

COLOSSIANS

&

PHILEMON

Dr. Brian J. Bailey

Colossians & Philemon

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DEDICATED

To the holy triune God, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Also, to my dear wife, Audrey, who through her sufferings is being made a partaker of His holiness.

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Preface

A number of years ago I began to seek the Lord with a fresh hunger and thirst for His holiness. In my quest, I turned, as have so many believers in my native country of England, to the writings of holy men and women from Church history. I even asked the Lord which of the writings of William Law, John Wesley, John Fletcher, Michael Molinos, Fenelon, and Madame Guyon I should read. These wonderful saints had certainly entered into the life I aspired to, but their writings did not bring me that for which I searched—true holiness. The Lord most graciously spoke to me and said, “Do not look to these books for your answers, because the answers you are looking for are in My Word.” Then the Lord directed me to the epistle of Colossians, and chapter 3:1- 17 in particular. As I immersed myself in the teachings of the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, I began to enter into that life of peace and holiness that I had so desired. This book is presented to you in the hope that through the exposition of these truths, you may also find that for which your soul longs—union and communion with the Lord who alone is holy.

In this epistle we see several areas into which very sincere people often stray in their pursuit of a holy life. The saints at Colosse were seeking holiness through external means such as: 1.) tradition and ceremonial washings; 2.) rigid abstinence—“touch not, taste not, handle not;” 3.) the worship of angels; and 4.) philosophy. They took their eyes

off of Christ, who alone has the answers for all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Therefore, let us prayerfully study the errors of the Colossian church so that we may be purged from all forms of false humility and legalism, and let us bathe ourselves in those truths which counteract them. Thus, we will be enabled to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Then our feet will be firmly established in the ways of holiness, and we will be preserved from erring from the paths of the Lord.

In addition to these great teachings on the subject of holiness, we have included the companion epistle to Colossians that Paul wrote to Philemon, the bishop of the Colossian church. This epistle concerns Philemon's runaway slave Onesimus. It is a story of the restoration of a runaway slave to his master's house. We trust that it will be a source of encouragement to all who are praying for wayward loved ones. May the Lord bless you!

Brian J. Bailey

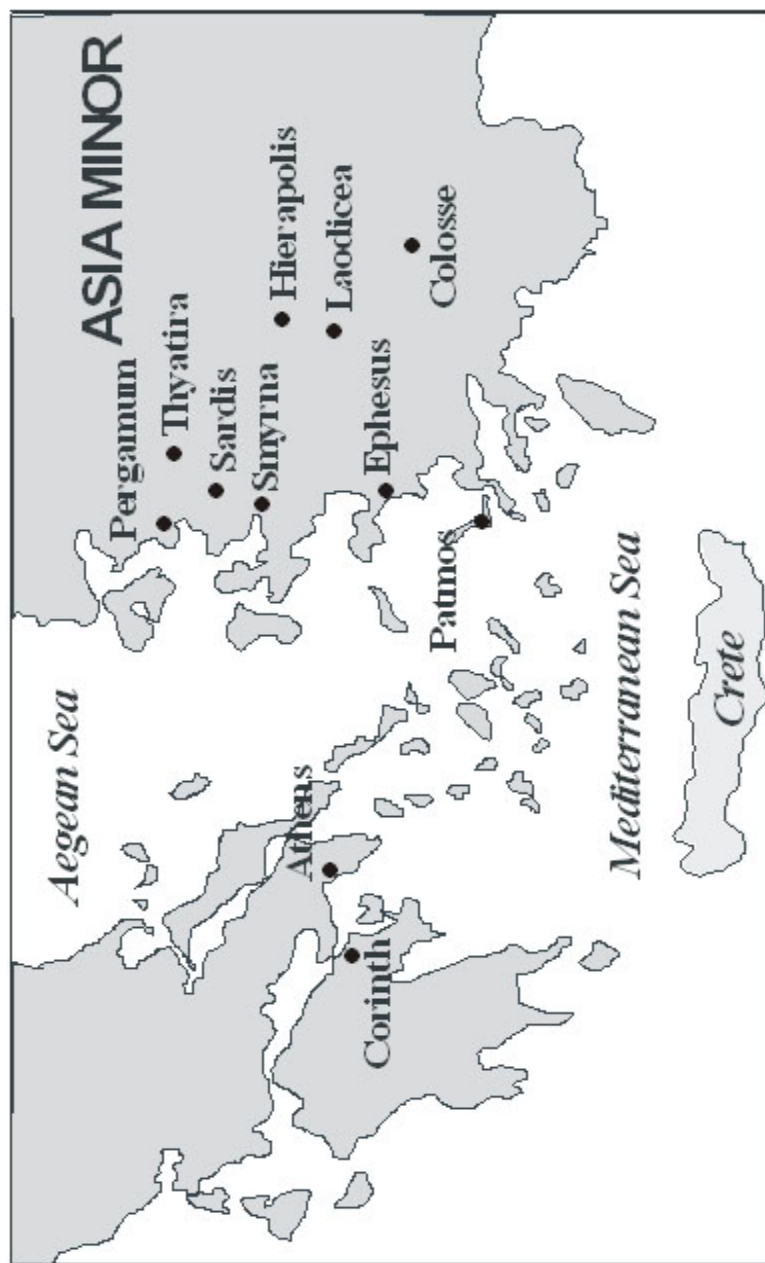
INTRODUCTION

The theme of the Colossian epistle is “Holy Living Through Jesus.” Perhaps more than any other, this epistle helps us to understand the life of victory we can have in Jesus. For this reason, it is important to pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation as we begin this study, even as the Apostle Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:17: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” Since this Colossian epistle uniquely presents Christ in a way not found in any of Paul’s other epistles, we particularly need the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to reveal unto us the unsearchable treasures that are hidden in Christ. Our introduction can be broken down into three parts:

1. Geographical Location
2. Historical Data
3. The Colossian Heresy

Geographical Location

As we first consider the geographical location involved in this epistle, we should remember that location also provides an indication of spiritual truth. Colosse was located on the Lycus River, on a great East-to-West trade route that went from Ephesus to the Euphrates River. The towns of Hieropolis and Laodicea were situated very near to the Colossian church.



In Colossians 4:13, the Apostle Paul says of Epaphras, “For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.” These two towns straddled the Lycus River where it joined the Maeander River. They were approximately 6 miles apart, yet within sight of each other.

Colosse was about 12 miles farther up the river. The Lycus River was impregnated with chalk, and this chalky water eventually covered the whole area around Colosse. The condition of the water becomes very significant when we realise that the Colossian epistle was written to counteract a heresy that was prevalent in this church. The heresy that polluted this church was much like the chalky water that contaminated the town of Colosse, with all its monuments and fertile fields. Even to this very day, there is absolutely no trace of the town of Colosse.

This truth also becomes important when we are seeking a particular key to release a certain geographical area from the spiritual forces that bind it. The key may be found in its geography or its history. Often, there have been cases where a pastor of a certain area has been able to release that region by coming into an understanding of the spirits that hold it in bondage.

Historical Data

Let us look next at the second part of the introduction, which is the historical data associated with the church and the town

of Colosse. Two hundred years before the ministry of the Apostle Paul, Colosse had been one of the leading cities of the entire area. However, by the time Paul wrote this epistle, it had degenerated into a second-rate market town. Heroditus, a famous historian, made reference to Colosse many years before as a great city of Phrygia. The Persian kings Xerxes and Cyrus had stopped in Colosse with their invading armies. By the time of Paul, Laodicea had become the great political and financial centre of the area. In fact, it was a city of such great financial prosperity that after experiencing an earthquake it was able to refuse the relief aid of the Roman Senate because the Laodiceans had enough finances of their own to rebuild the city. Meanwhile, Hierapolis had also become a great trade centre and a notable spa.

The Colossian Heresy

The church at Colosse, which was founded by Epaphras while Paul was at Ephesus, was the most insignificant church to which Paul ever wrote a letter. Yet, his purpose for writing was to address the great problem of the Colossian heresy. There are five main points to the Colossian heresy that help us to understand what Paul was encountering when he wrote this letter.

- The first aspect of the heresy was *ceremonialism*, which concerned four specific areas: food and drink; religious festivals; circumcision; and tradition. Paul addresses the first two issues in chapter 2:16, where he states, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of

an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.” Regarding the matter of circumcision, Paul explains in chapter 2:11 that we are “circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” Paul makes further reference to this in chapter 3:11. Concerning the issue of tradition, Paul cautions them in chapter 2:4 not to be beguiled with enticing words. Then he continues his warning in chapter 2:8 by saying, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

- The second major aspect of the Colossian heresy was *asceticism* (or rigid abstinence), which is related to Stoicism. This is the legalistic mentality of “touch not, taste not, handle not.” Paul addresses this in chapter 2:21-23.
- The third aspect of the Colossian heresy was *angel worship*. Paul exhorts in chapter 2:18, “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.”
- The fourth aspect of the Colossian heresy was the *depreciation of Christ*. Christ was not being magnified and lifted up in the Colossian church. To counteract this, we have Paul’s magnification of Christ’s deity in chapter 1:15- 21, and also in chapter 2:2-3,9. Every cult makes Christ less than who He really is.

- The fifth aspect of the Colossian heresy was *Gnosticism*. Gnosticism was a form of secret knowledge and wisdom which was said to be available only to a select few. It was actually a form of mysticism and spiritism. Gnosticism was believed to have originated in the Colossian church, but then it spread until it became quite powerful at the time of the writing of John's epistles. It certainly plagued the Church in the second and third centuries. To counteract this *false* concept of wisdom and knowledge, Paul pointed them to the *true* source of all wisdom and knowledge in chapter 2:3, where he said, "In [Christ] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

* * * * *

Part One

1:1-2

GREETINGS

Turning now to the Colossian epistle, we see the Apostle Paul's greetings in verses one and two of chapter one.

1:1-2 - *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother. To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* In New Testament times letters always started in this manner. They had a prescript and a preface, with the greeting broken down into three basic parts: 1.) the name of the sender, 2.) the name of the addressee, and 3.) the message of the greeting. These three parts can be seen in virtually all of Paul's epistles.

Paul says he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, a title he uses often. Not only is his purpose to emphasise his authority, but also to stress that it is by the will of God that he is an apostle. In Paul's original call in Acts 9:15, Christ made it clear to Ananias that Paul was a chosen vessel. This is a very important point. Every saint must flow in the ministry that God has chosen for him personally. Ministry is God-given. The fivefold ministry is not something that we can desire, or even take by faith. It can only be given by God. We can desire the position of an elder or a deacon, but the fivefold

ministry gifts are different. They are the ministry gifts of Christ, enumerated for us in Ephesians 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

Timothy is also mentioned in Paul's greeting to the Colossian church. He was an exceptional person who was linked to Paul in many situations. In Paul's letter to the Philippian church, he says of Timothy, "For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own [interests], not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:20-21).

Paul singles out Timothy from among all the people he was in contact with in his journeys and in his ministry. Timothy was exceptional! We see two things in Paul's description of him as having "no man like-minded." Paul had been disappointed in a number of people, but Timothy was truly an outstanding person and a loyal friend. Timothy brought joy and comfort to Paul's heart. In fact, Paul's affection for Timothy was so great that he included him in his greetings in 2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

Verse two says, "*To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse.*" All of God's people are called saints. Some denominations only select a few people from Church history whom they designate as saints. However, in actuality, all of God's people are *called* saints because of the very derivation of the name. A *saint* means "a person who is chosen and set apart by God for Himself." When we are born-again, we are termed saints because we are elected by God, even though we still might be very carnal.

There is a difference, however, between being called a saint, and actually being holy. Not only do we want to be saved and be termed a saint of God, but we also want to be faithful to the heavenly calling, and be among those who are listed as *faithful brethren*. **Those who are faithful in life are those who will be close to the Lamb of God**, “And they that are with [the Lamb] are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Rev. 17:14).

The three-part preface used in ancient letters is evident in *Colossians*. The names of the senders are Paul and Timothy, the names of the addressees are the saints and faithful brethren in Colosse, and the message of the greeting is: “Grace be unto you, and peace.” The use of the greeting “peace” was common in the days of Paul, and it also carried with it the connotation of prosperity. In Leviticus 3, the actual peace offering referred to can also mean a “prosperity offering.” Peace is dependent upon a right relationship with God. (See also: Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; 1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; and Philm. 1:3).

**A Saint is a person
who is chosen and
set apart by God for
Himself.**

From its conception, the Christian Church has been persecuted. Unlike our present times, to be a Christian in the early Church meant to be someone who was persecuted and often martyred. Therefore, the brethren in the first century would greet each other with, “Grace be unto you.” Grace means *divine enablement*. In other words, they were saying,

“May God give you divine enablement to stand against the onslaughts of the enemy and to accomplish God’s purposes.” As we consider the greetings, “grace and peace,” we need to see that grace also means *divine favour*. Thus, if you greeted someone with the words, “Grace and peace be unto you,” you would actually be saying, “May you receive God’s favour and enablement, and may He prosper you.”

* * * * *

Part Two

1:3-8, 12-14

THANKSGIVING

1:3-4 - “*We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints.*” The Apostle Paul was constantly praying and giving thanks to the Lord for those whom the Lord had entrusted to his responsibility.

In verse four, Paul speaks of the *faith* and *love* of the saints in the Colossian church. Faith and love are the twin virtues we need for perfection and fruitfulness. Peter develops this concept in 2 Peter 1:5-8. “And beside this, giving all diligence, *add to your faith* virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness *love*. For if these things be in you, and abound, . . . ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul noted that the faith and love of the Colossian church was producing fruit (Col. 1:4-6). Peter further amplifies this theme of fruitfulness, using these two virtues of faith and love (2 Pet. 1:5-8). We should meditate on the eight steps that join faith to love. These eight steps will bring us to 2 Peter 1:11: “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly

into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Thus, we have our twin keys for fruitfulness and perfection—faith and love. These virtues grow in our lives as we abide in the Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:5 - *“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.”* The Lord Jesus Christ spoke often concerning rewards awaiting us in heaven. The Lord said in Matthew 5:10-12: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” This is something that the early Church needed to know because it was a church that suffered great persecution. He told them to rejoice always.

This exhortation to rejoice in persecution applies to every generation. Everyone who lives godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). If you are on this quest for true holiness, you will suffer persecution. However, the key to triumphing is to rejoice, because a rejoicing spirit in adverse situations will overcome all adversity and obtain a great reward for us in heaven. Remember Job’s response to trouble (Job 1:20-22).

The Lord continued in Matthew 5:19-20 by saying: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least

commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” True greatness in God’s eyes is measured by whether or not we accomplish and teach the whole counsel of God. We teach not only by our words, but also by our lives. First of all, we must seek to have the laws of God written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, and then from the abundance of our hearts, our mouths can speak and teach the whole counsel of God.

It is very important to meditate upon the great rewards that await the godly in heaven.

It is very important to meditate upon the great rewards that await the godly in heaven. Remember this—Christ endured the cross by looking ahead to the joy that awaited Him. Everyone’s reward in heaven will not be the same. Our reward in eternity depends on the level of our consecration and dedication to the Lord in this life. Therefore, in times of testing and discouragement, we should meditate on the reward and the joy that will be ours in the life to come if we continue on and do not give up.

1:6 - “Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.” The

purpose of the gospel is not only to save people, but also to enable them to bring forth much fruit. In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul speaks of the nine fruits of the Spirit. The Lord said in John 15:8, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” The gospel and the Word of God should bring forth fruit in our lives.

1:7-8 - “As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.” Epaphras was the one who founded the Colossian church. Paul calls him a faithful minister. May we also be found faithful to the Lord. The Colossian church was known for its fruitfulness, and its faith and love. However, it also had a doctrinal mixture. They had a terrible heresy which in time impregnated much of the New Testament Church. It is so tragic to realise that although we may be fruitful in one area, if we believe a false doctrine, we can eventually destroy all the good fruit that has been produced in our lives. May we ask the Lord for purity of doctrine so that we do not end up unfruitful.

* * * * *

Part Three

1:9-11

PRAYERS

Next we will look at the prayers of the Apostle Paul in this Colossian epistle. These prayers have been handed down to us and preserved in the Holy Scriptures, not only that we might read them, but that we also might pray them. They are examples of prayers which should mould our own prayer life and desires.

1:9 - *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”* What does Paul pray and desire for this church which he has never even seen? First, it is that they be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. I want to look at this thought of the knowledge of His will. Have you ever been asked by someone, “What is the will of God?” Sometimes it might be difficult for us to know how to reply. However, Scripture answers Scripture. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 states: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.”

In the progression from faith to love in 2 Peter chapter one (see pgs. 103-106), the step after faith is virtue, which is

moral purity. We must be clear and certain that God wants us to be virtuous. He wants us to have moral purity, and 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 shows us how to obtain it. One should abstain from fornication.

What are some other aspects of the will of God for us as Christians? Romans 8:4 tells us, “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The will of God is that we walk in the Spirit. It is not enough just to be filled with the Spirit. We must *walk* in the Spirit so that we can completely fulfil the will of God, and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16, 25).

The will of God can even go deeper, touching such issues as whom we should marry. The Scriptures are very clear on marriage. It is the Lord’s responsibility to join two people together (Mt. 19:6). Therefore, if it is the Lord who joins a couple in marriage, then that marriage has been preordained before the foundation of the world. Thus, we should enter into rest concerning marriage. We should trust the Lord to make it clear to us whom He has chosen to be our spouse.

Another guideline for marriage that the Scriptures give us is that we are not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14). It is not enough to marry a Christian, it has to be a Christian who has the same vision and calling. I have seen people marry in haste, and then regret it for the rest of their lives. We must know whom the Lord wants us to marry. Also, you should naturally be attracted to the person God has chosen for you, for God works in us through desire. It sounds

very spiritual to say, “I did not like my spouse when I got married, but I married her anyway because I thought it was the Lord’s will.” However, I do not agree with this rationale. If we walk in the Spirit, and we are willing to wait for the one of His choosing, then the Lord will join us in His time with the one of His appointment. Furthermore, we will be glad and rejoice over His choice; for His choice will be ours.

All things are comprehended in the knowledge of His will for us. In this, there are two basic areas of need: 1.) that we keep our bodily sanctification, and 2.) that we walk in the Spirit. If we walk in the Spirit, all the other things we need will be added unto us.

Paul continues in his prayer in verse nine, “*In all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*” Wisdom is consistently emphasised throughout the Word of God. Proverbs 4:7 says, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” This was the advice given to Solomon throughout his formative years by his parents, David and Bathsheba. Wisdom is emphasised again and again in Proverbs. When God spoke to Solomon and asked him, “What do you want Me to give you?” Solomon answered, “Give Your servant wisdom.” Solomon asked for this priceless commodity, rather than riches and honour as many other people would have asked for; and that was because his father David had constantly emphasised to him the importance of wisdom.

It is important to know the will of God, but knowledge alone is not sufficient. We must also have wisdom along with

knowledge. Wisdom teaches us how to act in any given circumstance. It also enables us to make the right choices. Ecclesiastes 2:26 says, “God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Receiving the favour and blessing of God is very much dependent upon our walk. If we please God, He gives us wisdom, knowledge, and joy. Wisdom is a gift of God, and nothing else compares with it; but God deprives the rebellious of this treasure.

