is neither Greek nor Jew" - There is no prejudice with God (Romans 2:11; Acts 10:23). All are equal in Christ (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13-16).

"circumcised nor uncircumcised" - (Galatians 5:6)

"barbarian" - a foreigner

"Scythian" - This is used to designate a class of people considered by many in that day to be below average in culture and intelligence.

"slave nor free" - (Colossians 3:22-4:1)

"Christ is all and in all" - We again see a reference to the preeminence of Jesus.

C. Adding the essentials of a Christian character (3:12-17)

Verse 12

"elect of God" - (Greek - EKLEGO) - to pick out, to single out to choose. God has made a choice that the obedient ones will be saved.

There are some who teach that God arbitrarily chooses (unconditional election) those individuals who will be saved and those individuals who will be lost. However, notice these 4 points from the scriptures which prove unconditional election is not biblical:

1. God gives mankind freedom to choose. We see this from the beginning with Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:16-17). Their choice was clear -- obey and live or disobey and die. Mankind has always had the freedom of choice (Joshua 24:15; Psalm 119:30; Luke 10:42; Revelation 22:17).
2. God is impartial. He is no respecter of persons (2 Chronicles 19:7; Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11; 1 Peter 1:17). If unconditional election is true God would be guilty of indiscriminately condemning some while arbitrarily favoring others. If God were to do that He would violate His own nature (Psalm 89:14). God gives everyone the opportunity for eternal life (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).
3. Salvation is not solely dependent on God. The opportunity of salvation is certainly dependent on Him (Ephesians 2:4-10), but the response to salvation is dependent on man (Revelation 22:17; Philippians 2:12). God placed upon man the responsibility of obeying the requirements for salvation (1 Corinthians 2:7-8; 2 Timothy 1:9-10). Man must obey God's plan for salvation in order to receive the benefits of it (1 Peter 4:17). God has not arbitrarily doomed individuals without giving them a chance for eternal life.
4. If unconditional election were true there would be no reason to evangelize (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Why would we be told so many times in the scriptures to teach the world if a person's status in relation to salvation or condemnation could not be changed? It would do no good to warn the lost if they had not control over their spiritual condition (Matthew 3:7). Christ's invitation for salvation to the world is universal (Matthew 11:28-30; Revelation 22:17). Why would Jesus plead with people to do the impossible?

"holy" - (1 Peter 1:13-16; Colossians 1:2)

"beloved" - (John 3:16; Romans 5:8-9)

"put on" - (Greek - ENDUNO) - in the sense of sinking into a garment, to envelope in, clothe with. To follow Christ we must not only eliminate sin, but we must also add to our lives those things which are good (Luke 11:24-26).

"tender mercies" - This would be a heart which is benevolent, compassionate and full of pity for others (Matthew 5:7; James 2:13; Ephesians 2:4; Micah 7:18).

"kindness" - (Greek - CHRESTOTES) - This word is defined as moral excellence (in character or demeanor), gentleness, goodness. Christians should show to others the same kindness that they have received from God (Jonah 4:2; Ephesians 2:7; Titus 3:4; 2 Peter 1:5-7).

"humility" - (James 4:10; Philippians 2:1-8; Obadiah 1:3; Proverbs 16:18)

"meekness" - (Greek - PRAOTES) - bridled or controlled power (Matthew 5:5; Matthew 11:28-29)

"longsuffering" - (Greek - MAKROTHUMIA) - forbearance, fortitude, patience

Verse 13

"bearing with one another" - (Greek - ANECHO) - This word means to hold up, to bear with or to endure (Ephesians 4:2). When Christians bear with one another unity in the church is encouraged. We should always demonstrate attitudes of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance and most importantly love (Colossians 2:2; Romans 12:10; John 13:35; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17).

"forgiving one another" - (Matthew 6:12-15; 18:21-22; Jonah 4:2)

"if anyone has a complaint against another" - Problems always seem to occur when people are involved. Sometimes the disagreement is over a matter of opinion (Acts 15:39-41) and sometimes it is over a matter of doctrine (1 Corinthians 5 and Galatians 2).

"even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" - What do we see in the example of Christ (Luke 23:34; Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:9)? He was willing and

eager to forgive those who repented. However, without repentance there can be no forgiveness. Christians should never hold a grudge. Like Christ, they should be willing and eager to forgive those who repent.

