



Developing a Healthy Church Life- An Exposition & Application of Colossians

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July 2022 CABU Block Class Schedule

Monday – 3.5 hrs total teaching time

10:00-12:30 - Class Registration Begins
12:30-13:00 - Opening Remarks by DVC Academics
13:00-15:00 – 1st Lecture (2:00 hr.)
15:00-15:30 - Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:30 mins)
15:30-17:00 – 2nd Lecture/discussion (1:30 hrs)

Tuesday – 7.5 hrs total teaching time

08:00-9:45 – 3rd Lecture (1:45 hrs)
09:45-10:00 - Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:15 min)
10:00-11:30 – Quiz 1 (facilitated by Dean of Bible), 4th Lecture (1:30 hr)
11:30-11:45 - Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:15 min)
11:45-13:00 – 5th Lecture (1:30 hrs)
13:00-14:00- Lunch (1:00 hr)
14:00-15:30 – 6th Lecture (1:30 hr)
15:30-15:45- Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:15 min)
15:45-17:00 – 7th Lecture/Discussion (1:15 hrs)

Wednesday – 6.5 hrs total teaching time

08:00-9:45 – 8th Lecture (1:45 hrs)
09:45-10:00 - Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:15 min)
10:00-11:30 – Quiz 2 (facilitated by Dean), 9th Lecture (1:30 hr)
11:30-11:45 - Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:15 min)
11:45-13:00 – 10th Lecture (1:30 hrs)
*** Group Photos will be taken on Wednesday as you dismiss for lunch (13:00 hrs)***
13:00-14:00 - Lunch (1:00 hr)
14:00-16:00 – 11th Lecture/Discussion (2:00 hrs)

Thursday – 7.5 hrs total teaching time

08:00-9:45 – 12th Lecture (1:45 hrs)
09:45-10:00 - Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:15 min)
10:00-11:30 – Quiz 3 (facilitated by Dean of Bible), 13th Lecture (1:30 hr)
11:30-11:45 - Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:15 min)

11:45-13:00 – 14th Lecture (1:30 hrs)
13:00-14:00- Lunch (1:00 hr)
14:00-15:30 – 15th Lecture (1:30 hr)
15:30-15:45- Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:15 min)
15:45-17:00 – 16th Lecture/Discussion (1:15 hrs)

Friday – 3 hrs total teaching time

08:00-9:50 – 17th Lecture/Discussion (1:50 hr)
09:50-10:10 - Break/fellowship/one-on-one (:20 min)
10:10-11:30 – Quiz 4 (facilitated by Dean), 18th Lecture (1:20 hrs)
11:30-12:00 - Closing/Materials Distribution – CABU Admin
12:00 - Lunch

Background and Introduction to Paul's Letter to the Colossian Church

Introductory Remarks

Philosophy

- The word philosophy comes from the Greek word philosophia, which means “love of wisdom.”
- The study of philosophy is about using rational argument and critical thinking to analyze the way human beings think and know and perceive the world around them—both the physical world and the abstract world of ideas
- Genesis 3:5, Satan said to Eve, “For God knows that in the day you eat from it (that was... from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden), ...in that day... your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
- Man believes in himself and his ability to solve his problems apart from God as He is revealed in Scripture.
- Human philosophy claims that mankind is on the brink of a new age of human achievement and potential.
- The problem is that at the heart of this ideology is a multi-faceted syncretism

Colossians as a book speaks to our cosmic age and to this New Age movement

The book of Colossians is God's polemic and rebuttal to many kinds of delusions and heresies, but it is especially relevant to what we see happening in the world today.

The Scope of Colossians

First-century Rome:

- This was a seductive time.
- The world had never been safer
- life was everything one could ever hope for or imagine.
- Emperor Caesar was lord and savior because he brought peace and prosperity.

And there was much to give thanks for:

- advanced military power,
- safe travel unlike the world had ever known,
- aqueducts to carry water,
- economic prosperity,
- personal happiness
- ... and security.
- The prospect of a bright future.

This shaped the rhythm of life in the empire.

- Feasts and festivals celebrated Rome's victories
- Festivals in honor of the birthday of the emperor
- Coins stamped with Pax, the goddess of peace on one side—weapons on the other.
- Sacrifices to those who ruled Rome.
- Unavoidable images and symbolism that reminded Roman citizens who were the gods in their world.

The Roman version of reality was seductive and it held captive the imagination of its citizens:

- Appease the gods—
- live the dream—
- join the emperor cult—
- pay homage to Caesar—
- conquer foreign nations in the name of the gods—
- go with masses and all your dreams may just come true.

This is the world of Asia Minor in the time of the Apostle Paul.

Authorship of Colossians

- Some scholars have questioned the Pauline authorship of this epistle – possibly written by a disciple of Paul
- Colossians is sometimes taken to be “deutero-Pauline”
- From apostolic times until the rise of liberal higher criticism, the church accepted the Pauline authorship of Colossians.
- The arguments for rejecting the authenticity of Colossians on the basis of vocabulary, style, and theology are unconvincing
- The external testimony to Colossians’ authenticity is impressive.

Further evidence that Paul wrote this epistle comes from its close ties to the epistle to Philemon.

- Both epistles mention Timothy’s name in the greeting.
- Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas, Paul’s other companions, also appear in both epistles.
- Both letters contain a message for Archippus.
- Onesimus, the slave who is the subject of Philemon, appears in Colossians.
- Both Colossians and Philemon find Paul in prison.

The City of Colossae

Its Location:

- Colossae was a Graeco-Phrygian city
- In the Roman proconsular of Asia also known as Asia Minor.
- It was one of three cities located in the Lycus Valley...(Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea)
- These formed an important trade route.
- Colossae was about ten miles from Laodicea and thirteen miles from Hierapolis.

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- Known for textile and garment industry
- ... and at one time Colossae had been a large and populous city...

By Paul's day:

- it had become just a small town
- Its importance had declined
- It was outshone by the two neighboring cities... which appear to also have contained a congregation of believers (cf. Philemon 2) and are also mentioned in Colossians (cf. 2:1; 4:13).

The Church at Colossae

1. It was a Pauline church

Paul never visited Colossae, at least not at the time he wrote this epistle; he had only "heard" about the church at Colossae (1:4, 9; 2:1).

Nevertheless, it was a product of his ministry:

- Paul spent three years ministering the word in Ephesus
 - It was during this time all of Asia heard the Word (cf. [Acts. 19:8-10](#), 26; & 20:31).
 - Ephesus brought people into the city from all parts of Asia
- A young man from Colossae named Epaphras evidently heard the gospel from Paul and was converted.

Epaphras was known to be:

- a servant of Christ Jesus (again Col. 4:12),
- Paul's fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus (Philem 23; Col. 4:10a), and
- a hard worker in the three neighboring congregations of the Lycus Valley (Col. 4:13).
- He was vigilant in prayer and
- loyal

2. It was essentially a church made up of Gentile believers.

There was a large Jewish population in the Lycus Valley.

The Colossian epistle suggests that the membership of the church was primarily Gentile:

1. We see this in 1:12, 21, 24, 27
2. Scarcity of Old Testament allusions

3. Distinctively Gentile vices are mentioned in 3:5-7
4. Almost no reference to the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles

The Occasion and Date of the Epistle

- Paul imprisoned in Rome

- Epaphras visits Paul in prison

- Brought some good news regarding the Colossian assembly (1:4, 8; 2:5)

- Primary purpose for visiting the apostle was to seek aid against certain false teachings

- Epaphras ended up with his own imprisonment (Philemon 23, cf. with Col. 4:12)

- Paul wrote to counter this false teaching in Colossae

- Commissioned Tychicus to return to Colossae with his letter

- In the letter, Paul asserts the supremacy of Christ over the unseen power and authorities

- Paul writes to preserve the integrity of the Christian assertion that Jesus is Lord

Colossians presents:

- the all-supremacy,
- the all-sufficiency,
- the uniqueness,
- and the fullness of the person and work of Jesus Christ as:
 - the God-man Savior,
 - the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and
 - the total solution for man's needs both for time and eternity.

S. Lewis Johnson, the well-known professor from Dallas Theological seminary said this of the book of Colossians in his "Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians, Part I,":

"Without doubt Colossae was the least important church to which any epistle of St. Paul is addressed." So wrote Bishop Lightfoot some years ago in one of the finest commentaries on New Testament literature. Colosse had been "a great city of Phrygia," but it was in the afternoon of its influence and importance when Paul wrote the house-church there. And yet the message to Colosse, so bright with the light of the apostle's highest Christology, has become amazingly relevant in the middle of the twentieth century. With the sudden and startling intrusion of the space age and its astrophysics, nuclear power, missiles and rockets, the church of Jesus Christ has been forced to relate its Lord and Master to the ultimate frontiers. Colossians, which presents Him as the architect and sustainer of the universe, as well as the reconciler of all things, both earthly and heavenly, provides the church with the material it may and must use. Suddenly the epistle to the little flock in the declining city has become perhaps the most contemporary book in the New Testament library.

The usefulness of Colossians, however, is not a recent phenomenon. The epistle is no late-blooming flower, although its grandeur and brilliance may strike one's eyes with increasing force in the present time. The Christology and the ethics of the letter are important for all time. It has always furnished a proper antidote to humanly devised schemes of salvation. As A. M. Hunter puts it; "To all who would 'improve' Christianity by admixing it with spiritualism or Sabbatarianism or occultism or any such extra, it utters its warning: 'What Christ is and has done for us is enough for salvation. We need no extra mediators, or

taboos, or ascetics. To piece out the gospel with the rags and tatters of alien cults is not to enrich but to corrupt it.”⁴

Doctrinal and Practical Problems in the Colossian Church.

- there was a serious threat of false teaching facing the Colossians.
- Teaching undermined the person and work of Christ, and the sufficiency of the salvation believers have in Him.

The Nature of the False Teaching known as the “Colossian Heresy”

- Scholars are divided concerning the exact identity of the heresy
- determine the features of the heresy by:
 - many allusions,
 - the counter emphases, and
 - the warnings and teachings of the book.

Paul borrowed certain catchwords and phrases used by the heretical teachers.

- Some of these Paul filled with biblical content and used them against the heresy itself
 - in reality such ideas can only be found in Jesus
- Other terms he strongly rejected and totally denounced.

Some illustrations are:

- *mystery* (1:27),
- *fullness* (2:9),
- *knowledge* and *wisdom* (2:3),
- *elementary principles* or *rudiments* (2:8),
- delighting in *humility* and the *worship of angels* (2:18), and
- *self-imposed worship* (2:23).

The features of the Colossian heresy fell into the following characteristics:

1. As with all heresy, it *detracted* from the person and work of Christ.

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6. The heresy contained and flaunted an *exclusivity of mystery, secrecy, and superiority.*

The Colossian heresy was an eclectic blend of:

1. Jewish legalism,
2. Greek philosophic speculation, and
3. oriental mysticism
4. combined together with a Christian flavor or element.

It was a satanic deception in the following way:

1. While at its heart it was a combination of Judaism and paganism, it wore the mask of Christianity.
2. It did not *deny* Christ, but it did *dethrone* him.
3. It gave Christ a place, but not the supreme place.
4. This Christian facade made the Colossian error all the more dangerous.

What can learn from this?

- We see that false doctrine or theology leads one deeper into his delusions both in theology and practice.
- There can be no neutrality toward God, the Bible, and Christ for neutrality leads to hostility.
- There can be no morality and no genuine, lasting, and real humanism or true concern for man without sound theology.

- Without the absolutes of God's Holy Word as our foundation, we end up with a world-view that will distort and undermine the being and character of God and His salvation for man in Jesus Christ.

Do we have any of this heresy today?

The Theme of Colossians

The theme is the fruitful and effective power of the gospel message that heralds the supremacy or preeminence, headship, and the sole sufficiency of Christ to the church, which is His body.

Christ is the object of the Christian's faith (1:4) because He is:

1. God's Son (1:13),
2. the Redeemer (1:14),
3. the very image of God (1:15),
4. the Lord of creation (1:15),
5. the head of the church (1:18),
6. the fullness of salvation (1:19),
7. the Reconciler of the universe (1:20),
8. the One who contains all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3),
9. the standard by which all religious teaching is judged (2:8),
10. the fullness of God, undiminished deity (2:9),
11. the One under Whom all power and authority is subjected (2:10),
12. the Victor over all the cosmic powers (2:15),
13. the reality of the truth foreshadowed in Old Testament types and figures, regulations and rituals (2:17),
14. the One exalted and enthroned at the right hand of God in heaven (3:1),
15. the One in Whom we are complete and in Whom our life is hidden, protected, and kept (2:10; 3:3),
16. the One by Whom our new life will be gloriously manifested at His coming again (3:4),
17. ...and it is through Him and because of our new life in Him that we ought to put away our old manner of life from which we have been marvelously saved (3:5f).

The Purpose of Colossians

It is this wonderful Christology that Paul had in mind when he purposed to write the letter to the congregation in Colossae, and he did so with a four-fold express purpose:

1. To warn the Colossians against relapse into their former state with all its soul-destroying vices ([Col. 1:21, 23](#); [3:5-11](#))

2. To direct their attention to Jesus Christ who is in all things pre-eminent and in whom believers attain their fulness ([1:13-18](#); [2:8, 9](#)).
3. To enhance among them the prestige of their faithful minister, Epaphras ([1:7](#); [4:12, 13](#)),
4. To emphasize among the Colossians the virtue of forgiveness and kindness.

Paul counters the false theology of the Colossians with sound Christology and then spells out the practical outworking of this in the everyday life of the believer.

False theology always leads to wrong behavior because :

- it is **futile** to deal with man's condition in sin (cf. [Col. 2:23](#)), and
- it **faithless** or **bypasses** God's solution for man's sinful condition through Christ.
- False theology always contains a wrong view of God, man, sin, and salvation.

The book of Colossians is about the supremacy of the person of Christ.

Therefore, as we study this vital epistle, let us take heed to Paul's warnings against adding to or subtracting from the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Developing a Healthy Church Life: An Exposition and Application of Colossians Chapter Two¹

FALSE TEACHINGS IN COLOSSAE THREATENING SUPREMACY OVER THE THINGS OF CHRIST (2:1–23)

Concern for Their Continuation in Truth (2:1–8)

Efforts from a Distance to Promote the Truth (2:1–5)

Col. 2:1² ¶ For I want you to understand how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not seen my face in the flesh,

For I want you to understand how great a struggle I have on your behalf

While the previous subsection (1:24–29) provides a general statement on Paul’s stewardship of the gospel, this subsection (2:1–5) centers on Paul’s specific labor for the Colossians and Laodiceans.

This shift from the general statement to the specific context situates the audience within the wider salvation-historical plan of God as they become the beneficiaries of God’s work through his Son.

“A struggle” (ἀγῶνα) relates back to participle in v. 29 (“striving,” ἀγωνιζόμενος); although Paul did not make it clear as to the kind of “struggle” he had undergone for the sake of the readers, the connection with v. 29 provides some hints. In vv. 27–29, Paul connects his “striving” with his mission as an apostle to the Gentiles who is faithful in proclaiming the gospel message. In light of 4:3, where Paul states that he is “bound” in chains because of the proclamation of “the mystery of Christ,” the “struggle” should therefore include his imprisonment, which is a direct consequence of his faithfulness to his call and mission.

And for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not seen my face in the flesh

Paul points to other groups who have benefited from his ministry of proclamation. Laodicea was located eleven miles northwest of Colossae.

Together with Hierapolis, Laodicea and Colossae are the notable cities in the Lycus Valley, and they are mentioned together in 4:13. It is unclear why Hierapolis is not also mentioned here, but it is possible that Laodicea is mentioned because the Laodiceans also received a letter from Paul, one that Paul encourages

¹ The material in this handout is a compilation of the resources listed in the bibliography as used in the preparation of the messages delivered in the *Developing a Healthy Church Life* series and is not representative of the preacher’s original work. Instead, the works cited are representative of the exegetical preparation behind those messages and intended to aid the listeners who would like to see more of the exegetical process and study for themselves. Essentially, this is a digest of the preacher’s exegetical study of others’ work that allows the audience the opportunity to see more of the details that were not conveyed in the messages.