Wisdom is knowing how to make the right choice, but understanding is knowing why a choice is the right one.

We return now to Paul’s prayer in Colossians 1:9, “That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” There is a difference between wisdom and understanding. Wisdom is knowing *how* to make the right choice; but understanding is knowing *why* a choice is the right one. Therefore, we need to cry out, “Lord, please give me understanding of Your purposes for my life!”

One aspect of understanding is seen in Daniel 1:17. Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that came from God. However, of what benefit is a dream if you cannot understand it? When a dream or vision comes from God, human interpretation is not sufficient. God-given dreams, visions, and prophecies require

God- given interpretations as well. We have known many tragic examples of people who have genuinely received a vision, a prophecy, or a dream from God, but because of a lack of spiritual understanding, they made a shipwreck of their life by misinterpreting what they received. Thus, spiritual understanding is of utmost importance.

Throughout Scripture there is much said about the subject of understanding. In Proverbs 3:5 we are exhorted, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” In Hebrews 11:3 we are told, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Therefore, we see that faith and understanding are linked together—“through faith we understand.”

There are other Biblical prayers which speak of our need for understanding. In Psalm 119:27 the psalmist cries out, “Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.” Ephesians 5:17-18 says: “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”

1:10 - *“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”* Paul also says that we should become “fruitful in every good work.” It is important to consider and understand this idea of fruitfulness. Here is

an example to help illustrate this. When a farmer plants an apple tree, he has one basic desire, and that is to produce mature apples. When we think of fruitfulness, we must also think of maturity. The farmer would not be satisfied if he only received tiny apples, which were just beginning to grow. What he really wants is *mature, full-grown* apples. What kind of fruit does God want? It is impossible to read the Word of God and not see that He wants nothing less than full maturity in His people. We must become fruitful, even as the Colossian church was urged to bear fruit. **And if we are to become fruitful, we must go on with God and not stand still.**

In Luke 8:14 the Lord gave the parable of the seed and the sower. His chief concern was that the seeds that are sown in the hearts of men come to full fruition. For so often the word that is sown in the heart is choked with the cares and the riches and the pleasures of this life, and they “bring no fruit to perfection.” He does not say they bring forth no fruit. He says there is no fruit brought to perfection or maturity.

In England people have garden parties where they bring their produce such as apples, potatoes, and so forth. Then their produce is judged. There are prizes awarded for the best produce. If a gardener’s produce receives a first prize, he is very happy; and people come around and admire his prize-winning produce. The point I am trying to make is that we need to see Jesus as the Supreme Gardener. He looks for fruit that will merit first prize. He seeks Christians who are first-rate. When we think of fruit, we must think of maturity. Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:11-13 that God provides the

fivefold ministry “for the perfecting of the saints . . . till we all come [into] the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

There is no other way to look at the New Testament Church. It is a Church that must come to maturity. What is God’s will for us? It is that we become fruitful and mature. When we consider fruitfulness, we must also consider multiplication. We want fruit to be mature, yet we do not want just one mature apple. We want a whole barrel of mature apples. Fruitfulness is linked, not only with maturity, but also with multiplication. Too often there is a conflict in the Church. Some people say, “We are going on to maturity,” while their numbers are growing smaller and smaller. Others say, “We are striving for multiplication,” yet they remain immature.

It is obvious that God wants both maturity and multiplication. The Church universal does not possess the wisdom it needs, and often tends to get on one bandwagon or another. Many Christians concentrate on maturity, while neglecting multiplication, or they concentrate on multiplication and say they don’t need to worry about perfection until they get to heaven. However, the time to be moulded into Christ’s image is while we are on earth, not in heaven. Nevertheless, the Church battles against itself, with one group emphasizing one thing and another group emphasizing something different.

There are two parables which speak of multiplication—the parable of the pounds and the parable of the talents, found

in Luke and Matthew. As we have already stated, there are two sides to fruitfulness. In Luke 19:12-27, the Lord speaks about the ten pounds, and how He delivered to each of His ten servants one pound. One servant came afterwards and said in verse sixteen, “Your pound has gained ten pounds.” The Master replied, “Well, thou good servant: because thou has been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.” Another came and said in verse 18, “Your pound has gained five pounds.” The Master said to him, “You shall have authority over five cities.” Another servant came and said in verse 20, “Master, I hid the pound You gave me.” To him the Master replied, “You wicked servant.” And to those who stood by He said, “Take the one pound from him and give it to him that has ten pounds” (19:22-24).

We must remember that God is not only looking for mature fruit, but He is looking for *much* mature fruit. The Lord gives some people more talents than others because they have learned to use what they have been given. Therefore, if we want more gifts and talents from God, we must use what He has already given us.

Remember, both maturity and multiplication are necessary. We will be judged on both issues on the day of reckoning. God wants us to seek and preach perfection, and He also wants us to reach out and multiply. There must be a balance between maturity and multiplication.

Verse ten continues, “*Being fruitful in every good work.*” What are the good works Paul is referring to here? In

Ephesians 2:10 Paul states, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Before the world began, God ordained certain tasks for us to perform.

The following is an illustration of this. There is a family consisting of a mother, a father, and two sons, John and Peter. The mother and father are planning to go away into the city for the day. The father says to John, “I want you to rake up all the leaves in the garden. This is your duty for the day.” Then to Peter he says, “I want you to clean the house and make sure it is tidy.” The parents leave, and John goes outside and starts raking the leaves. Peter looks out the window and says, “Oh, it is so much nicer outside than inside, therefore, I will go out and help John.” So he helps John with his duty and all the leaves in the garden are removed so that it looks very nice. The parents return, and the father calls John in, looks at the garden, and says, “Well, you have done a fine job.” Then he calls Peter, looks at the house, and says, “And what have you been doing?” Peter says, “I have been helping John.” The father shows displeasure as he replies, “But I told you to do *this* job, not to help John.”

God has ordained specific tasks for us to do. We must be extremely careful to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. Sometimes God says that He does not want us to do what we are doing; He wants us to do something else. We will only be commended and rewarded for doing what God has ordained for us to do. This is one reason we cannot choose the place in which we will minister. It is God’s choice! God

has foreordained certain good works that He wants us to do. Therefore, we should pray and ask the Lord to show us what He wants from us. Remember, there is no reward for doing someone else's job.

“Increasing in the knowledge of God.” We always need to have an ever-increasing knowledge of God. Our desire is to come to know God more every day.

***The Lord wants
to reveal more of
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in every
circumstance we
face in life.***

We must always be crying out to the Lord in our spirits, “Lord, I want to know You more!” God described Himself when He appeared to Moses in Exodus 34:6 and proclaimed, “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” To

know God means to comprehend His character and to know all of these aspects of Him. It is only as we are led by the Spirit, and God puts us into various situations, that we come to know the Lord firsthand. The Lord wants to reveal more of His nature to us in every circumstance we face in life.

1:11 - *“Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”*

It is impossible for us to go through suffering unless we are strengthened by His mighty power. It is only the strength of God that enables us to endure. *Patience* in the Greek means “endurance.” It means to plod on, regardless of how hard or difficult the conditions may be, with joyfulness and a hopeful heart, knowing that these adversities are going to turn out for

our good. When we go through a trial, we must not grit our teeth in a grim determination, as though our human strength is carrying us through. We will fail if we harden ourselves. We have to pass through trials victoriously. Every sacrifice in the Old Testament was only complete when offered with wine, which is a symbol of joy. We must ask God for His divine strength and joy when we pass through trials, so that we can triumph in them.

THANKSGIVING (1:12-14)

Now Paul flows back into the theme, which he left off in verse eight, of thanking the Lord for His various blessings. First of all, he thanks the Lord for an eternal inheritance.

1:12 - *“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet [or qualified us] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”* We must have a heart of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving purifies us from murmuring and complaining. We should appreciate everything that the Lord does for us, even little blessings. We must have eyes that see God at work, orchestrating all of our circumstances, and a heart that responds with thankfulness.

In Colossians 2:7 Paul speaks of “abounding with thanksgiving.” It is important for Christians to have the spirit of thanksgiving. It must absolutely pervade our lives so that we become thankful people. Thankfulness is an important aspect of holiness. Therefore, we will now look at several points concerning thankfulness.

Point number one is that we are to enter His gates with thanksgiving. Before we praise and worship the Lord, we should be thankful (Ps. 100:4). Point number two is that *in* everything we are to give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us (see 1 Th. 5:18). In every situation in which we find ourselves we must give thanks to the Lord. These points are very important, since Colossians deals with the subject of holiness.

In every circumstance, we must give thanks. This is not always easy. We might catch ourselves murmuring, “How am I supposed to deal with this situation?” First of all, we must get the calmness and peace of God, then speak objectively and say, “This circumstance was permitted by God. He wants to give me a victory in this situation.” When we do this, it will work something within our hearts. We should thank God *in* the situation.

The expression of this is found in Philippians 2:14, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings.” This is how we grow and mature in our thanksgiving. Giving thanks is of extreme importance in every situation. But an even more mature step is found in Ephesians 5:20, “Giving thanks always *for* all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is much greater to be able to thank God *for* a disaster than to thank God for a blessing. As soon as you thank God, you have the victory.

Thanking God for our circumstances is a step of maturity. The attitude of thankfulness must pervade everything we do.

Psalm 108:1 says, “I will sing and give praise.” Psalm 107:1 almost makes giving thanks a command, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” We see thankfulness perfected in the life of our Lord Jesus during the last supper. “And when he had given thanks” (1 Cor. 11:24). Christ was giving thanks for the elements, and for the fact that He was about to be crucified. This is a tremendous example of the spirit of thankfulness. This spirit is summed up as Paul says, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

In Luke 17 we have the story of the ten lepers. These ten men stood afar off crying, “Have mercy on us!” When Jesus saw them, He said to them, “Go show yourselves unto the priest.” As they left, they were cleansed. However, only one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God. He fell down on his face at Jesus’ feet and gave thanks to Him. This man was a Samaritan. Jesus then said, “Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?” They did not return and give glory to God. Only this one stranger returned and gave thanks. Then Jesus said unto him, “Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”

There is a certain sense here that this man’s thanksgiving released faith, and not only was he healed in body, but he was also made whole in spirit. He was the only one of the ten lepers who was made whole in spirit, soul, and body.

Returning to Colossians 1:12, we see that we should thank the Lord for giving us an inheritance. The area of inheritance

is a very large subject. If we divide this area into the Old Testament and the New Testament, we will obtain some light concerning this thought of eternal inheritance. In the Old Testament, inheritance was divided basically into three aspects. First of all, the people were preoccupied with their land (see Num. 26:53, Deut. 4:21). The children of Israel thought of their inheritance as a piece of land, and for each individual Israelite there was a specific parcel of land.

We see then why Naboth would not sell the piece of ground that Ahab wanted to buy from him (see 1 Ki. 21). That piece of ground was Naboth's eternal inheritance, and it had been passed down from the time Israel had entered into the land under Joshua. This was part of the specific parcel of land that his family had received, and that is why he refused to sell it. He said to Ahab in 1 Kings 21:3, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

The second aspect of inheritance is found in Numbers 18:20, where the Lord told the Levites that He Himself was their inheritance. The third aspect was that the people of Israel were the Lord's inheritance. The Lord's portion was His people (Deut. 32:9).

We have basically the same three thoughts in the New Testament. We have the thought of the land, which the Apostle Paul summed up when he said, "I will build on no other man's foundation." He meant that when he went into a city he did not take someone else's church. He built his own church, or his own congregation. This is very important. In

His Sermon on the Mount, the Lord specifically says, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.” By “inheriting the earth,” we have a sense of geographical inheritance. God might call us to a certain country or a certain town, and there He might want to give us a piece of ground to build a physical building (a church). This is part of our inheritance.

Remember, it is the Lord who chooses our inheritance (Ps. 47:4). The children of Israel could not just go into the land and say, “I want this piece of ground.” It was the Lord who specifically chose their place for them. In New Testament times, we need to understand that God has a geographical area for us as well. This could involve many places and areas as God prospers us and blesses us.

As Colossians speaks of eternal inheritance, we need to see it from the point of heavenly inheritance. Heavenly inheritance means eternal life. So often Jesus was asked the question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” One answer to this is found in Matthew 19:29. Our inheritance is eternal life, but there is another aspect of inheritance that is clearly taught in the Scriptures—there are numerous rewards in heaven. 1 Corinthians 3:8,14; 9:17; Hebrews 10:35; and Revelation 22:12 address this matter. What are the rewards, and for what will we receive rewards in heaven? We will be recompensed for everything we do in this life. We will be rewarded for a handshake, and even for a smile.

For everything we do, we will receive either a reward or a demerit at the judgment seat of Christ. Therefore, we

must make sure that all of our demerits are under the blood of Christ. Our ultimate motive is not to gain rewards, but the entire Word of God does speak of rewards. For example, Matthew 6 makes reference to alms giving (giving to the poor). Matthew 6:1-2 says: “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” When we do something to be seen or to make a show, we receive our reward now, and that reward is the praise of man. But when we do something piously, with pure motives, we have an eternal reward. In a very real sense, the Lord speaks a great deal about rewards, but we should not make sacrifices with a reward in mind. We should do things to please the Lord. Nonetheless, the theme of reward runs through Scripture. Every act is rewarded, but is dependent upon our motives.

The theme that Christ has an inheritance is the same in the New Testament as it is in the Old Testament. Christ’s inheritance is His people. Ephesians 1:18 speaks of “His inheritance in the saints.”

1:13 - *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”* These two thoughts of “God delivering us from the power of darkness, and translating us into the kingdom of his dear Son” can be moulded together into the general theme of

adoption. This doctrine of adoption needs to be explained by comparing Scripture with Scripture, and also by looking at the background of the Roman law in New Testament times. Romans 8:15 says, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Using this doctrine of adoption, we can explain why the Apostle Paul is thanking God. We have been adopted from Adam’s fallen family into the last Adam’s new family. God has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.

How would the Romans have understood adoption? We must remember that the setting of the New Testament was the Roman Empire. Normally, it was the very rich in the Roman Empire who practiced adoption. For example, a landowner, emperor, or someone very wealthy might have vast land holdings. Therefore, he would look at all his goods, and all the property and material goods he owned, and realise that one day he would die and everything he owned would be given to others. This person might have only one or two sons and feel that he needed more sons to manage his inheritance. Thus, he would send his servants out into the countryside to look for young boys who seemed capable and of good character.

The fathers of those young boys would be invited to the rich landowner’s house, where they would be examined. The landowner might say, “I want to adopt your son.” Perhaps the father would respond, “I could never give him what you

could give him.” And so, for a certain sum of money paid to the father, an adoption ceremony was held, and at that time the boy actually died to his real father’s house and name. He was completely translated into his new father’s house. Then after a period of instruction, which might last until he was 30 or 40 years old, he might or might not qualify to become a legitimate heir with the other sons of the rich father. He would help manage the estate; and if he qualified, he would eventually inherit it after his father’s death.

This is basically what God has done with us. We were under the power of our old father, under the power of

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darkness, and God in His mercy and grace has translated us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. We have been adopted to qualify to be a joint-heir with Christ. Thus, Paul cries out in thanksgiving to God in Colossians 1:13 for translating us from the power of darkness and placing us into the kingdom of His own dear

Son. Paul is actually stating that we have marvellously experienced deliverance from the power of Satan, and that Satan has no more authority over us.

Often we have problems understanding the full meaning of our adoption. Satan already knows that he no longer has power over us, but he also knows that we may not always realise it. However, if we grasp the truth and the power of our

adoption, the next time Satan comes around we can proclaim that the Father has adopted us, and Satan will have to leave. This is not only a very beautiful truth, but is also something for which we need to thank God.

1:14 - *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”* The next thing we should be thankful for is that we have redemption through the blood of Christ. Redemption means “deliverance from some evil by payment of a price.” For example, if a slave is to receive his freedom, there has to be a ransom. The blood was the ransom paid for us by Christ. However, there is a sense that our redemption will only be fully complete when Christ comes again and we receive our new glorified bodies (Rom. 8:23). The idea of ransom in the Old Testament can be seen in Exodus 21:28-30. *“Even the forgiveness of sins.”* Next in our consideration of thankfulness is the forgiveness of sins. In the Old Testament God did not forgive all things (see Deut. 9:20; 2 Ki. 24:4; Jer. 5:7; Lam. 3:42). Thus, when God did forgive, there was cause for great gratitude. Psalm 32:1 tells us, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Great joy comes when our sins are forgiven, and there is completeness within us. Psalm 103:12 says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Hezekiah reminds us, “For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back” (Isa. 38:17).

Forgiveness of sins is the context of the New Testament. However, God does not forgive all sins. As seen in Matthew 12:31, Mark 3:28-29, and Luke 12:10, God does

not forgive blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. But God is a forgiving God, and He does forgive sins. 1 John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Verse nine goes on to say, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

This direct statement of God’s forgiveness of sins is *conditional*. It is dependent upon walking in the light and confessing our sins. The other condition for receiving forgiveness from God is that we must forgive others (see Lk. 6:37, Col. 3:13). Forgiveness of sins is linked to the cross for it was there that Christ sovereignly paid our debt (Eph. 1:7, Mt. 26:28).

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Part Four

1:15-22

THE MAGNIFICENT CHRIST

The next theme in our outline is “The Magnificent Christ.” This section of Scripture depicts Christ as being exalted for who He truly is.

1:15 - *“Who is the image of the invisible God.”* This description of Jesus is similar to Hebrews 1:3, where Paul says that Christ is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person. The concept presented here is similar to a wax impression. In olden days, people made seals by impressing the seal into soft wax. This would perfectly reproduce the imprint of the seal in the soft wax. The two were identical. This is how we should think of God and of Christ.

Christ is the exact image of the Father. When Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” Jesus said, “Have I been so long with you and yet thou hath not known me Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. How sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” (Jn. 14:8-9). In Colossians 1:15, Paul confirms this crucial area of theology that Jesus is the perfect replica of God the Father.

“The firstborn of every creature.” Paul now brings us to the subject of the firstborn. The concept of the firstborn

was of great importance to the Jewish mind in the Old Testament because the firstborn son had a double portion of the estate and inherited the headship of the family. He was feared and looked up to by all the younger brothers and sisters. The firstborn had power and authority over all his brethren, as well as the responsibility of looking after their welfare. Also, the kingship and priesthood were given to the firstborn. There was a great distinction between sons and firstborn sons.

Christ is declared to be “the firstborn among many brethren” in Romans 8:29. As our Elder Brother, He has power and authority over His younger brothers and sisters, for He is the Head of the Church, and He is honoured and revered among us.

Also, in Colossians 1:15-17, Christ is presented as “the firstborn of every creature.” Not only is He the firstborn among many brethren and the head of the Church, but He also has power and authority over the whole creation and universe, for He made them. His name is above every other name (Phil. 2:9-11, Mt. 28:18). He has authority over all men, angels, principalities, and powers. He is King of all kings, and Lord of all lords.

In Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 1:5, Christ is called “the firstborn from the dead.” This means that He has complete power and authority over death. He has conquered death, and He holds the keys of death and hell. Death fears and bows before Him.