Verse 14

"above all of these... put on love" - Christians should "walk in love" (Ephesians 5:2). True demonstrated love requires action (1 Corinthians 16:14; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 John 3:17-18; John 14:15; Revelation 3:19). Not only did Christ love, but He also gave (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 8:9; John 13:34; Romans 13:8; 1 Corinthians 13). If we are not careful we could lose our love (Revelation 2:1-5).

"bond of perfection" - Perfection comes from the Greek word TELEIOTES which is defined as the state of completeness. We cannot be complete in our Christianity without putting on love. Love will make a perfect (complete) bond between Christians (Ephesians 4:3).

Verse 15

"peace" - (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:77-79). Children of God should have peace ruling in their hearts. Our God is a God of peace (Romans 15:33; 16:20; Hebrews 13:20; Philippians 4:7, 9; Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 2:14-17). His message of salvation is a message of peace (Acts 10:36; Romans 10:15).

"you were called" - They had been called by the gospel of peace (Romans 10:15) which continues to call men today (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

"in one body" - The one body is the one church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:20; Matthew 16:18)

"And be thankful" - (Psalm 75:1; Philippians 4:6; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 15:57)

Verse 16

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" - Christ's word should find a dwelling place (home) in the heart of the Christian (John 12:48; Acts 20:28; James 1:21; Romans 1:16; 10:17; Psalms 1:2; Psalms 119:9, 11).

"in all wisdom" - Following the word of Christ will make one truly wise (1 Corinthians 1:20-21; James 3:13-18).

"teaching and admonishing one another" - This requires reciprocal action (Ephesians 5:19).

Elisha G. Sewell, former editor of *The Gospel Advocate*, said: "The members of the church themselves and for themselves are the ones that are required to sing, and they cannot hand this duty over to a choir..."

John Chrysostom (349-407 AD) said, "It was the ancient custom, as it still is with us, for all to come together and unitedly join in singing. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, male and female, bond and free, all join in one song. All worldly distinctions here cease, and the whole congregation forms one general chorus."

"psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" - Some commentators attempt to make significant distinctions between psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, but there is actually little difference of meaning in these terms. The Septuagint (earliest Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew) uses these terms interchangeably and with much overlap, as do the ancient historians Philo and Josephus.

Some try to use the Greek word PSALMOS which is translated as "psalms" in this verse as proof that we are authorized to use mechanical instruments of music in our worship to God. The root of PSALMOS is the word PSALLŌ which is defined as "to twitch or twang, that is, to play on a stringed instrument" (*Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionary of the Bible*). However, the Bible clearly designates which instrument we are to use when we sing. In Ephesians 5:19 Paul said, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Notice the instrument we are required to use as we sing is the human heart.

"with grace in your hearts to the Lord" - Our worship is a deliberate act which begins in our minds and hearts and then is expressed in our actions (John 4:24; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Amos 5:21-27).

Notice four points concerning the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship:

1. **The use of mechanical instruments of music for worship is not authorized in the New Testament.** As we study the New Testament we see that early Christians were taught to sing (not play) in their worship to God. Time and time again the music mentioned in the New Testament specifies singing

(Matthew 26.30; Mark 14.26; Acts 16.25; Romans 15.9; 1 Corinthians 14.15; Ephesians 5.19; Colossians 3.16; Hebrews 2.12; James 5.13). There are three passages in Revelation where music is mentioned, but in each case it is obviously being used in a symbolic way. For example, in Revelation 14:2 (ESV) we find, "And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps." Since, the New Testament uses the specific word "sing" rather than the general term "music" we are limited to doing only what the word "sing" allows (1 Corinthians 4:6; John 4:24; 2 John 1:9).

2. **Mechanical instruments of music were never used by the New Testament church.** Bible scholars and historians from every religious group and denomination agree that there was a complete absence of any mechanical instruments of music being used by the New Testament church. Noted scholar, Emil Nauman, wrote, "There can be no doubt that originally the music of the divine service was everywhere entirely of a vocal nature" (The History of Music, Volume I, page 177). The use of mechanical instruments of music was not practiced in the early church. The first century church, guided by the inspired apostles, did not use mechanical instruments of music in worship. This is significant when we consider that instruments were available and commonly used in the worship of the old law by the command of David (2 Chronicles 29:25). However, under the law of Christ we find the early church sang psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.
3. **The use of mechanical instruments of music in worship was not introduced until many years later.** The evidence is that organs were first introduced into "some of the churches of Western Europe, about 670, but the earliest trustworthy account is that of the one sent as a present by the Greek emperor, Constantine Copronymus, to Pepin, king of the Franks, in 755" (The American Cyclopaedia, Volume 12, page 688). It is interesting that when the Reformation first started in Europe, one of the first abuses denounced by the reformers was the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship. Many congregations quickly made three changes in their places of worship: (1) altars were changed to communion tables, (2) religious statues were taken down, and (3) organs were taken out. Martin Luther called the