² *The Legacy Standard Bible*® (LSB®), copyright by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Managed in partnership with Three Sixteen Publishing, inc. 316publishing.com

to be read aloud to the Colossians as well (4:16). Another possibility is that the Laodiceans are facing the same false teachings that plague the Colossians. Paul's letters to the Colossians would then be of particular significance to the Laodiceans.

"And for all those who have not seen my face in the flesh" can refer to all those in Colossae and Laodicea who had not met Paul personally. If so, "and" (καί) is to be taken in an exegetical sense. While some consider this phrase as referring to those whom he has not met, thus "universalizing Paul's place in the church," the shift from the universal language of 1:24–29 to the local references in 2:1–5 suggests that this group is likely referring to those who resided in the Lycus Valley. Paul's discussion of his absence from them in v. 5 lends further support to this local reading.

Col. 2:2 so that their hearts may be encouraged, having been held together in love, even unto all the wealth of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of God's mystery, *that is, Christ Himself,*

So that their hearts may be encouraged, having been held together in love

With this clause, Paul points to the purpose of his struggles for the Colossians, Laodiceans, and the others in the Lycus Valley. The "heart" is to be considered as the center of one's will and emotions. In this case, Paul is pointing to one's inner self: he wants them to be comforted and encouraged.

The verb "encouraged" (παρακληθῶσιν) may also be translated as "comforted," but either translation may focus too heavily on the emotional state of a person and is therefore unable to convey the significance of this term in this context. The verb can also be translated "strengthened," which would relate to Paul's activity of reaffirming the gospel message in this letter. The connection between this verb and the act of instruction is further supported by 1 Cor 14:31: "For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed [μανθάνωσιν] and encouraged [παρακαλῶνται]."

The first clause, introduced by a "marker to denote purpose" (ἵνα), should be understood as the main purpose clause of the paragraph. The participial clause that follows ("united in love") is best taken as modifying the act of comforting.⁸³ The final two units, introduced twice by another purpose marker (εἰς), are purpose phrases, but it is unclear if they are to be seen as parallel with the ἵνα clause. Some take these phrases as the result of being "united in love," but the presence of καί before these two phrases separates them from the participle and is best taken as modifying the entire purpose clause as introduced by "comforted" (παρακληθῶσιν).

Arguing against individual and elitist spiritual practices (2:16–23), Paul points to the significance of the unity of God's people as they experience his redemption. This unity is explicitly noted in 3:11, where traditional barriers can no longer define their identity.

Even unto all the wealth of the full assurance of understanding

With this prepositional phrase, Paul points further to the purpose of the comfort that the Colossians (and others) would receive.

Paul is providing an emphatic statement that highlights complete conviction and understanding as the purpose of one's being comforted by the gospel message.

This purpose phrase provides a critical definition of the significance of the act of comfort. Instead of simply providing emotional support for his readers, Paul focuses on the need to have full conviction that is not to be separated from a complete understanding of the salvific plan of God. It is for their understanding of this gospel that Paul is willing to go through hardships and suffering.

Unto the full knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself

Syntactically this purpose phrase, introduced by the same preposition (εἰς), parallels the previous phrase, but in terms of function this phrase further explains the content of the “understanding” noted in the previous clause.

Col. 2:3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge

This prepositional phrase provides further description of the significance of Christ.

“The treasures” (οἱ θησαυροί) denote “that which is stored up.” The two genitives that follow (“of wisdom and knowledge,” τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως) should be considered as genitives of content, thus providing the description of “all the treasures.” The focus here is on “all,” which stresses that the readers possess such richness and thus have no need to seek that which is only an illusion of such wisdom and knowledge (cf. 2:4, 23).

Paul is clearly portraying Christ as the embodiment of wisdom, and through Christ and him alone can one understand the divine will and plan.

This hiddenness does not point to the need for further revelation for those in Christ precisely because these saints are already “hidden with Christ in God” (3:3). Paul’s focus on hiddenness in this context points rather to the significance of the unfolding of the salvation plan of God. The mere use of the term “hidden,” therefore, anticipates the point of full and complete revelation.

Col. 2:4 I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.

I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument

Here Paul shifts from the unique status of Christ, whom he preaches, to the deceptiveness of the false teachers whom the Colossians may be encountering.

Paul is providing the rationale and a concluding note concerning what he just said. This statement highlights the urgency of Paul’s previous comments concerning the gospel he is commissioned to preach.

Behind the reference of “no one” (μηδείς) lies the false teachers whom Paul is criticizing (cf. v. 18), as are the references to “no one” and “anyone” in 2:8, 16.

The verb “delude” (παραλογίζηται) should most likely be taken in the middle voice to refer to the act of deception through false reasoning. In this context, deception is carried out through the means of “persuasive argument” (πιθανολογία), a word not easily translated by an English word. In Classical Greek, this word is used in reference to speculative arguments as opposed to empirical demonstration.

This verse anticipates 2:8, where Paul likewise warns his audience of the misleading arguments posed by the unnamed false teachers, though he uses stronger and more explicit language.

Col. 2:5 For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the stability of your faith in Christ.

For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit

Paul's unique role in the plan has already been established (1:24–29), and his work for the Colossians in particular (2:1–3) further establishes his position as one who has the authority to remind them of the gospel they have received. Now Paul deals directly with his absence and thus introduces the significance of this letter.

While the reality and the potential peril of Paul's absence cannot be denied, Paul's focus here is not the severity of the situation but his unique authority as an apostle.

Some have, however, suggested that "I am with you in spirit" refers not to Paul's spirit/heart but to the Holy Spirit, who is present with the readers as they read Paul's own written words. In light of Paul's reference to his physical presence, however, this phrase seems primarily to refer to Paul's own self. His physical absence provides the urgent necessity for writing this letter. His words thus represent the very words of Paul the apostle, and in this manner he is present among them "in spirit."

Rejoicing to see your good order and the stability of your faith in Christ

With this description of his expectation of the Colossian believers, Paul concludes this section before addressing directly the false teachings that those believers face. In Greek, "rejoicing to see" consists of two participles connected with a conjunction, rendered literally by the KJV as "joying and beholding." In this context, it is best to consider the two participles as expressing one complex verbal act, and this is adopted by almost all modern English translations: "rejoicing to see."

Taking the conjunction "and" (καί) as having an epexegetical function, the interrelationship between the two parts of the sentence becomes clear: "rejoicing to see your order that is reflected in the stability of your faith in Christ." In this context, the focus is not simply on their order or the strength of their faith; it is on the anchor of their lives "in Christ," which points to Christ as the object of their faith.

The reference to "in Christ" paves the way for his arguments where he reaffirms the centrality of Christ in the faith of the believers. In combating the false teachings that the Colossians are facing, Paul insists that nothing less than a Christocentric faith is sufficient for one to stand firm in the gospel they have received. It is for this gospel, after all, that Paul is willing to undergo great sufferings and afflictions.

Charge to Resist False Philosophies (2:6–8)

Col. 2:6 ¶ Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord

Paul begins this section by reminding the Colossian believers of their reception of the traditions concerning Christ Jesus. "Therefore" (οὖν) links this passage with the previous sections, which focused on the supreme status and

identity of Christ (1:15–23) and the apostolic gospel that has been faithfully transmitted (1:24–2:5).

The verb “you received” (παρελάβετε) belongs to a pair of verbs (“to transmit,” παραδίδωμι; “to receive,” παραλαμβάνω) that is often used to describe the transmission and reception of traditions and teachings in both Classical Greek and Hellenistic Jewish writings. In Paul’s letters, this use is best illustrated in his description of the transmission and reception of the core gospel message:

For I delivered [παρέδωκα] to you as of first importance what I also received [παρέλαβον], that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3–4).

Paul is not primarily referring to receiving Christ Jesus as one’s personal Lord, but to the reception of the traditions concerning Christ Jesus the Lord.

The point Paul is establishing here is not that the Colossians have not submitted to the lordship of Christ, but that they need to be reminded that they have received the authentic gospel of Christ Jesus, who is the Lord of all. Therefore, they should not be deceived by the “empty and deceitful philosophy” that finds its roots in “human tradition” and the “elemental spirits of the world” (v. 8).

So walk in Him

The affirmation of Jesus as Christ and Lord should lead to changed behavior. The Greek verb “continue to walk” can be either an indicative or an imperative according to morphology, but in this context it is clearly an imperative that exhorts the Colossians to lead lives consistent with their confession. The impact of such a Christological confession is also implied in 1:10 and 3:13, where Paul affirms how the lordship of Christ should affect every aspect of one’s life.

“In him” (ἐν αὐτῷ) again points to the Christocentric principle that lies at the center of Paul’s argument in this letter. As Paul continues with this line of argument, he will once again stress that proper behavior is grounded in the fact that believers “have been filled in him [ἐν αὐτῷ], who is the head of every ruler and authority” (2:10). Here one finds a clear statement of the purpose of this letter as Paul aims at reforming the confessional, ethical, and cultic lives of those who have received the gospel of Christ Jesus the Lord. It is not an overstatement to consider this “the key verse for understanding the letter.”

Col. 2:7 having been firmly rooted and being built up in Him, and having been established in your faith—just as you were instructed—and abounding with thanksgiving.

Having been firmly rooted and being built up in Him

Paul now outlines the means through which believers can live a faithful life in Christ.

And having been established in your faith—just as you were instructed—and abounding with thanksgiving

“Established” (βεβασιούμενοι) can be used in a variety of contexts; in Paul, it is often used in the sense of “strengthening” (Rom 15:8; 1 Cor 1:8) or “confirming” (1 Cor 1:6; 2 Cor 1:21). In light of the previous two participles that emphasize the firmness of the believers in their walk in Christ, “established” appears preferable. This participle builds on the previous two and emphasizes the significance of their stability in the gospel that they had received.

“The faith” (τῇ πίστει) can refer to one’s personal faith (“your faith,” ASV, NASB, NLT, NET), but in a context that emphasizes the reception of the gospel message (v. 6) and their being “taught” (v. 7), it more likely points to the content of their act of belief: “the faith” (KJV, NAB, NKJV, NJB, NRSV, REB, ESV, NIV). This dative phrase should therefore be understood in the locative sense (“in the faith”), not an instrumental sense (“by your faith”).

Paul shifts from the three passive participial clauses to an active one, “abounding in thanksgiving,” which functions as a concluding call to lead a Christ-centered life. As the act of thanksgiving is an act of confession, this phrase points to a need to be involved in a continuous act of worship through which one reaffirms the lordship of Christ.

Col. 2:8 ¶ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

See to it that no one takes you captive

Paul now argues directly against the false teachers. Moving from a call to remain firm in the faith (2:6–7), Paul now directly warns his readers not to drift away on account of those who challenge the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ.

The construction used here—“see to it that no one” (βλέπετε μή)—appears several times in Paul’s letters as readers are warned to take note of the danger they are facing (1 Cor 8:9; 10:12; Gal 5:15; cf. Eph 5:15). Paul is again pointing to the danger the false teachers pose (cf. “no one” in 2:4). This expression may point to the undefined group of disciples, but “this indefinite τις is frequently used by St Paul, when speaking of opponents whom he knows well enough but does not care to name.”

“Takes you captive” (ὁ συλαγωγῶν) provides a dramatic imagery of the power of those who spread the false teachings.

In light of the combat and military metaphors in this section (see v. 15), the appearance of “take captive” is not entirely surprising. Such imagery is similar to the sayings of Jesus when he describes the binding of the strong man and robbing him of his possessions (Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21–22). In this case, Paul is applying the imagery to the false teachers taking the believers away from the gospel “into the slavery of error.”

Captive through philosophy and empty deception

This prepositional phrase describes the weapon through which believers could be taken captive. The conjunction “and” most likely carries an exegetical function, with “empty deception” describing “philosophy.”

“Philosophy” (τῆς φιλοσοφίας) is a general term used to refer to a general love of knowledge, philosophical traditions or teachings, sects, and even religions. While Paul may not be arguing against philosophy in general, it should not be forgotten that this discipline finds its origin in the attempt to establish elemental principles and causal relationships.

The labels attached to philosophy here as well as reference to “human tradition” may point to a negative evaluation of the entire enterprise especially when practiced by those who refused to work within a Theocentric or Christocentric framework.

The description “empty and deceitful” sets up a contrast with Christ—“in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell” (1:19) and “in whom all the treasures of

wisdom and knowledge are hidden” (2:3)—and with the gospel that is “the word of truth” (1:5). In the verses that follow, Paul makes it clear that this philosophy is “empty and deceitful” not because it is void of ideology or pragmatic rules and regulations, but because it is based on “human tradition” rather than on “Christ” and him alone.

According to the tradition of men

Paul uses three prepositional phrases, all governed by the preposition “according to” (κατά), to indicate the basis of such worldly philosophy. It seems best to consider the first prepositional phrase as providing a general statement, while the second and third provide further expansion of this statement.

“According to the tradition of men” recalls Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law in Mark 7:8 (“Leaving the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men”), a verse that immediately follows a quote from Isa 29:13, where God’s people are accused of false worship. In this passage Paul is not simply accusing the false teachings of being merely human teachings, but that these teachings represent a false worship that cannot be tolerated. The severity of this warning is underlined by the next two prepositional phrases as the worship of those who compete with God is contrasted with the true worship of the Creator.

According to the elementary principles of the world, and not according to Christ

It is difficult to reconstruct the exact meaning of that phrase. *Stoicheia* (elementary principles) refers primarily to the letters of the alphabet. It literally means “things in a row.” Hence, Paul might be describing the false belief system of the Colossian errorists as rudimentary, too simplistic for mature spiritual adults. To accept their teaching would be to descend, to regress from the mature teaching of Scripture to the infantile teachings of an immature religion, based not on advanced thinking and wisdom but on silly and childish thoughts. To abandon biblical truth for empty philosophy is like returning to kindergarten after earning a doctorate.

“Not according to Christ” provides the strongest argument against this false teaching. This phrase also brings us back to the center of Paul’s argument: any teachings that challenge the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ are to be unmasked to reveal their true nature as personal spiritual forces that threaten the Christian community. These forces, bound with this “world,” cannot be compared to Christ, through whom “all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities” (1:16).

The Incomparability of Union with Christ (2:9–15)

Christ is the Very Fullness of Deity (2:9)

Col. 2:9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily,

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily

Paul now provides the grounds for the previous warning: because “all the fullness” can be found in the incarnated Christ, one should not be deceived by “empty and deceitful philosophy” (v. 8). Moreover, this verse explains why a teaching that is not “according to Christ” (v. 8) is to be rejected.

In this context, the genitive “of deity” (τῆς θεότητος) is best taken as a genitive of content: Jesus is filled with the full deity.

This emphasis of the body of Christ “underscores the accessibility (come-at-ableness) of the divine epiphany,” as Christ’s presence is already a historical reality that requires no special visionary experience as one gains access to him and the deity with whom he is filled. This note may also argue against the ascetic practices promoted by the false teachers (cf. 2:16–23) since Christ’s own body was an instrument of God’s redemption and deliverance.

Union with Christ brings Spiritual Completion, Spiritual Circumcision &
Cancellation of Sin
(2:10–14)

Col. 2:10 and in Him you have been filled, who is the head over all rule and authority;

And in Him you have been filled

With the conjunction “and” (καί), Paul moves from the Christological affirmation to its ecclesiological implications.

in this context this divine passive participle likely points back to three preceding passive participles as explicating the full meaning of this divine act of filling: “rooted and built up in him, established in the faith” (v. 7).

It is because of Christ’s full deity that believers, having been filled in him, can experience full salvific assurance and benefits.

Who is the head over all rule and authority

After a note on believers, Paul returns to the supremacy of Christ over all created beings.

The metaphor of “the head” points to supremacy and authority, with “of every ruler and authority” being objective genitives: “head over every ruler and authority.”

The “all” recalls the “all” in the previous verse in emphasizing the supreme status of Christ as well as the comprehensiveness of his reign. Together with 2:15, one finds a progressive depiction of Christ’s power in relations to such spiritual powers: they are created through him (1:16), subjected to him (2:10), and disarmed and defeated by him (2:15). The intensity of the polemic against these powers through Paul’s arguments cannot be missed.

