

UNDERSTANDING THE BODY OF CHRIST

A PAULINE TRILOGY

Charles F. Baker

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Introduction

Our subject is, *Understanding the Body of Christ*. But since there are two different bodies of Christ mentioned in the Bible, we must first make some distinctions. One of the bodies mentioned is the physical, fleshly body in which the Son of God became incarnate. There are some twenty-seven references to the Savior's physical body in the New Testament. Probably the most familiar passage is that at the Last Supper, "This is my body which is given for you" (Lk. 22:19). Another often quoted passage is 1 Peter 2:24: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness."

The other Body of Christ, and the one which is the subject of this book, is "the Church which is His Body" (Eph. 1:22, 23). This Body is mentioned only in Paul's epistles. Paul uses the word "body" approximately twenty-nine times in reference to the corporate Body of Christ, composed of all of the saved people of this present dispensation with Christ as its Head.

Likewise, there are two Christs in the New Testament. There is first of all the personal Christ. Most of the references to that name refer to Jesus Christ personally. However, Paul does use this word in referring to both the Head and the Church which is His Body. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 12:12: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is (the) Christ." Paul is not speaking of the personal Christ or of His physical body. Paul also seems to use the word "Christ" in this sense in Ephesians 3:4 and in Colossians 4:3 where he speaks of "the mystery of the Christ." When Paul speaks of the Mystery in these two epistles, he is speaking of the hitherto unprophesied Church which is His Body. Christ personally was prophesied hundreds of times, but the Christ, composed of the Body and the Head, was never predicted.

The subtitle to this book, *A Pauline Trilogy*, describes its content. A Trilogy is defined as "a set of three related writings which, though each has its own unity, form together a larger work." Paul's three Prison Epistles, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are the three related writings, forming together the larger work, the Mystery concerning the Church which is the Body of Christ.

The word *Mystery* is a translation of the Greek word, *musterion*, derived from the verb *muo*, to shut the mouth, to keep silent. The Mystery of which Paul speaks is thus a body of truth about which God had kept silent. Paul's own words are, "the mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints" (Col. 1:26). The mystery is described as a Dispensation or Stewardship which was committed to Paul concerning the Church, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; whereof I was made a minister according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfill the word of God" (Col. 1:25). The Mystery is that which "fulfills the word of God." The word *fulfill* means to complete. There was a gap in the revelation of God's great plan caused by the fact that

God had kept silent about a part of it, and this secret or mystery part which is now revealed, fills up to the full that gap.

The Mystery is not only a distinct part of God's eternal purpose which He had never before made known: it is also a revelation of a distinct outcalling or church, which is called *the Body of Christ*. The subject of the Mystery is the Body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The word *church* simply means an outcalling or assembly of people. This word needs to be qualified in order to determine what particular assembly is in view. In the Bible the word is first used of the Israelites who came out of Egypt under Moses ([Acts 7:38](#)). Some forty times the congregation of Israel is called a church in the Septuagint Greek version of the Old Testament, as in Nehemiah 13:1. Then Jesus called His little band of disciples whom He had called out by this same name in Matthew 18:17. In the Millennial Kingdom, yet to come, Christ's redeemed Jewish brethren will be called a church ([Heb. 2:12](#) quoted from [Ps. 22:22](#)). God's called out people in our present dispensation are also called a church, and this church is identified as *the Church which is His Body*, or as *the Body of Christ*. Much confusion has resulted from a failure to keep the Church which is His Body separate and distinct from the other churches of the Bible. The Body of Christ church is the subject of the Mystery which was never before made known to the sons of men until it was revealed to Paul by the ascended Lord Jesus Christ.

The word *mystery* occurs six times in Ephesians ([1:9](#); [3:3](#), [4](#), [9](#); [5:32](#); [6:19](#)), and four times in Colossians ([1:26](#), [27](#); [2:2](#); [4:3](#)). The Church as the Body of Christ is mentioned eight times in Ephesians ([1:23](#); [2:16](#); [4:4](#), [12](#), [16](#), [16](#); [5:23](#), [30](#)), and five times in Colossians ([1:18](#), [24](#); [2:17](#), [19](#); [3:15](#)). Christ is referred to as head of the Body three times in Ephesians ([1:22](#); [4:15](#); [5:23](#)), and twice in Colossians ([1:18](#); [2:19](#)). But what about the epistle in between Ephesians and Colossians? Strangely enough, Philippians contains no reference to the Mystery, to the Body of Christ, or to Christ as Head of the Body. It was the discovery of this fact that led to this present study on these three epistles, which we have entitled, *A Pauline Trilogy*.

It is generally agreed that these three epistles, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians were all written in the same time frame, at the end of the Book of Acts, while Paul was undergoing his first Roman imprisonment. It would therefore seem logical to suppose that all three should have a somewhat common theme. Most commentaries are quick to recognize the similarity of Ephesians and Colossians, but what about the epistle in between? Almost universally the theme of Philippians is said to be that of Joy and Rejoicing, this being a dominant expression in the epistle. But we believe there is an even more dominant theme, one that identifies the epistle with its neighbors. That theme is *the Mind of Christ*. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" ([Phil. 2:5](#)).

The headship of Christ as presented in Ephesians is universal. He is exalted far above all heavens; His Name heads the list of all names in this world and in that which is to come; He has a position as Head over all rule and authority and power and dominion; all things have been put in subjection under His feet; and He has been given

to be Head over all things to the Church which is His Body. Contrastingly in Philippians, He is the Mind which is in every member of the Body, even as the human mind is in every member of the human body, operating through the brain and its nervous system, controlling and regulating the functions of every member. The words *mind*, *minds*, *minded* occur eleven times in the Authorized Version (1:27; 2:2, 2, 3, 5; 3:15, 15, 16, 19; 4:2, 7). The verb, *to be minded*, also occurs in 1:7 where it is translated think, and twice in 4:10, where it is translated *care* and *careful*, in the sense of thinking and being concerned about. Thus the mind is the central theme of Philippians, presenting the outworking of His Headship in the life of every member of the Body.