organ "an ensign of Baal." John Calvin said that musical instruments in worship were "no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of other shadows of the law." John Knox urged that "plain singing of psalms unaccompanied by instrumental music" be restored in worship. John Wesley was adamantly opposed to the use of instruments in the worship service. Charles Spurgeon would not allow instrumental music where he preached each week. He said, "I would as soon pray to God with machinery as sing to God with machinery."

4. **If PSALLŌ includes the use of mechanical instruments of music, then all members of the congregation would be required to play.** This verse is a command! The brethren must teach and admonish "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16). Teaching "one another" requires all to be involved. This must be done just as they must let the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom.

Verse 17

"whatever you do in word or deed" - Words and deeds both originate in the human heart (Mark 7:15; Luke 6:43-45; Proverbs 23:7; Philippians 4:8; Psalm 1:2).

"word" - (Matthew 12:34-37; Psalm 19:14; James 3)

"deed" - (Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12; Acts 10:38; James 4:17)

"do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" - "In the name of" means "by the authority of." Jesus Christ, as the Preeminent One, has all authority (Matthew 28:18-19; Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Therefore, the conduct of the Christian must be guided by the authority of the Lord Jesus. This requires true obedience, not merely giving "lip service" to His name (Matthew 7:21-23). Since, the authority of Christ is found in the New Testament, a Christian has no right to implement any thought, word or deed which is not authorized by that sacred document.

The Bible is the all sufficient, verbally and plenarily (complete in all respects) inspired word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Everything it contains is true (Hebrews 6:18). Today everyone everywhere is answerable to the New Testament.

The New Testament is a timeless message for men lost in sin and never needs updating. We must abandon all man-made traditions, creeds, doctrines and practices not found in the New Testament to be guided completely by the authority of the New Testament.

- We must have authority from the New Testament for everything we practice and teach.
- We must speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent.
- We must do Bible things in Bible ways.

If we follow the New Testament we cannot be wrong, but if we stray from the New Testament we cannot be right.

"giving thanks to God the Father through Him" - (Philippians 4:6; Psalm 75:1)

D. His preeminence in the home (3:18-4:1)

Verse 18

"Wives, submit to your own husbands" - There are many places in the scriptures where we see the duty of the wife to be in submission to her husband (Ephesians 5:22; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:1).

"As it is fit in the Lord" - The submission of the wife to her husband is "fit" (proper) by the nature of their relationship and the principle of authority (Genesis 2:21-23; 1 Corinthians 11:3).

What the Bible says about a wife's role must be taken just as seriously as what the Bible teaches about redemption. However, it must be made clear that this is NOT about the **value** or **equality** of women (Galatians 3:28). I know many women who are more intelligent and more devoted to the Lord than some men. The Bible does not teach that women are inferior to men, but it does provide distinct roles for each.

Verse 19

"Husbands, love your wives" - The word "love" in this verse is a translation of the Greek word AGAPAŌ. This is the highest form of self-giving, sacrificial love (1 John 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; John 3:16). However, the love the husband should have for his wife will also include PHILEO

which is love between friends or companions, STORGE which is the affection that naturally occurs between parents/children, siblings and husbands and wives in a good marriage, EROS which is romantic love and PRAGMA which is the deep understanding love that is developed between long-married couples who are willing to make compromises to help the relationship work (showing patience and tolerance).

"and do not be bitter toward them" - In his role as the leader of the home the husband must not have an angry or irritated feeling toward his wife (Ephesians 5:28-33).

Verse 20

"Children, obey your parents in all things" - Since our heavenly Father expects obedience from us as His children (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; John 14:15, 14:14; Hebrews 5:8-9) we should not be surprised to see that children are required to obey their earthly parents (Ephesians 6:1-3; Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Exodus 20:12). Children must obey their parents unless the thing they are being told to do is a violation of God's law (Acts 5:29).

"for this is well pleasing to the Lord" - Notice the verse does not simply say fitting or good, but that children obeying their parents pleases the Lord well (2 Timothy 3:2; Romans 1:30). From the earliest of ages the obedient children are learning the concept of authority which will serve them well in later life.