Col. 2:11 in whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ,

In whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands

Paul continues to focus on the effects of Christ’s work on believers, who are now “in him” (ἐν ᾧ). While v. 10 uses the positive metaphor of filling up, this verse focuses on the negative metaphor of stripping off. The connection of these two aspects is provided by the adverbial use of the conjunction “also” (καί).

The passive verb “you were ... circumcised” (περιετμήθητε) points to God as the implied subject; thus, it seems likely that this circumcision refers to the

conversion of the believers as they experience the powerful deliverance and salvific act of God (cf. Rom 2:25–29). The further reference to a circumcision “not performed by human hands” also points to the unique and sovereign act of God in the lives of the believers.

The phrase “a circumcision made without hands” reflects two related OT traditions. First, already in the OT one finds circumcision imagery as referring to God’s disobedient people, who are circumcised in their flesh but not in their hearts (cf. Lev 26:41–42; Deut 10:16; Jer 4:3–4; 9:24–25; Ezek 44:6–9), their ears (Jer 6:10), or their lips (Exod 6:12, 30). The positive use can also be found when God promises to work among his people (Deut 30:6). Here Paul points to the fulfillment of such promises as God is able to cleanse the hearts of his restored people through the death and resurrection of his Son.

Second, the Greek word (ἀχειροποιήτω) may also evoke the long anti-idol tradition in Israel. The related term “made by human hands” (χειροποίητος) in the LXX is almost always used in reference to the idols made by human hands (Lev 26:1, 30; Isa 2:18; 10:11; 16:12; 19:1; 21:9; 31:7; 46:6; Dan 5:4, 23; 6:28; cf. Wis 14:8). Here, Paul is indirectly accusing those who emphasize physical circumcision of worshipping false gods.

In the removal of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ

This points to the means through which the true circumcision of the believers is performed. The exact meaning of this part of the verse depends on the relationship between the two prepositional phrases: To whose “body of flesh” Paul is referring, and what is the function of the genitive “of Christ”?

The best option seems to be to take both phrases are parallel and describe Christ’s own experience when he was “circumcised”: “when (Christ) stripped off his physical body, that is, in Christ’s own ‘circumcision.’” Therefore, Paul is speaking of two circumcisions: believers are circumcised by Christ’s own circumcision (i.e., his death). This imagery is particularly powerful because the traditional circumcision involves the cutting off of a piece of flesh, while Christ’s circumcision involves the sacrifice of his entire body. With this complete sacrifice, no longer is the bodily identity marker important, nor does one need to rely on ascetic practices to curb the desires of one’s flesh (cf. 2:20–23).

Col. 2:12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Having been buried with Him in baptism

This verse is connected with the previous one in a number of ways. First, this participial phrase explains what happens in the “circumcision” of the believers. Second, this verse emphasizes the significance of the death and resurrection of Christ for the believers. Third, while the previous note focuses on God’s work through the death of Christ, the end of this verse also takes note of the way human beings can participate in this divine salvific act through the response of faith.

In this verse, the relationship between circumcision and baptism cannot be denied, but the latter is not meant to replace the former. To understand Paul as referring primarily to the external rite of baptism would contradict his argument in the previous verse, where the internal transformation brought about by the death of Christ is emphasized. “Baptism” here can only refer to the “spiritual reality” that this metaphor symbolizes as the immersion points to the

participation in the death and burial of Jesus Christ. Moreover, “baptism” here is not something that human beings can perform; it points rather to the prior act of God that allows the external rite to be of significance.

In which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead

“Through faith in the working of God” points to the means through which believers can appropriate the power of Christ’s resurrection. Earlier Paul noted his appropriation of God’s power in his powerful ministry (1:29). Here, this power is extended to those who put their trust in this power of God. Paul specifies the object of one’s faith as “the work of God,” probably to draw attention to God’s power and initiative when describing human responses to his mighty acts. Even in the act of appropriating God’s power in one’s life, one must rely on God’s power for such a receptive act.

Col. 2:13 And you being dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him, having graciously forgiven us all our transgressions.

And you being dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh

After noting the believers’ participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, Paul explains the implications of such participation for the life of believers as well as for the challenges they are facing. In terms of their status, they are now freed from the sinful nature that dominated them (v. 13). In terms of the challenges they are facing, Paul reminds them that they should no longer be threatened by the evil forces that may claim to have power over them (v. 14).

Some have therefore understood the preposition “in” (έν) as acquiring a causal sense here: “you were dead because of your sins.” This reading is supported by yet another parallel in Romans, where the use of a different preposition (διά) makes this causal sense clear: “your body is subject to death because of sin” (Rom 8:10).

“The uncircumcision of your flesh” draws on the physical reality of the uncircumcised state of the Gentiles in their former status as excluded from God’s people. Thus, “uncircumcision” carries both a literal and metaphorical sense. Similarly, “flesh” refers to their physical state, although one should not exclude an implicit reference to their “sinful nature,” especially in light of the reference to “transgressions” in the preceding phrase.

He made you alive with Him, having graciously forgiven us all our transgressions

The verb with the συν-prefix, “made alive [with]” (συνεζωποίησεν) links this clause with “you were buried” (συνταφέντες) and “you were raised” (συνηγέρθητε) in v. 12. “Made alive [with]” reverses the state of “dead” and points to a new existence. The implied subject of this verb is God, while “with him” (σύν αὐτῷ) refers clearly to Christ. This double συν-reference points to the believers’ participation in Christ’s resurrection, which in turn brings about new life in them. In this sense, one again finds the connection between the physical and the spiritual as Christ’s physical resurrection brought about the believers’ spiritual resurrection.

The reception of the new life is impossible without God's initiative in restoring people to himself.

Col. 2:14 Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which was hostile to us, He also has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us

The meaning of the participle “expunging” (ἐξάλειψας) is “to cause something to cease by obliterating any evidence,” and relevant parallels to this verb refer to the wiping out of one's sins (Acts 3:14) and the blotting out of one's name from the book of life (Rev 3:5). With this verb, Paul highlights the complete destruction of that which was against believers.

Most agree that “certificate of debt” is taken from the fields of commerce and law and in this context would refer to an IOU from human beings to God.

Even though a strict identification with the Mosaic Torah cannot be made, this “certificate of debt” should be understood in relation to the Mosaic law. Paul states that “through the law we become conscious of our sin” (Rom 3:20) and in this sense “the law brings wrath” (4:15). Although “the law is holy” (7:12), it testifies to one's failure to fulfill God's will. It can therefore be considered a “record of debt,” and as it testifies against us, in this sense the “record” is “against us” (καθ' ἡμῶν). This reading is consistent with the consideration of the use of the word for “decree” (δόγμα) in its only other occurrence in Paul's letters, where he points directly to the Mosaic law: “For he himself ... broke down the dividing wall of the partition

Eph. 2:15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances [δόγμασιν]” (Eph 2:14–15).

A preferable interpretation is to view the “decrees” as explaining the reason why the “IOU” was “against us.” All we humans had, as it were, “signed” an IOU promising God perfect obedience, and this document has come to stand against us “because” of God's “decrees” that we have failed to keep. Paul emphasizes the negative verdict of the IOU by stating it twice: it *stood against us* and *was hostile to us*.

Which was hostile to us, He also has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross

The basic flow of vv. 13–14 runs as follows: “God has made alive with Christ us who were dead by forgiving our sins, in that he has cancelled the IOU; in fact, God removed this IOU from the situation by nailing it to the cross.” Both the syntax and the wording of this last clause lend it emphasis. It is by “nailing it to the cross” that the IOU has been decisively removed from having any power over us. The imagery probably has nothing to do with any ancient means of canceling debts but arises from the actual nature of Christ's crucifixion. In causing him to be nailed to the cross, God (the subject of the verb) has provided for the full cancellation of the debt of obedience that we had incurred. Christ took upon himself the penalty that we were under because of our disobedience, and his death fully satisfied God's necessary demand for due punishment of that disobedience.

Christ is the Conqueror of All Devils (2:15)

Col. 2:15 Having disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them in Him.

Having disarmed the rulers and authorities

In the final verse of this section, Paul provides the climactic note on God's victory through Christ on the cross. Having urged the Colossians not to be taken captive (v. 8), Paul now focuses on the disarming of the forces that oppose Christ and his followers. As Christ rules over "every ruler and authority" (v. 10), here God is said to have disarmed them through Christ. Finally, in the stripping off of Christ's body on the cross (v. 11), one finds the rulers and authorities in turn being stripped of their power. The followers of this Lord of all should no longer subject themselves to the power of what had been subdued.

in this context, God should be considered the subject of this participle. The subject of the verbs since v. 13b has been God, so it is fitting to see Paul as continuing this pattern. Second, if "in him" (ἐν αὐτῷ) at the end of this verse refers to "Christ," as in all the repeated appearances of this phrase in this section (cf. vv. 6, 7, 9, 10), it is more natural to see God performing the action.

The objects of God's act of disarming are "the rulers and authorities." These should be understood as demonic spiritual powers (cf. 2:10), and this usage is clearly paralleled by the description of divine warfare in Eph 6:12, where believers are called to fight "against the rulers, against the authorities ... and against the spiritual forces of evil" (cf. also Eph 2:2). Here, Paul notes the "disarming" of these powers; thus, he emphasizes that these powers can no longer threaten those who believe in Christ.

He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them in Him

In Roman military practices, victory was followed by the public demonstration of the glory of the victor as well as the shame of the defeated. In ancient literature, the word translated "triumphing" (θριαμβεύσας) is often used to describe the victory parade in which victorious Roman generals would lead captives in a public procession.

What is worth noting is that in a traditional Roman triumphal procession, captives are led to their death. This may be implied in this passage, but the focus of Paul's discussion is not the fate of these "rulers and authorities," but on the believers, who should not be deceived by these spirits whose powers have been stripped by the climactic act of God through his Son.

"In him" (ἐν αὐτῷ) points again to the critical role Christ plays in this divine warfare. The antecedent of this pronoun could be either the "cross" or "Christ." The former is certainly the closest explicit antecedent. On the other hand, God's work on our behalf "in" and "with" Christ has been a theme of this whole passage. It seems, therefore, preferable to take Christ as the antecedent. The agency of God, rather than Christ, in this context also supports the reading of Christ as its antecedent rather than the cross. If this is so, it means that the display of God's triumph over the powers may refer not to the cross (as most assume) but to the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

Confrontation of False Teachings (2:16–23)

Col. 2:16 ¶ Therefore, no one is to judge you in food and drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

Therefore, no one is to judge you in food and drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day

As the preceding section focused on the theoretical underpinnings of the false teachings, this section tackles specific practices demanded by the false teachers. This exhortation is connected directly with the previous assertion of the defeat of the evil powers and with the general discussion of the sufficiency of the believers' sharing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (vv. 11–15).

"Anyone" (τις) is another way of rhetorically suppressing the identity of the false teachers. "Judge" (κρινέτω) here carries the sense of passing "an unfavorable judgment upon" a person.

This probably reflects the dietary practices of eating and drinking in a pagan context (cf. Rom. 14). The avoidance of "food and drink" refers to the abstention "from meat" and "from wine and strong drink" in preparation for the participation in cultic and religious rituals. In light of the following reference to feast and "sabbaths" in particular, however, a Jewish background cannot be excluded.

"Festival" (ἑορτῆς), "new moon" (νεομηνίας), and "sabbaths" (σαββάτων) point clearly to a Jewish context. These three terms appear together in a number of OT passages (e.g., 1 Chr 23:31; 2 Chr 2:4; 31:3; Ezek 45:17; cf. 2 Kgs 4:23; Neh 10:33; Isa 66:23; Ezek 46:1; Amos 8:5). Some consider these terms here simply as the imposition of a "religious calendar" on the Colossian believers. It should be noted, however, that when these terms are listed together in the OT, it often refers to cultic rituals linked with these festal days. If so, Paul is not opposed to the Jewish calendar per se but to the imposition of practices related to these feasts.

Col. 2:17 things which are *only* a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Things which are *only* a shadow of what is to come

Paul notes the insignificance of these customs and regulations related to dietary and calendrical practices when compared to the accomplished work of God in Christ.

In Greek philosophical traditions (esp. Plato), "shadow" (σκιά) is contrasted with "reality" (πρᾶγμα) or "form" (εἰκών), and the "shadow" represents that which only acquires the appearance of what is real. If the contrast between "shadow" and "reality," especially in the Platonic sense, is to be assumed, then Paul's usage here is striking in that he is replacing the ontological distinction between appearance and reality with the temporal one. This temporal perspective is highlighted by the genitival phrase, "of the things to come."

"Of what is to come" refers to the acts of God through Christ that have already been accomplished, thus justifying a translation that makes this temporal aspect explicit: "these are a shadow of the things that were to come."

But the substance belongs to Christ

The shadow is caused by the body (“substance”). The nature of the body has been the subject of considerable discussion. Many commentators take the word to mean the actual body of Christ, i.e., his physical body. While the term “body” (σῶμα) normally does refer to the physical body, it is difficult to see how this interpretation answers the questions here.

The best suggestion is that the term “body” simply contrasts and completes the common shadow/body distinction. The reality to which the shadow points is “of Christ.”

Col. 2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, going into detail about *visions* he has seen, being puffed up for nothing by his fleshly mind,

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels

Paul now focuses his critique of false teachings by warning the Colossian believers not to be misled by ascetic practices and cultic acts of worshiping angels.

If the following phrase (“worship of angels”) is to be understood as referring to heavenly ascent, “self-humiliation” is then a practice that prepares for this visionary experience. Or if “worship of angels” points to the invocation of angels, these ascetic practices would also point to rituals that accompany the encounter of angelic beings.

Instead of locating the Colossian false teaching in a general trajectory within mystical Judaism, angel veneration has been shown to have existed in Phrygian Judaism. Few would argue against a syncretism in the Judaism of first-century Asia Minor, and it is also possible that the Jewish angelology was influenced by the Hellenistic demonology.

Going into detail about *visions* he has seen

Paul continues to criticize the false teachers for their promotion of visionary experiences in the worship of angels. This section may well refer to visionary experiences while worshiping the angels, and “going into detail about *visions* he has seen” is an attempt to enter into the heavenly realm through visionary experiences to gain possession of that which escapes mere mortals. Instead of gaining possession of the heavenly realm, however, they are only able to encounter what they see in their futile minds. The Colossian believers are called to resist such practices because all promises to them have already been provided through Christ, in whom “all the fullness of deity dwells” (v. 9).

Being puffed up for nothing by his fleshly mind

This points to the baseless assertions of the false teachers who claim superior visionary experience while not being able to experience anything but their illusions. Assumed to be humble through their ascetic practices (v. 18), they are actually consumed by pride that prompts them to be involved in false worship.

The ironic nature of their claims is further illustrated by the phrase “his fleshly mind.” Here Paul is accusing the false teachers of claiming to transcend their physical bodies in their involvement in visionary experiences but ending up becoming preoccupied by a mind that is controlled by the flesh.

Col. 2:19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

And not holding fast to the head

This participial clause further defines the false teachers as those who do not focus solely on Christ. This clause not only points to the critical deficiency of the false teaching, but it also identifies the shaky ground on which the false teachings are built. The false teachers can be criticized for their particular practices and their focus on visionary experiences, but these practices and experiences are to be criticized primarily because they do not find their roots in Christ. This section again builds on Paul's earlier call for the Colossian believers to be "rooted and built up in him" (v. 7), and not to be deceived by a philosophy that is based on "human tradition" instead of being "according to Christ" (v. 8).

From whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God

The dependence of the believers on Christ is illustrated with this physiological metaphor of the body. This section apparently draws from the physiological metaphor of the body, although the participles "nourished" and "united" move beyond medical terminology.

The emphasis on "the entire body" likewise points both to the need of every member to be dependent on Christ and to the unity of this body under this head.

"Grows with a growth from God" identifies the ultimate source behind the growth of the body.