In order to understand the significance of these epistles, we must compare them with Paul's epistles written during the latter half of the Book of Acts. This period is described by Paul as a growing up period from childhood to adulthood. It is a period of transition from God's dealings exclusively with the nation of Israel under the gospel of the Kingdom to the setting aside of Israel and the sending of the gospel of the Grace of God to the Gentile world completely apart from Judaism. The transition was in the outward religious program which accompanied the preaching of the gospel. The new dispensation of the Church began in the environment of the Jewish believers among whom God had distributed various sign gifts, such as tongues, healings, miracles, interpretation of tongues, special knowledge, prophecy. Thus at the beginning of the Church these gifts were in manifestation among the Jewish believers. These gifts are enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. In vs. 13 we learn that the Corinthian believers became members of the Body of Christ by a baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, and not by any baptizing work that man might do. Then in chapter 13 of this epistle Paul shows that these gifts had to be exercised in love, and that their possession was not necessarily indicative of spirituality, for they abounded in a church marked by carnality. The apostle then proceeds to show that these gifts belong to a temporary period which he likens to childhood. When this period ends with mature manhood, the gifts will no longer be needed and will therefore cease, just as one puts away childish things when he becomes a man. It is when "that which is perfect has come," (vs. 10), that these temporary gifts will fail, cease, and pass away.

The key question we must ask ourselves is, What is meant by "that which is perfect"? The generally accepted interpretation is that perfect refers to the future heavenly state which will be ushered in by the return of Christ. While it is true that there will be no need or place for tongues, healing, special knowledge, prophecy, miracles, etc. in heaven, is Paul actually saying that all of these gifts are going to continue until the second coming of Christ? Take the gift of prophecy for example. This gift was given to several men in each Christian assembly that they might receive revelations from God and communicate them to the congregation, as we learn in chapter 14. At this time there was no New Testament canon. It is doubtful that the Corinthians had any New Testament books until Paul wrote to them. The questions arise, Is the canon still open? Is the gift of prophecy still in operation? Does God still give special revelations to men? Or is the canon closed? Is God's revelation completed? Is the New Testament the completed Word of God? Most conservative scholars take the latter position. They could hardly take this position if the gift of prophecy is still operative. For

this reason and for reasons associated with the other gifts, it appears that Paul intended something other than heaven when he spoke of that which is perfect.

Our English word perfect connotes that which is absolutely without flaw, that which cannot be improved upon. But that is not necessarily the meaning of the Greek word *telios*. This is evident even from our English versions of the Bible. For example, Paul states, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect" (1 Cor. 2:6). Or again, "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (Phil. 3:15). Not even Paul was perfect in this flawless, sinless sense. The Greek word has the sense of maturity, or of arriving at the end for which a thing was made. In 1 Corinthians 14:20 it is translated "men" in contrast to "children." A similar usage is seen in Hebrews 5:14, milk is for the babes, but strong meat belongs to those who are of *full age*. It seems significant that immediately after stating, "when that which is perfect is come," he goes on to say, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: but now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." (1 Corinthians 13:11).

If the canon of Scripture is closed; if God is no longer giving special revelations to His people, then it is evident that the gift of prophecy has ceased. Dr. C.I. Scofield rightly states, "The N.T. prophet was not merely a preacher, but an inspired preacher, through whom, until the N.T. was written, new revelations suited to the new dispensation were given (1 Cor. 14:29, 30)."¹ If prophecy has ceased, so have the other sign gifts. Prophecy was the most valuable of the gifts and was in a class by itself. The other gifts, such as tongues, were called *sign gifts* (1 Cor. 14:22). Paul states that "the Jews require a sign" (1 Cor. 1:22), but the Gentile Greeks were not interested in signs; they were seeking for wisdom. God has always dealt in signs with Israel. Signs are mentioned 14 times in the Pentateuch, 10 times in the Gospels, and 8 times in Acts. God predicted that these miraculous things would occur when the Messiah came, and when they did occur they were signs pointing to Him and validating His claims (cf. [Matt. 11:2-6](#) cf. [Isa. 35:4-6](#)).

It is therefore plain to see why the signs would pass away when this new dispensation of the Mystery came to maturity. On the one hand, the sign or signs, which were necessary before the Word of God was completed, passed away when the canon was completed. The revelation of the Mystery was that which completed the written Word of God. On the other hand, the sign gifts which were intended especially for Israel, had no further use after the end of Acts. There blindness was pronounced upon Israel, and God set Israel aside until the time He takes up dealings again with the nation during the Tribulation period.

We thus see some of the distinctions between Paul's earlier and later epistles. The earlier epistles were written in the childhood of the new dispensation, before there was a written and completed revelation, and during the time while God in His longsuffering was still dealing in covenant relationship with Israel in signs and wonders. But when we come to the prison epistles, written at the end of the transition period, we come into the mature state of the dispensation. The signs have passed away and the exceeding

¹ C.I. Scofield *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1917), p. 1224.

riches of the new dispensation are unfolded. Instead of exercising the gift of healing, Paul now tells Timothy, "Drink no longer water only, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). And Trophimus, one of his dear fellow-workers, Paul had to leave behind at Miletum sick (2 Tim. 4:20).

There are gifts in the Body of Christ, but these gifts are men, not miraculous signs. Apostles and prophets are in the list, because these men were still alive when Ephesians was written, and we still have these men in their written word. Other gifts that are enumerated are evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. 4:11). It thus appears that Paul did not set forth the distinctive details of the dispensation of the Mystery concerning the Body of Christ (as distinct and separate from Israel) until Israel was finally set aside.