However, in Hebrews 12:22-23, we have a group of devout believers who have ascended spiritual Mount Zion, and they make up that company known as “the church of the firstborn.” These will be endowed with a double portion of God’s Spirit.

Jesus said in John 14:12, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” As we consider the double portion, let us remember the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Elijah performed about seven miracles. Elisha performed twice as many miracles as Elijah did because the double portion (the double mantle of the Spirit) was upon him. Elijah is a type of Christ; and Elisha is a type of the Church.

Although we are called to be joint-heirs with Christ, and we are called to have a double portion of His Spirit, still we are only *adopted* sons. We will never be equal with Christ. Jesus is uniquely the only *begotten* Son of God who came from the very bosom of the Father (Jn.1:18, 16:27-28). He alone is deity; we are only adopted. Many years ago a professor of mine personally met Mahatma Gandhi and asked him, “Do you believe Jesus Christ is *the* Son of God?” Gandhi replied, “I believe that Jesus was *a* son of God, even as I am *a* son of God.” Gandhi brought Christ right down to his level, making himself equal with Christ.

1:16 - “*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether*

they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.” Clearly, the Lord Jesus Christ was the Co-Creator of the universe and of man. This is brought out emphatically in Genesis 1:26 where God said, “Let *us* make man in *our* image.” In the creation, we see that the Father and the Son worked together. This is emphasised again in Proverbs chapter eight, where Christ is seen as the personification of wisdom. “When he prepared the heavens I was there, when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountains of the deep . . . when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him” (Prov. 8:27-30). It is very clear that Jesus had an active part in creation.

John also establishes this truth when he writes, “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Jn. 1:3). Verse ten of the same chapter declares, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” Beyond a shadow of a doubt, Christ was the Co-Creator of the universe (Eph. 3:9).

“All things were created by him, and for him.” Everything in the universe was created *by* Christ; and everything was created *for* Him. This truth is confirmed in Revelation 4:11, where it says, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” We were created *for* the Lord, to bring Him pleasure. **We are His inheritance. Therefore, we should always live in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord.** Understanding this truth of *why* we

were created is basic to living a victorious life. We were created *for* Him. Conflict ceases in our heart when we realise that we were not created to be the world's greatest achiever, athlete, or musician, but for Him.

1:17 - "*And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*" Christ existed before all things. This thought is verified in Proverbs 8:22: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." Christ always existed in the bosom of the Father. But there came a time, long before creation, when He proceeded forth and came out from God. Proverbs 8:24-25 continues this thought: "When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth." One of the reasons for the writing of the Colossian epistle was because the Colossian church was depreciating the power, authority, and position of Christ.

"By him all things consist." In His graciousness, God has opened up tremendous knowledge, even as He said He would. In Daniel 12:4 God promised that knowledge would increase in the last days. Scientists now understand that matter is composed of atoms, and they even understand the structure of atoms. However, one thing they do not understand is what holds the atoms together. Scientists have conveniently come up with the explanation that is called the "X-Factor." We know what (or Who) the X-Factor is; for it is given to us in the Word of God. Hebrews 1:3 tells us that He upholds "all things by the word of his power." It is Christ who causes the

structure of atoms to remain intact as He created them. He is the X-Factor, and by Him all things consist.

1:18 - *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”* Christ is the Head of the Church. We have here the sense of the head controlling the body. In Ephesians 4:15-16 Paul confirms this truth that we should: “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

When Peter rushed into the tomb of Christ after His resurrection, the napkin that had been around His head was in a place by itself, separate from the linen that clothed His body (Jn. 20:6-7). This signified that the Head had finished His work. Now the Body, the Church, has to finish its work. In many other portions of Scripture, the Church is likened unto a many-membered body, and Christ is always revealed as the Head. As the head controls the body in the physical realm, so should Christ control His Church. The body can be very active, but it will not be productive if it is not being controlled by the head. We need to be careful of this in the Church. **We must come under the control of our Head,**

***We are the
body and
Christ is the
Head of the
Church.***

the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we are productive, not just active.

When my wife and I were in South Africa many years ago, the Lord gave her a vision of a spastic child. A spastic child makes motions, but his movements are not coordinated. Thus, there is no productivity because his head is not controlling the movements of his body. Are we spastic Christians, or are we under the control of the Head? A spastic child makes much movement, but does not accomplish anything.

“The firstborn from the dead.” As we mentioned earlier, the position of the firstborn is one of power, authority, and reverence. Christ has power and authority over death, and He holds the keys of death and hell. Death bows and trembles before Him. The Captain of our salvation has destroyed Satan who held the power of death (Heb. 2:14-15), and He has also delivered His redeemed from the fear of death. Upon conquering death and gaining the ascendancy over him, He ever lives to make intercession for His younger brothers and sisters over whom He also has pre-eminence, and whom also He will bring to resurrection life on the final day.

“That in all things He might have the preeminence.” Christ is the Pre-eminent One! In Philippians 2:9-11 Paul further adds: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to

the glory of God the Father.” As we have already seen in Colossians 1:16, Jesus was the Co-Creator “of all thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers.” He has sovereign rule over everything. In a monarchy, the king is pre-eminent; everyone is in subjection to him. Even so, Christ, the King of kings, has the ascendancy over everything in heaven, in earth, and under the earth.

1:19 - *“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.”* The Father, reigning as Supreme in the universe, does as He pleases. It pleased the Father for all the fullness of the Godhead to dwell in His Son.

1:20 - *“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”* By His death and sacrifice on the cross, the Lord made peace between the Father and us. Because of the rebellion of Lucifer, heaven also had to be reconciled to God. By His blood, Christ has purged heaven (Heb. 9:22-23). And of course, the things in earth also needed to be reconciled. However, we must be very careful of a doctrine called “ultimate reconciliation.” This doctrine teaches that Satan, all the fallen angels and demons, and everyone in hell will ultimately be reconciled to God. This is a very erroneous exaggeration of God’s love. There was no sacrifice provided for Satan and his fallen angels.

Hebrews 2:16-17 makes it very clear that Christ identified Himself with man and man only, in order to reconcile them

to God. He became a man, not an angel. Therefore, there is no salvation for angels because they sinned in the light of His presence.

1:21 - *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.”*

Returning to the theme of thanksgiving, we must also include this subject of reconciliation. Reconciliation means “to do away with a quarrel.” It signifies that the parties reconciled were formerly hostile to one another. This could be said of us, because sinners are classified as enemies of God. The thought presented here is that we were once enemies of God; but He has paid our debt, covered the damage we have done, and He has reconciled us to Himself (Rom. 5:10). Oh, how thankful to God we should be!

“Alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works.”

What turns our mind against a person, a fellowship, a church, or God? It is when we do wrong. If we will not do those things that are right, and we are not faithful in our duties, our mind will be changed and become alienated against those who are in authority, and ultimately against God. (Cain is an example of this.)

Our works determine the state of our mind, and they govern our attitudes. Those who do what is right and honest always have the right attitudes. However, those who are not upright always have a bad attitude. After a time, their mind is changed and turned against the Lord, and against those in authority. If we do evil, our mind becomes

confused. To have a sound mind, we must be honest and upright in our actions.

1:22 - *“In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.”* Here we have a revelation of the tremendous power of the cross of Christ. The marvellous grace of God forgives, reconciles, and redeems, and also has the power to make us holy, unblameable, and unproveable in His sight.

“Holiness” in essence means to be separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil, but also to be joined to God, who alone is holy. We must never forget both of these aspects of holiness.

“Unblameable” means to be without blemish. To better understand this, we could use the illustration given to us in the first chapter of Leviticus, which describes an animal being prepared for sacrifice. This animal must first be carefully inspected and found to be without blemish. Romans 12:1 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Our bodies must be presented to the Lord as living sacrifices without blemish. Ephesians 5:25-27 reminds us that Christ loves and washes His Church with His Word in order to present it unto Himself without blemish or

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in the perfection
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Word of God.***

spot. By meditating upon God's Word, we are washed and purified from every stain and blemish (Jn. 15:3).

"Unreprovable" means to be free from accusation (see Rom. 8:32-33, 1 Jn. 2:1). Jude 1:24 encourages us that God is able to keep us from falling, and He is also able to present us faultless (unblameable and without blemish) before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. If we will allow God to work in our hearts, Christ's blood can perfect us and present us faultless before the throne of God so that nothing in our lives can cause others to accuse us. This is the state of purity to which the Lord brought Daniel. "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Dan. 6:4-5). There was nothing in Daniel's life wherein these men could accuse him; he was unreprovable.

We must believe in the perfection that is available through Christ, and our believing must be based on God's Word. Paul pronounces in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 that the very God of peace is able to sanctify us wholly; and preserve our body, soul, and spirit blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Part Five

1:23 - 2:5

THE MINISTRY

1:23 - *“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.”* A minister must preach, teach, pray, labour, and suffer so that his flock might become stable. Stability of the flock is a basic concern of the shepherd. But the key to coming to perfection and holiness is in the word “continue.” Too many people stop short of God’s purposes because of discouragement, delays, or something that offends them. Then their heart closes and they cease to press on or “continue.”

In John 8:31-32 the Lord promises that if we will continue in His Word, then we will come to know the whole truth, and the whole truth will make us totally free of everything that makes us unholy and unlike Him. Therefore, Paul exhorts us to continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel. And what is the hope of the gospel? It goes back to verse 22—to be presented holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in God’s sight!

1:24 - *“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.”* Suffering

is a major doctrine. Today, there are many people who say that Christians do not have to suffer. However, the Word of God is very clear that adversity is a part of Christianity. Paul was chosen by God to manifest the longsuffering of Christ. This can be seen in 1 Timothy 1:16: “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” We also must have the virtue of longsuffering worked out in us, and there is only one way. We must suffer for a very long time.

Suffering can be broken down into the following main areas: First, one suffers because of sin. This is seen in the epistles of Peter (see 1 Pet. 2:20, 3:17, 4:15). Second, we suffer to learn obedience. Hebrews 5:8 reminds us that Christ “learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” As with Christ, so also must we suffer to learn obedience. In that same context, 1 Peter 4:1 says, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh [willingly ceases] from sin.”

A third aspect of suffering is called vicarious suffering, and this is seen in the life of Christ. Vicarious suffering is suffering to bring others through. Christ suffered vicariously for us (1 Pet. 3:18). There are also many Scriptures which reveal the vicarious suffering of the Apostle Paul on the behalf of others (see 1 Cor. 4:10-13, 2 Cor. 4:7-12, 6:3-10). Paul explained the very important truth that as we die daily and enter into death, we release the life of Christ to others.

When a person suffers, he releases the life and grace of Christ to another.

Vicarious suffering can be seen in Christian families. If a child is backslidden, there can be great anguish and suffering. Physical suffering and illness might even strike the mother or father so that grace might be released to bring the child back to God. Likewise, the same situation may occur in a church. Sometimes the pastor is afflicted in order to release life to a member of his flock.

1:25 - *“Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation [or stewardship] of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God.”* Paul was a special man with a special mission. Unto him was committed the task of interpreting the new covenant to the Church. A divine stewardship of truth had been entrusted to him to dispense to the world. He told the Colossians that a dispensation (or stewardship) of God had been given to him to give to them. He also said to the Ephesian church, “Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward” (Eph. 3:2). Thus, Paul had the privilege and responsibility of explaining to the Gentiles the new covenant and the Age of Grace. The old covenant was incomplete by itself. It was not until Paul opened up and explained the new covenant of grace that the Word of God was complete and fulfilled.

Paul was given the message of grace to dispense to the Gentiles. Peter, too, was given a stewardship of the message of

grace to give to the Jews, exhorting them to “be established in present truth” (2 Pet. 1:12). Both Paul and Peter were proponents and teachers of the dispensation of salvation by grace, which David, who lived in the Age of the Law, foresaw as forgiveness by faith in Christ (see Ps. 32:1-2, Rom. 4:6-8). Both men had the privilege and mission of making men see that the Age of the Law was finished, and that a new Age of Grace had started with the coming of Jesus Christ.

King David was a man who overshadowed his own epoch and lived in and tasted of Paul and Peter’s new Age of Grace. It is important to understand the era in which David lived. David lived during the Age of the Law, which extended from Moses until Christ, a period of around 1,500 years. During that time, God instituted animal sacrifices, which were shadows of things to come. However, David said in Psalm 40:6, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.” Although David was living in an age where God had ordained sacrifices, the Lord opened David’s eyes so that he was able to look forward to another age—the Age of Grace, which covers the Church Age when Christ came. David was looking into this new dispensation and it caused him to say of the old, “That is not what You want Lord. You do not want sacrifices. What You want is someone who delights to do Your will, one in whose heart is Your law.” David bridged the two epochs. He was living in one, but experiencing another.

David was saying that, even though his era had the law written on tables of stone with sacrifices, God had opened his ear and revealed to him His heart. He did not really want sacrifices and offerings. God wants people who will perform all His will and have His laws written upon their hearts.

Scholars sometimes divide the 7,000-year span of man upon earth as follows:

1. The Age of Innocence (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:21-25).

The period of time in the Garden of Eden.

2. The Age of Conscience (Gen. 3:7-24).

After the Fall, man was governed by his conscience.

3. The Age of Human Government (Gen. 9:1-6).

Man was required to execute the death penalty for innocent bloodshed.

4. The Age of Promise (Gen. 12:1-3).

Made to Abraham and his seed concerning the land of Canaan.

5. The Age of the Law (Ex. 19:5-8).

When the Law was given through Moses, a period lasting 1,500 years.

6. The Age of the Church (Jn. 1:17).

The era of grace that started with Christ's death and resurrection.

7. The Age of Millennial Rule (Rev. 20:6).

The 1,000-year reign of Christ upon earth.

1:26 - *“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”* God unlocked and presented to Paul truths that had never been revealed before. However, God did not only give these truths to Paul for his sake, but for the sake of the Church of all ages. We should desire to receive revelation from the Lord too. On the other hand, it should be remembered that revelation and more truth are granted only in the measure that we are found faithful to the truths that we have already received.

1:27 - *“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”* What is that great hope of the Christian? It is Christ living inside of us! It is God dwelling within us! In Ephesians 3:17 Paul says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” In the last days the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be seen in His fullness in His people. There will be a tremendous revelation of Christ that will be manifested in and through His Church. He will truly be admired *in* His saints (2 Th. 1:10). I have had a little foretaste of what it is going to be like in the last days.

A number of years ago, I was sitting on the platform with several other ministers at a convention. Suddenly the Lord appeared, and He walked up onto the platform; and then He walked right into me as I was sitting there. When I looked down I did not see my hands, but only His nail-scarred hands. I did not see my clothes, but only His garments. Most

importantly, as I watched the speaker, I was watching him through the Lord's eyes and hearing him with His ears. I even felt in my heart what the Lord was feeling about this minister. For a few brief moments, I understood what it meant to have "Christ in me" in His entirety. I strongly believe that in these last days Christ and His fullness will be seen and demonstrated in and through His people. Praise the Lord!

1:28 - *"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."* Paul makes the point that a minister needs to be filled with wisdom when he says, "Teaching every man in all wisdom." It is so important that we receive wisdom for the ministry that God has called us to. The end purpose of all teaching, preaching, exhortation, and counselling is to present a people who have been perfected by the workings of God.

1:29 - *"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."* This same thought is expressed by the Apostle Paul in several other of his epistles, notably in Philippians 3:21 and Ephesians 3:20. To the degree that we permit the power of the Holy Spirit to have full course in our body, soul, and spirit, to that same degree God can do all things in us, through us, and for us. If we restrain the Holy Spirit in our lives, His power to accomplish His purposes in us will be diminished. The Lord works in our lives according to the degree that we are saturated with His Spirit.

CHAPTER TWO

2:1 - *“For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.”* In verse one the Apostle Paul speaks of the great conflict that he had for the saints in Colosse and Laodicea. Paul is speaking of the spiritual warfare he experienced for those two churches. Even though he was many hundreds of miles away under house arrest at Rome, Paul was battling against spirits that were trying to overcome and oppress these churches. Paul (writing to the Ephesians at the very same time he wrote to the Colossians) said, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). Paul was saying that we not only have to convince people of the truth of the gospel, but principalities and powers in heavenly places will oppose us as we try to do so.

The prophet Daniel alluded to the principalities that rule over kingdoms. Evil angels rule over cities and towns, and they seek to thwart the purposes of the churches in those cities. Therefore, a church is engaged in a spiritual battle against the principalities that rule over its locality. Because of this, we must learn spiritual warfare. It is clear from the Colossian epistle that the Apostle Paul, who was in a Roman prison when he wrote this letter, was engaged in spiritual warfare with the spiritual powers that were trying to oppress the Colossian and Laodicean churches. We can be praying for someone who is in another town or country and actually

be feeling the powers of the enemy coming against us; for physical distance is not a factor with these unseen powers.

As pastors, we should have intercessory prayer groups in our flocks that can pray and combat these spiritual powers that are oppressing our churches. Prayer will break these powers that are binding our churches and give us an *open heaven*. In Isaiah 25:7 we read: “And [the Lord] will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.” The prophet Isaiah makes it very clear that there is an evil covering over people and a veil spread over the nations. When the veil and the evil covering over a nation is removed by the anointing, there is such a liberty to preach the gospel there. Therefore, we should pray that the veil over our locality will be broken so that people are freed to receive the gospel.

The spiritual powers of the adversary were seeking to come against Paul because of his apostolic authority over the Colossian church. The spiritual powers realised the tremendous spiritual authority that Paul had in that town, and so they were seeking to weaken him.

2:2 - *“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.”* Paul wanted their hearts to be knit together in love, for love brings unity. There is tremendous power in unity. The Apostle Paul also prayed that they would have the full assurance of understanding.

Understanding is very wonderful. When we have a problem, a large part of the problem, and even the torment of the problem, comes from the fact that we do not understand that problem. However, when we understand why we have a problem, about ninety percent of the difficulty evaporates because we understand what is happening. This is what the Apostle Paul was saying here. He was praying that the Colossian church would have full assurance from their understanding of the gospel. Understanding God's Word from Genesis to Revelation will bring us full assurance.

2:3 - *"In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* We must remember that Paul was counteracting several heresies in the Colossian church; and one of the heresies was the exaltation of man's knowledge while Christ was depreciated from His rightful lofty position. Therefore, Paul draws all attention to Christ and exalts Him as being *the very source* of all wisdom and knowledge. Christ not only understands all the sciences and mysteries of life, but He also created them. Thomas Edison attributed the science of electricity to God. Christ is also a mathematician of extraordinary exactitude. There is no wisdom or knowledge in the universe that does not originate from the Son of God.

When I was newly saved, I was working in a research laboratory in England where I was required to take examinations very frequently. The night before I had a calculus examination, I just prayed to the Lord. Then I took my calculus book, flipped through the pages, and I studied the pages that I felt led to turn to. When I had the

examination the next day, the various sections that I had read the night before were the chapters that were on the test. I was relying upon the One in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

One of the purposes and callings of the Church is to show forth and manifest the wisdom of God. Sometimes when your spiritual eyes are opened, you will see angelic beings in the church. They are sitting in and learning the wisdom and ways of God. They are being educated as they observe the movings of the Holy Spirit in the Church. This is the reason Paul said, “To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10). The Church is called to manifest the manifold wisdom of God to man and angels. The word *manifold* means “many hues, multicoloured, and many varieties.” Therefore, we are to manifest all the different aspects of God’s marvellous wisdom.