The "growth" of the body of Christ involves the spiritual growth of the individual members (3:5-8), the growth of the unity among these various members (3:9-14), and the outreach to those outside the body (4:5-6). Paul's emphasis on this growth is polemical in intent with each of these areas. The false teachers who focus on themselves instead of Christ fail to bring about spiritual growth in their followers. Their focus on individual visionary experiences destroys the community of God's people. Their obsession with their own superior knowledge and with their own exclusivist practices prevents them from bringing the gospel to the outsiders.

False Philosophies are Powerless Inventions of the World (2:20–23)

Col. 2:20 ¶ If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees:

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world

Paul now turns to the absurdity of following that which Christ had already conquered.

To practice asceticism, Paul writes, is to adopt a worldly system of religion, based on elementary principles.

Why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees

In this apodosis, one finds the question that illustrates the irrational choices of those who claim to belong to Christ.

Clearly Paul does not mean to imply that believers do not continue to live in “the world,” whether we define “world” as the physical universe or as the fallen and sin-prone state of existence. His point, rather, is that believers no longer count the world as their true home or as the place that dictates who they are or how they are to live. By dying with Christ, we have been set free from the elements of this world, and we no longer therefore “belong” to the world over which they rule. How foolish, then, to continue to submit to the rules of this world!

Col. 2:21 “Do not handle, nor taste, nor touch”?

“Do not handle, nor taste, nor touch”

This verse provides a sample of the content of the “regulations” of the world mentioned above.

Perhaps the best way to understand these items is to read them within a general framework of cultic concerns. Instead of a thoroughgoing asceticism, the regulations imposed on the Colossian believers aim at preparing them for an encounter with the angels.

This cultic reading explains the diversity of the regulations in this section as they center on cultic purity in the worship of heavenly beings. For Paul, therefore, these practices are not to be condemned because of the rigorous treatment of the body. They are to be condemned because they look to other beings as the objects of worship instead of Christ himself, to whom these beings have been submitted (v. 15).

Col. 2:22 Which deal with everything destined to perish with use, *which are* in accordance with the commands and teachings of men;

Which deal with everything destined to perish with use, *which are* in accordance with the commands and teachings of men

Paul further provides reasons for the Colossian believers to reject the regulations imposed by the false teachers.

“Destined to perish with use” points to the lack of any permanent value of the regulations that guard such material things. In Paul, “perish” (φθορά) is often used in reference to that which belongs to this age instead of the age to come (Rom 8:21; 1 Cor 15:42, 50). There is a contrast between legalistic practices that are destined to perish and the life-giving promises of Christ (v. 13).

“In accordance with the commands and teachings of men” alludes to Isaiah 29:13.

Col. 2:23 which are matters having, to be sure, a word of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Which are matters having, to be sure, a word of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body

In these clauses, Paul unveils the true nature of the cultic and ascetic practices promoted by the false teachers. He sets up a contrast between the appearance of the wisdom of the imposed practices and their actual uselessness.

In light of the “worship of angels” in v. 18 and “self-imposed worship” in this verse, this asceticism is not simply the disciplining of the body; it is also preparation for an act of worship and is thus a cultic act. This understanding of asceticism can be identified across various ancient ascetic traditions, as it is “not simply the cutting off or destroying of the lower but, much more profoundly, the refinement and illumination of the lower and its transfiguration into something higher.” For Paul, the question is whether such “illumination” and “transfiguration” are grounded in the salvific act of God through Christ or are simply self-imposed acts of worship, the object of which are forces that had already been pacified by Christ.

***But are* of no value against fleshly indulgence**

Paul continues to ridicule the “regulations” of the world by noting their impotence in combating the desires of the flesh.

Taking the preposition πρὸς in the sense of “against,” Paul is affirming that the ascetic rules and regulations have no value in combating the desires of “the flesh.” This reference to the failure of their practices recalls Paul’s critique of the false teachers as “conceited without reason by his carnal mind” (v. 18). Paul’s rhetoric here points to his sustained attempt in this section to unmask the claims of the false teachers as their seemingly spiritual practices simply reflect their denial of the sufficiency of Christ.

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Expositing and Practicing
Colossians 3-4
for a Healthy Church
Central Africa Baptist University
Kitwe, Zambia
Pastors' Block Class July 2022
Dr. Carl A. Hargrove

3:1-4

Look to Christ to Live the New Life

- ❑ The Privileged Call to the New Life (vv.1-4)
- Grasp the Scope of the New Life (vv.1-2)
- Consider the Motivation for the New Life (vv.3-4)

Paul wants us to have a Mountaintop View...

Our ties to the past require another view...

- There are TEN PRIMARY lessons from chapter 3
 - What will you gain?
 1. A greater ability to stand in the knowledge of God and His acceptance. “with Christ”
 2. A greater knowledge of how Christ’s exalted status affects your daily life. “raised, right hand, return”
 3. A greater ability to seek first the kingdom of God. “seek things...set your mind”
 4. A greater awareness of ways to kill sin before it kills you. “put to death...put on”
 5. A greater ability to love, praise, and be thankful. “above all, put on love...sing...be thankful”
 6. A greater ability opportunity for women to learn the benefits of submission. “Wives submit...do not be harsh with them”
 7. A greater opportunity for men to learn divine love and forgiveness. “Husbands, love...do not be embittered with them”

8. A greater knowledge of God's expectation and promise for children. "Children, obey"
9. A greater awareness of the privilege of secular work. "Workers, ...work heartily unto the Lord"
10. A greater knowledge of employees' divine accountability. "Employees, ...a Master in heaven"

- **Look to the Person of Christ**

- Why look to Christ?

Because Christ is the following and more:

- Preeminent
- Sufficient
- Savior
- Sovereign

Therefore, He is superior to the following:

- Ceremony
- Philosophy
- Career
- Worldly Knowledge

•

Look to Christ because He is

- Beautiful
- Glorious
- Forgiving
- Merciful

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- Compassionate
- Kind
- Humble
- Meek
- Patient

I have chosen the last five words for a contextual reason

- Notice v.12—we are called to be what He is

Therefore, it only makes sense to look to the model if we genuinely want to be like Christ

- Corinthians—Imitate me as I imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1)
- Ephesians—Imitators of God (Eph 5:1)
- Philippians—The upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3)
- Hebrews—Look for the Author and Perfector of our faith (Heb 12:1-4)

Therefore he is

- Satisfying
 - An Application: How high are you willing to climb?

How is it possible to look to Christ when we are still so sinful?

The hope of living the New Life is the reality that God will never abandon His children and expect them to live this new life on their own. He has provided the

means for us to live as John 10:10 says, abundantly. *I came that you might have life, and that it would be abundant.*

- v.1 Grasp the reality of your secure position with Christ

- **What does this mean?**

To be in union with Christ means to be joined with Him in death, burial, resurrection, His exalted status, and His return.

The implications of being raised with Christ—36x in Paul

In the OT it is God with us, now we will be with God, stressing eternal fellowship.

- You have been raised with Him (cf. 2:12-13)

A big-picture application: Make sure that you are using the right marker.

What is the role of motivation in accomplishing goals?

- What makes a person bear the pressure of great expectations?
- What makes a pastor go through the rigors of high expectations?
- What moves a person to say no to temptations that would gratify their natural emotions and physical desires?
- Why does a person forgive another who has hurt them deeply?

I want us to focus on **FOUR POWERFUL TRUTHS** concerning your call to live the NEW LIFE.

A preview of what is ahead:

□ The Privileged Call to the New Life (vv.1-4)

- v.1a Grasp the REALITY of your New Life
- v.1cd Grasp the PERSON of your New Life
- vv.1b, 2 Grasp the DIRECTION of your New Life
- vv.3-4 Grasp the RATIONALE for your New Life
 - Your old life's power is gone (v.3a)
 - Your new life's promise is secure (v.3b)
 - Your new life's presence is awaiting (v.4)

□ The Privileged Call to the New Life (vv.1-4)

- **v.1a Grasp the REALITY of your New Life**

- **The implications of being RAISED...**

- The closest to Col is Eph 2:5 *made alive with Christ*
- Heb 11:31 Rahab did not perish with those who were disobedient
- James 2:22 faith cooperated with his works

Those who have surrendered their lives to Christ have been raised with Him and in turn now have the capacity to love, know, live, and proclaim the gospel. With this new capacity, there is a radical change in relationships and desires. Christ was raised to a new ministry and exalted status, and so you are raised with a new capacity and ministry. You are no longer dead in sin and walking according to the standards of the

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world or self-made religion. Now, you can walk in newness of life—2:6 *Therefore, as you received Christ, so walk in Him.* Your perspective on life is different—there has been a realignment, which requires you to consistently evaluate your life choices against the backdrop of the Cross. And here is where the rubber meets the road if you will—making everyday choices to realign ourselves with the Cross and discard anything that does not align itself to our New Life.

I have a question for you. Do you sometimes find yourself out of line with the gospel? We all do at some point, and that is why we need sound preaching and biblical relationships over the throne of God's grace so that we can be what we are in God's eyes—a people who have been raised with His son.

Before being raised with Christ, you were dead, helpless, hopeless, sinful by nature, and an enemy of God. Yet, your new identification with Christ brings about the most radical change imaginable. Once dead, now alive, once helpless, now capable of living for God, once hopeless, now there is the guarantee of a present life ordered by God and a future life that cannot be lost. You were once sinful by nature and an enemy, now you are no longer slaves of sin but slaves and children of God, even a friend of God. Jesus said, *"You are my friends if you do what I command you."* John 15:14

- **v.1cd Grasp the PERSON of your New Life**
- **Motivated by the PERSON of Christ...**

Reading the text and looking for Christ uncovers in a very pronounced way, the Preeminence of Christ.

In chapter 1 Christ is mentioned 24x in 29vv. Paul begins the letter with many Christological statements that set the tone for the entire letter. As I have stated before, His argument is Christological—he counters the false teachers with statements concerning the all-sufficient work of Christ which differs from many of the direct counterarguments used in other letters.

HOW IS HE SUFFICIENT?

- **Creator (v.16)**—by Him, through Him, and for Him
- **Sustainer (v.17)**—before all and holds all things together
- **Leader (v.18)**—the head and first place,
- **Reconciler (v.20)**—all things and made peace through the cross
- **Perfector (v.28)**—we are made complete in Him by the preaching of the gospel
- **Empowers (v.29)**--Paul reminds the church at Colossae that he labors according to His power, with the implication that self-effort is futile.

In chapter 2 Christ is referenced 17x in 23vv. We see Jesus as the

- **Revealer (v.2)**—Christ is the one who reveals the mystery of God
- **Renewer (v.10, 13)**—He is the one who brings life from death
- **Redeemer (v.14)**—it is through His all-sufficient sacrifice that the eternal debt of sin and its justifiable hostility towards us is removed
- **Ruler (v.15)**—through His resurrection He triumphed over all hostile spiritual rulers and authorities,

- **Sustainer (v.17)**—Paul communicates that the “substance belongs to Christ.” This is obviously meant to stand in contrast with the shallow religious and pagan offerings of the false teachers. **Implication**—what they offer you cannot sustain you, only a saving knowledge of Christ is capable of saving and securing your future. **Application**—Are you striving to gain acceptance with God through any means other than the complete and accepted work of the Son? Are you attempting to convince God to love you more, are you trying to prove to others what you know with little time spent on who know? Do you condemn the precious blood of Christ as a believer by not receiving His sanctifying forgiveness? Look to Christ!
- It is very clear that Paul is moving from the Indicative (statement of truth) to the Imperative (command for action) in chapters 3-4 because we only see 13x in 43 vv.
- This is still nearly 1/3 of the verses referencing the One that models the life we seek to emulate.
- **Sovereign (v.1)**—He is at *God’s right hand*, **Securer (v.3)**—we can be assured of our future because our life is *hidden with Him*
- **Indweller (v.15-16)**—Christ rules in your hearts and dwells in you, and **Commissioner (vv.24, 4:3, 12)**—serve, speak for Him, and act as Epaphras a slave of Christ.

Note that the first reference to Christ is connected to serving Him—an apostle of Christ (1:1) and the last references the privilege of being a slave of Christ (4:12).

This is the whole of our walk with Him. We are called, privileged, and expected to

live this life as slaves of Christ as we look to His example and depend on His grace to do what naturally we would not desire or be able to achieve.

- 54x in 95vv.
- 3:5-4:18 8x in 39vv. which makes Paul's approach even more unmistakable
- 1:1-3:4 46x in 56vv.

Paul's intention is obvious. This letter wants us to look to Christ!

❑ Motivated by the PERSON of Christ

❑ **Motivated by the POSITION of Christ**

The significance of seated at the right hand of God—this is the only other reference outside the gospels other than Revelation

Why a vision of Christ?

Illustrated in a boat without an anchor

Christ must be that anchor that provides the spiritual compass to navigate the new life we've been called to experience. The Colossians were being tempted with several false anchors that offered no lasting ability to stabilize one's soul.

A vision of Christ is needed for the practical decision of life if you are going to make those choices based on the right standard. Let me make my case by comparing some of the false teachings at Colossae and

- Philosophy and empty deception based on tradition and worldly thinking—Christ is the solution because He is full of Deity
- Self-abasement
- False visions

The right hand in the Old Testament

- Exodus 15:6 majestic power that shatters enemies
- Psalm 16:11 eternal pleasures
- Psalm 17:17 place of refuge
- Psalm 118:15-16 valiant and exalted

FIVE important statements concerning the throne of God:

- ① It is a place of acceptance

Before I tell you why it is a place of acceptance, let's allow the Scriptures to help make the point.

- Mark 16:19 *after He spoke was taken up and sat down at the RHOG;*
- Acts 5:31 *God exalted him at his RH as Leader and Savior; to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sin*
- Eph 1:20 *raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places*
- Heb 8:1-7—
- Heb 10:12 *offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at TRHOG*

I am sure that you see why it is a place of acceptance. The right hand of God is a place of acceptance because according to John—He is the *propitiation for our sins*. That is, He is the one who satisfies the holy standard of God, and He is able to do so because He is sufficient in character and action—in Jesus is the fullness of Deity (Col 1:19; 2:9) and the external expression of His life was always consistent with His perfect character—Heb *yet without sin*, John *always do the things pleasing to Him*, 1 Peter *without spot or blemish*.

It is important to note that Jesus sat because there was no need for continual sacrifices. In the place where the priests offered sacrifices, there was no chair because their work was constant. There was always a need to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people because the millions of sacrifices that preceded Christ were all deficient in removing the stain and consequence of sin from the heart of men. But not so with Christ!

② It is a place of authority

- ❑ Heb 1:3, 13 *the exact representation of His nature, upholds the universe by His word, made purification of sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...to which of the angels has He ever said, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet*

- ❑ 1 Pet 3:22 *at TRHOG, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him*

It is a place of authority, and very relevant for the argument of Colossians is the picture of deity, sustainer, redeemer, and superiority. The statements concerning angels are more reason to see the error of the false teachers at Colossae who tempted the Colossians to focus on the vision of angels. Christ is not one among spiritual beings, as some at Colossae may have been tempted to think, He is the Creator, and all are subject to Him.

Therefore, we should look to the One on the throne and GRASP the reality that He has subjected every power to Himself. Moreover, any influence spiritual powers possess in this world is allowed by His sovereign choice.

3) It is a place of intercession

- ❑ Rom 8:34 ESV *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

Look to Christ and His throne and know as the letter to the Romans intended, that the intercessory ministry of Christ protects us from the false accusations of the enemy and the lingering effects of sin. That is why it makes so much sense that the writer of Hebrews would say that we can come to the *throne of grace in time of need*.

- **Illus. Oswald Chambers on intercession**

Our work is to be in such close contact with God that we may have His mind

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about everything, but we shirk that responsibility by substituting doing for interceding. And yet intercession is the only thing that has no drawbacks, because it keeps our relationship completely open with God. What we must avoid in intercession is praying for someone to be simply “patched up.” We must pray that person completely through into contact with the very life of God. Think of the number of people God has brought across our path, only to see us drop them! When we pray on the basis of redemption, God creates something He can create in no other way than through intercessory prayer. My Utmost

4) It is a place of blessing (Acts 2:33)

5) It is a place of vindication (Acts 7:55-56)

□ **The implication of Jesus standing—**

What’s the connection?