"All scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). It would seem that God has seen to it that Paul's epistles, though written in a somewhat different order, are arranged in the canon in the order of doctrine, reproof, and correction. Romans is the great doctrinal epistle on justification by faith. The Corinthian epistles are letters of reproof for failure to live according to the doctrine of Romans. Likewise Ephesians presents the great doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ of which He is the Head. Philippians contains the element of reproof for failure to keep the unity of the Body in practical life, while Colossians uncovers a serious deviation from the doctrine of Ephesians. Their error was "Not holding fast the Head." "He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow"² (Col. 2:19 - N.I.V.).

"The Galatian and the Roman Epistles (as the history of the Reformation of the sixteenth century showed) are the treasure-house of the truths of personal Christianity; for the very thought of justification, dominant in them, brings each soul face to face with its own sin and its own salvation, in that supreme crisis of life and death in which it is conscious of but two existencies - God and itself. These *latter* epistles are equally the storehouse of the less vivid, yet grander conception of the Holy Catholic Church. The central idea is of Christ the Head, and the whole collective Christianity of the Church as His Body. He is conceived not solely or mainly as the Savior of each individual soul but rather as 'gathering up' all humanity, or even all created being, in Himself. The two conceptions are, of course, inseparable. In the *earlier* epistles, the Church is constantly recognized; in these *latter* the individual relationship to God in Christ is never for a moment ignored. But the proportion (so to speak) of the two truths is changed. What is primary in the one case is secondary in the other."³

With this general introduction to the Pauline epistles and to the prison church epistles in particular, we will proceed to the exposition of these latter epistles, giving

² *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1978), Col. 2:19.

³ C.J. Ellicott, quoted by J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House 1972) Vol. VI, p. 162.

special emphasis to the unique truth of the Mystery which ties these epistles together as a Trilogy.

Ephesians

EMPHASIS ON THE BODY OF CHRIST

Introduction

The Apostle Paul first visited Ephesus near the end of his second missionary journey ([Acts 18:19-21](#)). He reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue briefly, and although they wanted him to stay longer, he felt the urgency of getting to Jerusalem for the coming feast, but he promised to return. The next year, about 53 A.D. he returned to Ephesus where he carried on an intensive ministry for three years ([Acts 19:1-41](#)). Finally at the end of his third missionary journey he stopped at Miletus and sent for the elders of the Ephesian church to meet with him ([Acts 20:17-38](#)). Paul had great success at Ephesus, for we read, "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" ([Acts 19:10](#)). He must have gathered a sizable congregation, for, when his converts brought their heathen books of magic which they had previously practiced in order to burn them, they estimated the value of the books to be fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Ephesus, which was near modern Seljuk on the Aegean coast in Turkey, was the metropolis of proconsular Asia in Paul's day. During the past century archaeologists have uncovered the ruins of that ancient city. Ephesus was the center of the cult for the worship of Artemis, known also as Diana. The temple was a vast edifice 340 feet long and 160 feet wide, adorned with 100 columns each over 50 feet high. It has been estimated that the population of the city in Paul's day was over a quarter million.

Since Ephesus served as an evangelizing center for that whole region of Asia Minor it is thought that the Ephesian letter was originally addressed as a circular letter to all of the churches in the region. The fact that two of the most ancient Greek manuscripts omit the words, "at Ephesus," suggests that this was true. After being read in all of the churches in the area, the letter probably was returned to the main church in Ephesus and the Ephesian name became permanently attached to it.

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- XII. BENEDICTION - 6:21-24

EXPOSITION DOCTRINAL SECTION - Ch. 1-3

I. SALUTATION: 1:1, 2.

¹*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.* Paul became an apostle, not by his own will or choice, and not by the appointment of other men, but by the will of God. It is of utmost importance that we recognize this claim of the Apostle. Paul became the author of at least thirteen of the books of the New Testament, and he injected into the canon a body of truth that is found no where else in the Bible.

Although Paul was originally a bitter enemy of Jesus Christ and His followers and had had no contact with Jesus on earth, he gives as proof of his divine call the fact that he was the last person to see Jesus Christ ([1 Cor. 15:8](#)), and had therefore received revelations subsequent to that of the other Apostles. He possessed all of the signs of an apostle ([2 Cor. 12:12](#)). The Twelve Apostles recognized and endorsed his claims, and even turned over to him the evangelization of the Gentiles ([Gal. 2:7-9](#)).

Paul addresses "the saints" and "the faithful in Christ Jesus." Paul was not writing to two distinct groups. All believers are "saints." This statement could be rendered: "to the saints at Ephesus, even the faithful (or the believers) in Christ Jesus." The word (pistos) is rendered "believe or believing" some eight times in the A.V.

²*Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* This salutation is characteristic of all of Paul's epistles. Grace must always precede peace. Justification brings peace with God ([Rom. 5:1](#)). Committal to God's Will brings peace of mind ([Phil. 4:6, 7](#)). In this salutation Paul is saying, "May you experience God's graciousness and may you be free from anxiety and care."

II. SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS - 1:3-14

A. *Blessed by the Father* - 1:3-6.

³*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* - "Blessed" is the Greek word, "eulogeo," from which we get our word "eulogy." It means "to speak well of," and hence "to laud, praise." Whether we bless God or not, He, the Creator, is blessed for ever ([Rom. 1:25](#)). Paul in Ephesians is offering up all praise and glory to God the Father and God the Son. In the economy of the Godhead it is the work of the Holy Spirit, not to speak about Himself, but to glorify the Son ([John 16:13, 14](#)). The Spirit is carrying on this work through Paul. The old catechism said it correctly, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

Not only do we bless God, but God *hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*. Under the law God promised to bless Israel with all material blessings if they were obedient (Deut. 28), but He has nowhere promised all material blessings to believers in the present dispensation. He has promised to supply our needs materially, but if He had promised us material enrichment, why did Paul exhort, "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content" (1 Tim. 6:8)? These spiritual blessings are all "in Christ," an expression which occurs some forty times in this one epistle. All believers are baptized into Christ by the Spirit the moment they are regenerated (Rom. 6:3). The blessings are not in heaven itself, but in the heavenly sphere. The sphere in which our blessings lie is also inhabited by Satanic powers which war against us. An analogy can be drawn between the land of Canaan, Israel's promised land, and the heavenlies where our blessings lie. There were enemies in Canaan, just as there are enemies in the heavenlies. In both cases the enemies must be overcome in order for God's people to possess their blessings. Paul discusses this warfare in the heavenlies in Ch. six.

Besides blessing us with all spiritual blessings, *He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*. The verb, "has chosen" (exelexato) is the aorist indicative middle of "eklegomai," which is most often translated "elect". Thus we could just as well translate: "He has elected us," as "He has chosen us." Calvinists believe that God in pure grace apart from any merit in man, chose who would be saved. Arminians believe that while God foreknew who would be saved, election is based upon man's free will. In other words, God elected those He knew would believe, not that God chose them to believe. Arminians would probably interpret v. 4 to mean simply that God chose that we should be holy and without blame after believing, but not that we were chosen to be in Him. We will probably never be able to reconcile the Sovereignty of God with man's free will. On the one hand it seems unjust for God to save some and pass the others by. On the other hand, if man does all of the choosing, how can election be attributed to God?

Regardless of our arguments and reasonings, Paul clearly states, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thes. 2:13). Since the sanctifying work of the Spirit precedes our belief of the truth, it is evident that the Spirit in some way sanctifies or sets us apart as the initial act in salvation. Election in the Bible is always of grace; it is never to condemnation; it in no way alters man's ability to believe or his responsibility to do so. It is plainly the sovereign act of God, for it took place before the creation of the cosmos. Whatever

election is, Paul was blessing and praising God for it, and not accusing God of unfairness. There are some things about the wisdom and knowledge of God which are unsearchable and past finding out to finite minds ([Rom. 11:33-36](#)).

Without faith it is impossible to please God ([Heb. 11:6](#)), and without holiness no man shall see the Lord ([Heb. 12:14](#)). Sanctification means to be made holy. As to our standing before God, "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" ([Heb. 10:10](#)), even though our daily lives may be imperfect. God's purpose in election is to make us holy and without blame (cf. [Col. 1:22](#) and [Phil. 2:15](#)).

God chose us in love, ⁵*having foreordained us unto the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ to himself* - Foreordain or predestinate means "to ordain or purpose something beforehand." The word is used in [Acts 4:28](#); [Romans 8:29, 30](#); [1 Corinthians 2:7](#); and [Ephesians 1:5, 11](#). The order of the carrying out of God's purpose is stated in [Romans 8:29, 30](#). First He foreordained us, then He called us, then He justified us, and finally He will glorify us.

God further foreordains us unto sonship. Sonship refers to maturity and equal rights in the family. The central passage on sonship is [Galatians 4:1-7](#). Our adoption is through Jesus Christ unto the Father, *according to the good pleasure of his will*. The word translated "according to" (*kata*) is used some sixty-six times in the three epistles of this study. It balances one thing with another. He foreordained us in accordance with His will because it pleased Him and was His kind intent. And it was ⁶*to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved*. Paul stacks superlatives upon superlatives in praising the grace of God with which He has engraced us in the Beloved One. The A.V. rendering, "made us accepted" is the translation of "echaritosen," which is used only one other time in the New Testament: "Hail, thou that art highly favored" ([Lk. 1:28](#), spoken of the Virgin Mary). Every believer in Christ Jesus has been highly favored.

B. Redeemed by the Son: 1:7-12.

⁷*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace* - It is in Christ, the Beloved (cf. [Matt. 12:18](#); [8:17](#); [17:5](#)), that we have obtained redemption. Redemption has in it the idea of setting a slave free by paying a price. The Father chose us. The Son paid our redemption price by shedding His life's blood. Paul speaks of redemption in [Romans 3:23](#); [8:23](#); [1 Corinthians 1:30](#); [Ephesians 1:7, 14](#); [4:30](#); [Colossians 1:14](#); [Hebrews 9:12,15](#). It is interesting to note that in [Romans 8:23](#) and in [Ephesians 1:14](#) Paul speaks not only of the redemption of our soul but also of the future redemption of our body. Redemption is equated with the forgiveness of our trespasses. Paul uses this particular word "aphesis" for forgiveness only one other time ([Col. 1:14](#)), and the verb form only once ([Rom. 4:7](#)), although elsewhere these words are used dozens of times. Paul's favorite word for forgiveness comes from the root "grace," to show grace towards, as in [2 Corinthians 2:7, 10](#); [Ephesians 4:32](#); [Col. 3:13](#) and [4:13](#). It is interesting that Luke, Paul's fellow worker, is the only one of the Gospel writers to use this word ([Lk. 7:42, 43](#)).