Isaiah 28:23-29 speaks about the ploughman or farmer. Isaiah 28:26 says, “For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.” It is God who gives farmers the wisdom to know how to raise crops. In Proverbs 8:15-16 we have another aspect of the manifold wisdom of God: “By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.” It is God who gives wisdom to rulers to govern. As Christians, we have the divine privilege to call upon God to give us wisdom in whatever situation we are in; for in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Christ is

all the wisdom of the Godhead. Wisdom is the principal thing (Prov. 4:7). Therefore, we should constantly cry out to God for wisdom. And where do we find wisdom? We find it in Christ!

2:4 - *“And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.”* Paul continues writing to the Colossians with admonitions to preserve them from heresy. As we previously mentioned, the reason for the Colossian letter was that heresy had crept into the Colossian church and there was a danger that it would destroy their faith. Therefore, Paul gives the Colossians a series of admonitions to rescue them from heresy. This was ever the concern of the Apostle Paul for all the churches. Also, he cautioned his own dear spiritual son Timothy, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Tim. 6:20). Well, if Paul wrote that to his beloved disciple Timothy, the one who had a pre-eminent place in his heart, certainly, we all need to heed that admonition. *True* science never contradicts the Word of God because true science is the study of creation; and God is the Creator.

2:5 - *“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.”* Paul was writing this letter from a Roman prison. How, then, could he be with them in spirit? Some might try to say that he was with them in affection. But Paul goes on to say that he is actually there, watching everything that was going on among them.

Even though Paul's body was in a Roman prison, his spirit was free and he was present in Colosse. He was walking through the Colossian church and beholding it in his spirit.

I, too, have had this same experience. Many years ago when I was in South Africa, I walked through a church in New Zealand in my spirit. Not only did I walk through that church, but I was also actually present in a board meeting there and I heard what the board members of that church were saying. A friend of mine, who was a Canadian pastor, left his family in Canada for Christmas one year because he had to go to Belgium. While there, he had such a longing to know how his family was doing on that Christmas day. God was so gracious to him, and He actually permitted him to walk through his own house in Canada in his spirit. He saw his wife knitting in a chair, and he also saw his children. When he was later reunited with his family, his wife said to him, "At a certain time on Christmas day, I felt you walk through the house and look at us." Oh, let us not limit God with our rational mind. These experiences of Paul are experiences that we can have too.

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Part Six

2:6-23

FALSE TEACHING AND CORRECTIVE DOCTRINE

In spite of Paul being overjoyed by the steadfastness of the faith he beheld in the Colossians, he still cautioned them. When we think of the admonition to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:16), we can understand why there are so many admonitions in the Word of God. For even in our own day, we have seen many who started out so well in Christ and had tremendous influence, only to later come crashing down. Therefore, even those with a level of stability need to heed these warnings.

2:6 - *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”* The first admonition, and the key to being spared from heresy, is to walk in Christ. Walking in Christ will result in the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). This is further developed in Ezekiel 1:7, where the prophet describes the four living creatures: “Their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.” The description continues in Ezekiel 1:9, “Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.”

The command in the Christian life is not to turn to the right or to the left, but to keep straight on course. For there are many paths leading off, and many enticements that would allure us away from the course God has chosen.

Also, the Apostle John exhorts us in 1 John 2:6 that any man who claims to be abiding in Christ ought to walk or conduct himself even as Christ walked. Therefore, we must walk and abide in Christ. We are promised in Galatians 5:16 that if we walk in the Spirit we will not fulfil the desires of the flesh. Thus, we must walk in Christ, in His statutes, and under His covering.

2:7 - *“Rooted and built up in him, and [established] in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”* The Word of God has much to say about the subject of roots. Jesus Himself speaks in Matthew 13:21 of those whose roots are shallow. Roots are extremely important. In His infinite wisdom, God has created some plants and trees with small root systems; yet others, like the redwoods, have immense root systems that go down very deep into the ground. Also, the quality of any building depends on the quality of its foundation. When we built the auditorium for Zion Ministerial Institute in Waverly, New York, the laying of the foundation seemed to take a very long time. People began to wonder why we were taking such a long time on the foundation. Then the Lord said, “It is indicative of what I am doing here at this Institute. I am laying a very deep spiritual foundation in this fellowship.”

Once a foundation is laid, the building is completed very quickly. God is concerned about foundations. Unfortunately, some people do not have the patience to let God develop deep roots in their lives. Without that patience, however, there will be no solid foundation. There are those like the Prodigal Son who want their inheritance quickly. Solomon wrote in the book of Proverbs, “An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed” (Prov. 20:21).

King Saul came into his inheritance very quickly, and he ended up losing it in the end. In contrast, David paid a great price for his inheritance and had to wait many years to come into it, even though he had been anointed to be king at the age of seventeen. King Solomon entered into his inheritance at the age of nineteen, and unfortunately, it was not blessed in the end. We should be patient and wait for God’s time to exalt us. We should allow Him to do a deep work of humility in us so that when we finally do come into our inheritance, we will not squander it (1 Pet. 5:6)!

As we continue to consider the root system, we may also look at the parable of the vine in John chapter fifteen. In verse four Jesus said, “Abide in me, and I in you.” Verses seven and ten show us how we abide in Christ. It is important to understand that a branch must first be rooted in the vine. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you . . .” (Jn. 15:7). This is a scripture that tells us that the life of Christ flows through us *as* we hear His Word. To have that life, two things are necessary. The branch must abide in the vine, but life

must also flow through that branch. It is possible to have a branch connected to a tree, and yet it can still be dead because it has shrivelled and is no longer receiving life from the trunk.

Jesus said, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love” (Jn. 15:10). We remain in Christ as long as we keep His commandments. However, this alone is not sufficient. We must have a daily flow of life that only comes as we draw sustenance from every word Christ is continually speaking to us. Remember what Jesus said when He was tempted by Satan, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mt. 4:4). To stay in the Vine, we must keep His commandments; but to have the life, we must hear from the Lord daily. These two things are very important.

As we look at Ephesians 2:20-22, we see that God intends for us to be built upon a foundation. We are: “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Our lives are built upon what the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles taught. The foundation of our lives is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This was a strong emphasis of the early Church, and we must not go astray from these teachings. The whole purpose of these admonitions is found in Colossians 2:8.

2:8 - “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” At the time of the Apostle Paul, the whole world was influenced by the Greeks. Greek philosophy is a mixture of Greek mythology and humanism. At that time, there were four principal philosophers: Homer, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The last three philosophers were all homosexuals, and Socrates was even condemned to death for this crime by the tribune of Athens. He was then followed by Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle’s most famous pupil was Alexander the Great, who memorized Homer’s *Iliad* and was constantly quoting it. Wherever he went, Alexander took Greek culture and Greek philosophy. In fact, he raised up 16 towns and named them all Alexandria before he died in Babylon of homosexual debauchery in 323 B.C. Philosophy is rooted and grounded in immorality.

These philosophers virtually carried away their pupils as captives. Their students were dominated; they were disciples of these philosophers and they were bound to their teachers. That is what the Apostle Paul is warning against—philosophy and vain deceptions after the traditions of men. In their teaching to the Church, these men always presented a mixture of Grecian thought and Jewish tradition. After the time of Alexander, this absolutely plagued Israel. In the New Testament days, it was not only philosophy that plagued the early Church, but also the traditions of men, including rules and regulations that strive for perfection which the Jews propagated.

The rules and regulations of men were corrupting the Colossian church. This is also a very large problem in the Church today. Certain people say that the length of a woman's hair or clothing determines her spirituality. I agree that we must dress modestly, but in all honesty, what we wear does not change our heart. However, what we wear is an expression of our heart. This is what the Apostle Paul was complaining about to the Galatians. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:1-3).

The phrase, "*the rudiments of the world,*" actually means spiritism and astrology. It is amazing how those in the New Testament days were captivated by astrology. All the great emperors of Rome would not do anything until the stars were consulted. They were captivated by the thought that the stars controlled their destiny. They had their own personal astrologers who told them the best time to do certain things, and then their actions were guided by these predictions. This still happens even today. Many world leaders and many great commercial firms are guided today by spiritists and spiritist mediums. In Japan, for example, there is virtually no businessman who will make a move without first consulting a spiritist. This is also true in Columbia, South America. The Colombian government was at one time controlled by spiritist mediums. People are very superstitious. Yet, these people are

not plugging into God; they are plugging into Satan. Satan controls astrology, spiritist mediums, and horoscopes.

2:9 - *“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”* Christ is the complete expression of the Godhead in a bodily form. We have a measure of the anointing, but Christ had the fullness of the anointing during His earthly ministry (Jn. 3:34).

2:10 - *“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”* In other words, you do not need anything but Christ to be complete in this life. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him, and since He has created everything (including us), we are complete in Him. In the New Testament times, the thought was that after salvation people must go on to perfection. But in order to be perfect, they thought they needed philosophy, rules, and traditions of men. They even consulted the stars to obtain their perfection. Therefore, Paul admonishes and tells them that all completeness and perfection is in Christ. Holiness is total union with Christ.

“Which is the head of all principality and power.” Paul also expressed this truth in Ephesians 1:20-22, how the Father: “raised [Christ] from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.”

2:11 - *“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.”* In verse eleven the Apostle Paul speaks of circumcision. To the Jew, physical circumcision was the cutting away of the flesh they were born with as a token of being in covenant relationship with God through Abraham. This is physical circumcision. A baby boy had to be circumcised when he was eight days old. This involved the cutting away of the flesh, which that boy was born with, but was not really responsible for. This is an important factor when we look at spiritual circumcision.

Several years ago, when we were in New Zealand, my wife and I were awakened Easter morning at 3 o'clock. Standing at the end of our bed were two angels. One was very tall and he held a sword, at the end of which was the word “circumcision.” He did not speak, but the Holy Spirit spoke to our hearts saying, “I have come to circumcise My Church. Everyone who yields will go on to what I have for their lives, but for those who do not, the other angel will deal with them.” The other angel was smaller, and written across his chest was the word “Enforcer” (see Rev. 3:19).

We had quite a remarkable service that Sunday morning after those two angels visited us. You could have absolutely heard a pin drop, even though there were about 2,000 people present. The response to the altar call was also quite astounding. Some heeded, but others did not. Then the Enforcer took over. **Those who had not allowed God to begin circumcising their hearts and cut away the old**

nature were severely dealt with. One man actually died. Someone else whom we had warned for years about talking too much was riding on a motorcycle which came to a sudden stop. He was thrown off his motorcycle and fell right on his mouth. God has the ability to get the message across to those who are stubborn and will not listen. Sometimes there are those who are not willing to be circumcised.

While natural circumcision is the cutting away of that which we were born with, and that which we are not responsible for, spiritual circumcision is the cutting away of those things that we receive at birth from our parents. We are the product of our father and mother, and forefathers, and we have all the traits that our parents have embodied within us. A wife might say to her husband, "You are just like your father!" That is quite a true statement, for he is his father's son. With all due respect to our parents whom we must honour, they were not exactly perfect since they also descended from Adam. They pass on to their children an Adamic nature, and they pass on traits that are unlike Christ. Spiritual circumcision is the process whereby God cuts away those things from our lives. We were born with the traits we received from our parents, but it is our responsibility to allow God to cut away those maladies with His sword. Spiritual circumcision is the applying of God's sword to those traits in our lives.

There are several circumcisions spoken of in the Word of God. There is the circumcision of the lips (Ex. 6:12), the ears (Jer. 6:10), and the heart (Deut. 30:6). We need our lips circumcised so that we only speak the Lord's words

and not our own (see Isa. 58:13). We also need our ears circumcised so that we can hear from God. King David says in Psalm 40:6, "Mine ears hast thou opened [or digged]." He is saying, "God, You circumcised my ears. Now I can hear clearly what You are saying." We need circumcised hearts; for the heart is the very source of our being. We need to have the things that we were born with cut away.

2:12 - "*Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*" In verse twelve Paul says that we are, "Buried with him in baptism." This truth of baptism is further developed in Romans 6:3-4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Baptism is an Anglicized form of the Greek word "baptizo." This Anglicized form was used because the translators were not in agreement about water baptism. Some of the translators believed in infant baptism and sprinkling, while others believed in complete immersion. When we consider the meaning of the Greek word, it is very easily understood. When a ship sank to the bottom of the sea, the Greeks would say that the ship was "baptised." Another example has to do with the making of a sword. The hot metallic blade was plunged into water so that the sword could be hardened and tempered. It was said that the sword was being "baptised."

Another example of the idea of baptism has to do with a tub filled with dye. A garment that is to be dyed is plunged into the dyeing liquid, and the piece of cloth is said to be “baptised.” Thus, when the Apostle Paul or John the Baptist used this word, it is absolutely conclusive that water baptism was carried out in the New Testament Church by total immersion. This is the only way we can correctly translate the word *baptism*.

When I was in Switzerland a number of years ago, we took a trip to a certain Catholic monastery. The monastery was very famous in Switzerland, and its construction was reportedly begun by some disciples of St. Augustine. It was very old. The priest who was showing us around began in the courtyard. There you could clearly see the baptismal tank which was a full length tank. The priest explained that in the beginning, they baptised by full immersion. “Later,” he said, “part of the tank had been filled in, and instead of full immersion, we baptised by having the person stand in the water and we poured water over him. Finally, it became just a small hole, and now we just take a cup and sprinkle the people with water.” We can see from this how the traditions of men have destroyed the meaning of water baptism.

Water baptism should line up with what it says in Romans 6:4: “We are buried with him by baptism.” How do you bury a person? You don’t just sprinkle a small amount of dirt on his head and conclude that he is buried. In every country, burial requires full immersion! Obviously, Christ Himself entered into the waters of baptism “to fulfil all righteousness,” even as John the Baptist had declared to his generation. After He

had been buried, He rose again. One of the requirements of water baptism is not only that the believer is fully immersed, but also that he be brought up again afterwards. Baptism is obviously a physical act. It signifies that we are buried with Christ, and raised up (or quickened) together with Him to walk in newness of life.

***Water baptism
signifies that we are
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in newness
of life.***

2:13 - *“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”* The important thought here is that when we come out of the waters of baptism, we are raised in newness of life to walk with Christ. Things really happen in baptism—bondages are broken. In fact, many religious ties and bondages are often broken in baptism, especially in third world countries.

“Having forgiven you all trespasses.” It is the tender mercy of God to forgive. But forgiveness must never be assumed or presumed. Forgiveness comes only by the grace and mercy of God. 1 John 1:9 shows us a condition for forgiveness, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Note the prerequisite: *if* we confess our sins.

The ability to confess is a real problem for some people. Sometimes just confessing to God is sufficient, but at other

times God may require an open confession to man. We must understand that forgiveness is based upon confession. We currently have this terrible sin of abortion, which God considers murder. Many years ago when society considered abortion to be a crime, we were asked to pray for a lady who could find no peace because she had had an abortion. She was unable to receive forgiveness from God until she confessed the sin of murder. Remember, the first step to forgiveness is seen in Jeremiah 3:13, “Only acknowledge thine iniquity.”

2:14 - *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”* It is as though all of our sins are recorded on a chart. *Blotting out* doesn’t mean today what it did in Bible times. In the olden days, ink did not contain acid. Therefore, it did not bite into the paper. It could be easily removed with just a wet cloth or sponge. It could virtually be wiped clean, and that is what Christ did on the cross for us. He wiped our slate clean, and nailed it to His cross.

2:15 - *“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”* Here is the greatest victory in the history of the universe. This verse gives us a picture of what happened when Christ was upon the cross. We need to realise the mighty power of the cross; for upon the cross, Christ completely stripped Satan of his power.

A number of years ago, there was a certain pastor who was praying for a demon-possessed person. He spoke to the

demon and said, “Do you remember the cross?” The demon replied, “Yes, if we had won that battle, then we would have won everything.” There is no question in the hearts of demons and fallen angels that they have been defeated by the cross. They thoroughly understood that when Christ came to earth nearly two thousand years ago, He had come to judge them (Mt. 8:29). But as we look at the life of Christ, we can see that all Satan was interested in was keeping Jesus from going to the cross.

Satan was not afraid for Jesus to do miracles. In fact, he invited Him to perform miracles (see Mt. 4:3,6). He did not even mind if Christ became king, for he offered Him all the kingdoms of this world. He even stirred up a crowd to try to make Him king by force. Satan also tried to kill Christ before the time. But when Jesus said He must go to the cross, immediately Satan rose up and spoke through Peter saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Get thee behind me, Satan” (Mt. 16:21-23).

Satan tried to do everything he could to deflect Christ from the cross. Even down to the last moments when Christ was hanging on the cross, Satan stirred the people to shout, “We’ll believe you if you come down from the cross.” When Christ’s body did come down from the cross, His spirit went into hell. Some accounts of those who have had visions and dreams of the under world say there was terror in hell, and the demons asked Satan, “Why did you bring Him down here?” Be assured that Jesus went into hell as a mighty victor, and as a conqueror, He completely stripped Satan

of all his power. Yes, the enemy knows the power of the cross—and we must also!

It was not the fact that Jesus died that defeated Satan. It was *the way* He died that defeated him. Let me try to illustrate my point! Satan was full of pride. To defeat pride and the proud one, it required humility and total humiliation. Satan was self-willed and rebellious. To defeat the self-willed one and rebellion, it demanded One who could say with His whole heart, “Not my will but thine be done.” To defeat bitterness and resentment, someone had to suffer tremendous injustices, but then respond by saying, “Father, forgive them.” To defeat self-pity, there had to be one who could say, “Weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children.” Jesus defeated Satan on every point. He died as a perfect sacrifice—without bitterness. And now the mouth of the accuser has been shut forever. Christ holds the keys of death and hell, and His name has been exalted above all other names in heaven and earth, and under the earth as well.

Not only has He conquered Satan and all of his evil spirits, but He has also defeated sin and the sin nature. He has made provision for man to be holy and without blemish, as we come into full union with Him.

2:16 - *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”* Much is said in the Word of God about food. Paul said in Romans 14:14, “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord

Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” In 1 Corinthians 10:25 we read, “Whatsoever is sold in the [meat market], that eat, asking no question for conscience sake.”

It is important to recognize that sometimes in other countries food has been offered to idols. In fact, there is so much incense in the air in some restaurants that it is even difficult to see. We might say, “Oh, I could not eat there.” Yet consider, who is greater—God or the little devil to whom the food is offered? Paul’s attitude was, “The earth belongs to the Lord and everything in it, including the food we eat. Just bless the food in the Lord’s name and enjoy it. God is greater than superstitions and idols or demons that people have dedicated their meat to.”

An effective guideline to use regarding this matter is to eat anything we want, but avoid eating too much of foods that are not good for us. Science has verified that there is a difference between clean and unclean animals. Pork, for example, is not as good for us as lamb or beef. Paul warns that some shall depart from the faith: “Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:3-5).