As we move to the next consideration, I want you to see how the vertical meets the horizontal. In one sense, I am simply pointing you to Paul’s argument, Peter’s argument, and the writer of Hebrew’s argument. Building a theological vision that acts as the marker for exhortations and commands to live and think differently in view of the theological realities presented.

In Colossians, the reality is the Person of Christ and His sufficient work. But you must understand that His sufficient work affects a radical change in life. Remember, we have been raised with Him. Now have a spiritual capacity that was foreign to us in our former life. In the episode with Stephen, we see the benefit of the vertical and how it affects the horizontal—our walk with the Lord.

Notice the unfolding of the episode with Stephen...

- v.55 Full of the Spirit, gazed, the glory of God, Jesus standing
- v.56 the heavens opened, Son of Man standing. Only used of Christ and Stephen in the NT.
- v.57 But they cried out...covered their ears
- v.58 stoned him, at the feet of Saul
- v.59 Jesus, receive my spirit
- v.60 he cried out, do not hold this against them! Forgiveness
- Two things that allowed Stephen to forgive—He was full of the Spirit, and He had a vision of Christ.

Consider Psalm 16:8 in context

- v.1 the call for help
- vv.2, 5 the satisfaction found only in Him
- v.6 the recognition that all blessings come from Him
- v.7 the intimate ministry of the Lord
- v.9 THEREFORE...glad, rejoice, security
- v.11 YOUR RIGHT HAND are pleasures forever
- **An application:** Is Christ enough motivation for you? Consider the example of Jesus Christ in Hebrews 12:2 in preparation for future lessons.

Seeking and Setting

The Privileged Call to the New Life (vv.1-4)

- v.1a Grasp the Reality of your New Life
 - v.1cd Grasp the Person of your New Life
 - **vv.1b, 2 Grasp the DIRECTION of your New Life**
 - vv.3-4 Grasp the RATIONALE for your New Life
 - Your old life's power is gone (v.3a)
 - Your new life's promise is secure (v.3b)
 - Your new life's presence is awaiting (v.4)
- The errors of Colossae manifest today in MORALISM—virtuous living with the proper vision and dependence on the grace of God—it is effort without empowerment. LEGALISM—contrived restraints on the flesh that demand more than God's revelation and purport to be a sign of spirituality. They are man-made...

Answer 5 questions to help us grasp the lesson

1. Why must I have a vision of Christ?

- **vv.1b, 2 Grasp the DIRECTION of your New Life**

Seek the things above

Set your mind on things above

2. What does it mean to SEEK?

3. Why should I seek them?

They represent the new life and standard we possess and seek to demonstrate to the world. In one sense, Paul's thoughts are preparing readers for the call to witness in the world, which we'll see in chapter four (4:5-6).

4. What is above?

We have answered that over the course of several lessons. Christ is above, and He is the source of all the spiritual blessings for the child of God. So, are we to seek possession of them? No. We already have them. Our spiritual blessings are IN Christ, and we are IN Christ. We are to continually seek (present tense) the standard of heaven. Heaven is the starting point for every life decision. The false teachers and those influenced by them started from below, or from a human perspective and source of power. The believer is called to start in the opposite direction and with a power that is not human but divine.

- ❑ Seek implies the sense of direction, to be marked off, to “try to obtain” or have “a desire to possess” BAGD, 339.

5. How do I seek them?

- ❑ First, Paul shifts from the rather colorless “seek” to the more specific “think” (*phroneō*). Paul likes this verb: **twenty-three of the twenty-six New Testament occurrences are his**. It refers not to a purely mental or intellectual process, but to a more fundamental orientation of the will. Thus many versions, like the TNIV, translate “set your minds on” (ESV; NRSV; RSV; HCSB; NASB). The verb suggests the basic inner attitude that lies behind and is part of the “seeking” of v. 1, and, like “seek” in v. 1, it is also in the present tense, suggesting a “habit of the mind” (cf. **NET: “Keep thinking about things above”**). It may also be a further polemical dig at the false teachers, who are perhaps advocating a spiritual orientation that focused on the emotions at the expense of the mind. *Colossians* by Douglas Moo, 248

The Conditions for Seeking

1. Exclusivity (Psa. 27:4,8)

2. Consistency (1 Chron16:10,11 "seek His face continually")

3. Purity (Psa 24:4-6)

The Benefits of Seeking

Provision (Psa 34:10; 84:11; Phil 4:19)

1. Renewal (Psa 69:32,3)

2. Peace (Phil 4:7 *And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus)*

3. Joy (Psa 40:16 *Let all who seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee; Let those who love Thy salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!")*

4. Wisdom (Prov 2 Solomon is an illustration of wisdom given as a result of seeking God)

- Psalm 119:95 *The wicked wait for me to destroy me; I shall diligently consider Thy testimonies.*
- v.96 *I have seen a limit to all perfection; Thy commandment is exceedingly broad.*
- v.97 *O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.*
- v.98 *Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine.*

5. Understanding

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- Proverbs 28:5 *Because they do not regard the works of the Lord Nor the deeds of His hands, He will tear them down and not build them up.*
- Psalm 119:99 *I have more insight than all my teachers, For Thy testimonies are my meditation.*
- v. 100 *I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Thy precepts.*

6. Guidance

- **119:94** *I am Thine, save me; For I have sought Thy precepts.*

7. Deliverance

- **Psalm 34:4** *I sought the Lord, and He answered me, And delivered me from all my fears.*

8. Protection (Psa 91)

9. Satisfaction

- **Psa 17:15** *As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake.*

Learning from Paul's use of THINKING

- Romans 12:3—understand your role in the body of Christ
- Romans 8:5—the Spirit guides spiritual thinking
- 1 Cor 13:11—heavenly thinking will be consistent with your level of maturity
- Phil 2:2; 5, 3:15-17—the need to be consistent with your spiritual
- 3:18-19—learn from the false teachers of the world
- 3:20—remember our true home
- Consider Phil 3:12, 13—the intensity of its language

Grasp the RATIONALE for your New Life (vv.3-4) “for”

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Your old life's power is gone (v.3a) "you have died"

Grasp the implications of your DEATH

- You have died with Christ (Col 2:12,13, 20)
- You have died to SIN (Rom 6:2-11)
- You have died to the LAW (Rom 7:4-6; Gal 2:19)
- You have died to the WORLD (Col 2:20)
- Therefore, you are no longer under the POWER of sin, the CURSE of the Law, or the DIRECTION of the World

Your new life's promise is secure (v.3b) "hidden with Christ"

Grasp the implications of your SOURCE

- Your new life is secure in relation to Christ "with Christ"
- Because of His riches (Col 2:3)
- Your new life is secure in relation to God "in God"
- Expect your new way of life to be misunderstood by the world (1 Cor 2:14)

Your new life's presence is awaiting (v.4) "revealed...revealed with Him in glory"

Grasp the implications of your FUTURE

Your life has its TOTALITY in Christ “your life”

- He is your SOURCE
- He is your MEANING
- He is your IDENTITY
- He is your DESTINY

Your life has its TRANSFORMATION in Christ

Your life has its VINDICATION with Christ
Illustrated—Stephen in Acts 7

These truths are aids to prevent you from disregarding Christ.

- Seeking the things below disregards the sufficient work of Christ
- Seeking the things below disregards the sufficient person of Christ
- Seeking the things below disregards the sufficient relationship with Christ
- Seeking the things below disregards the sufficient plan of Christ

An application
Are you prepared for a journey of death and life?

❑ Grasp The New Life To Kill Divisive Sin (3:5-11)

OUTLINE

- ❑ The Privileged Call to the New Life (vv.1-4)
- ❑ **The Practical Battle in the New Life (vv.5-11)**
 - I. **Understand The Command To Kill Sin (v.5)**
 - II. **Understand The Character Of Sin (v.5)**
 - III. **Understand The Motivation To Kill Sin (vv.6-11)**
 - ❑ **Its relationship to the WRATH of God**
 - ❑ **Its relationship to the GRACE of God**
- I. **Understand The Command To Kill Sin (v.5)**
 - ❑ **Understand the Relationship to your Spiritual Death “therefore”**
 - You have died with Christ (Col 2:12,13, 20)
 - You have died to the WORLD (Col 2:20)
 - You have died to the LAW (Rom 7:4-6; Gal 2:19)
 - You have died to SIN (Rom 6:2-11)
 - Therefore, you are no longer under the POWER of sin, the CURSE of the Law, or the DIRECTION of the World
 - ❑ **Understand the Intensity of the Command “put to death”**
- II. **Understand The Character Of Sin “which amounts to idolatry” (v.5)**
 - Immorality—
 - Impurity—

- Passion—

- Evil Desire—

- Greed—

III. **Understand The Motivation To Kill Sin (vv.6-11)**

- Its relationship to the WRATH of God “For...wrath will come”

- Its relationship to the GRACE of God “once walked”

☐ **Killing Anger Before It Kills You (v.8)**

Anger is a potentially debilitating emotion that will damage your health, marriage, friendships, career, education, children, and reputation. If anger is not checked, it will damage your life and kill the potential for realizing the fullness of your spiritual potential. And, in missing that fullness you reject the power Christ died to provide.

Anger in the church causes division and discord. I am sure that you realized that a church divided cannot possibly fulfill its purpose to the degree that God expects.

The relationship of vv.8-11 to the preceding

Remembering the CONTEXT of vv.1-7

We are to seek heavenly things in view of our new POSITION IN CHRIST (vv.1-4)

- We are RAISED with Christ (v.1)

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- We are HIDDEN (Secure) with Christ (v.3)
- We will be REVEALED with Christ (v.4)

Therefore, put to death SEXUAL SIN (vv.5-7) which is idolatrous (v.5)

- In view of God's DISPLEASURE (*the wrath of God* v.6)
 - In the days of Noah
 - In the plagues of Egypt
 - In the deportation of Israel
 - In the judgments of Revelation
 - In the destruction of the universe
 - In the eternal punishment of sinners
 - In the substitutionary death of Christ, which must be a motivator to avoid sin, because sin was the cause of Christ experiencing the wrath of God
- In view of Our FORMER Walk (*were living in them* v.7)

Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

- ❑ But now—the contrast
- ❑ You also—you as well or emphatic—you yourselves

Put them all aside—what Paul has challenged them to PUT TO DEATH, he now challenges them to PUT IT ASIDE. The word is used in a literal sense of laying aside or

taking off clothes (Acts 7:58)—as Stephen is stoned, they laid aside their garments at Saul’s feet.

- It is a decision to surrender, to renounce, to disassociate with the former life (Thayer’s Lexicon, 701).

Paul shows the connection with the previous passage by using the same strong form to call the Colossians to the new life—v.5 Put To Death (NASB Consider).

ὀργήν anger—

Notice God’s anger in v.6, translated by the NASB as the wrath of God. There is an implication in this observation—there are moments when anger may be righteous since God manifests anger. Paul is not addressing righteous anger but sinful anger that is grounded in fleshly desires and values.

θυμόν wrath—In v.6 WRATH is a motivation to put sin to death, whereas here, it is another demonstration of man’s perversion of what is good in God corrupted in men

κακίαν malice—Used of evil (1 Cor 14:20) or of viciousness disposition (Rom 1:29, 1 Cor 5:8; Eph 4:31, Tit 3:3). Greco-Rom lit was the opposite of virtue.

βλασφημίαν slander—Against God and others (Matt 15:19 Eph 4:31; 1 Tim 6:4)

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**☐ Grasp Your New Life and Kill Anger Because of Its Overall Testimony
(Prov 14:17, 29; 15:1,18; 30:33)**

1) It Reflects A Foolish Heart

- ☐ Proverbs 14:17 A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of evil devices is hated.
- ☐ Proverbs 14:29 He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. Proverbs 14:29 Patient people have great understanding, but people with quick tempers show their foolishness. New Century Version

2) It Reflects A Contentious Heart

- ☐ Proverbs 15:1,18 A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. 18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger pacifies contention
- ☐ 30:33 For the churning of milk produces butter, and pressing the nose brings forth blood; so the churning of anger produces strife.

3) It Reflects A Proud Heart

- ☐ Proverbs 19:19 A man of great anger shall bear the penalty, For if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again. 19:19 Short-tempered people must pay their own penalty. If you rescue them once, you will have to do it again. NLT

☐ Considering The Social Consequences (Prov 22:24,25; Gal 5:15)

4) It Reflects An Inconsiderate Heart

- ☐ Proverbs 22:24,25 Do not associate with a man given to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man, 25 Lest you learn his ways, And find a snare for yourself.

- ❑ Proverbs 22:24,25 Don't make friends with anyone who has a bad temper. 25 You might turn out like them and get caught in a trap. CEV

5) It Reflects A Divisive Heart

- ❑ Galatians 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. 5:15 But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always critical and catty, watch out! Beware of ruining each other. The Living Bible

Anger Causes Spiritual Vulnerability (Prov 25:28)

6) It leads to unspiritual decisions and may give the enemy a foothold

What comes in when the walls of a city are broken down? Why the image of walls?

- ❑ Proverbs 25:28 Like a city that is broken into and without walls Is a man who has no control over his spirit.

7) It fosters harmful thoughts

- ❑ Husbands do not be embittered against your wives—Col 3:19 [used of water being made bitter in Rev]
- ❑ The defiling root of anger—Heb 11:25

What Is Your Anger Rating?

- 1) Do I justify outbursts of temper?
- 2) Do I shift the blame to others (not accepting responsibility)?
- 3) Have I become physical with someone over an issue?
- 4) Do I often regret my speech in arguments/discussions?
- 5) Do I exaggerate the situation to justify my response?
- 6) Do I allow righteous anger to become unrighteous expression...Do I *speak the*

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- 7) Do I shut people out emotionally when offended?
- 8) Do I fight back with the silent treatment?
- 9) When I look in retrospect, do I OFTEN say, *I made more out of that than I should have?*
- 10) Do I find it difficult to apologize?
- 11) Can I engage in intense discussions without losing my temper?
- 12) Do intense conversations turn into a monologue because the other person can't *get a word in?*
- 13) Do I have the ability to stop my angry expression when it is brought to my attention (not hours or days later but within moments)?
- 14) Do I keep my cool but inside feel contention and have sinful thoughts?
- 15) Do I shutdown when others disagree with me?
- 16) Do I have trigger points that cause me to act out of character (normally coolheaded but certain people or situations get to you)?
- 17) Do I feel remorse over my anger, or do I rest in self-righteousness?

Grasp The New Life of Honesty

3:9-11

- **Two truths that compel us to grasp the new life of integrity**
- **Lying in America and the call to integrity...**

Lies:

How are you doing spiritually
Are you having sex
Are you maintaining your purity
When was the last time you looked at...
How are things at home

Lies are told when you know what's being asked

Lies told because of embarrassment

Lies told to protect another

Wives
Husbands
Parents

Lies told to fit in with the crowd

Lies told to hide one's past

But then there are those whose lives have been changed by the power of God. We are those people, and we are all striving to live as Paul said to the Corinthians—*such were some of you, but you were washed...*

I. The Command to be a People of Integrity (v.9a) “do not lie...”

II. The Rationale for being a People of Integrity (vv.9b-11) “since you have laid aside”

I. The Command to be a People of Integrity (v.9a) “do not lie...”

The twofold nature of lying

- Rom 1:26-30 lying and idolatry because its goal is to protect self
- Earlier it was sexual sin as the idol because its goal is self-gratification
- The emphasis on lifestyle in vv.5-9a

II. The Rationale for being a People of Integrity (vv.9b-11) “since you have laid aside”

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- Heb 12:1—
- James 1:21—
- 1 Peter 1:21—

The relationship of sanctification and justification: Put to death can take place because you have laid aside the old. This addresses moralism-virtuous living apart from grace

❑ **You have denounced the evil of the past (v.9b) (Eph 4:22; Rom 6:6)**

❑ **You have accepted the renewal of the present and future (v.10a)**

It is grounded in genuine knowledge (v.10b)

- At Colossae, there would have been the false knowledge espoused by those who taught...
- 1:10 True knowledge of God
- 2:2 the true mystery vs. the false ministry of the false teachers
- 2:30 appropriately, Christ is the source of this knowledge
- **It is grounded in Divine image (v.10c)**
- **It is grounded in divine inclusion (v.11a)**

The language of inclusion

- Rom 10:12 no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him

- 1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.
- Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

This is not just a theological statement but a relational one as well. It is a statement of community. And, of course, we accept the community of the church, and therefore we need to be aware of the damage lying does to a community. There is an obvious violation of trust which may take a long time to repair once it has been damaged. There are people in your life that you might say, *I can't trust them because there has been a pattern of deceit*. When this happens in marriage, it undermines the fiber of the relationship, which should be based on mutual respect and affection.