Sin (harmatia) is missing the mark, going astray, but here the word is "trespasses" (paraptomaton), meaning to lapse or deviate from the truth. It differs from harmatia in figure, not in force. There is another Greek word for wrong doing (parabasis), which means violation of law, transgression ([Gal. 3:19](#)). Here again redemption and forgiveness are in accordance to His grace, ⁸*which he made to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence*. Wisdom is the attribute of knowing how to use knowledge. Prudence or insight is the practical use of wisdom. Some commentators refer this wisdom and prudence to God's activity; others to believers as recipients of His grace. Both things could be true. It probably means that God has given us insight into His divine plan of the ages, ⁹*making known unto us the mystery of His will*. The mystery, that is the now revealed secret, of His will is larger than the mystery concerning the Body of Christ. It includes the mystery of chapter three, but it encompasses more, for it is ¹⁰*according to the good pleasure which he purposed in him, unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth*. The bringing together of all things in heaven and upon earth under the headship of Christ points to the consummation, including not only the present dispensation of the grace of God, but also the coming Millennial Kingdom. It is not until that end is reached that all things will be put under His feet ([1 Cor. 15:24-28](#)). God has granted us insight into His master plan. The plan includes several different dispensations (oikonomia). Paul uses this word five times ([1 Cor. 9:17](#); [Eph. 1:10](#); [3:2](#); [Col. 1:25](#); [1 Tim. 1:4](#)). Modern speech translations usually translate this word "administration" or "stewardship." Theologians who recognize the dispensational principle in the Bible usually break down all time - past, present, and future, into seven dispensations. The three most distinct ones are Law, Grace, and Kingdom.

Paul is very emphatic that all of this plan is wrapped up in Christ. In Him, I say, ¹¹*in whom we also were made an heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will*; ¹²*to the end that we should be to the praise of his glory*. The A.V. puts "heritage" in the active voice, "obtained an inheritance." It should be passive, as above. The words mean "to assign by lot," as was done when Israel took possession of the land of Canaan ([Num. 34:13-29](#)). Paul makes it very plain that God does nothing arbitrarily or on the spur of the moment. Foreordination, purpose, everything after the counsel of His will, all indicate that God knows what He is doing, even though we sometimes cannot understand.

We were made God's inheritance, *to the end that we should be to the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ*: ¹³*in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation* - It may seem that God is selfish in wanting all of the glory to go to Himself and to the Lord Jesus Christ. But the fact is that he would not be the Sovereign Lord if all of the honor and glory did not go to Him. Some day every knee in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, will bow at the name of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father ([Phil. 2:10, 11](#)).

Of whom is Paul speaking when he says "we who had hoped before in the Christ"? Apparently Paul uses "the Christ" here, not in personal reference to Jesus, but in

reference to the Messiah. The hope of Israel was the Messiah ([Jer. 14:8](#)). Israel had hoped in the Messiah. The Messiah had come as Jesus in the flesh; a remnant of Israel had received Him and the rest were blinded ([Rom. 11:7](#)). Then God began a new dispensation under Paul's apostleship which concerns the Gentiles and the Body of Christ. "In whom ye (Gentiles) also (trusted), having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation." Thus Israel's Hope has become the Head of the Body, the Church.

C. Sealed by the Spirit: 1:13b, 14

In whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The A.V. gives the impression that the sealing with the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace which occurs "after" believing. The present participle means, "upon believing ye were sealed." Various kinds of seals are used in the business world: sealed envelopes, notary public seals, seals on stock certificates, seals on registered letters, seals on machinery to keep grease in or dirt out. A seal is proof of authenticity, a guarantee of safe delivery or of safe keeping. The Spirit's seal ¹⁴*is the earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory.* "Earnest" (arrabon) is a down payment made on a purchase as a pledge of completing the transaction. The N.I.V. translates this, "who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until redemption of those who are God's possession."⁴ When God completes the transaction of our redemption we will be redeemed in glorified bodies as well as spirits. We will be conformed to the image of His Son.

Thus the Father chose us, the Son redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit sealed us. All three Persons of the Godhead have been active in our salvation. And again Paul reminds us that it is *unto the praise of his glory.*

III. PRAYER FOR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING 1:15-23.

¹⁵*For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which ye show toward all the saints,* ¹⁶*cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;* ¹⁷*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him;* ¹⁸*having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,* ¹⁹*and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might,* ²⁰*which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places,* ²¹*far above all rule and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:* ²²*and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church,* ²³*which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

Paul had the heart of a true pastor. He had great concern for his converts and the

⁴ N.I.V. *op. cit*, Eph. 1:14.

churches which he had established. He spoke of his "care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). He visited them to "see how they do" (Acts 15:36). When he felt a church was in danger from Satan's onslaughts, he would send a fellow worker to help (1 Thes. 3:5). When he heard of their tribulations, and he could no longer forbear, he would send a Timothy to find out if they were standing fast in the faith.

In our present context Paul's prayer is that God would give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Sin is a disease which produces spiritual blindness. The unsaved person is in the dark. Peter speaks of those who are blind in the sense that they have spiritual myopia (muopazo); they are nearsighted; they cannot see distance; they live for the present without regard for the future (2 Pet. 1:9). Therefore Paul prays that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened to the end that we may understand the following:

First, "What is the hope of His calling." *Calling* in Paul's epistles is always effectual; that is, it always results in salvation: "And whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified" (Rom. 8:30). In the Gospels the word is used in the sense of a general calling: "Many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. 20:16). Paul speaks of "His" calling here and of "your" calling in ch. 4:4. God does the calling, so that it is His calling, and He calls us, so that the calling belongs to us. But in both cases it is the hope of the calling that is in view. Hope is always something that is future: "For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it" (Rom. 8:24)? In a very real sense the hope of the believer is Christ Himself (1 Tim. 1:1). But the different dispensations of God have specific hopes because of specific promises. God promised Israel a land, a King and a kingdom, and we believe this hope will someday be realized. God has not made any such promise to members of the Body of Christ, but He has promised that some day our Lord Jesus Christ will descend out of heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel, and the dead in Christ shall be raised and we who are yet alive will be changed, and together we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall be forever with the Lord (1 Thes. 4:13-18). This event is called *the blessed hope* (Tit. 2:13). Since we have been called, not only to salvation, but to salvation as members of the Body of Christ, Paul no doubt has this event in mind in reference to our calling.