This is why we pray over our food. We thank God for the food and we ask Him to sanctify it so that it is fit for our

consumption. However, in the New Testament, we are commanded not to eat anything that has been strangled. We are also not allowed to eat the blood, even in New Testament times, because the life is in the blood (Acts 15:29).

Our salvation is not based on food, drink, or observance of holy days or sabbaths. It is interesting that Jesus was constantly attacked for doing good works on the sabbath day. In Luke 13:11, the Lord Jesus was faced with a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for 18 years. She was bowed down and could not lift herself up. When Jesus laid hands on her and prayed for her, immediately she was loosed from her infirmity. But in Luke 13:14-16 we read: “The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?”

Even today many people are very conscious of “days.” I believe that we should respect Sunday as the Lord’s Day. We should not do our own pleasure on Sunday. However, keeping a certain day rather than another day in itself does not make us holy. And if we do not eat a certain food, that in itself does not make us better than someone who does

eat that kind of food. **True holiness is an inward work of grace in our hearts. It is being transformed into the image of Christ.**

2:17 - *“Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”* This is a very important little verse. Paul is saying that holy days, new moons, the sabbath days, and the different ordinances are all a shadow of things to come in the millennium. In the millennium, there will be a return to the Age of the Law for the Jews. They will offer up sacrifices and observe the different Levitical ordinances. These things are not for the Church, however. (Please see Ezekiel 40-48).

2:18 - *“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.”* We have an eternal reward waiting for us if we continue on the right path. However, as Paul states in verse 18, we can lose our reward. The worshipping of angels will cause us to forfeit our crown.

The early Church delved into the worship of angels. When we study the Word of God, we find that the Lord does use angels. We are told in Hebrews 1:14 that they are ministering spirits. Every child has his own angel. All the saints of God have their ministering angels watching over them. But we must be very careful, for if our mind gets all caught up with angels, then Christ is obscured. There is a difference between fallen angels and God’s ministering angels, yet when we see

them, it may be difficult to distinguish the difference. Some fallen angels are black, and therefore, can be easily discerned. Yet, with others it may be difficult for us to distinguish the difference, for the Bible says that even Satan can appear as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14).

Paul warns the Colossians not to be preoccupied with issues that make Christ secondary, or even obscure. This is a problem today in churches that use the entire service to talk about demons. Everyone becomes demon-conscious and the result is that the attention actually invites the demons to come. Holiness depends on what we focus upon continually. We need to be Christ-conscious all the time. If God wants to send an angel to instruct us or assist us in any way, that is fine, but we must look to Him rather than the angels. Christ is greater than the angels, for He created them.

2:19 - *“And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”* This is the reason for all error. Instead of drawing all life and impulse from the Head, people become distracted or infatuated with one thing or another.

***True holiness is being transformed
into the image of Christ.***

2:20 - *“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances.”* Paul explains to the Colossians that they were all baptised into Christ’s death; therefore, he asks them why they are allowing themselves to be governed by the rudiments of this world, and by the ordinances and traditions of men.

2:21-22 - *“(Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?”* In the last part of chapter two, Paul addresses the ever-common mistake of trying to perfect one’s self and attain unto holiness by rigid self-denial—“touch not, taste not, handle not.” Holiness and perfection never come about by exteriors or man-made rules. As a matter of fact, man-made rules reinforce and strengthen the fallen nature. Rules imposed upon us by the human mind never bring release, but only add to our heavy burden. One reason for this is that the Holy Spirit is not obligated to help us keep self-imposed or man-imposed concepts and rules. Therefore, when we attempt to carry out statutes created by the flesh, it is done without the aid of the Holy Spirit and we utterly fail. Thus, it is imperative to understand just what God requires and what He does not require.

All the numerous rituals and ordinances of the Old Testament were described by Peter as “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10-11). Later, under the Holy Spirit’s direction, the apostles determined to lay upon the Gentiles no greater burden than these four necessary

things: to abstain from the pollution of idols, moral impurity of any kind, the drinking of blood, and eating anything that died of itself (Acts 15:20, 28-29). Now concerning these added traditions, do's and do not's, and austere self-denials, Paul continues his case in verse 23.

2:23 - *“Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”* Neglecting the body does not make a person more spiritual. Denials and abstinence can appear to be a display of humility and piety. They may even seem to promote holiness, but in actuality, they do not. Holiness comes as we walk in the Spirit. Exteriors in themselves never change the heart.

Avoiding certain kinds of foods, or wearing legislated lengths of clothes does not change our nature. Holiness comes by union and communion with a holy God. **Holiness is the result of walking daily with Him, obeying Him and those He places over us, and by maintaining a personal anointing in our lives.** “If we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.”

Tradition and the commandments of men must never be held in higher esteem than the Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ said, “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of me, . . . Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mk. 7:7-9).

Therefore, we should ask ourselves, “Are there any traditions, do’s and do not’s, or rigid self-denials in my life (imposed upon me by man or by myself) that are hindering me from becoming holy?”

In chapter three Paul will teach us what really constitutes holiness, and how we may find the way to holiness. Paul clearly defines the steps that lead us into holy living through Jesus.

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Part Seven

3:1-17

THE WAY TO HOLINESS

As we come into Colossians chapter three, in the first 17 verses we have what could be entitled, “The Way to Holiness.” Colossians chapter three is one of the most important chapters in the entire Word of God. In my own life, as in the lives of so many other Christians, there is a deep cry for holiness! Where can we turn to be instructed in the life of true holiness? Many years ago I asked the Lord, “Which book should I read to help me in my quest for holiness?” I thought the Lord might tell me to read one of the great mystics from the Church Age, or some great theologian of the past. However, the Lord said to me, “Colossians 3:1-17 will show you the way to holiness. That is all you need.” Therefore, I would like to concentrate on this particular portion of Scripture, and also other related areas of the Word of God to see what it says about the true way to holiness.

First, we must define holiness. The root meaning of holiness means *different*. **Holiness means a separation from worldliness, the flesh, and the devil, and a joining unto God who alone is holy.** Thus, there are two sides to holiness. Merely being separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil is not sufficient. We must also be

The root meaning of holiness means different; we are to be different.

joined to God, for He alone is holy. Holiness has a very positive aspect. The third aspect of holiness involves the long, hard battle to choose the right and refuse the wrong.

Let us look first at the key to separation. Separation involves a refusal to fellowship with evil people. In Psalm 1:1 we have three degrees of fellowship. “Blessed is the man that *walketh* not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor *standeth* in the way of sinners, nor *sitteth* in the seat of the scornful.” The first degree of fellowship is our walk. Spiritually, we walk in the direction of those from whom we receive guidance. The second degree of fellowship is to stand. This means to take a stand or to openly advocate a position. The third degree of fellowship is sitting. Sitting denotes an abode or a constant position.

Along with a refusal to fellowship with evil people, Psalm 1:1 also identifies three degrees of evil people. The first degree of evil people is the *ungodly*, which means the wicked or restless, or someone who is given to change and instability. The second degree of evil people is the *sinner*, which means those who actively and habitually do wrong. Such are bound with chains of evil. The third degree of evil people is the *scornful*, which means those who ridicule and scorn the things of God and those who are spiritual. We can pick up this theme again in Romans 1:28 where Paul says, “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.” Scorners are eventually given over to a reprobate mind, which is a mind that is incapable of sound judgment.

A person's spirituality is governed by his friends. I cannot over emphasise this! We can always know who a person is by who he is associated with, and who his intimate friends are. Proverbs 13:20 says, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." Cliques form in churches because likes go to likes. I hope that we all belong to the group of people mentioned in Malachi 3:16—those who fear the Lord and meditate often upon His name. Those who are in this group will be spared by the Lord. If we are in the right group or clique, we will be preserved in the time of judgment. The Lord went on to say in Malachi 3:17-18: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Discernment, as we see in Malachi 3:18, comes by walking with the godly and by being in the right group.

The church or group of people with whom we fellowship determines our eternity because we become part of them, and we also become just like them. Revelation 18:4 is a warning to those in the false church, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." We will be judged according to the group we have mingled ourselves with, and if we are in the right group, we will be sheltered in the time of judgment. However, if we are interwoven with the wrong group, we will be judged accordingly.

3:1 - *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”*

Holiness is an attitude of mind. An attitude of mind has two aspects: 1.) a seeking mind, and 2.) a mind that is steadfast and not wandering. In verse one Paul speaks of having a seeking mind. This is essential. We are told in 1 Corinthians 2:10 that the Holy Spirit is constantly seeking out the deep things of God to reveal them to us. We must have a seeking mind. We must never be satisfied with the plateau to which we have attained. We must always seek God for further revelation. As a young man, my field of endeavour was research. One of the things that a person develops in research is a seeking mind. In research, we are never content with what we already know. In the same manner, as Christians we must constantly seek God for fresh and new truth from His Word.

3:2 - *“Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.”* We must also have a mind that is set on those things which are heavenly. Thus, there is the mind that pursues, but also the mind that is steadfast. One great danger of a seeking mind is that you can have a wandering mind, which is not conducive to holiness. King Solomon had a tremendous appetite for wisdom and learning, but he dabbled with many other things too.

We need a mind that seeks holiness and that constantly sets itself upon heavenly things. We must have the disciplined mind that Peter describes in 1 Peter 1:13, where he commands us to “gird up the loins of our mind.” If we want to be in good physical shape, we must exercise to keep our

stomach flat. Peter tells us to do the same with our minds. Our minds must be disciplined and focused.

Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Our thoughts, therefore, should be tested by the eight gates mentioned in Philippians 4:8. We should analyze our thoughts by these eight gates and see if they are: true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praise worthy. Romans 12:2 tells us that we are “transformed by the renewing of our mind.” Therefore, in our pursuit of holiness, we must pay a great deal of attention to our mind. We must not only have a seeking mind but also a steadfast mind.

How do we renew our mind? One way is by meditation. Psalm 1:2 tells us to meditate in the law of the Lord day and night. Holiness is developed by meditating upon the Word of God. Meditation is sometimes linked to the term “rumination.” Rumination can be likened to a cow chewing her cud. She eats grass and then regurgitates it and chews it over and over again. Meditation is performed in the same way. We must read the Scriptures prayerfully, asking the Lord to speak to us every day from His Word. Then God will cause a certain verse to catch our attention, and we know that He has given us that verse. We can then take that verse and begin breaking it down and meditating upon it until we absorb the truth in that particular verse.

God created the clean and unclean animals (Gen. 7:2,8) to teach His people spiritual truths. Leviticus chapter eleven

differentiates between the clean and unclean animals. The clean animals do two particular things—they part the hoof, which spiritually means to have a separated walk, and they also chew the cud. Therefore, a clean Christian is one who not only has a separated walk, but who also meditates upon the Word of God. There are animals like the camel that chew the cud, but do not divide the hoof (Lev. 11:4). The camel, therefore, could represent a Christian who meditates upon the Word of God, but does not have a separated walk. There are many people who are like that. They constantly read the Word of God, but they are associated with the wrong people. There are also Christians who are like swine, which have a divided hoof, but do not chew the cud (Lev. 11:7). This kind of Christian is separate from sinners, but he does not meditate upon the Word of God. Therefore, a clean and pure Christian is one who is separated from the ungodly, and also meditates constantly upon the Word of God.

Our pursuit of holiness also involves the commitment of our body. Paul urges or beseeches us in Romans 12:1 to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” The word “beseech” is a very strong term. It is a word that depicts desperation. There must be a consecration and a commitment so that our body truly belongs to God. If our body belongs to God, it should be as an offering dissected into parts as expressed in Leviticus 1:12-13 where it says, “And he shall cut it into his pieces, with his head and his fat: and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire, which is upon the altar. But he shall wash the inwards and the legs with water.”

Four aspects of the body are mentioned here: the head, the fat, the inwards, and the legs. We have already spoken of the head in the sense that it contains the mind. Holiness must start with the mind, because the mind renews and redirects the body. Yet, there are other things connected with the head, such as the eyes. Jesus said that the eye is the light of the body. What we gaze upon will also determine what we become.

The head also contains the ears. Our character is formed by what we listen to. Are we listening to the right people and the right music? In a certain sense, our nose can condition our character too. Our lips are also involved. Psalm 50:23 promises, “And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.” It is very important that we bridle our lips in order to be holy.

Another part of the offering is the fat. The fat is a symbol of vigour or strength. Thus, we must commit our strength unto the Lord. We must not do things in our own strength, or by our own effort, but only by His strength. The inwards speak of our affections, which must be given to the Lord. Our affections must be set on the Lord. He must be number one in our lives. And be careful not to play with your emotions, or the emotions of another, or you will get yourself into trouble. Our will is involved here. Finally, the legs speak of our walk and the places we go to. In these four areas we have four aspects of commitment in presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice unto the Lord. One of the things we are to do with our bodies is to submit them unto God by water baptism (Rom. 6:1-4).

There are three words in Romans chapter six that are very important in our pursuit of holiness. They are: *knowing*, *reckoning*, and *yielding*. Romans 6:6 declares, “Knowing this, that our old man [was] crucified with him, that the body of sin might be [rendered powerless], that henceforth we should not serve sin.” In the Greek, the word *knowing* means to know by experience, not just by an intellectual knowledge. When Jesus hung upon the cross, our old man hung there with Him. This is a truth we must know by experience and revelation.

Many years ago when I was pastoring in a certain place, the Lord was dealing with me along this line of holiness. He started to deal with me from Romans 6:1 where Paul says, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” Another way of asking this is, “Will our Christian experience be up one day and down the next?” The Lord clearly spoke to me and said, “No! That is not what I have provided for you on the cross.” He then started to deal with my heart. He said to me, “Will you give this up?” He started going through my life, revealing little things that I thought were insignificant and also bigger things. Some of the issues were easy to give up, but with others I had to pray through to get released of them. Finally He asked me, “Will you give me your wife?” And I replied, “Lord, I am unable to do so.”

The Lord is very gentle in His dealings with His people. Shortly after this, we were in a service one morning, and following the service I went forward to be prayed for. As I was standing before the Lord at the front of the church, the

Spirit of God came upon me and I was slain in the Spirit. I lay flat on the floor and I could not move. As I lay there, the Lord again began to speak to me about my wife. He reasoned with me, "Who loves her more, you or Me?" I replied, "Well, You do, Lord." Then He asked, "Who has the power to look after her well-being, you or Me?" And of course, I had to acknowledge, "You do, Lord." Then the Lord said to me, "Then release her to Me." Instantly, grace was poured into my being and my heart melted, and I was empowered to release my wife to the Lord.

A few days later, at about ten o'clock in the morning, I was in my office in the parsonage. The Spirit of God entered the room. In a vision I saw Christ on the cross, but I was looking at Him from behind. Then I was caught up in the Spirit and I hung with Christ on the cross. I was *in* Christ, looking through His eyes down at the multitudes. At that moment I had a new appreciation of the verse that says, "Knowing that our old man was crucified with Him." I understood then that when Christ was on the cross our old man (or old nature) was upon the cross with Him. When Adam sinned, we were all in Adam and sinned also. Conversely, when Christ was on the cross, we were in Christ upon the cross with Him.

At that moment I felt a tremendous roll of the Spirit within my innermost being and it rolled and it rolled and it rolled. Suddenly, out from my mouth came the words from Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ." The peace and release that came to my soul was indescribable. Everyone has

their own unique experiences, but this particular experience helped me to “know” that I had been crucified with Christ. This “knowing” is essential. At that moment I became so vividly aware of the provision Christ made upon the cross to free us of the resistant fallen nature we are born with. How important it is to “know” by experience and by revelation that our old man was crucified with Christ, that our body of sin should be rendered inoperative (Rom. 6:6).

Christ paid our debt at the cross, but He accomplished much more than that. He also made provision for our old man (or old nature) to be arrested so that we could be freed from the power of sin and live a victorious life. Our old man was crucified with Him. This happened nearly 2,000 years ago. Yet until it becomes a personal revelation to us, the power and reality of it are not released to us. Therefore, we should seek for the experience of “knowing” that our old man [was] crucified with him, that the body of sin should be destroyed or rendered powerless. The reality of Romans 6:6 is a major key to holiness, and mortifying the lusts of the flesh.

After the word “knowing,” we come to the second word “reckoning” in Romans 6:11. To reckon means to “count or regard as being.” In other words, after we have had the experience of “knowing” that our old man was crucified with Christ, then we can reckon it so. We may then count it or regard it done. *Reckoning* is based upon *knowing*. We cannot reckon unless we first know. To illustrate this, when we write out a check, we cannot reckon that we have enough money in the bank to cover that check; we must know

that we do. This is not something we take by faith. Many Christians act like a person who writes out a check without knowing if they have funds in the bank. So often we hear people say, “Just reckon yourself dead to sin.” But we cannot reckon ourselves dead unless we have had an experience and a revelation of “knowing.”

After that experience in my office and also of my heart melting and being enabled to release my wife to the Lord, I realised as never before the power of the cross. I understood as never before that a provision had been made upon the cross to deal with my old man. My old man had been crucified with Christ, and the power and grace that is in Christ Jesus flowed out to me and transformed my life. This is the reason I emphasise that holiness is not attainable by ritual, legalism, works, rigid self-denials, or any other efforts of the flesh or natural mind. Holiness comes by being joined to Him who alone is holy, by union and communion and obedience to Him. Holiness comes by grace and by walking daily in the Spirit. Holiness grows out of a relationship with the One who is holy.

Finally, Romans 6:13 brings us to the third word—“yielding.” In Romans chapter 6 we have three important words—*knowing*, *reckoning*, and *yielding*. “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you . . .” (Rom. 6:13-14).

After we have experienced “knowing that our old man [was] crucified with Him” and “reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God,” we are then enabled to yield the members of our body unto God. The power to yield our members to God comes from the experience of “knowing” that our old man was crucified with Christ and upon reckoning it to be so. It is then that we have the power and the ability to make the choice for holiness. Even so, it is still a choice; it is still a battle. Yielding signifies a battle, but if we will choose God’s way, it is then that sin shall not have dominion over us.

3:3 - *“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”* Paul is saying that once we are baptised in water, we are in type dead with Christ, and our life is hidden with Him. However, the full reality of being “dead” comes after we experience Romans 6:6.

3:4 - *“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”* Our great hope when Christ appears is that we will appear with Him in His glory!

3:5 - *“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”* The word “mortify,” comes from the French word *mourir*, which means “to put to death.” This is not something that happens immediately. It is a process. The five cardinal sins mentioned here must be put to death in the members of our body.

How do we put these sins to death? Let us use the example of our physical body. In the natural, if we were to cut off the life flow to our arm, there are basically two things that we could do. One, we could put a tourniquet around our arm to cut off the blood circulation. This prevents our arm from being fed or nourished with life and oxygen. Second, we would not exercise our arm. Spiritually, these are the two keys to putting to death these five cardinal sins in the members of our body. We must not *feed* them, and we must not *exercise* them. The more we exercise and nourish these sins, the stronger they become. How do we feed these sins? They are fed by the five senses, and also our minds. What we constantly meditate upon, what we absorb with our eyes and ears, and what we touch can feed these sins. Therefore, we must stay away from those things that stimulate sin, and we must not practice these sins.