Over the years, I have asked many questions, and many people have lied in response:

- Are you still seeing her?
- Did you have lunch with him again?
- Did you cancel the subscription?
- Have you moved out?
- Were you there alone?
- Have you ever become physical when you disagree?
- How are you progressing in your faith?
- Is this your work or someone else's?
- I never got the assignment, are you sure you sent it to me?
- Have you lied to me about anything I just asked you?

In the second portion of the verse, Paul returns to our starting point in our series in Colossians and the foundation for the proper motivation to live the Christian life—the

Person, Jesus Christ. This section closes with the reminder that Christ is the source of strength for those who would live the new life of faith.

- **It is grounded in Christological accomplishment (v.11b)**
 - *ALL* in Colossians
 - 1:15—firstborn of ALL creation—He is superior
 - 1:16—ALL things have been created through Him and for Him—He is worthy
 - 1:17—He is before ALL things, and in Him ALL things hold together—He is sufficient
 - 1:19; 2:9—ALL the fullness of deity to dwell in Him—He is Divine
 - 1:23—the gospel was proclaimed in ALL creation—His message is universal
 - 2:3—For in Him ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—He is the ultimate source
 - 2:10—He is the head over ALL rule and authority—He is the ultimate ruler
 - 2:13—forgiven us ALL our transgressions—He is the ultimate redeemer
 - 3:8—put aside ALL anger, wrath...--He is the ultimate motivation

All of these truths lead us to a conclusion that we can extrapolate from the next phrase...

- *Is all*
 - A statement of His preeminence
- Note the next phrase IN ALL...
- *In all*
 - A statement of the scope of redemption
- This brings us full circle in Paul's argument/presentation

- Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for **you are all one in Christ** Jesus.

Honor Christ by Putting on the Virtues of Faith

3:12-17

The Bonding Virtues of the Command (vv.12b-14)

Achieve God-glorifying unity by putting on Compassion (v.12)

- The Boundless Justification for the Command (v.12a)
- So [therefore]
- “that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation.” [L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 114.]
- Moreover, the word is always used in the middle voice meaning God chose *for Himself*. This describes the purpose of the choosing—God chose believers to be in fellowship with Him and to reflect His grace through their living a redeemed life [Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 328]

The Intrinsic Power Accompanying the Justification

The Glorious Nature of the Justification

- 1) It is bound to eternal choice (Eph 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13)
- 2) It is bound to eternal love (1 Pet 1:2 by the foreknowledge of God)
- 3) It is bound to eternal sanctification (Eph 2:10; 1 Thess 1:5-10)
- 4) It is bound to eternal grace (1 Cor 4:7; Rom 11:5; Eph 2:8)

- 5) It is bound to eternal justification (Rom 8:33 who will bring a charge against God's elect)

- 6) It is bound to eternal destiny (Rom 8:28-30; 11:29)

- 7) It is bound to the ultimate eternal purpose (Eph 1:6, 12, 14)

Compassion

Expressed in mercy

- Erickson's words on the mercy of God that is partially captured in His rachamim: God's mercy is his tenderhearted, loving compassion for his people. It is his tenderness of heart toward the needy. If grace contemplated man as sinful guilty, and condemned, mercy sees him as miserable and needy (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 295).

Further defining God's compassion:

- Exodus 34:6—the passed and proclaimed...compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth

- Psalm 86:15—But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth

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- **God's Display of Compassion**

- Nehemiah 9:17—But you are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness; and You did not forsake them

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- Joel 2:13—
- Jonah 4:2—for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity
- Psalm 103:6-10 The Lord performs righteous deeds And judgments for all who are oppressed. 7 He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. 8 The Lord is **compassionate and gracious**, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. 9 He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
- Psalm 111:4-5 He has made His wonders to be remembered; The Lord is **gracious and compassionate**. 5 He has given food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant forever.
- Psalm 116:1-6 I love the Lord, because He hears My voice and my supplications. 2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live. 3 The cords of death encompassed me And the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. 4 Then I called upon the name of the Lord: “O Lord, I beseech You, save my life!” 5 **Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate**. 6 The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.
 - **The NT Expression**
- *Compassion* is often expressed in figurative language, for example, “your heart should go out to others,” or “you should feel sorrow in your heart for others,” or “you should weep in your insides because of others (Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, UBS Handbook Series, 86.).

Imitating Compassion

The Example of Christ

- Let’s take a brief walk through the Life of Christ
 - Matt 9:13 “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion (ἐλεος), and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Cf. Hosea 6:6 NASB loyalty (**τὸν**) NKJ, NIV= Mercy

- Matt 9:36 And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. . .
- Good Sam who “felt compassion” Lit “inward parts of a sacrifice” also of man . .
 - ❖ Outside the original parables of Jesus there is no instance of the word being used of men. It is always used to describe the **attitude of Jesus** and it characterizes the divine nature of His acts. *TDNT*

- Matt 14:14 And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and felt compassion for them, and healed their sick.
- Matt 20:34 And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.
- Mark 1:41 And moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand, and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."
- Luke 7:13 And when the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep."

What is the response to Jesus' compassion?

In the immediate context, it is forbearing and forgiveness, which is consistent with the use elsewhere

- **Displaying Compassion**
 - **The Need in the Church**
 - **The Need in the World**
 - **Aborted children**
 - **Enslaved families**
 - **Demeaned women and girls**

The importance of 3:12-17 to the instructions in 3:18-4:6

Preparation for family, work, and the world

- Wives and submission (v.18)
- Husbands and love (v.19)
- Children and obedience (v.20)
- Fathers and exasperation (v.21)
- Employees and work ethics (vv.22-25)
- Employers and fair practice (4:1)
- Evangelism and preparedness (vv.5-6)

Achieve God-glorifying Unity by Putting on Gentleness

- “Meekness is a grace whereby we are enabled by the Spirit of God to moderate our passions.” Thomas Watson
- The Role of Gentleness
 - 1) It is needed for restoration (Gal 6:1)
 - 2) It is needed for confrontation (2 Tim 2:25)
 - 3) It is our calling as imitators (Matt 11:29)
- Jesus said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Achieve God-glorifying Unity by Putting on Patience (macrothumia)

- Its Definition... Distinguishing Patience from Endurance
- Its Example in God (Ex 34:5-7; Num 14:18-19; Jonah 4:2; Rom 2:4; 9:22; 1 Tim 1: 16; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:15)
- The Need for Patience

Proverbial Wisdom on Patience

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- 1) It helps avoid strife (Prov. 14:29) 2) It helps in resolution (15:18)
- 3) It helps our reputation (16:32) 4) It is a sign of wisdom (19:11)

Achieve God-glorifying Unity by Putting on Humility

- Biblical Examples of the Virtue of Humility—Jesus and Moses “Moses was more humble than any man on the earth” (Num 12:3)
- *I used to think, that God's gifts were on shelves one above another and the taller we grow, The easier we can reach them. Now I find, that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath another and the lower we stoop, the more we get. —F. B. Meyer*

Forgiveness and the New Life Col 3:13

This is one of the most important verses in this passage because, without the fulfillment of this command, all relationships will fail. Why do I say that?

The Importance of the Lesson

- Forgiveness is the key to maintaining every relationship
 - Friendships

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- Marriage
- Work
- Ministry
- Church life
- Forgiveness and the privilege of emulating the Godhead

Theological Questions Answered

- 1) What does forgiveness tell us about God?
- 2) What does a struggle with forgiveness say about men?
- 3) What is true of a believer that demands forgiveness?
- 4) Does God punish the justified?
- 5) Are there Old Testament lessons to learn from forgiveness?
- 6) Does the Father or Christ forgive?
- 7) Should forgiveness be considered a condition for salvation or evidence of genuine faith?

Textual Questions Answered

- 1) What is the relationship of v.13 to vv.1-12 & 14?
- 2) What is the significance of the definition for BEARING and FORGIVING in v.13?
- 3) Does the Parable of the King's mercy (Matt 18:21-35) help us understand Colossians 3:13?
- 4) What is the significance of "just as" in v.13?

Practical Questions Answered

- 1) Am I called to forgive those who don't ask?
- 2) Can I forgive someone who can't ask for forgiveness?

- 3) How do I apply the 70 x 7 principle in life?
- 4) If a person continues to offend in the same manner, what is my recourse?
- 5) Does forgiveness mean there are no consequences for those who offend?
- 6) Is it possible to *forgive but not forget*?
- 7) How can I avoid bitterness?
- 8) Why is withholding forgiveness the pathway to greater hurt?

As we consider this verse in context and in the wider context of Scripture, God's Word will instruct all of us on how we can live the new life as people who forgive as we are motivated by His forgiveness.

I. Live as Chosen People in Forgiving Relationships (v.13a)

II. Live as Chosen People by the Motivating Relationship (v.13b)

What is the significance of the words for BEARING and FORGIVING in v.13?

- **What does it mean to “bear with each other”?**
 - Defining the word
 - Biblical examples of the word
 - Practically living the word

Defining the Word:

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The USE OF THE WORD:

- Matthew 17:17 And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.”

- 2 Corinthians 11:1 I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.
- 2 Corinthians 11:20 For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.
- Eph 4:2 showing tolerance in love
- 2 Thessalonians 1:4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.
- 2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,
- Hebrews 13:22 But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

Is Paul addressing particular issues at Colossae? Most likely, he is not. The principles he shares are universal and meant to address the tendency for people to withhold forgiveness from those who ask or require it. There will always be those in our lives, either closely related or simply acquaintances who will offend us, and we must be ready to tolerate their sins, tendencies, and idiosyncrasies. If not, the body of Christ will be stalemated. Why do I say that? Because every church body has conflict, every relationship will involve conflict. And unless we can bear with the differences of others, we will stunt our growth and those around us.

2) What is the significance of the words for BEARING and FORGIVING in v.13?

“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14)

- **What does it mean to “bear with each other and forgive each other”?**

Forgiveness and Paul’s Usage

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Let's allow usage to help us understand forgiveness:

- ❑ Luke 7:42,43
- ❑ 2 Cor 2:7, 10
- ❑ 2 Cor 12:13
- ❑ Eph 4:32
- ❑ Col 2:13

Forgiveness and the virtues of v.12

- Compassion
- Kindness
- Humility
- Gentleness
- Patience

Forgiveness in the Old Testament

- Gen, Exod, Lev, Num, Deut, Josh, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Sam, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Neh, Esther, Job, Psalm, Isa, Jer, Lam, Eze, Dan, Hosea

Forgiveness and the Gospels

The Parable of the King's Mercy (Matt 18:21-34)

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- *If we know not what we ourselves merit at God's hands, we shall be ready to think much of any injuries which we receive from others; but if once we become sensible of the greatness of our debt to God, and of the obligations he has laid us under by the free offers of his mercy, we shall feel no difficulty in exercising forbearance and forgiveness. Resentment cannot long dwell in the bosom of one who has tasted redeeming love. Let it then be our study to obtain a thorough knowledge of our own depravity, and to imitate the longsuffering, which we ourselves so richly experience.* Charles Simeon
- *The conclusion is, if we do not forgive others, we are not forgiven. We are not justified people. We are not God's children.* James Montgomery Boice

Achieve God-glorifying Unity by Putting on Love (v.14)

Church splits and disunity—

Beyond all these things put on love,

Understanding the prepositional phrase—*beyond all these things*

- In addition to
- On
- On top of, above

NKJ—but above all

NET—and to all

ESV—and above all

Why must we put on love?

It is the obedient response to the character of God. The point of this passage and our lives is to look for Christ and follow His examples in every facet of life.

It is the worshipful response to the teaching of Christ. I say worshipful response because it is beyond a simple motivation, but a sincere response based on one's desire to worship the One who saved us.

- John 13:34—The new commandment that we love one another

It is the proper response to Paul's exhortation to walk in love

1 Cor 13:4-7—

Rom 13:8-10—8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Galatians 5:6, 14, 22—6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

It is the strategic response to Peter's instruction for handling offenses

Love in 1 Peter:

- ❑ 1:8 –we love Christ whom we have not seen
- ❑ 1:22—purified our souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love from the heart
- ❑ 2:17—in the midst of honoring all, fearing God, and respecting the king, we are to love the brotherhood
- ❑ 1 Peter 4:8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

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- Compassion and Love—love looks at the need of the person and acts according
- Kindness and Love—love makes practical decisions that are useful for the needs of those in the body of Christ
- Humility and Love—love recognizes the call to prefer others and places their needs before oneself
- Gentleness and Love—love avoids harshness in tone and action and realizes that so often a gentle response will help avoid disunity
- Patience and Love—love is patient because it desires the best in the other person and the situation. Patience is an expression of love as it controls ungodly responses and replaces them with the ability to wait on the Lord to act. Loving patience avoids taking things into one’s hands before the proper time. Loving patience is an expression of a person’s trust or lack of trust in the sovereign hand of God in difficult situations that have the potential to cause disunity.
- Forgiveness and Love—love forgives because these two virtues are so bound to each other in the course of salvation—God is love and God loved the world that He gave and in His giving of His son, He can forgive those called by grace. If forgiveness is the greatest gift God can bestow on men and love motivates God’s forgiveness—a love for His glory and a love for His creation, then love does have a superior nature. And we are called to manifest this love in the body of Christ for each other as a means to maintain our unity and set an example for the world.

to which indeed you were called in one body

☐ Christ’s Lordship has brought unity

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The thought of being called returns us to verse 12 and the motivation to put on the virtues of our new faith—we are a chosen holy and beloved of God. *and be thankful...with thankfulness (v.16c)...giving thanks through Him (v.17c)*. Grateful for what? In the immediate context, the reason to be thankful includes experiencing the peace of God (v.15), having the word of God (v.16), and a new life that has called us to be a servant of God (v.17). We would notice in verse 16 that thankfulness is also bound to the spiritual praise of the church.

What is being taught here is this: people who were thankful for experiencing the grace of God in salvation and sanctification will extend forgiveness patience, kindness, compassion, and all other virtues to his brother in Christ.

They will extend it because they know it has been extended to them; they remember the call of verse 13—forgive just as Christ has forgiven you. People who are thankful have come to grips with their need and how it has been met by the sovereign grace of God. Note v.16—people who are thankful for the mercy shown them will praise God from a heart of thankfulness.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you

❑ **Christ's Word must permeate the body**

The word “dwell” is derived from oikos (house). This has a strong implication for us. The preached word, the written, and the recited word must permeate every fabric of church life.

Live for the Privilege of Service to Christ (v.17)

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The relationship of vv.15-16 to v.17

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all

❑ The scope of the privilege

(Luke 24:19; Acts 7:22; Rom. 15:18; 2 Thess. 2:17; cf. 1 Cor. 10:31): everything, including what we say and what we do, should be governed by the consideration of what it means to live in the realm of the risen Christ. Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 291

in the name of the Lord Jesus

❑ The standard of the privilege

What's in a name?

through Him to God the Father

❑ The honor of the privilege

In this very practical passage, Paul returns to the argument of the letter—Christ is preeminent in all things. It is a statement of sufficient exclusivity. JOHN 14:6

Paul is communicating that all genuine worship offered to God must honor the person of

Christ and can only be offered in relationship to Christ.