In the second place, Paul prays that we might understand the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. But what can He find to inherit in us? We would have no trouble in understanding how we could have an inheritance in Christ, but in what sense could He have an inheritance in us? When we understand that Christ invested everything He had, even His own life, in us, in order to conform us to His image (Rom. 8:29) and restore us to a perfect standing with the Father, we can see how He does have an inheritance in us. Some day we will be presented to Him as a "glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

Finally, Paul prays that we might experience what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward, even according to the strength of His might, which He wrought in

Christ when He raised Him from the dead. Jesus miraculously raised people from the dead, but the power thus manifested was insignificant compared with the power that raised Him from the dead. He died under the curse and condemnation of all of the sins of the world. Every satanic power of the nether world would have exerted its power to keep Him in the tomb, for the devil is said to have the power of death ([Heb. 2:14](#)). But Christ, in His mighty working power, overcame sin, Satan, death and the grave and arose triumphantly. The power which accomplished this stupendous work is the power which is available to every member of the Body of Christ.

This super power which is ours through Christ, not only raised Him from the dead, but it put every thing in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Although the Body of Christ is mentioned in Romans and 1 Corinthians, we have here for the first time the full title of the Church: *The Church which is His Body*. In the figure of the Church as a body and Christ as the head, we should not make the mistake of making the head to be a skull with eyes, ears, and nose. (In the figure these parts are all members of the body, not of the Head, [1 Cor. 12:14-27](#)). The true meaning of Head is that which is revealed in Philippians, where Christ is the Mind of the Body. The Head or Mind is in every member, controlling and regulating its every function.

The word *church* is a general term, describing several different groups of people, both saved and unsaved. The church of which Paul speaks is designated as "the Church which is His Body." It is not any particular local congregation of people, but a spiritual Body comprising all true believers in this present dispensation, from Paul's day to the present.

IV. CONDITIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS: 2:1-18

A. Past Condition: 2.1-3

Chapter One revealed God's gracious purpose to provide salvation. Chapters Two and Three tell how God is carrying out that purpose in giving spiritual life to spiritually dead sinners and making them members of the Body of Christ. In the preceding prayer Paul spoke of the exceeding mighty power which God wrought when He raised Christ from the dead. Just as He made Christ alive, Paul proceeds to tell his readers, *And you (also) did he make alive*. The Greek text omits the words, "did he make alive." We have to go to verse five to find out what he did to them, and then supply these words to verse one. Paul then breaks off before telling us what God did, to describe the former spiritual condition of mankind outside of Christ - *when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins*. Spiritual death does not mean that man's spirit has ceased to exist, but that his spirit has been cut off from any relationship with God. Death is never pictured in the New Testament as a state of unconsciousness or non-existence. "She that liveth in sin, is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6). Man becomes dead through trespasses and sins. (cf. notes on Ch. 1:7)

Paul goes on to further describe this condition of spiritual death, ²*wherein ye once*

walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience. The "course of this world" is literally, "the age of this cosmos." In Galatians 1:4 Paul calls this "the present evil age." The life-style of the unsaved is that of this evil age. But it goes beyond this, for there is a spirit-being who is directing this evil age, the prince of the power of the air. Jesus called him, "the prince of this world" ([John 12:31](#); [14:30](#); [16:11](#)). Satan is the prince of death. Christ is the Prince of life ([Acts 3:15](#)). "The powers of the air," may seem to be a strange description to this scientific age. The New Testament uses two Greek words for air. One is "ouranos," literally, "the sky" or "the heavens." The other is "aer," which has reference to that which we breathe, that which is meant by the word "air" today. The air is a thin layer of atmosphere that surrounds the earth. No physical life can exist above that layer. When astronauts go into outer space they have to take air along with them. So the air is the sphere in which man lives, and that is the sphere in which Satan's principalities and powers operate. Thus, Paul's expression is not unscientific. Jesus is coming back in the air ([1 Thes. 4:17](#)), which means He is coming into the atmosphere of the earth. The unsaved are called "sons of disobedience" not "children." Sons have come of age. The unsaved have matured in their disobedience.

It was not only the Gentiles who were dead through their trespasses and sins, but as a Jew Paul says, ³*among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest.* Although the nation of Israel was in covenant relationship with God, individual Israelites had exactly the same kind of nature as did the Gentiles. When God put Israel under the Law He proved this fact ([Rom. 3:19, 20](#)). How often do we read in the Old Testament of Israel lusting after fleshly things ([Ps. 106:14](#); cf [1 Cor. 10:6](#)). Both sides of man, the flesh and the mind, are involved. Man by nature is a child of wrath, that is, a child appointed unto God's wrath. God's wrath has been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ([Rom 1:18](#)). In our day there is a craze in the food industry of advertising products as being "natural" But there is much in nature which is poisonous and deadly. The "natural man" has to be included in this category ([1 Cor. 2:14](#)). There is nothing good in him. What may appear to be good is bad, because the mind of the flesh is at enmity with God. How can God accept the work of man as good, as long as man rejects His Son and thus takes sides with those who crucified Him?