Fornication is a sexual vice. Fornication is a very strong force. Uncleanness means impurity, and especially sexual impurity. Inordinate affection is sexual appetite and lust. It can also speak of homosexuality. Evil concupiscence means unholy desires. We must carefully guard our desires. Covetousness is greed; it always wants to have more. I have known very rich people who have not been satisfied with what they had. They had to have more, and they would do anything to get more money and more possessions. Paul says that covetousness is idolatry. Covetousness worships what it wants; therefore, it is idolatry. The overbalanced prosperity message of recent years is idolatry. Its main thrust is how we can get more possessions and more

money. We must mortify or put to death these five cardinal sins if we are to be holy and acceptable in the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3:6-7 - *“For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.”* Paul is saying that these five sins bring God’s judgment upon a person. Some of the Colossian saints had practiced these sins before they were saved, and Paul warns them not to continue in them or drift back into them again.

3:8-9 - *“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.”* We must not confuse verse five with verse eight. They are two separate categories. The Word of God was written with extraordinary exactitude. The Apostle Paul is writing with mathematical exactitude under the anointing of the Spirit, and we must not confuse the context of these two verses. The sins listed in verse five are very strong and they have to be put to death over a period of time. However, the sins in verses eight and nine can be put off. As Christians, we have the power to put off these sins by the grace of God. *“Put off”* means to put these sins off like you would put off a coat.

These two groups of sins in verse five and verses eight through nine are split up. Some have to be put to death, but the sins in verses eight and nine can be put off by an

act of our will. We must not confuse these two lists of sins. It is of no use to try to put off fornication. Fornication has to be mortified or put to death, but lying can be “put off.”

3:10-11 - *“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”* There are two sides to holiness. There is a cleansing of evil and a putting off of sin, but we are not complete like that. We have to put on the new man and the characteristics of the new man. A little boy comes in from playing outside and all his clothes are dirty. His mom undresses him and takes all his dirty clothes off and washes him. However, his mother can’t let that little boy run around without clothes. She has to put clean clothes on him. In the same way, the Apostle Paul warns of Christians appearing unclothed before the presence of God (2 Cor. 5:3, cf. Rev. 16:15). The shame of our nakedness must be clothed and covered with His garments (see also Rev. 3:18).

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge.” The new man, or Christ within us, is strengthened as we feed him. We strengthen the new man

As Christians, we have the power to put off sin by the grace of God. “Put off” means to put these sins off like you would put off a coat.

by feeding on the Word of God. He grows according to knowledge. As we increase in the knowledge of God's Word, and as we come to know the Lord more and more, our new man is strengthened. That is the reason we have to read the Word of God and spend time with the Lord in prayer every day.

3:12 - "*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.*" Now we come to the subject of "putting on." Holiness involves mortifying, or putting to death, certain sins that are in the members of our body. Other sins we are commanded to "put off" as a garment. Now, we are told to "put on" as a garment the following virtues. In verses twelve through fifteen, Paul lists ten virtues, or spiritual garments, that every Christian should put on. How do we put on these spiritual garments? These garments belong to God; therefore, God has to initiate them. God has to start dealing with us and speaking to us about these different virtues. The first garment is *bowels of mercies*. We will use mercy to illustrate how we put on these spiritual garments. God wants us to be merciful to people. Therefore, He starts by speaking to us about being merciful. In the New Testament era, garments were put on over the head. That helps us to understand how to put on spiritual garments. This process of putting on these spiritual garments starts by putting them on over the head.

First of all, our mind has to be immersed with thoughts of mercy. Then, when God starts speaking to us about being merciful, we respond to God by studying all the Scriptures

on mercy. We should envelop our mind with the garment of mercy.

Then the garment is pulled down over the chest area. Mercy, and all these other garments, must then go from our mind and cover our heart. As our heart is consumed with thoughts of mercy, our emotions and reactions become merciful. Then the garment is pulled down over our inwards, which is the seat of our affections. Our affections must be rooted in mercy. Eventually the garment completely clothes us and covers our legs and feet; and we walk in mercy. In this way, we become a merciful person. Every part of our being is immersed with mercy. Our spirit becomes merciful and we are transformed into a merciful person, just like Jesus our merciful High Priest (Heb. 2:17).

The Ten Virtues of the Perfect Law of Liberty

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mercy | 2. Kindness |
| 3. Humbleness of mind | 4. Meekness |
| 5. Longsuffering | 6. Forbearance |
| 7. Forgiveness | 8. Love |
| 9. Peace | 10. Thankfulness |

Mercy is very important because it is the highest revelation of God. In the Tabernacle of Moses, the mercy seat covered the tables of the law, which were in the Ark of the Covenant. God's mercy is over and above the law. Upon the mercy seat of gold were the two cherubim, which represent Gabriel

and Michael. When there was an uprising in heaven, these two were kept from rebellion, but a third covering cherub, Lucifer, was not. It is only the mercy of God that keeps us from rebellion.

It is God's sole prerogative to show mercy. God showed mercy unto David, but He did not show mercy unto Saul. He showed mercy unto Peter, but not unto Judas. We must learn to only show mercy when God shows mercy. However, we must always lean toward mercy.

1 John 3:17 says, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Bowels of compassion are mercy. John says when we see a brother in need, we should take steps to meet that need. Moses said: "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth" (Deut.15:7- 8). Mercy compels us to have an open hand.

The second spiritual garment Paul tells us to put on is *kindness*. Philippians 2:4 says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." The thought here is that we should consider others first. There must be a deep kindness in our hearts for others. Even in our conversations, we should not do all the talking. Instead,

we should develop a listening ear. This is an act of the will. Kindness is a garment we can choose to put on.

Humbleness of mind is the third spiritual garment. This garment is very, very important. Humility is the key to receiving God's grace, and since every thing comes by grace, humility is the key to life (Jas. 4:6). Philippians 2:3 says in the NIV, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." We must look upon others as being better than ourselves. Our minds need humility so that we do not think that we are greater than we actually are (see Rom. 12:3, Gal. 6:3, I Cor. 8:2).

Humility is rooted in three aspects of truth. The fact that we are created beings is the first truth. We came into this world as helpless infants. David said, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:4). We are created beings, and we gain the proper perspective of ourselves as we go out into the night and look up into the heavens that God created. How insignificant man really is in comparison to the whole universe. The first time I flew in an airplane, I was awed as I saw the people on the ground become smaller and smaller as we ascended. Yet, God still humbles Himself to look upon man.

The second aspect of humility is that we are fallen sinners and that we are unable to change our nature. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." We have all come short of that for which we were

created. We were born with all the works of the flesh in our blood because we come from Adam (Gal. 5:19-21). There is nothing good in us, except that which the Lord deposits in our lives.

The third truth that humility is rooted in is the fact that we are recipients of God's grace. Anything we accomplish can only be done through the grace of God. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 the Apostle Paul says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Wherein is boasting? We are absolutely nothing. We were created from the dust, and to the dust we shall return. We are only what we are by the grace of God. Also, man is unable to control his future or understand himself, apart from divine aid (Jer. 10:23).

The fourth garment is *meekness*. Meekness is that holy acceptance with joy of all our circumstances as coming from God. When meekness is worked out in our lives, it does not really matter what happens, or what people do to us. When meekness is within us, we see everything from God's standpoint, and there is a holy acceptance of circumstances.

Meekness is the strength not to demand vindication; it is not fighting back when people speak evil about us, or seek to hurt us. Meekness does not respond or react harshly, and it does not become angry. Meekness is the ability to overcome injustices. Meekness is a garment we can choose to put on by grace. On the other hand, we can harden our heart and refuse the grace of God.

Longsuffering is the fifth garment. Longsuffering is one of the greatest virtues of God. It is a description of God Himself (Ex. 34:6), because God is longsuffering with His people (Rom. 2:4). Longsuffering means to suffer for a long time, and it is always related to people. Longsuffering is essential for leadership because some people take a long time before they turn to God and flourish. We knew a very godly lady in Switzerland who married a man who claimed to be a Christian, but in actuality he was not. She prayed for her husband for 50 years. Three months before his death, he turned to the Lord. She had to suffer a long time with him; and yet he made it to heaven because she had clothed herself with the garment of longsuffering.

3:13 - *“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”* The sixth spiritual garment that we are to put on is *forbearance*. Forbearance is different than longsuffering; and we must differentiate between the two. Forbearance is to bear with a sin in a person’s life that God has not yet dealt with. People might say, “That person irritates me because of this nasty sin.”

I remember a certain lady we met many years ago in Germany. She had prayed for years for her husband and after many years he accepted the Lord. The lady complained to her pastor, “My husband still has not changed.” The pastor said to her, “Certainly he has changed,” and he went on to list numerous sins that he had stopped committing. The lady said, “Yes, but he still has quite a temper.” The pastor said, “That irritates you, doesn’t it?” She said, “It sure

does.” The pastor then said to her, “The reason God has not yet dealt with anger in your husband is because He is trying to work out forbearance in your life.” Sometimes God is slow to deal with an annoying problem in those close to us because He wants something adjusted in our own life first (Prov. 16:7, 2 Cor. 10:6).

Forgiveness is the seventh garment. Forgiveness is very important. We must always have a forgiving spirit and not hold grudges against people. However, forgiveness is not the same as restoration. We must always forgive people when they wrong us, or when they sin; however, you do not restore them to former positions until you see the fruits of repentance in their life. So many people say to their pastor after they have sinned so grievously and been untrustworthy, “Please forgive me.” Their pastor should forgive them and embrace them; but he should not restore them to their former position until they have been proven and tested to see if their repentance is genuine. They have to be put on probation for a time.

There is only one way for forgiveness to be worked out in us—it effectively works in us when people betray and hurt us deeply. When people do things that do not immediately affect us or concern us, it is easy to forgive them. But when there is a direct assault against us, and they hurt us and speak evil about us, it is difficult to forgive them. Therefore, we must release that hurt to God and forgive them. Otherwise, we will not be forgiven of our sins (Mt. 6:15). Forgiveness is a garment we can choose to put on by God’s grace.

3:14 - *“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”* Love is the eighth spiritual garment that we are to put on. Love is the bond of perfection. Christ said in Matthew 5:48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” This almost seems like an impossible commandment. Yet, when we study the Word of God, we find that love and Christian perfection are equivalent.

There are four Greek words that are rendered love:

1.) Eros - *The love between a husband and wife.* We need to perfect our love for our spouse. Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” That is an awesome standard for a husband.

2.) Phileo - *The love between friends.* This is like the love that David and Jonathan had for each other.

3.) Storgé - *The love between parents and children.* This is the natural affection and bond between parents and children.

4.) Agape - *Unconquerable, unselfish benevolence.* This is God’s love. God’s love is sacrificial unto death. It is totally unselfish and requires nothing in return. It is defined in 1 Corinthians 13.

Negative Aspects of love

Love Never:

- Envy
- Lifts itself up
- Is arrogant
- Is ill-mannered
- Is selfish
- Is bad tempered
- Records wrong
- Rejoices in evil

Positive Aspects of love

Love Always:

- Suffers long
- Is kind
- Rejoices in the truth
- Bears all things
- Takes the kindest
view of all things
- Hopes for the best in people
- Endures and never fails

Love never records wrong. I know some people who can remember everything that others have ever done to them. On one occasion, we were counselling a husband and wife, and the wife listed everything that her husband had ever done wrong, beginning from the time of their engagement. She ended this by saying, “But, of course, I have forgiven him.” We told her that she had not truly forgiven her husband because forgiveness is rooted in forgetfulness. If we keep bringing up the past, we have not totally forgiven. Joseph’s firstborn son was named Manasseh, which means *forgetfulness*. Joseph named him Manasseh because at that point in his life, God had caused him to forget all the injustices his brethren had done to him (Gen. 41:51).

God quickened this to me many years ago when I was in Switzerland, where many would come to us for counsel.

God was gracious and He would give us the keys to help these people, but afterwards I could look at those people and remember everything they had said, and even all of their sins. Finally, I said to the Lord one day, “Lord, I cannot continue like this. I do not want to be a cesspool.” The Lord said to me, “Ask me for your personal *Manasseh*.” I did so, and after that I could counsel a person and 20 minutes later I could not remember anything they had told me.

Forgiveness is rooted in *forgetfulness*. Love does not remember all the evil that people have done against us. Love also hopes for the best in people. That is the heart of a true pastor. Some of the pastors in our fellowship tell me different things that people in their churches are doing. Yet they say to me, “Although they are doing all these things, I have a hope that they will change.”

3:15 - “*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*” *Peace* is the ninth garment we should put on. Paul tells us to allow the peace of God to rule in our hearts. We need to be ruled by peace and not be restless and frantic. There are basically two aspects of peace:

1.) Peace *with* God. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace *with* God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Justification can be easily explained by the illustration of a typewriter. When you type on a typewriter, the left side is perfectly straight, but the right margin is jagged and one line is longer than the other. A printer can

straighten the right margin line by line. This process is called *justification*. That is what God does; He straightens us line by line. As we allow the Lord to straighten us, we have peace with God. However, if we do not allow Him to straighten us in a certain area, we lose our peace. This peace puts us on good terms with the Lord. Yet at the same time, we can be filled with many other anxieties and fears. Not only do we need peace *with* God, but we need the peace *of* God.

2.) Peace of God. Jesus said: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (Jn.14:27). Having the peace *of* God is different than having peace *with* God.

When my wife and I were in a certain city one night, I was asking the Lord for a Scripture, and He spoke to me, “Troublous times are coming.” In the morning the windows and walls in our hotel room started to crack from an earthquake. Instantly, it was as though a tent or canopy covered us and we had such peace. We were not worried at all because we were covered with the peace of God. The peace *of* God is a higher level of peace than having peace *with* God.

“*And be ye thankful.*” Paul continues in verse fifteen by admonishing us to be thankful. *Thankfulness* is the tenth garment that we are to put on. It is the tenth virtue of the law of liberty. We are to give thanks *in* all things (1 Th. 5:18). However, Ephesians 5:20 goes on to say

that we are to thank God *for* all things as well. This is a higher degree of thankfulness. We need to major in thankfulness; for we purify ourselves from all murmuring and complaining as we thank the Lord and others. My wife thanks me for everything I do for her. Thankfulness is the key to keeping our well unblocked, and it is an integral part of holiness.

3:16 - *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”* In the beginning God planted a garden, and He put man and woman in that garden. After the fall, He had to take Adam and Eve out of the garden so they would not partake of the tree of life. Since that time, God has been seeking to plant a garden in the hearts of His people, a garden into which He may come and walk.

This is clearly seen in the Song of Songs 4:12-16, where God likens His bride to a beautiful garden with nine herbs growing abundantly in it. These nine herbs answer to the nine fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. In Song of Songs 5:1 the Lord said, “I am come into my garden.” Here we see a new entrance of the Lord into the life of a believer who has allowed his heart to be carefully cultivated so that it is flourishing with the fruits of the Spirit. Not only does the Lord delight Himself in the fruit of such a garden, He also longs to share that fruit with others. And where does that fruit come from? It comes from the quality seeds that have been sown—those rich and wise seeds of the

Word of God. Therefore, we want the Word of God to dwell richly and abundantly in our hearts.

We must have truth, but truth must be cradled in wisdom. We must have the wisdom to know what to do with truth. Paul says in Ephesians 1:8 that God has abounded toward us in all wisdom. God knows exactly how to handle us. He knows when to do a certain thing in our lives, and when not to. God wants us to be like that with one another.

The Word of God must be in our hearts, but in all wisdom. We must know when to speak a certain truth to a person, and when not to speak that truth. Wisdom will enable us to know when to teach and admonish one another, so that we speak in God's perfect timing. There are times when it would be damaging to deal with an issue in someone's life. We must wait until it is God's time to address that issue. Ask God to show you how to speak a word in season (Isa. 50:4).

“Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” We have to minister not only to one another, but also to ourselves. This is a spiritual exercise. This is brought out so beautifully in Ephesians 5:19 where Paul says, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Someone might ask, “How can we speak to ourselves?” We have a classic example of this in Psalm 43:5. When David

wrote this, he was being pursued by 20,000 of the Israeli troops under the command of Absalom, and he only had about one thousand men with him. David spoke to himself saying: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

We must remember that we have a body, a soul, and a spirit. The soul is the centre of our emotions, and it is governed by whether it is a nice day or a bad day. Many Christians are very soulish. If it is nice and sunny outside, they are happy; but if it is cloudy and rainy, they become depressed and sad. If we are governed by our soul, we will be governed by our circumstances.

The soul of David had every reason to be cast down. There were 20,000 men pursuing David, and David only had about one thousand men with him. He was tremendously outnumbered. However, what was David’s reaction to his soul? He spoke to his soul and took command over it. This is what we must do. Our spirit has to take command over our soul, so that irrespective of circumstances our spirit looks to God and praises Him. Then the faith of the Son of God will fill our being, rather than anxiety and gloom.

There is also resident within us a spiritual well. The Lord said, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be *in him* a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Jn. 4:14). Also, on Israel’s journey from Egypt to Zion, the

Lord commanded them in Numbers 21:16-17 to dig a well and then to sing to it. “Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it.”

In like manner, we have to sing to the well of living water that is in us. The Holy Spirit must spring up and bubble up within us. How does it spring up? It springs up within us as we minister to it by singing psalms and spiritual songs in our hearts. This is a spiritual exercise whereby we dominate our souls, and we release the Spirit of God within us through praise and worship. We must not only praise and worship the Lord in church, but also in our homes and when we are in our cars. Wherever we are, we should be singing to the Lord in our hearts. May the song of the Lord ever come forth through our lips.

3:17 - *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”* The life of holiness continues in verse seventeen. Everything we do should be done for the Lord. Whether we are hammering a nail, sweeping the floors, cooking, caring for someone; whatever it may, it should all be done for the Lord. Everything we say should be said on behalf of the Lord. Isaiah 58:13 tells us not to speak our own words. It is only possible to come into the true Sabbath of rest when we speak only when God tells us to speak. All ministry and everything we do should be done as unto the Lord.

If we fail on this point, we will be discarded somewhere along the way. We must examine our motives and be sure that

we are seeking God's honour alone, and not man's honour. The heart will never be troubled with jealousy when our motives are pure. Jealousy is the fruit of exalting ourselves and drawing attention to ourselves.

* * * * *

Part Eight

3:18 - 4:6

FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE

Now we come to part eight of Colossians (3:18 - 4:6), which concerns family and social life. The Church is a collection of families. As it is in the home, so will it also be in the Church. If Christianity is not real in the home, it will not be real in the Church. Therefore, family life is extremely important.

3:18 - *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”* First of all, Paul speaks of the relationship between husbands and wives. We must understand that there is a hierarchy. First there is Christ, then the husband, and then the wife. A wife must obey her husband, and must submit to him in the Lord. Paul qualifies the command for wives to submit to their husbands by saying, *“as it is fit in the Lord.”* Obviously, a wife cannot obey her husband if he tells her to do something that is unlawful, because that would violate the law of Christ which is higher than her husband’s commandments.