Verse 21

"Fathers" - The father serves as the head of the family (Ephesians 5:23; Deuteronomy 6:1-9). He must make sure that the right priorities are being upheld in his house (Matthew 6:33; Mark 12:30; Philippians 3:14; Luke 5:23, 14:27). Our homes will not be what they are meant to be if the father does not provide for his family (1 Timothy 5:8). This includes both financial and spiritual support.

"do not provoke your children" - Fathers must be careful not to be overbearing and harsh. It is easy for a child to become angry or discouraged in such situations. Obviously there will be times for discipline, but it must be done in the right way. Discipline can be done in a positive way when it is both instructive (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Proverbs 22:6) and corrective (Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 3:19; Proverbs 29:15, 17; 13:24, 19:18, 23:13-14). Fathers must also be consistent as they provide loving discipline to their children. A child will thrive when they know what to

expect from their actions. Someone once provided these three guiding principles concerning discipline: (1) be loving before, (2) be merciful during and (3) be forgiving after.

Verses 22

Notice from this passage that the Bible does not directly oppose or condemn slavery. However, God's word regulates it in such a way to bring about its end.

"Bondservants" - This is a translation of the Greek word DOULOS which always means slave. Slaves were commanded to obey and respect their masters.

"not with eyeservice" - Eyeservice is defined as being diligent and industrious only when the master is watching.

Obviously not an exact equivalent, but similar principles also apply to the relationship in a modern-day work context, between employee and employer.

"sincerity of heart" - The slaves were expected to serve from the heart. Their reverence for God should cause them to provide sincere (not fake or phony) service. A Christian should always do the will of God from a sincere heart (Colossians 3:22; 1 Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18).

Verses 23

"as to the Lord and not to men" - The service that slaves provided to their masters was really service to their true Lord (Matthew 25:34-40).

Verse 24

"you will receive the reward of the inheritance" - The Christian's highest concern should be pleasing Christ. He is the Savior (Acts 4:12), foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), way to the Father (John 14:6), refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1). Christ Jesus, who is the judge (2 Timothy 4:1) also provides the reward of the inheritance (Ephesians 1:18; 1 Peter 1:4).

"for you serve the Lord Christ" - The Colossians should consider themselves slaves to Christ. Remember, Paul often referred to himself as a servant or slave of his Lord (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1).

Verse 25

"he who does wrong will be repaid" - The Lord will see that a faithful servant receives his reward, and He will see that an unfaithful servant receives his earned punishment (Romans 6:23; 2 Peter 2:9).

"there is no partiality" - The Lord is no respecter of persons and will not show partiality. Earthly masters are not always fair. They may show favoritism or prejudice, but the judgment of the Lord will always be fair (Romans 2:11; Galatians 3:28).

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCTION

1. In the fourth chapter Paul explains the importance of making the best use of time.
2. Paul writes his closing comments to the brethren.
3. The main emphasis for this chapter is encouragement and final directions.

DISCUSSION

Note: When the books of the Bible were originally written there were no chapters or verses. The books were written without any breaks from beginning to end. The chapters and verses were added to the Bible for convenience.

The chapters were inserted by Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris, in the year A.D. 1227 and the verses were added in A.D. 1551 by Robert Estienne who was a French scholar and printer. Therefore, these divisions were introduced by men, not God.

The addition of chapters and verses on the biblical text may be helpful at times, but in some cases it can lead to confusion as it does in our text. The first verse of Colossians chapter four should actually be included at the end of the previous chapter. No one knows for sure why this obvious mistake was made. Perhaps it was done to emphasize the role of masters.

Verse 1

"Masters" - The masters are commanded to be "just" and "fair" in their dealings with their servants. They are not instructed or even asked to give their slaves freedom, although Paul may have alluded to this in the case of Onesimus (Philemon 1:12-14). Notice that the conduct of the masters should be regulated by the knowledge that they also have a Master in heaven.

Obviously not an exact equivalent, but similar principles also apply to the relationship in a modern-day work context, between employer and employee.

E. Redeeming the time (4:2-6)

Verse 2

"continue earnestly in prayer" - The Colossians are instructed to be ever prayerful (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Luke 18:1; Matthew 7:7-8).

"being vigilant in it" - The word "vigilant" is a translation of the Greek word *GRĒGOREUŌ* which is defined as to keep awake, that is, watch closely (Colossians 2:8; 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:18). Proper prayer requires an alert, intense and fervent mind (James 5:16).