- ❑ 1:16 ALL created _____ Him
- ❑ 1:20 reconcile ALL _____ Him made peace ____ His blood
- ❑ 2:8 no one take you captive _____ philosophy and empty deceit, and the wisdom of men,

- ❑ BUT, be captive to the person and cause of Christ, who, in contrast to the emptiness of the false teachers is the fullness of deity
- ❑ 2:12 we are raised _____ faith in the working of God
- ❑ 2:15 triumphed ___Him

This is a wonderful conclusion to the passage that prepares us for the passage ahead.

Note the relationship of what is taught in vv.15-17 to 3:18-4:6...

A Godly Family and Work (overview) 3:18-4:1

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The relationships in the next passage cannot be lived consistently unless you understand the relationship of 3:1-17 to 3:18-4:1. 3:1-17 is the theological and practical preparation for the relationships in 3:18-4:1.

I want to show in three parts how verses one through seventeen relate to the passage ahead and then consider questions you may have for family and work and having done that conclude with a final thought of exhortation.

A PROPER VISION of Christ and Christian priorities is needed for a victorious walk of faith (vv.1-4).

- You must have a lofty view of His PERSON
- For several weeks we considered how Christ must be the motivation in our lives because of his perfect example of moral purity and obedience. If we have a lofty view

of His person, this will help us with the direction of our lives by making them Christ-centered and upward.

- You must have a lofty view of His AUTHORITY

This is a declaration of his absolute authority over the universe is the result of his acceptable sacrifice for mankind, but the implication of it it's clearly obvious—if he is in fact the absolute authority over all the universe surely he is the authority over her life decisions and every relationship and family and work.

- You must have a lofty view of your FUTURE

Why would I say that you should have a lofty view of your future? I say this because the Christian life is a Grace empowered effort in which we strive to make our lives what they will be in eternity. When we look to the future it gives us a perspective it should, actually, must cause us to reprioritize our life decisions. If I know that eternity awaits me and all that It entails, then I will not be so transfixed on the temporary take my decisions, my choices through the grid of eternity. And of course, this cannot help but have a positive affect on family and my work ethic. Because then I will see these relationships properly.

The second part of the passage is necessary if we were to have godly relationships in the family and a proper view of working on to the Lord.

A PASSIONATE APPROACH to killing sin is needed for a victorious walk of faith (vv.5-11)

NOTE: v.2 on the earth and v.5 earthly body

Every vice mentioned in this passage will only lead to harming if not altogether destroying family relationships and any testimony for Christ in the workplace. I remind you that the language of verse five is very strong. It is more than just considering your members is dead, but it is an active approach to killing what remains of a former life, which includes the attitudes and passions that undermine any attempt to fix one's heart on things that are above.

Take note of the vices which destroy or damage any relationship and witness for Christ.

- Immorality
- Impurity
- Passion
- Evil desire
- Greed

All of these work to undermine the fidelity of family relationships and the integrity necessary to work in the marketplace of life as an example of Christianity made practical. Said differently, the vices of the past will lead to sinful choices that destroy trust, lead to compromise, and reflect a heart of selfishness which obviously will not think of others first but only with what a person may gain for themselves.

A PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION of virtue is needed to authenticate a victorious walk of faith (vv.12-17)

1) Family and Work require you to behave as a person CHOSEN by God (v.12a)
Because you will emulate Christ powerfully

2) Family and Work require you to put on the VIRTUES of FAITH (v.12b)
Because they manifest grace

3) Family and Work require you to offer FORGIVEN consistently (v.13)
Because it heals injury

4) Family and Work require you to strive to LOVE consistently (v.14)
Because it builds unity

5) Family and Work require you to seek the PEACE of Christ in all relationships (v.15)
Because it becomes the proper goal

6) Family and Work require you to seek the WORD of Christ in all relationships (v.16)
Because it provides the proper guidelines

7) Family and Work require you to seek the WILL of God in all things (v.17)
Because it is the ultimate goal of life

If we understand the floor five from verses one through 17, then we can begin to answer properly the questions that arise in the passage in front of us.

- What does it mean to submit?
- How can I submit to someone who doesn't lead?
- What if my spouse has been unfaithful?
- When does the call to obey parents end?
- Why are Fathers told not to exasperate?
- How do parents exasperate their children?
- How does the fear of God help obedience in trying circumstances?
- How can I develop an attitude that views secular work as a service to God?
- How can I avoid the temptation to repay those who injure me?

Once we've answered those questions and more you will be empowered to live them out as you reflect on what you've already been learned in the preceding verses.

- The wife will be able to follow the man who is not leading properly.
- Husbands will be able to love a woman who is not submitting and even aggravating.
- Children will be able to obey parents from the heart even if they don't fully understand or agree.
- Fathers will deal with their children with gentleness instead of harshness
- Employees will be able to work even in the most difficult environments and with the most difficult of employers

A Godly Family and Work: Submission

3:18

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I. Demonstrate A Transformed Life Through Submission in Marriage

1) The Definition of Submission in Marriage

Note the statements of submission in popular culture:

1. Submission is the suppression of women
2. Submission is the denial of women's rights
3. Submission requires absolute obedience to men
4. Submission does not allow for a woman's creativity to flourish
5. Submission denounces a woman equal standing with men

Submission is unnatural, therefore it is resisted

- 1) It began with Satan (Isa 14:13)
- 2) It continued in the garden (Gen 3:5)
- 3) It extended to all mankind (Isa 53:6)
- 4) It will intensify in the last days (2Tim 3:1,2; 2 Pet 2:19)

A choice must be made to reverse the resistance to God's design which began with the rebellion of Lucifer.

What are the incorrect views of submission?

1. Submission is not a statement of Inequality (Phil 2:5-7; 1 Peter 3:7)

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2. Submission does not give the right to ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY of the husband (1 Peter 3:7). Note the call for children and slaves to obey those in authority.

3. Submission is not a statement of Inferiority (Psa 139:14-16)

4. Submission is not a statement of PASSIVE LEADERSHIP (Hanna, the proverbial mother, Timothy's mother and grandmother)

Submission does mean: (hupotasso)

- arrange oneself in order
- this is done voluntarily (middle)
- The implication of the middle voice

1. Divine plan for function and order

2. It reflects a way of life for Christians (Eph 5:21)

1 Peter its context affects the command

- the believer's behavior
- unfair treatment
- deference
- motivation by Christ's example
- anticipation of future glory
- submission in Peter (2:13,18; 3:1,5,6; 5:5)

2) The Motivation for Submission in Marriage "fitting to the Lord"

Why is it "fitting to the Lord"

- It is the example of Christ. Again, if we reach back to vv.1-4 and consider the exalted status of Christ, our ultimate motivator, we must remember that His exaltation was preceded by humble submission.
- It follows the divine order for the family
- It requires humility
- It glorifies God

3) The Guidelines for Submission in Marriage

Genesis 2:18

- Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a **helper suitable** for him.” NASB
- ... **companion who will help** him.” NLT
- ... **helper as his partner.**” NRSV
- ... a **helper suitable** for him.” NIV
- ... a **helper comparable** to him.” NKJ
- ...make a companion for him, a **helper suited to his needs.**” TLB
- ... a **help meet** for him. KJV
- ... a **suitable partner** for him.” CEV

OT usage—

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The heart of the definition: One who comes alongside to complete that which is lacking, without challenging that which is strong.

Biblical and practical considerations to be a good *helper*

1. Seek to supplement his weaknesses not outdo his strengths.
2. Seek to understand his goals.
3. Seek to correct the failure of your upbringing.
4. Seek to be the example your children and others in need of a model.
5. Seek to be discrete when expressing your frustrations and differing opinions.
6. Do I express a spirit of complementation or contention?
Choose your issues (Prov 21:9, 19; 25:24; 26:21; 27:15)
7. Do I exhibit a life that calls my husband to trust in me?
Providing conversation (Prov 31:11)
8. I'm I flexible in scheduling time to be a wife?
9. Do I seek to look my best for him?
10. Seek to enjoy the things he enjoys.
11. Realize that God has given you your spouse for your personal growth.

12. Accept the evangelistic platform of marriage.

Husbands, Walk in Love Not Bitterness
Colossians 3:19

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Questions to answer:

- 1) How should we understand love in Colossians and the relationship to Ephesians? What does it mean to love in the context of marriage?
- 2) What is the importance of 3:1-4 in defining biblical love and the husband's role?
- 3) What if your love is not reciprocated?
- 4) Why are husbands not told to submit?
- 5) What does it mean to be embittered?
- 6) Why is the charge given to husbands?
- 7) Which actions of a wife may cause a man to become embittered?
- 8) What is the solution to a bitter heart in view of vv.1-17 and Hebrews 12:15?
- 9) What is the relationship of 1 Peter 3:7 to this verse?

I. Husbands are to honor God in marriage by Pursuing Love

II. Husbands are to honor God in marriage by Preventing Bitterness

I. Husbands are to honor God in marriage by Pursuing Love

Love in Colossians

- Colossians 1:4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;
- Colossians 1:8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.
- Colossians 2:2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,
- Colossians 3:14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Husbands, Love, and the Virtues of vv.12-13

▪ **Compassion and Husbands**

Just as the Lord had compassion on us in our unsaved and sinful state, and just as Christ did when He looked on this with need, so compassion—the emotions that look with concern and pity on the need of another is an expression of love.

▪ **Kindness and Husbands**

Kindness is a word that is more than an agreeable disposition but communicates actions that are practically useful to the other. When we say that a person is KIND, we are saying that they act on their sensitive heart for the benefit of another.

▪ **Humility and Husbands**

This is needed because deference and preference are needed in marriage and humility is the example of Christ for believers (Phil 2). Humility is needed to live out the vows of commitment to the other person beyond self. NOTE Phil 2:3-4.

▪ **Gentleness and Husbands**

Men must pay more attention to this virtue because of the tendency to be harsh, short, and demanding. The example is Christ, and the fruit is the Spirit. That is, again Christ sets the example, and the example is not beyond reach because gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5).

▪ **Patience and Husbands**

You may remember the word for patience—MACROTHUMIA—to be long in suffering. Patience is an attribute that is required in ministers—Paul to Timothy—patient when wronged. There may be moments when your spouse has wronged you intentionally or unintentionally and your response, like the minister, like the Lord is one of

patience. There must also be patience in growth—the growth of your spouse and the marriage relationship.

- **Bearing and Forgiving Husbands**

v.12 the 5 virtues (nouns) are now followed by two participles—the application of the virtues

II. Husbands are to honor God in marriage by Preventing Bitterness

Why are husbands commanded not to become bitter?

The implication is clear that something in the marriage relations may lead to a bitter

heart. This is not to say that wives do not have this potential but husbands in this

context were more prone to this state of mind.

What are the causes of bitterness?

Obedient children please God

3:20

A sign of the times and a sign of honor

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I. Please God through The Call to Obedience “children, be obedient...”

- Children (teknon) who is being addressed—broad range Eph implies smaller children because the father is raising them in the Lord
- It is best to conclude that it is any child still under the authority of the parent

- It reflects a lifestyle—present tense
- Christ obeyed the Father

II. Please God through The Scope and Effect of Obedience “in all things...pleasing to the Lord”

1. This authority must be grounded in biblical commands and principles

- Proverbs 7:1 My son, keep my words And treasure my commandments within you.
- Proverbs 7:2 Keep my commandments and live, And my teaching as the apple of your eye.

2. This authority is obvious when they are young and require your support to sustain themselves

3. This authority extends when the child is in the home and decisions must be made in reference to the home

4. This authority extends to the areas where the parent provides substantial support

5. This authority is optional as the child becomes independent of the parent Pleasing *to or in* the Lord

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6. It pleases the Lord because it honors the parents

- Deuteronomy 21:18 “If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them,
- Deuteronomy 21:19 then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown.
- Deuteronomy 21:20 They shall say to the elders of his city, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.
- Deuteronomy 21:21 “Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear.
- **Deuteronomy 27:16** ‘Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’
- NOTE the other curses in 27:15-20
- Proverbs 30:11 There is a kind of man who curses his father And does not bless his mother.

7. It pleases the Lord because it recognizes God’s authority

We must continue to follow Paul’s argument and remind ourselves of the authority with which the admonitions are given. We cannot overestimate the importance of vv.1-4 and v.17 to the instructions of the vv.18ff

8. It pleases the Lord because it allows Him to extend grace to those who comply (Exodus 20:12; Eph 6:1-3)

The promise of the original command “that it may be well with you”

This promise is fulfilled practically

- Proverbs 3:1 My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments;

- Proverbs 4:10 Hear, my son, and accept my sayings And the years of your life will be many.
- Proverbs 6:22 When you walk about, they will guide you; When you sleep, they will watch over you; And when you awake, they will talk to you.
- Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life
- Proverbs 7:5 That they may keep you from an adulteress, From the foreigner who flatters with her words.

Don't Exasperate Your Children Col 3:21

As we continue to study in Colossians chapter 3, we are reminded of a pattern that began in verse 18—one member of the body is called to live under the authority of another, then the one with authority is admonished to respond in a manner that will make the choice to live under authority easier.

There are FOUR questions that we need to answer from the text

- 1) Why is the command addressed to fathers?
- 2) What does it mean to exasperate?
- 3) How does God's example remedy this sin?
- 4) How can exasperation be avoided?

1) Why is the command addressed to fathers?

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Paul has chosen this wording to highlight the father as the one with the key role in the family. Both biblically and culturally, he is the one with the authority and

responsibility in the home. There is also a practical consideration to take into account—the tendency for fathers to be stricter and the one with unrealistic expectations. Let me say, this is unbiblical from the standpoint of the father’s calling, and it stands in stark contrast to the example of God.

2) What does it mean to exasperate?

- ESV Colossians 3:21 Fathers, do not **provoke** your children, lest they **become discouraged**.
- KJV Colossians 3:21 Fathers, **provoke** not your children **to anger**, lest they be discouraged.
- CEV Colossians 3:21 Parents, don’t **be hard** on your children. If you are, they **might give up**.
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The use of the word for exasperate

The only other use is a positive one in 2 Cor 9:2

- 2 Corinthians 9:2 *for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.*

3) How does God’s example remedy this sin?

The Fatherhood of God as a remedy for exasperation.

A. Matthew 6-7 and fatherhood

Notice the 12 references to *Fatherhood* in Matthew 6 vv.1, 4, 6, 8, 14, 15, 18,

26, 32; 7:11-He gives what is good to those who ask

B. Noting the immediate context and applying it to God’s fatherhood will

help us understand God’s fatherhood and the remedy to exasperation. We

observe God’s example of these virtues in Scripture.

Colossians 3:12 And so, as those who have been

- chosen of God (the Father chose us not based on what we would contribute but unconditionally)
- holy and beloved (God has empowered us to be holy and set His affection on us),
- put on a heart of compassion (time and again, God is seen as the God of compassionate; actually, this attribute is one of the earliest self-declarations of God—Exodus 33
- kindness—
- humility—
- gentleness and patience—

C. Consider Psalm 103 as a template. Direct references to the Fatherhood of God in the OT are rare. Although it is implicitly communicated throughout. Psalm 103 is a jewel of a psalm for many reasons—one being the wonderful picture of God’s fatherly ways with the people of God. This should act as a template for fathers as they develop as leaders in their home, and it will act as a shield against exasperating children.

1) How can exasperation be avoided?