B. New Condition: 2:4-10

The hopeless condition of the spiritually dead and guilty man is broken by two welcome words, *But God*. Had the conjunction been, "And God," we might have expected to see the judgment of God being pronounced, as in the case of the Flood. Notice the "ands" in Genesis 6:1-7, and the "but" in verse 8. The world was destroyed in God's judgment of the flood, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. So also in our text, ⁴*But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace ye have been saved) –*

Rich mercy, great love, and matchless grace here combine to effect our salvation. Mercy is the manifestation of pity. It is God's attitude towards those in distress. It is the feeling of compassion with a desire to help. We may feel sorry for people in trouble, and yet do nothing to help. Mercy puts feeling into action. God is rich in mercy. The mercy seat on top of the ark in the tabernacle was sprinkled with blood indicating that God had shown mercy to the Israelites by placing their blame on an innocent victim. We too have a mercy seat, sprinkled with the blood of Christ ([Heb. 4:16](#)). How can we adequately describe the great love of God? The measure of God's love is seen in the fact that He gave His only Son to suffer the death and shame of the Cross. And we are reminded here that He did this ⁵*even when we were dead in our trespasses*. This fact is brought out even more forcefully in the comparison found in Romans 5:6-8: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die, but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

He died for us while we were yet dead, and upon believing the Gospel, He *made us alive together with Christ*. There are fourteen different Greek words translated "with". The one used here is the compound word, "made alive together," together with in the sense of complete participation, all united in one. It expresses a joint relationship, where Christ and the believer share equally, as in Romans 8:17. Ellicott is quoted as saying, "What God wrought in Christ He wrought, *ipso facto*, in all who are united with Him."⁵

It seems that Paul is thinking ahead to verse eight, and just can't wait to say something about it, so he puts in a parenthetical phrase (*by grace ye have been saved*). The verb is in the perfect tense, which means that their present continuing state is the result of a past action. They are not going to be saved: they have been saved and are saved.

God ... made us alive, ⁵*and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus* - When Stephen saw Jesus after His ascension, He was standing on the right hand of God ([Acts 7:55](#)), as though He was pleading with outstretched arms for His chosen people Israel to repent and believe Him, so that He might come back and establish their millennial Kingdom. But instead of repenting they showed their hatred by stoning Stephen to death. Christ was also standing to receive Stephen's spirit. All other references to His position in heaven have Him sitting or seated at the right hand of God. He is surely not seated on the throne of David reigning over a spiritualized Israelitish Church, as covenant theologians teach. His seated position is an indication that His work of redemption is finished. The priests of the Aaronic priesthood "stood" daily offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which could never take away sins, but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, "sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:11, 12). We, too, have been made to firmly sit together with Him, for we have been incorporated into Him.

⁵ C.J. Ellicott, quoted by J. Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies of the New Testament* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons 1914) Vol. 111, p. 376.

There have been those who have denied a physical resurrection, who teach that being made alive and being raised is all the resurrection there is. No doubt this is what Hymenaeus and Philetus taught (2 Tim. 2:17, 18). The word "resurrection" means "to stand upright," having reference to the body. The body is in a prone position in death. Christ was resurrected in a literal body. Our bodies will be changed and fashioned like His glorious body (Phil. 3:21).

God's purpose in saving us is ⁷*that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.* Throughout eternity the redeemed will be on display to show all angelic beings the riches of His grace. Christ did not die for the angels that fell. Apparently their nature as individual creations which did not reproduce as a family, made it impossible for Christ to die for them. At least, we know that when Lucifer and his angels sinned God cast them down to hell (Tartarus), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. Satan may have supposed that God would do the same with man, once man had yielded to the serpent's temptation, and that he could therefore defeat God's purpose in this new kind of being. The angels knew nothing of the grace of God, and no doubt Satan was greatly surprised to discover this gracious attribute in God, that He would sacrifice His own Son for a race inferior to the angels. We will learn more about this in Chapter six, verse ten.

Now Paul states in full what he hinted at in verse five, ⁸For by grace have ye been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not of works, that no man should glory. Relative to salvation, these two verses, along with John 3:16, are probably the verses most often quoted by Christians. Grace is God's provision, faith is man's response. But the expression that follows, "and that not of yourselves," raises questions. Does it mean that the faith exercised is not of man? It would seem to make salvation even more gracious to make the faith to be of God and not of man, but by so doing difficult questions are raised in regard to election and the responsibility of man. If a person believes, not because he willed to do so, but because faith had been imparted to him by an act of God apart from his own assent, then faith seems rather meaningless. But on the other hand it is argued, if man is dead in sins, how could he do anything? This question supposes that "dead in sins" means that the person's spirit is non-existent. One can go back and forth in such reasonings without ever coming to an agreement. It seems best in this case to decide the meaning on grammatical grounds. The word "faith" is feminine in gender, and the "that" is neuter. Therefore grammatically "faith" cannot be the antecedent of "that". It seems best to take "that" as referring to salvation in its entirety. Salvation is of the Lord, from beginning to end. Man had nothing to do with thinking it up, with providing it, or with putting it into operation. All we know is that man is held responsible for accepting it. The Holy Spirit is like the wind (John 3:8). We can't see the wind, but we can see and feel its effects. The poet expresses our ignorance of exactly how the Spirit works, "I know not of how the Spirit moves, Convincing man of sin, Revealing Jesus thru the Word, Creating faith in Him." We know there is a sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit before man exercises faith (2 Thes. 2:13), but man does not believe apart from responsibly willing to do so.

Salvation is not of works of any kind. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Tit. 3:5). All of man's boasting is excluded ([Rom. 3:27](#)). God has provided salvation by grace so "that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:29). In glory we will have only one thing to boast about, and that is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, the believer is said to be "God's workmanship." ¹⁰*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.* The word "workmanship," is in the Greek, "poiema," to compose. We get our word poem" from it. We are God's poem. A skilled workman can select a piece of scrap metal from the junk box, chuck it in his lathe, and turn out a vital part for a machine he is constructing. Just so, God can take a sinner from the scrap pile of fallen humanity, and recreate him in Christ Jesus to become a member of the glorious Body of Christ. We are not saved by good works, but we have been saved *for* good works, which God made ready beforehand. He did this "in order that" (hina), or "to the end that" we should walk in them. If a person claims to be an artist but has never painted; if a person claims to be an orator but has never delivered a speech; or if one claims to be a musician but has never made music; we have good reason to doubt his claims. If one claims to be a new creation in Christ created for the purpose of producing good works, and never does any, we have reason to doubt his salvation.