"with thanksgiving" - Prayer and thanksgiving are connected (Philippians 4:6).

Verse 3

"praying also for us" - It is interesting to note that even the apostle Paul sought the prayers of his fellow Christians. This should leave no doubt concerning the power of prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Romans 15:30; Colossians 1:9; Ephesians 1:16).

"that God would open to us a door for the word" - (2 Thessalonians 3:1; Ephesians 6:19). The word "door" represents an opportunity. Christians should always be watchful for every opportunity God provides to teach others His truth.

"to speak the mystery of Christ" - The mystery was "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:3-6; Galatians 3:26-29). See also the notes for Colossians 1:26 and 2:2 for more information concerning the mystery.

"for which I am also in chains" - It could be that he added this comment to show his willingness to suffer for the precious gospel which he held so dear. He was always prepared to suffer for the honor of proclaiming the gospel to the world (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:20; Philippians 1:7).

Verse 4

"that I may make it manifest" - Paul understood his responsibility to reveal the truth of the "mystery" of the gospel to others (1 Corinthians 9:16). In the New Testament we often see the effectiveness of preaching the gospel message (Acts 14:1-2; Ephesians 4:15). God's word has the power to change lives (Jeremiah 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:2; Jude 1:22-23).

Verse 5

"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside" - Decisions should be made based on the wisdom of God, not the foolishness of men (Ephesians 5:15; James 1:5-6, 3:17; Colossians 1:9-10; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 20-21; 3:18-19). Those "who are outside" (not in the Lord's body: Acts 2:47; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27) will be quick to condemn a Christian who is not living correctly.

"redeeming the time" - Literally, this means buying up each opportunity. In other words we should take advantage of every occasion for doing good works (Ephesians 5:16).

Verse 6

"Let your speech always be with grace" - (Ecclesiastes 10:12; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 4:19). The word "grace" is a translation of the Greek word CHARIS which can refer to both the dealings of the Lord with man and the dealings of men with each other. When the word is used to describe the relationship between men it should bring to our minds and actions sweetness, charm, loveliness, goodwill, lovingkindness and favor (1 Peter 3:15).

"seasoned with salt" - Salt has the power to both purify and preserve (Matthew 5:13; 1 Peter 3:15; James 3:1-2).

V. Final Salutations (4:7-18)

A. Paul commends his fellow Christians (4:7-15)

Verse 7

"Tychicus" - Tychicus was a friend and companion of Paul being mentioned five times in the New Testament (Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12). He is described as a "beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord."

Verse 8

"I am sending him to you for this very purpose" - Tychicus had a job to do. Paul wanted him to learn the spiritual condition of the Colossians and to provide to them comfort and encouragement (Ephesians 6:21-22).

Verse 9

"Onesimus" - Onesimus was a slave of Philemon (Philemon 1:10). He was evidently a native of the region of Phrygia, if not of Colossae itself. It appears from the scriptures that he had been converted to the faith by Paul while in Rome. We are not told how this came about. We note that in this verse Paul describes him as a "faithful and beloved brother."

Verse 10

"Aristarchus" - Aristarchus was a Thessalonian (Acts 20:4; 27:2), who traveled with Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:29). He is also mentioned as being with Paul on his return to Asia (Acts 20:4), and his journey to Rome (Acts 27:2). He is described as a fellow laborer with Paul in Philemon 1:24 and in our verse Paul's fellow prisoner (Colossians 4:10).

"Markus" - Marcus (also known as John Mark) was a cousin of Barnabas (Acts 15:37). In Acts 13:13 we learn that he deserted Paul's first missionary journey when they reached Perga of Pamphylia. For this reason Paul did not want to take him on the second missionary journey. However, it was not an ongoing issue considering Paul later described him as being useful (profitable) to him for ministry (2 Timothy 4:11).

Verse 11

"Jesus, who is called Justus" - Jesus was a common name (the Greek form of the name, Joshua) so we should not be surprised to find others who had this same designation. We do not know if this is the same Justus of Corinth, whose house was next door to the synagogue (Acts 18:7).

"These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision" - These were the only Jewish Christians who were then at Rome with Paul. There were also Gentile Christians who worked with him, some previously mentioned, and others to be named later in this letter. The role played by each of Paul's fellow workers was very important (1 Corinthians 3:6-9).

"they have proved to be a comfort to me" - How had they comforted him? They had comforted him with encouragement, companionship, prayers, visits and love.