1. You must be willing to apologize to your children

2. Avoid Hypocrisy because it will discourage the heart of any child

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3. Do not withhold praise from our children
4. You must avoid vicarious living
5. Make sure we love our children first
6. Avoid a pattern of broken promises
7. Always treat them with dignity
8. Never be upset *only* because they embarrass you
9. Avoid the fault of comparisons and favoritism
10. Be careful in always rescuing them from the issues of life
11. Avoid conditional affection

- **Slaves and Masters**
Col 3:22-4:1

- 1) Understanding the instruction in context
- 2) We should not make an immediate parallel with the modern workplace
 - Because this refers to absolute ownership
 - Cannot simply choose to leave
 - You were property
 - It could mean abuse or death with no consequence, except for social criticism

- 3) It is wrong to state that Greco-Roman slavery was TOTALLY unlike Western/Colonial
 - 4) Atheism's criticism is partly right
 - 5) Distinguishing forms of slavery
 - Greco-Roman
 - Western/Colonial
 - Modern
- **Greco-Roman**
- 1) Conquest in War
 - 2) Birth
 - 3) Payment of debt—Matt 18:23-25 the wicked slave was to be sold to pay a debt, Nehemiah 5:5 sold children because of famine, vv.6-8 Nehemiah's rebuke, Leviticus 25:47-55 redeeming those who sold themselves because of poverty
 - 4) Kidnapping/Pirating
 - 5) Abandonment—after rescue would educate and sell for a profit, this seems unthinkable for us
 - 6) Sold by parents
 - 7) Survival—the lowest in socioeconomic ladder were freemen who could not find work and would turn to slavery for a “better life”
 - 8) Not race based
 - 9) Not clearly distinguishable in public
 - 10) Education provided and encouraged
- **Western/Colonial**
- Kidnapping

- Birth
 - Race-based
 - Education prevented or limited
- **Modern**
 - Coercion
 - Kidnapping
 - Debt repayment
 - Socio-economic, Ethnic, exploitable based
- **Grasping the radical nature of Paul's instruction**
 - It was radical in that it brought dignity
 - It was radical in that it brought equality spiritually-- Paul repeatedly says that before God, and thus in the church, there is no difference between slave and free (1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Col 3:10,11).
 - It was radical in that it brought accountability
 - It was radical in that it brought awareness
- **Why didn't Paul say more?**
- **What Paul did say. His statement against a form of slavery.**
 - **1 Tim 1:9, 10** realizing the fact that law is not made for righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for... 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,
 - NASB—kidnappers: ἀνδραποδιστής (andrapodistēs) from a compound word meaning:
 - ESV—enslavers
 - KJV—men stealers

- NKJ—kidnappers
 - NET—kidnappers
 - NET—kidnappers
 - NRSV—slave traders
 - NIV84—slave traders
- A violation of the 8th commandment “you shall not steal”
 - **Ex 21:16** “He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.
 - **Deuteronomy 24:7** “If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel, and he deals with him violently or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from among you.
 - ❑ **Principlizing the text for contemporary application**
 - ❑ v.22 “in all things obey”
 - Employees should submit to employers in all matters pertaining to their job as long as it does not violate God’s standards or company ethics
 - ❑ vv.22-23 “fearing the Lord...heartily, as for the Lord”
 - Employees should submit to employers as one who recognize God’s sovereignty over the workplace
 - ❑ v.24 “you will receive a reward”
 - ❑ v.25 “you will receive consequences...without partiality” [note the placement in Eph 6:9]
 - ❑ 4:1 “grant justice and fairness...Master in heaven”
 - Christian employers are to be equitable and lead with the sense of divine accountability
 - They should not resort to “threatening” (Eph 6:9) but justice and brotherhood

A Call to Devoted Prayer

4:2-4

Martin Luther and the commitment to prayer

- Luther said, [prayer is] *the hardest work of all...a labor above all labors, since he who prays must wage a mighty warfare against the doubt and murmuring excited by the faintheartedness and unworthiness we feel within us.* (Deanna M. Carr, A Consideration of the meaning of prayer in the life of Martin Luther Concordia Theo Monthly 42/10: 620-29 (1971), 621-22).

Devoted

- Marriage vows
- A religious covenant
- A spouse who remains through hard times
- An athlete who trains
- A true statesman who serves his people
- If we move into the divine, it is the image of a Savior devoted to the glory of God and completing a mission to redeem a chosen people

The text provides FOUR features of prayer which will help you better understand Paul's call to devoted prayer.

I. Understand that devoted prayer is not optional (v.2a *be devoted to prayer*)

Defining Devoted

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Illustrated in Epaphras (v.12)

Illustrated in translations

- Acts 1:14 These all with one mind were **continually devoting themselves to prayer**, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

- Acts 2:42 They were **continually devoting themselves** to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
- Acts 2:46 Day by day **continuing with one mind** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,
- Acts 6:4 But we will **devote ourselves to prayer** and to the ministry of the word.
- Rom 12:12 rejoicing...persevering...**devoted to prayer**
- Mark 3:9 And He told His disciples that a boat should **stand ready** for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him;
- Acts 10:7 When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his **personal attendants**,
But to what are we called to devotion?

What is Prayer

- Phillips Brooks said succinctly that prayer is "a true wish sent Godward" ([Daily Meditations on Prayer](#), p. 41).

What Brooks referred to as a true wish sent to God may be adoring praise (worship), thanksgiving for God, His plan, and blessings, confession (a wish to be in tune with God and acceptable in His sight), a petitionary wish, intercession on behalf of others, a prayer of submissive commitment to do God's will, and other aspects of prayer.

Prayer by its very nature requires that we surrender ourselves to the living God. The implication of prayer is a sense of incompleteness, frailty, and insufficiency, yet humble enough to recognize all that I've mentioned; and sees God as the only one who can address every need from the smallest concern to the most heart-wrenching and seemingly impossible. Prayer is what we see in the psalmist as he cries to the Lord for deliverance, provision, insight, forgiveness, judgment of the wicked, comfort, and a host of other emotions and needs.

ESV—continue steadfastly

- *Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.* John Bunyan

II. Understand that devoted prayer includes spiritual alertness

v.2b keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;

Alert— “alert” implies a moral readiness (Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 321.

This is appropriate in the context Paul has established. Remember, all that was stated in vv.1-17 prepared the readers for the call to practice their new life in the household codes communicated in vv.18-4:1. So, it makes perfect sense that Paul call them to a moral alertness that must blanket their communion with God in prayer. The imagery of one being alert is useful because it reminds us that we must be aware of the temptations that seek to undermine the new life we experience. This call to moral alertness also acts as an introduction to the command to witness in vv.5-6...

- Revelation 16:15 “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”)
- 1 Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
- 1 Corinthians 16:13 Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.
- Matthew 24:42 “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.
- Matthew 24:43 “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

○

Thanksgiving.

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Either word in English, as it appears in the Psalms, expresses the main thought of **appreciation**, acknowledgment, or **recognition** of God, whether it be for His Person in its excellence, magnificence, glory, perfection, worthiness, or for His performance as to actions, works, blessings we behold or experience.

Pauline Thanksgiving

- **Because of God's sovereign rule**

1 Timothy 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions, and **thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,**

- **Because of God's proclamation through human agents**

Romans 1:8 First, I **thank** my God through Jesus Christ for you all, **because your faith is being proclaimed** throughout the whole world.

- **Because of God's gracious support**

1 Corinthians 15:57 but thanks be to God, who **gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

2 Corinthians 1:11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for **the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.**

2 Corinthians 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always **leads us in triumph in Christ,** and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

1 Timothy 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who **has strengthened me,** because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,

- **Because of God's extraordinary gift**

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be to God for His **indescribable gift!**

III. Understand that devoted prayer has an unselfish focus

v.3a praying at the same time for us as well

And if one wants to be engaged in prayer, it must include intercession. It is standing in the gap for the others is seeing their needs and asking the Lord to graciously meet

them. It is not possible to say that you were personal prayer are desire prayer and don't desire to stand in the gap for others.

- *Our prayer must not be self-centered. It must arise not only because we feel our own need as a burden we must lay upon God, but also because we are so bound up in love for our fellow men that we feel their need **as acutely as our own**. To make intercession for men is the most powerful and practical way in which we can express our love for them.* John Calvin

Illustrated in AWOL and Desertion in military contexts

IV. Understand that devoted prayer includes an evangelistic emphasis

- *There is no way that Christians, in a private capacity, can do so much to promote the work of God and advance the kingdom of Christ as by prayer.* Jonathan Edwards

What Edwards communicated is evident in history:

- Christ's example of devoted prayer to His Father
- The Apostles and the early church as they saw thousands added
- The Reformers and the battle for souls
- William Carey's faith to reach the people of India
- Hudson Taylor's spiritual secret was prayer
- George Mueller's example of absolute trust in God's resources
- Charles Spurgeon's boiler room was the fire under the pulpit and in the hearts of millions reached by him
- Amy Carmichael's dependence on the Lord to direct, protect, and provide

1) Pray for evangelistic opportunities

- *An "open door" is a natural metaphor for the idea of ready access to an opportunity and is therefore widely used in the ancient world. It occurs in the New Testament to refer to an opportunity for evangelistic ministry (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; cf. Rev. 3:8, 20). These parallel texts, along with the context here, make it probable that Paul is asking prayer for his (and others')*

evangelistic ministry in particular (Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar Commentary, 322).

v.3b that God will open up to us a door for the word,

v.3cd so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

2) Pray for empowering grace

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v.4 that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

Clarity is beautifully illustrated in John's Gospel; a gospel which has an emphasis on making something manifest:

- Jesus manifested his glory,
- Jesus manifested his power,
- Jesus manifested himself to his disciples so they might truly understand the plan of salvation and his spiritual role as Messiah.

...in the way I ought to speak

Obligation

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This implies that compulsion obligates one either by internal motives or external circumstances.

Let's consider some of the images of the word in the gospels:

- Matthew 18:33 '**Should you not** also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?
- Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He **must go to Jerusalem**, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.
- Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you **should have** done without neglecting the others.
- Mark 13:10 "The gospel **must first be preached** to all the nations.
- Luke 17:25 "But first He **must** suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.
- Luke 24:26 "Was it not **necessary for** the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"
- John 4:4 And He **had to** pass through Samaria.

Notice again the end of v.3. There may be a play on words in Paul's mind. Paul is imprisoned for the gospel and in v.4 he is obligated or imprisoned by his conscience to preach with clarity and boldness the message of Christ crucified and raised from the dead.

In the former, he would desire release, in the latter, it is a life sentence that he gladly accepts and would have no desire for parole. He has been sentenced by Christ to be His spokesman for his stay on earth. He is a slave for life and realizes that to live as this slave is the only way to enjoy freedom in Christ.

I remind you again how this section of the letter begins—Paul is motivated and wants the church at Colossae to be motivated by *things above and the One who sits in the place of honor above the heavens—Col 3:1-4*. This is the source of lasting motivation—Christ, the superior Savior who sits in power and will return to reward all those who follow Him!

A CALL TO WATCH!

Wisdom with the World 4:5-6

Scripture is very clear concerning our relationship to the world. We are not to be like the world, we are not to love the world, we are not to be satisfied with its offerings, we should be prepared for the world to hate us, and we must constantly realize that this world is not our home, therefore we must live our lives in such a way that we are spiritual lights for this dark and dying place that is a temporary home. There is a spiritual balance we strive to achieve—avoid and even hate the world system while at the same time loving the lost souls who are victims of their sin and the evil influence in this system.

Finding Spiritual Balance—

THREE INVALUABLE LESSONS:

Walk with Wisdom in the World

Conduct yourselves with wisdom
Toward outsiders

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Walk with Opportunity in the World

Making the most of the time

Let your speech always be with grace

- As though seasoned with salt

Walk with Eternal Purpose in the World

So that you will know how you should respond to each person

I. Walk with Wisdom in the World

Literal=*In wisdom be walking*

Conduct=Walk

What does it mean to walk in wisdom?

What is wisdom?

The NT definition is consistent with the OT definition—to live or walk through life with skill

- The skill is gained by divine enablement
- The skill is gained by a proper response to divine revelation—being unlike the fool and heeding Scripture and the biblical counsel
- The skill is gained by life experience that develops insight in how to best use one's giftedness for eternal matters

Wisdom in Colossians

1:9—pray that you will be *filled with spiritual wisdom*

2:3— *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*

2:8—*teaching every man with all wisdom*

3:16— *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

The NT provides a comprehensive view of walking with God. Allow me to give you 9 features of what it means to walk with God.

1. Newness of Life

- **Rom 6:4** (NASB) 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might **walk in newness of life**.

2. It Is A Walk of Faith

- 2 Cor 5:7 (NASB) 7 for we **walk by faith**, not by sight—

3. It Is A Governed Walk

- Gal 6:16 And those who will **walk by this rule**, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.
- Rom 8:4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who **do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit**.
- Eph 5:8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; **walk as children of light**
- 2 Jn 6 And this is love, that we **walk according to His commandments**. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

4. It Is A Predetermined Walk

- Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God **prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them**.

5. It Is A Forsaking Walk

- Eph 4:17 This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you **walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind**,

6. It Is A Loving Walk

- Eph 5:2 and **walk in love**, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God

7. It Is An Honoring Walk

- Col 1:10 so that you may **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord**, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;
- Col 2:6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk in Him**,
- 1 Th 2:12 so that you may **walk in a manner worthy** of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
- 1 Th 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to **walk and please God** (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.

8. It Is A Growing Walk

- 1 Th 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), **that you may excel still more.**

9. It Is An Emulating Walk

- Phil 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and **observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.**
- 1 Jn 2:6 (NASB) 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk **in the same manner as He walked.**

All these aspects of the walk of wisdom has an object, we walk in this manner for a goal—to reach the unbelieving world (outsiders). Notice the text—*Toward outsiders*. This is clearly referring to those outside the family of faith. Paul has just walked us through the family codes in 3:18-4:1, which, as we've already stated are bound to the motivation and instruction that preceded. And now he instructs us in our relationship

with those outside the faith. It is important that we appreciate the order. In the same way that an elder must be qualified spiritually and one testing ground is his home, so the church must be spiritually qualified, and its body and family life must be in order before it is truly prepared to reach those on the outside.

***Before the next point, let's join this call to wisdom with the challenge at Colossae.**

2:4—no one delude you with persuasive argument

2:8—no one take you captive through philosophy **and** empty deception (vain, hollow, having no spiritual use)...tradition of men...elementary principles of the world *take you captive.*

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2:16—don't be judged according to food, drink, festival, new moon, or Sabbath day

2:18-23—no one defraud you of your prize....These are matter which have to be sure, **the appearance of wisdom**...but are of no value against fleshly indulgence

The false teachers were communicating that adherence to their doctrine and regulations was skill, that is, wisdom for living a religious life. However, Paul makes it obvious that this wisdom has no spiritual value whatsoever. As all religious instruction apart truth and grace is condemning, so was the error presented at Colossae two thousand years ago, and sadly many today are presented this delusion of the enemy. We must understand that Paul's call to wisdom is not disconnected from the purpose of the letter—to present Christ as the sufficient means of hope and warn against the false teachers' claims of spirituality and wisdom.

If Paul doesn't distinguish between the wisdom of the world and that of Christ, then the Colossians influence in the world would have its basis in a system as v.23 states of no value. This leads us to the next point.

II. Walk with Opportunity in the World

We need to see these words in two parts:

Making the most of the time

Let your speech always be with grace

- As though seasoned with salt

The Redemptive Nature of a Wise Walk

Why the wording, the redemptive nature of a wise walk?

The very engaging word...

III. Walk with Personal Awareness in the World

- The Redemptive Nature of a Wise Walk
- The Gracious Nature of a Wise Walk

How does one have gracious speech?

What does the language communicate?

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- Phil 2:14, 15 14 Do all things **without grumbling or disputing**; 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among **whom you appear as lights in the world**,

- 1 Thess 4:11, 12 11 and to make it your **ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands**, just as we commanded you, 12 so that you will **behave properly toward outsiders** and not be in any need.
- 1 Tim 3:7; 6:1 7 And he must **have a good reputation with those outside the church**, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 6:1 All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.
- Tit 2:8 **sound in speech** which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.
- 1 Pet 2:15 For such is the will of God that by **doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men**.
- 1 Peter 3:1, 16 In the same way, you **wives, be submissive** to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

Two Culminating Verses

1 Cor 10:32, 33—32 **Give no offense** either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, **so that they may be saved**.

These verses are culminating because they communicate our ultimate objective. We are here to witness for the cause of the gospel as a fulfillment of the Great Commission—to go and make disciples of the nations.

Eccl 10:12 *Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him*

III. Walk with Eternal Purpose in the World

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SO THAT...

But notice the personal nature of this approach

Know how to respond to each person

**Final Words of Encouragement
4:7-18**

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