3:19 - *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”* Paul amplifies this truth in Ephesians 5:25, saying, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” The standard for a husband is phenomenal. The husband is required by the Lord to care for his wife as Christ cares for the Church. Christ

is the Head of the Church, and the husband is the head of the wife (1 Cor. 11:3). The head gives the body direction and guidance; and that is what a husband must do for his wife. The husband must provide for his wife, and care for her every need—body, soul, and spirit. I have known ministers who have been told by God that they are responsible for the spiritual progress of their wives. This is a very high standard for a husband. Therefore, unless we make perfection our goal, we will never come into it. Perfection must be the cry of our hearts; and if we are married we must cry out to the Lord, “Make me a good husband and shepherd to my wife, fashioned according to the specifications of Your Word!”

The wife was created to be a helpmeet for her husband; and the two are to walk together, hand in hand. I think it is very important for the wife to come into the same spiritual experiences of the husband because that is the only way she can truly be a helpmeet. What a husband wants is someone to share his heart with and someone to understand him. However, if the wife has not entered into the same experience as her husband, how will she be able to empathise with him? A couple must walk together as one.

3:20 - *“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”* All that a child has to do is to obey. The fifth commandment requires us to honour our parents. However, I would add that there are times when children should not obey their parents if their parents’ commandment contradicts what God is telling them to do. For example, if a young man has the call of God to go to Bible

school and his parents frown upon it, he must go anyway because God's will and law is higher than our parents' law. I would not be in the ministry today if I had obeyed my father in *all* things. My father was a very godly man, but he wanted me to pursue a different career than the ministry. Yet I knew in my heart that God had called me to the ministry. Thus, I had to go against his word to follow the Lord's will for my life. I have always honoured my father. I have always respected him and spoken well of him, but I have not always obeyed him. Children must always obey their parents, unless what their parents are telling them to do interferes with the will of God (Mt. 10:37-38).

3:21 - *“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”* One of the things that we have to realise in dealing with people, especially our children, is that we must not put upon them more than God puts upon them. If we do, they will surely become discouraged. This is so important when we are dealing with our children. We must not require and expect too much of them or they will lose all their joy and turn from the path of God. The human heart will rebel and go in the opposite direction when the stipulations are overbearing.

3:22 - *“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.”* God's eyes are everywhere. He is watching what we do when no one else is watching us. According to our attitude and how well we perform our tasks, God rewards and promotes us. Therefore, we should do all

things with a consciousness that we are being watched by the Lord at all times. Some people perform their duties only with *eyeservice*. In other words, they only do a good job when others are looking on. Yet, when no one is watching they slack off, and this is a lack of character.

3:23 - *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”* We must do all things with all of our hearts as unto the Lord, and not as unto men. Right attitudes and faithfulness when no one is watching determines whether we are going to be promoted and exalted to a higher position. If a person is faithful in that which is least, he will be faithful with greater responsibilities (Lk. 16:10). In business, and in virtually every area of life, a person starts at the bottom. If he is faithful in sweeping the floors or in other menial tasks, he is elevated to higher things. But if he is not faithful, he will not be promoted.

3:24 - *“Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”* There is either a reward or a demerit for everything we do. This is the reason we must be faithful in everything. One of the men from Church history that I love so very much is Brother Lawrence, whose duty in the monastery was to wash dishes. He was so faithful in washing the dishes that he became the confidant of many nobles in France. Therefore, it is not necessarily our job that counts, but how well we do our job. I commend to you the book that Brother Lawrence wrote entitled, *Practicing the Presence of God*. He practiced the presence of God in the kitchen, and God

promoted him and gave him an eternal name because even today his life and writings are greatly appreciated by Christians of all denominations.

3:25 - *“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”*

God is not a respecter of persons. Many people think they are going to get away with things, but they are sadly mistaken. We do not get away with anything in this life. I have lived long enough to see the end of people, and I have always seen that people who do not walk uprightly always pay for it in the end. If we set ourselves in opposition to something that is right, God marks us, and ultimately we will be judged.

CHAPTER FOUR

4:1 - *“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”* A Scripture that is very important for leaders and administrators is what King David said in 2 Samuel 23:3, “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” We have to treat everyone uprightly and equally. This is something that is an absolute necessity for leadership.

In the British Army, officers cannot go to bed until all the soldiers who are under their care are in bed. If their men are out on manoeuvres, or out in the field, the officers cannot go to bed until they make sure that all their men are looked after and cared for. If that is the standard for the British

Army, how much more should those who are leaders in the Church care for those for whom they have responsibility?

4:2 - *“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”* In another place Paul said, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Th. 5:17). Charles Spurgeon was once asked how long he prayed. He replied, “I never pray for more than ten minutes, but ten minutes does not pass that I am not praying again.” His life was a life of prayer. We must enter into this high degree of prayer whereby we are constantly communing with the Lord. Paul now mentions thanksgiving again. Remember, Paul was in a Roman prison when he was writing this, and thanksgiving was his constant theme. Thankfulness is the key to victory.

4:3-4 - *“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”* Here was Paul in a Roman prison asking the Colossian saints to pray for him. What tremendous humility and lowliness of mind on the part of Paul. He asked them to pray for him that a door of utterance to preach would be opened to him. Even while Paul was a prisoner of the Roman emperor, Nero, he was a witness to the whole palace. He had a tremendous impact on Caesar’s household (Phil. 4:22).

Verses three and four were made so real to my wife and me when we were in Thailand. In Thailand, the missionaries were going through a very rough time. It was as though

there were no open doors for them to minister. God then gave us these two verses, and we told them to write to their churches that supported them, asking them to pray that God would open a door of utterance for them. God answered those prayers and opened up numerous doors of ministry for them to proclaim the gospel of Christ.

4:5 - *“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.”* It is important that we witness to the unsaved, but we need to have wisdom to know *how* we should witness to them. Often our lives are the most powerful witnesses; our lives have a greater impact than our words. If Christianity is real in us, it will affect people even if we do not say anything to them. However, we need to know when to speak up and when to be silent.

“Redeeming the time.” Life is very short. We only have a small amount of time to do all that God has called us to do. Therefore, we must cut the “nonessentials” out of our schedules—those things that are not really important to the Lord. We need to redeem the time and make every minute count (see Ps. 90:12, Eph. 5:16).

4:6 - *“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”* We must always be gracious with our words. The Lord’s words were very gracious—so much so that the multitudes marvelled (Lk. 4:22). The power of life and death is in our speech (Prov. 18:21). Therefore, the life of God should flow from our lips.

+We are going to be put in situations where people challenge us on certain issues, and we will be asked what we believe and why we believe it. At that moment, we need to have wisdom from God to know the precise answer we should give, so that God can anoint it and use it to make an impact upon their lives.

Part Nine

4:7-18

PERSONAL NEWS

4:7 - *“All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord.”* Paul now mentions Tychicus, and he says three very wonderful things about him in verse seven. He says he is a beloved brother. There are some brothers in Christ who do not merit that adjective of “beloved.” He was also a faithful minister and a fellowservant in the Lord. We need to covet these three attributes for our own lives. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were all written at the same time, and delivered by Tychicus to their destinations.

4:8 - *“Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts.”* Tychicus wrote this letter for Paul, and he delivered it to the Colossian church. Paul could not always travel to places, especially at this particular time since he was in prison in Rome. Thus, he would send people he trusted to the different churches, who would come back and give him a report of the state of the churches.

4:9 - *“With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.”* Paul would often send people out in sets of two’s. Onesimus was going to go with Tychicus to Colosse. Onesimus, as we will see in the book of Philemon, was from

the city of Colosse. That is why Paul says that Onesimus is one of them. We will study the life of Onesimus in the book of Philemon. The whole book of Philemon was written for the sake of Onesimus.

4:10 - *“Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)”* Aristarchus was a prisoner with the Apostle Paul. So

We should pray for those who fail at a young age that they may rise above their failure and make it in God.

Paul was obviously not alone in prison. The Marcus referred to here is John Mark who had previously failed miserably (Acts 13:13), but was now restored back into fellowship. He was related to Barnabas. We should pray for those who fail at

a young age (usually because of immaturity) that they may rise above their failure and make it in God.

4:11 - *“And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.”* Jesus was a very common name in New Testament times. Many Christians would change their name from Jesus to another name after they came to Christ. Jesus, who was called Justus, was *of the circumcision*. In other words, he was a Jew. The ministry of Peter was primarily to the “circumcision,” or the Jews (Gal. 2:7-8).

4:12 - *“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”* Epaphras was the one who founded the Colossian church. Epaphras means, “faithful one.” Epaphras was known as the praying servant. What a tremendous ministry he had. Paul calls the ministry of prayer a labour. **Praying is hard work.** How wonderful it is when God raises up people in our churches who pray for us that we might stand perfect in all the will of God.

4:13 - *“For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis.”* Epaphras had a great love and zeal for the believers in Colosse. Laodicea and Hierapolis, as we have already mentioned, were the two neighbouring cities of Colosse.

4:14 - *“Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.”* Luke, the beloved physician, had accompanied Paul on his journey to Rome. Luke was not only a physician, he was also an able historian who authored the gospel that bears his name, and also the Acts of the Apostles, which records much of the life of Paul. Luke was with Paul on many of his travels, and they were very close to each other. What a tremendous privilege Luke had to be close to the Apostle Paul, who was such a great man of God.

Then Paul speaks of Demas, another comrade who was with him at the time of the writing of the Colossian epistle. Paul was in a Roman prison for two years, from A.D. 61-63. It was

during this time that he wrote to the church in Colosse. He was later released in January, A.D.63 and was free for four years until A.D.67 when he was imprisoned again. It was then that he wrote his second epistle to Timothy. Paul was executed soon after in May or June of A.D.68. Therefore, it could not have been more than six years from the writing of the Colossian epistle to the time Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy. Demas, just six years before, was found worthy to be mentioned in Holy Scripture.

Yet, we later read in 2 Timothy 4:10, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.” Can you imagine the anointing that was upon the Apostle Paul, and what it was like to be in his presence? Everyone who came in contact with Paul must have been affected by that anointing. Demas had the tremendous privilege of being with Paul. However, a short time later he forsook Paul because he loved this present world. He had a *golden* opportunity, yet he took it lightly. This is an awesome warning to us to highly esteem the blessings of God and those who are close to Him. May we ever seek to be loyal and faithful to our godly spiritual fathers and mothers unto the end.

4:15 - “*Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*” Paul gave general salutations to the brethren at Laodicea and to Nymphas who had a church in his house. This was the custom in New Testament times. Nymphas is believed to be Philemon, who also had a church in his house (Philm. 1:1-2).

4:16 - *“And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”* Paul gave instructions for this epistle to the Colossians to be read in Laodicea, and he told them to read the letter he wrote to the Laodiceans. Paul obviously wrote many letters to different churches. In the wisdom of God, some letters have been preserved for us in the canon of Scripture, whereas others have not. Paul’s letter to the Laodiceans is not preserved for us today. However, we do have a record of what Christ said to the Laodicean church in the book of Revelation (Rev. 3:14-22).

4:17 - *“And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.”* Here was a man who had received a ministry from God. He had been called and chosen of God, and yet he was being negligent of the high calling God had given him. May we take heed to fulfil all that God has called us to do. Archippus was given this personal admonition from Paul, and it is recorded forever because he was not fulfilling his ministry. We must be faithful to our calling and ministry so that we can hear those words, “Well done thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mt. 25:21).

4:18 - *“The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.”* Paul wrote this last verse himself. He cries out to the Colossian believers to remember his bonds and his trial; he was entreating their prayers. **Oh, how we need to pray for those who are going**

through difficulties. He concludes by wishing them the grace of the Lord.

What a triumphant epistle this is, yet written by a man who was in prison. Paul was enduring all kinds of hardships and betrayal, yet he had great victory in Christ Jesus. This is a very wonderful epistle, and I encourage you to read it and meditate upon it often; for it shows us the way to holiness and victory in Jesus. Amen.

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The Epistle of Paul

the Apostle to

PHILEMON

THE RESTORATION OF ONESIMUS

Introduction

The epistle to Philemon was written by the Apostle Paul from Rome. It is the only *private* epistle in the whole of Scripture. It was written to a person, not a church, and it concerned a private matter. The entire epistle is an appeal by Paul to Philemon, primarily on behalf of Onesimus, a runaway slave of Philemon.

Onesimus had been converted to Christ through Paul's teachings, and the Apostle was asking Philemon in this letter to forgive Onesimus and receive him back into his household as a brother in Christ. Philemon, the bishop of the church at Colosse, was apparently a very close friend of the Apostle Paul. It appears that Paul was responsible for Philemon's conversion, and may have even installed him as the bishop of the Colossian church.

1:1 - *“Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother; unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer.”* Paul begins this epistle in a fashion different than most of his epistles. He presents himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ, or as one who was in need. Why did Paul write this epistle? Paul wanted to ask of his friend Philemon a very large favour. Therefore, he does not write to him from the standpoint of his apostolic authority, but he writes to him as one who is seeking a favour.

The Apostle Paul never looked at himself as a prisoner of Rome. He always looked at himself as a prisoner of the King of kings, rather than a prisoner of the emperor of Rome. One of Paul's striking virtues was that he always looked beyond his circumstances. No matter how unjust his circumstances were, he always saw the Lord as the author of every situation. This is why Paul was always triumphant and victorious in his life.

We need to have this mentality too. It is imperative to look beyond our circumstances and see God as sovereignly ruling over everything. We should realise that Romans 8:28—"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God"—either works all the time, or it never works.

Timothy was Paul's companion and spiritual son. Timothy, the one who was closest to Paul, joined him in this appeal to Philemon. Philemon himself must have been a very wonderful person, for he was dearly beloved by Paul and the brethren. He was also a fellow labourer of Paul.

1:2 - "*And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house.*" Archippus is the same man mentioned in Colossians 4:17. Apphia was his wife. It is quite possible that Archippus and Apphia were related to Philemon. "*To the church in thy house.*" We have to understand what the houses were like in the days of the New Testament. The houses were usually walled, and many of them had substantial courtyards. The churches would often meet in the interior courtyards.

1:3 - *“Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* This was the conventional greeting of the New Testament era. The two basic meanings of grace are: 1.) divine, unmerited favour; and 2.) divine enablement. Paul is praying that God would show His favour to Philemon and also give him divine enablement to fulfil His will. Peace is something that the world craves, but *true* peace and tranquillity are only found in Christ, who is the Prince of Peace. He is the God of peace (Rom. 16:20, 1 Th. 5:23).

1:4 - *“I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers.”* We see that Philemon obviously had a very close relationship with Paul. Paul was a man who prayed much for his spiritual children and for those he was close to. The more we love people, the more we pray for them. (See Phil. 1:3-4.)

1:5 - *“Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints.”* Philemon fulfilled the two greatest commandments of the law (Mt. 22:36- 40). He demonstrated great love, both for God and man. In fact, his name means “affectionate.” In order to truly love the brethren, we must first love the Lord. Paul speaks of Philemon’s great love for the Lord, out of which flowed a deep love and appreciation for the brethren. We must spend time every day nurturing our love for the Lord. The one who truly loves the Lord will also love the brethren. We must never get that order reversed.

This is a very interesting verse. Normally, faith comes first and then love, but here the order is reversed. In verse five,

Philemon's love is placed before his faith. In 2 Peter 1:5-8, we have the eight steps to Christian perfection. Faith is the first step and love is the last step.

Eight Steps to Christian Perfection

1.) Faith. Faith is essential for salvation. Ephesians 2:8 says that we are saved by faith. Faith is the first step in the Christian walk. It is the foundation for every other virtue in the Christian life. Every blessing we possess is by grace through faith. 2 Peter 1:5-8 exhorts us to add seven other virtues to our faith.

2.) Virtue (or moral purity). To faith we must add virtue. We should seek to control the impurities of the body (1 Th. 4:3). Samson had faith, but he did not add virtue to his faith, and crashed. We should also seek to have pure motives (Ps. 24:4).

3.) Knowledge. To virtue it is necessary to add the knowledge of God's Word and the knowledge of God Himself. We must study and meditate on God's Word and seek to know Him (Jer. 9:24). We must ever pray with the Apostle Paul, "That I may know Christ" (Phil. 3:10). The knowledge presented here is the kind of intimate knowledge that married people share.

4.) Temperance (or self-control). To knowledge we must add self-control. We have to be disciplined. Our thought- life, affections, walk, and deeds have to be disciplined. Only those who are disciplined succeed in life. It is imperative that

we come under the disciplines of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Himself learned obedience by the things He suffered (Heb. 5:8). Unless we are willing to come under the yoke and harness of Christ and be disciplined by Him, it is absolutely futile to think that we will ever succeed in life. **Discipline is one of the key components of the spiritual life.**

Discipline or self-control is a vital key!

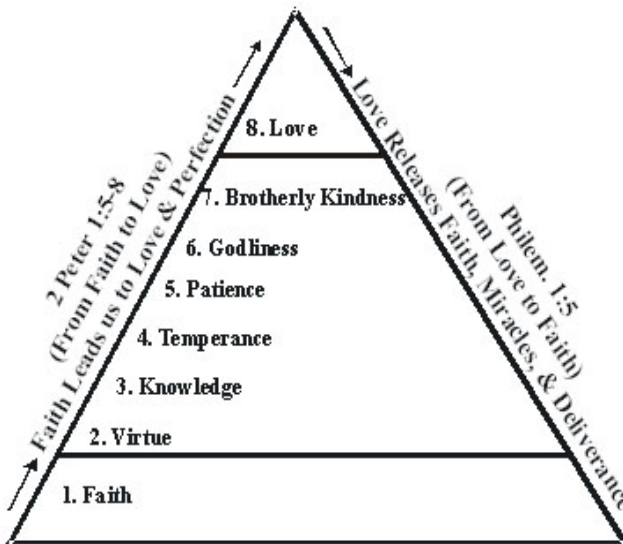
5.) Patience. In the original Greek, **patience means endurance.** Therefore, it is endurance that overcomes obstacles. It is only the overcomers who inherit the promises (Heb. 10:36, Rev. 21:7), and this involves putting up with delays. In the Christian life, and especially in leadership, we will encounter one frustration after another. It is only as the endurance of Christ is worked out in our lives that we can triumph. So many Christians give up when the going gets rough. It is estimated that ninety percent of missionaries who are sent out to certain countries do not fulfil their first term. They give up and quit. William Pitt, a former Prime Minister of England, said **that patience (or endurance) was the most important attribute for a leader.**

6.) Godliness. This means to be like God and to fully and correctly resemble Him. It means to bear His likeness and character. This requires a life of seeking Him and running after Him with all of our hearts. We should constantly be crying out to be more like Him.

7.) Brotherly kindness. This means love for the brethren. This is obeying the commandment of Jesus to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Mt. 22:39). Brotherly kindness is demonstrated by practical means such as helping the poor or afflicted.

8.) Love (or charity). This is God’s love (*agape* love) in us. This is the top of the mountain in the Christian life. Love is the bond of perfection (Col. 3:14).

Eight Steps To Perfection And Power



When we have climbed the ladder from faith to love (which is the mark of maturity), we may then come down the mountain, even as Christ came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, and our love will release faith, miracles, and deliverance to others.