Verse 12

"Epaphras" - Epaphras was a citizen of Colossae, and one of their faithful ministers. He is described as a "fellow servant" and "faithful minister of

Christ" (Colossians 1:7). He was with Paul in Rome at this time (A.D. 57) as a "fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus" on behalf of the gospel (Philemon 1:23). Epaphras was clearly willing to suffer for the cause of Christ and of great value to Paul's ministry (Colossians 1:7-8; 4:12).

"always laboring fervently for you in prayers" - We see that Epaphras demonstrated well the command to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) when we consider he was giving himself to prayer for his Colossian brethren while he himself was in prison.

"that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" - Epaphras had great concern for the faithfulness of his brethren. Christians should follow his example today by demonstrating this same level of love, care and compassion for brothers and sisters in Christ (Hebrews 10:24-25; Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:1).

Verse 13

"For I bear him witness" - Paul stood as an eye and ear witness to the prayers, concerns and affections shown by Epaphras toward his Colossian brethren.

"he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis" - Notice that Epaphras was thinking about others instead of himself (1 Peter 2:17; Romans 12:10). The cities mentioned here were located in the region of Phrygia, near to Colossae and the Lycus river.

Verse 14

"Luke, the beloved physician" - This is the one place where Luke is referred to as a physician. The name Luke occurs three times in the New Testament (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24). Luke had become Paul's devoted companion during the missionary journeys and now as Paul endured imprisonment in Rome. Luke wrote both the gospel account which bears his name and the Acts of the Apostles.

"Demas" - Demas was a companion of Paul during the Apostle's first imprisonment in Rome (Philemon 1:24; Colossians 4:14). Later we find him mentioned as having forsaken Paul, "having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10).

Verse 15

"Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house" - Nymphas was a disciple in the city of Laodicea.

It appears he allowed the Christians in the city to use his house as their meeting place for worship.

B. Paul's final directions (4:16-18)

Verse 16

"see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans" - Since the city of Laodicea was near to Colossae Paul instructs them to read this letter first among themselves, and then to pass it on to the congregation at Laodicea.

"likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" - There is a great deal of uncertainty concerning the epistle mentioned here. Some have thought it was an epistle from Paul to the Laodiceans, while others surmise it was a letter written from Laodicea.

Marcion of Sinope (c. A.D. 85-160) who published his own record of New Testament books included the letter to the Laodiceans on his list, but not the letter to the Ephesians. Therefore, some have concluded that "the epistle from Laodicea" was actually the letter to the Ephesians.

Whichever it might be the Colossians were instructed to read it.

The inspired writings were meant to be circulated among the congregations. Each group would be able to make a copy of the letter and then forward it to the next congregation. In this way the inspired instructions were distributed throughout the Lord's church.

Verse 17

"Archippus" - Archippus was a Christian teacher in Colossae (Colossians 4:17) who is called Paul's "fellow soldier" (Philemon 1:2). He may have been a member of Philemon's family (some say the son of Philemon).

"Take heed to the ministry" - Spiritual responsibilities must be met (1 Timothy 4:6).

Verse 18

"by my own hand—Paul" - On some occasions Paul would write his epistles by his own hand (Galatians 6:11), but generally he would dictate the words to someone else and then sign his name to authenticate the letter as he did here.

"Remember my chains" - Paul did not ask this to complain or to gain their sympathy, but to encourage them to zealously proclaim the gospel. They could assist in the effort to spread the truth while Paul was bound in prison.

"Grace be with you" - The word "grace" is a translation of the Greek word "CHARIS" which is defined as a benefit, favor or gift. Grace is the unmerited favor we receive from God.

"Amen" - Amen started as a Hebrew word (Numbers 5:22), which was transliterated into the Greek language and then eventually into English. The word comes from a Hebrew root word which means to build up or support; to be firm or faithful, to trust or believe; to be true or certain. It is also used as an adverb at the beginning of a speech to mean "assuredly" (Matthew 5:18; Mark 3:28; John 3:3). At the conclusion of a sentence it is used to mean "so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled." When the word is used as an adjective it means "firm or true." Some dictionaries claim that when "Amen" is used at the end of a prayer it means approval of what is being said. However, our approval does not make it true. It is more correct to think of it as "this is true, or may it come to pass, or may it be fulfilled."

CONCLUSION

1. This concludes the study of Paul's letter to the Colossians.
2. In this epistle we see clearly the preeminence of Christ.

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