This diagram helps us to understand what Peter (2 Pet. 1:5-8) and Paul (Philm. 1:5) are talking about. Peter tells us to add seven virtues to our faith. Faith is the foundation of our Christian life. He lists love as the summit of Christian perfection and maturity. From a heart of love, we release the faith and power of God. Christ went up the Mount of Transfiguration, which speaks of coming to perfection and glory. However, Jesus did not remain on the mountaintop, as Peter suggested, but He came down from that experience to minister in faith and power to the multitudes in the valley (Mt. 17:1-18, Lk. 9:28-42). We only accomplish *part* of God's will if we come to maturity and love, but do not then minister in faith to the multitudes. The left side of the mountain speaks of our character, and the right side of the mountain speaks of our ministry which is a product of godly character. We must have both in our lives to be complete.

We can only give to others what we have (Acts 3:6). Paul tells Philemon in verse six to allow that which God had done in him to be shared with others. Having ascended the mountain of Christian perfection, we can release the faith of God from a heart of love to do miracles and meet the needs of people. If we are called upon to teach, we must believe God for revelation from His Word, so that we can present people with good doctrine. We must release that faith from a heart of love. Many accounts in the Gospels say that Jesus, being moved with compassion, healed the sick (cf. Mt. 9:36, 14:14, Mk. 1:41). Love and a heart that cares for others is the key to miracles and healings. It is from love that we release the faith of God to meet people's needs. Galatians 5:6 says,

“Faith works [or operates] by love.” **Having a heart that is totally committed to the Lord and in love with Him is the key to having His faith and His power.**

1:6 - *“That the communication [or outrushing] of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.”* The tendency in some Christian circles is to dwell on one’s faults and failures. Of course, we want to seek the Lord to be totally cleansed of the self-life; but there is another side to this. We must acknowledge and emphasise the good things that God has put in us. We must acknowledge what He has worked out in us and what He has given us by His grace.

The word “communication” is the Greek word, “koinonia,” which can also be interpreted *fellowship*. However, in this verse, a better rendering is “outrushing.” We have to acknowledge what is in us in order to release the faith of God. It is the same with spiritual gifts. We must acknowledge that God has given us certain spiritual gifts; and we must know those spiritual gifts. **If we have prophecy, we need to seek the Lord to release that which He has given us so that we can bring forth the spirit of prophecy for the edification of the church.**

1:7 - *“For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels [or inwards] of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.”* When Paul thought about Philemon, it gave him great joy. Philemon consoled the heart of Paul. When we are leaders, people will often disappoint us. It is

such a joy to our heart when someone like Philemon, who was a spiritual son of Paul, is wholehearted for the Lord. Paul was saying to himself, “At least I have a measure of fruit that is reproduced in Colosse through Philemon.”

“The bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.” In the natural sense, the *bowels* speak of the stomach and the natural food that the saints needed. Also, the bowels are the centre of our affections and emotions. Philemon met the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the saints, and he refreshed them. He was obviously a very wealthy man, with resources to care for people in the natural; but he also had a spiritual mantle that was able to meet the inner needs of people. Philemon is a wonderful portrait of a Christian gentleman. He was also a very thoughtful person. He would see a person in need and then think about how he could help him. We should seek to emulate him.

1:8 - *“Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient.”* Having complimented him, the Apostle Paul now entreats Philemon. Here the Apostle Paul is stating his apostolic authority. Paul was saying that he could command Philemon to do his desired request, by virtue of the fact that he was in authority over Philemon.

1:9 - *“Yet for love’s sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.”* However, rather than giving him a commandment, Paul says he would rather beseech and appeal to him in the spirit of love.

“Paul the aged.” Aged is not a good rendering here. The Greek word “presbutes” translated “aged” actually speaks of a person who is about 49 to 55 years old. The Greeks had another word for a person who was 60 years and older. Therefore, this phrase should read, “Paul the *elder*.”

1:10 - *“I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.”* Now Paul gives the real reason for writing Philemon. We are now introduced to Onesimus. The story of Onesimus is one of the most beautiful stories in the history of the Early Church. Paul is pleading with Philemon for someone he had led to the Lord while he was in prison in Rome. Praise the Lord! Even though we might pass through times of confinement and captivity when our ministry is not flourishing like it has in the past, the Lord still gives us fruit in those dark times. As a matter of fact, Paul obtained much fruit while he was in prison. He wrote four epistles from that Roman prison: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians. These books are *eternal* fruit.

1:11 - *“Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.”* Now Paul is making a pun on Onesimus’ name. Onesimus means, “profitable.” Paul is saying, “Onesimus, who was at one time *unprofitable* to you, has now become *profitable* to you and me.” In other words, Onesimus had entered into the real meaning of his name. The effect of the gospel is that men and women who were formerly unprofitable to society and life itself, are transformed to be useful and productive saints.

Onesimus was a runaway slave. He evidently had stolen money or goods from Philemon before he ran away. There were about 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire at the time Paul was writing this letter. Slaves in New Testament times had no rights whatsoever; therefore, a slave cannot be equated with a servant. A slave was the possession of his master, and his master had absolute control of life or death over his slave.

Many masters were very cruel to their slaves, and some masters even had ponds in the courtyards of their houses which were full of man-eating fish. There is an account of one slave who tripped and broke some of his master's crystal glasses. The master then commanded that he be thrown into the pond where he was devoured by the fish. Other masters enjoyed beating their slaves with whips.

When runaway slaves were caught, they would often be branded for life with the letter "F" on their foreheads, which stood for a fugitive, or a runaway slave. If a runaway slave was caught, the master could execute him; but if he wanted to keep him alive, he could put an "F" on his forehead.

So as you can see, there was extreme cruelty in the Roman Empire. Therefore, remembering that a master had complete power and control over his slave, Paul was asking something of Philemon that was very extraordinary.

1:12 - *"Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels."* In a legal sense, Paul is saying that

he is referring Onesimus to Philemon for him to determine what to do. Philemon had all legal rights over Onesimus. Paul is referring the case to Philemon, yet he is asking him to receive Onesimus as himself. Paul is letting Philemon know what he would do, and what his judgment was in this situation. Paul says that Onesimus was “his own bowels.” In other words, Paul had begotten him into the gospel and had led him to the Lord.

1:13 - *“Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel.”* It would appear from this verse that there was a time in the life of Paul when Philemon ministered to him. Apparently, Paul deemed it right that Philemon should have ministered to him because Philemon owed him so much.

1:14 - *“But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.”* Paul writes in Philippians 4:15-17: “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church [shared] with me [in the matter of] giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may [be accredited] to your account.”

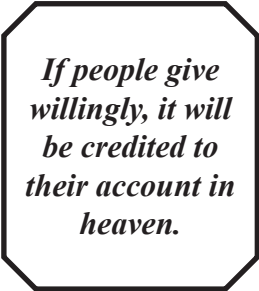
This describes the joy of a pastor when he sees people give willingly. If people give willingly, not because they were talked into it or because they felt obligated, it will be credited to their account in heaven. The joy of a pastor is to see people

be fruitful, knowing that they will receive a rich reward in heaven. Paul had a wonderful attitude. It is an attitude that we want to cultivate in our own lives. A father rejoices to see his son do well, not for his own sake, but because it benefits his son. Spiritual fathers like to see their spiritual children give to others because they know that they will be rewarded for it in heaven. After all, what we want is fruit that abides (Jn 15:16).

Paul did not want Philemon to accept Onesimus back because he was commanded to, but because he was willing to do it. Paul wanted Philemon to do this willingly from a heart of love, so that he could receive a reward from Christ.

1:15 - *“For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.”* In this verse we find a valuable spiritual truth. Sometimes

people have difficulties in their lives which they do not seem to be able to overcome. Perhaps they even leave the church, and we think we have lost them. But in God’s economy, He leads those people into a spiritual desert. He reasons with them of many things in the wilderness. When they are ready and they pass their tests, He brings them back and restores them to the church again.



If people give willingly, it will be credited to their account in heaven.

John Mark is a notable example of this in the New Testament. Mark was with the Apostle Paul on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). Because Mark turned back, later on

there was a great contention between Paul and Barnabas over restoring Mark (Acts 15:36-41). Paul refused to take Mark with them on their second missionary journey, because Mark was not ready for restoration at that time. Barnabas, because of his family ties to Mark, turned off God's course for his life and he ended up in Cyprus, which is the last we hear of Barnabas in the New Testament.

It is very important that we know God's mind concerning people. People leave our church or fellowship at times because they cannot cope with what God is doing in the church, and all the pressures. They are not mature enough. Mark left Paul on his first missionary journey because he couldn't handle the pressure (Acts 13:13), but the end of the matter was that he was restored many years later. Mark became Peter's secretary. Peter's gospel actually bears the name of Mark, because Mark obtained all the material and information for his gospel from Peter. In his last days in prison, Paul acknowledges Mark and says that he was profitable to him for the ministry (2 Tim. 4:11).

This is why Paul says that Onesimus left Philemon for a season, so that he could receive him back later in a much more developed spiritual state. There had to be something worked out in Onesimus. He had to meet Paul in Rome and be converted before he could be of any use to Philemon. I think we should have a generous attitude sometimes to people who leave us. There are things that have to be worked out in their lives, and it is absolutely necessary for them to take a detour and leave so that they can come back to us

in the future and be profitable to us. The whole nation of Israel virtually wandered around in the wilderness for 38 years before they were ready to resume the path of God and accomplish His purposes.

1:16 - *“Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?”* How does Paul ask Philemon to receive Onesimus back? Not as a servant, but as a brother in Christ. That was an extraordinary thing for Paul to ask of Philemon. This was unheard of in those days. A slave would never be treated on the same level as his master, but that is what Paul is asking Philemon to do. Sometimes we will be stretched as leaders. At times God will ask us to receive back those who have wronged us and done evil to us. **We must have a heart of forgiveness and receive them back with open arms.**

1:17 - *“If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.”* The Apostle Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as himself. That is what the Lord Jesus Christ says of us. “He that receiveth you, receiveth me” (Mt. 10:40). When we take care of others and help them in their time of need, the Lord looks upon it as if we had done it unto Him (Mt. 25:40). Paul asks Philemon to treat Onesimus as he would treat him, his spiritual father. This was a tremendous thing to ask.

1:18 - *“If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.”* Sin is costly. The Apostle Paul could

not ask Philemon just to forgive that monetary amount that Onesimus had stolen. Someone had to repay that money, and Onesimus was in no condition to repay it. Therefore, in order to ask Philemon to receive Onesimus back, the Apostle Paul had to be willing to restore the amount that Onesimus had stolen.

We must always remember with restoration that there must also be *restitution*. The Word of God is very clear on this point in the Old Testament. If anyone stole something in the Old Testament era, they not only had to repay the principals, but 20 percent on top of that (Lev. 6:5). If you come across a case where someone has stolen money from someone else, yet has now repented and wants to be received back, there has to be the restitution of that money for there to be complete reconciliation and restoration. The money, in this case, was going to be repaid by Paul if necessary. Restoration demands restitution. Someone has to pay the debt. Paul was willing to pay the debt of Onesimus. Praise the Lord! Jesus paid the debt that we could never pay!

1:19 - *“I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.”* Paul wrote this epistle with his own hand and he signed it, and it was as good as a check. Paul said, “I will repay his debt.” We must never forget this. You cannot just tell people that Jesus has forgiven them. Their debts have to be paid. There is a tendency in the Church to say to people, “Well, you have been forgiven, so everything is forgotten.” No, everything is not forgotten. Everything has to be put in order for there to be complete restoration.

“Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.” Paul tells Philemon to remember that he owes his very life to him. What he meant by that was that Paul had evidently led Philemon to the Lord, and the position he held in Colosse was by Paul’s authority.

1:20 - *“Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.”* In other words, Paul is saying here, “I have received so much disappointment from one person after another. Here I am in prison, and I am bound by a chain, and at the other side of the chain is a Roman soldier. I have to remain in this house. I have been disappointed again and again by those I have loved. But, Philemon, refresh my bowels through your obedience. Let me rejoice in you, knowing that you have matured in the Lord, and that you will do even more than I ask.”

1:21 - *“Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.”* Paul was confident of Philemon’s obedience and love. Here is a beautiful portrait of Philemon. Why would he do more than the Apostle Paul asked? Because he had a heart that loved to obey. I have noticed in over 40 years in the ministry that the people who have learned obedience are the people who hit God’s mark for their lives.

Sometimes we denigrate the armed forces and talk about how evil and corrupt they are, but there is one thing that the armed forces teach a person, and that is *instantaneous* obedience. When you are a soldier, you don’t question your

authorities when you are commanded to do a certain thing. You just say, “Yes, Sir.” It is amazing what you are required to do in boot camp. Those who join the Navy are required to make their beds meticulously so that they can bounce a quarter off the bed. Some of the soldiers question why that is necessary. But the reason for that is because a few weeks later they will be guiding missiles, and they will have to be instantaneously obedient. There isn’t any time for asking questions when they are firing missiles.

When I was in the Royal Air Force in England, we had to keep our rooms in complete order. There were no questions asked. If the sergeant got us out of bed at 5:30 a.m., we didn’t question him. That training in menial things prepared us for flying. Philemon was one who had learned obedience. Therefore, when Philemon received this letter from Paul, he would rejoice in the fact that he was counted worthy to receive a command.

When the Lord calls us into His service, we should consider the millions of Christians throughout the world that the Lord could use for the particular task He wants us to do. It is very humbling to think that the Lord would even acknowledge our existence, let alone choose us to work for Him. I feel overwhelmed with gratitude at times.

I am amazed by the attitudes of people who give the Lord a whole list of conditions before they will agree to go to the mission field or do something for Him. They should feel tremendously privileged to even be asked to go to the

mission field; yet, they are proud and they want all the conveniences that they have here in the United States.

Philemon was one who had learned obedience. Philemon would be tremendously humbled and overwhelmed by the fact that the Apostle Paul would even write him a letter, and that he could even do something for the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul was held in very high esteem in the New Testament Church. There were people who were willing to pluck out their own eyes if it had been possible and give them to Paul because he had eye trouble (Gal. 4:15). Philemon marvelled that Paul even had the time to think about him and write him a letter. Therefore, he was so very happy and privileged to do Paul a favour.

Philemon was overjoyed that he would be counted worthy to do something for the Apostle Paul. That is the attitude that we should have. When the Lord asks us to do something, we should feel privileged and honoured that the Lord of glory would even think about us and ask us to do something for Him. The Lord has the same attitude that the Apostle Paul had. He wants us to do things for Him *willingly*, so that He can give us a reward for doing them.

1:22 - *“But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.”* Paul asks Philemon to pray for him because he had great confidence that the Lord would release him from prison. Nero released Paul from prison in January, A.D. 63, and Paul was free until A.D. 67 when Nero imprisoned him

again. It is believed that during these four years Paul might have gone to Colosse.

1:23-24 - *“There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus. Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.”* Epaphras is also mentioned in Colossians. In verse 24, Paul calls John Mark a fellowlabourer with him. Aristarchus was a travelling companion of Paul, mentioned in Acts 19:29, 20:4, 27:2, and in Colossians 4:10. Demas was also a labourer with Paul, but he later forsook him and betrayed him because he was never purified of his love for this world (2 Tim. 4:10). Luke, the gospel writer and beloved physician, was a close companion of Paul.

1:25 - *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”* Paul closes this letter by praying again that the Lord’s grace would be with Philemon. **Oh, how important it is for us to have a humble heart so that we can receive the Lord’s grace to overcome every hurdle in life and be presented faultless before His throne with great joy.**

The reason Paul wrote this epistle was to ask Philemon to receive back Onesimus, who was a runaway slave. Paul could not have kept Onesimus because Onesimus belonged to Philemon. Paul had to return Philemon’s “property” to him. Paul had to do what was right and send him back to Philemon, even though he wanted to keep him with him in Rome. Sometimes we have to return people to other churches because they rightfully belong somewhere else.

Whatever happened to Onesimus after he returned to Philemon in Colosse? Church history tells about how Onesimus succeeded in life. Nearly fifty years after this epistle was written, Ignatius, one of the greatest martyrs of the Early Church, was taken by Roman guards from Antioch to Rome where he was executed. As the custom was in those days, if the prisoner knew anyone in the cities they passed through, they were permitted to be ministered to by their friends. Ignatius stopped in several cities along the way, and wrote letters to friends while he was travelling from Antioch to Rome.

In one of those letters, he spoke about the wonderful bishop of Ephesus (which was about 100 miles from Colosse), whose name was Onesimus, the former runaway slave. Ignatius said about him, “Onesimus is Onesimus by name; and he is Onesimus by character.” He was using the same pun that Paul used. In other words, Ignatius was saying that Onesimus was profitable by name and he was profitable by nature. It is so wonderful to see what the Lord can do with a runaway slave. He changed him and caused him to live up to his name.

* * * * *

CONCLUSION

There are some wonderful little truths in this short epistle to Philemon. First of all, we would do well to meditate on the beautiful character of Philemon—a wonderful Christian gentleman. Also, there is another important truth found in verses five and six. We need to acknowledge the good things that are in us so that they can flow forth out of a heart of love, and release the faith of Christ to others.

If you want more from God, the key is to give to others what He has already given to you. Proverbs 11:25 says, he that watereth shall be watered. The Lord Jesus Christ said, “Give, and it shall be given unto you” (Lk. 6:38). The thought is that as we teach the Word of God to others, more truth is given unto us (cf. Mk. 4:25). As we release that which God has given to us to meet the needs of others, more is poured into us, and thereby we are enlarged spiritually. The Dead Sea has no life because it has no outlet. Spiritually, let us not be a Dead Sea.

The other major truth in this epistle is the story of Onesimus. I do commend that you study carefully restoration from the Word of God. Restoration demands restitution. Onesimus belonged to Philemon. Paul did not have the legal right to retain him. Therefore, he had to restore him to Philemon. But he also had to pay back the money that Onesimus had stolen. Restitution of the debt was the only grounds on which Paul could ask Philemon to restore Onesimus. When

we are converted, and we have put things right and made restitution, God lifts us up to a higher plane. Onesimus was lifted up from being a slave to being a brother. Onesimus grew in grace and in the knowledge of God, until he was made the bishop of Ephesus. He apparently became very well known throughout the whole of the New Testament Church in that area.

The story of Onesimus is one of the most encouraging accounts of God's restorative power to bring a castaway back into a useful ministry in the household of God. We would like to encourage all the readers of this little booklet on Philemon who have an Onesimus in their family. An unprofitable son or daughter can be turned around by the power of God to become profitable and abundantly fruitful in the very place in which he had previously caused shame. Be encouraged, and believe God to restore the Onesimus in your family or church.

Let us ask God to give us our Onesimuses—those we can lead to the Lord, and see grow and flourish over the years. Paul had fruit being accrued to him many years after his death through that one man, Onesimus. He was having fruit in Ephesus through Onesimus. May God grant that we have such converts as Onesimus. The Lord bless you!

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EPILOGUE

In these twin epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon, the bishop of the Colossian church, we have seen the virtues of holiness and restoration expressed. We believe that it is significant that these two epistles are linked, because in the pursuit of holiness there is always the danger of neglecting the plight of the unsaved. At times we may even be like the Shulamite in the Song of Songs, who said, “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?” (Song. 5:3).

Let us be mindful and careful to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, while also remembering the lost in their afflictions. These twin virtues will enable us to receive the accolade from the Lord’s lips, “Well done thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Amen. So be it dear Lord!

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