C. Past Relationships 2.11, 12.

Having told the Gentiles of their past spiritual condition of being dead through trespasses and sins, Paul next reminds them of their past relationship in the world. ¹¹*Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh made by hands; ¹²that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.*

God has furnished each of us with a built-in computer capable of storing millions of bits of information. What a wonderful and awesome faculty is the memory. How wonderful to recall the happy events of the past, but how awful to remember our sins. Both the good and the bad are all stored permanently away, and although we would like to erase the bad, we discover that the more we try, the more vivid the memory becomes. Apart from memory man would be incapable of knowing and incapable of learning. God calls upon His children numerous times in the Bible to use this faculty.

In the Old Testament God called upon Israel to remember who and what they were before He delivered them out of Egypt (cf. [Deut. 5:15](#); [9:7](#); [15:15](#)). The Israelites had been slaves under harsh taskmasters in Egypt before God brought them to freedom "on eagle's wings" (Ex. 19:4). Now Paul is calling upon the Gentiles to remember what and who they were before Christ redeemed them with a much greater deliverance. When God manifests His grace toward people, there is always the tendency for the recipients to suppose that some goodness in themselves was responsible for their righteous

standing with God. This was the attitude that Israel came in time to take, and God had to tell them through Ezekiel, "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned amongst the heathen, whither ye went" (36:22). And Paul had to warn the Gentile believers, after God had cast Israel aside, "Thou wilt say then, Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in; well, by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will He spare thee ([Rom. 11:19-21](#)).

There were a number of things about the Gentile's past relationships which Paul wanted them to remember.

1. They did not bear in their body the mark of God's chosen nation. Circumcision set Israel apart from all other nations. The Jews called the Gentiles "akrobustia," "the foreskin" or the uncircumcised. Circumcision availed nothing at the time Paul was writing ([Gal. 5:6](#)), but in the past dispensation it did have great significance. Paul mentions circumcision and uncircumcision some sixty times in his epistles.

2. They were without Christ. This again is referring to the past dispensation. Christ, "the Messiah," was to be an Israelite, of the tribe of Judah. He belonged to the Jews. Even in Christ's earthly ministry He Himself declared, when a Gentile sought a favor from Him, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" ([Matt. 15:24](#)). Christ did not belong to the Gentiles.

3. They were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. Commonwealth is "politeias," the right and privilege of being a citizen. The Gentiles were excluded from any such rights in divinely established government on earth.

4. They were strangers to the covenants of the promise. God had entered into several covenants under His promise to Israel. There was the Mosaic Covenant, the Palestinian Covenant, the Covenant of Circumcision, the Davidic Covenant. The Gentiles were foreigners as far as these covenants were concerned.

5. They had no hope. They had no basis for hope. Their world was ruled by brute force. Their idols and images which they worshipped were powerless to deliver them. They had no revelation from heaven as a future hope of salvation.

6. They were without God in the world. They were "atheoi." The letter "a" called "alpha privitive," when placed before a word in Greek, as it is here before "theos" - (god), reverses the meaning of the word. An atheist is one who does not possess God, so in this general sense all unsaved people are atheists. Technically the word "atheist" is used to describe those who militantly propagate movements designed to destroy any kind of theistic belief. The Gentiles Paul was speaking about had in times past worshipped many gods, but they were completely separated from the one true God. This call to remembrance does not seem to have a negative motive of warning the Gentiles against spiritual pride; but rather it is a more positive approach in teaching what a great change had been wrought by the grace of God, as we shall see in the next

section.

D. Present Relationship: 2.13-18.

¹³*But now* - represents a radical change. There are several important "but nows" in Paul's epistles (cf. Rom. 3:21; 6:22; 16:26; 2 Cor. 5:16; Eph. 5:8). - *in Christ Jesus ye that were once far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*. Just as there was a great gulf fixed between Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and the rich man in Hades (Lk. 16:26), so there was a great gulf between the Gentiles and God. But Christ bridged that gulf, and now the Gentiles have been brought near. This does not mean only that saved Gentiles have been made near, but also that a "door of faith" has been opened to the Gentiles which they never had before (Acts 14:27). Paul has already referred to the redemption through the blood of Christ (1:7). It is this redemption which has brought them near. - ¹⁴*For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition* - Individual believers have peace with God, but that is not what Paul is talking about here. He is talking about the peace that Christ has made between Jew and Gentile, between whom there had been a dividing wall of hostility, a barrier that kept them apart. Christ, in breaking down this barrier, has made peace between the two, by now making both the Jew and the Gentile one in the Body of Christ. What was this wall? Continuing, Paul explains, ¹⁵*having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances* - The barrier was erected when Israel became a nation under the Mosaic Law. The law strictly forbid the Jews from having relationships with the uncircumcised. Gentiles could become worshippers of Israel's God and partake of their ordinances, but only if they were first circumcised (Ex. 12:48, 49). Christ through His death and the shedding of His blood completely fulfilled all of the righteous requirements of that legal system and thus brought an end to the Law (Rom. 10:4). He abolished it (2 Cor. 3:13). He did this *in order that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace*, ¹⁶*and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby*. It is clear that the peace and the reconciliation here spoken of are between Jew and Gentile. The one body is the Church, the Body of Christ, more closely defined in chapter three. Christ reconciled both in one body through the cross. Since this was done through the cross, some argue that the new Body of Christ must have begun at the cross. But this would have been impossible for several reasons. Christ was dead for three days after the cross; the Holy Spirit who baptizes into the Body had not yet been given, and there are surely no indications that at the time of the cross there were both Jews and Gentiles who had faith that His death was the basis of their salvation. "Through" and "at" are two different things. It is through Christ's death that God will some day, after the Millennium, destroy the Devil (Heb. 2:14). The Devil was potentially destroyed at the cross but he will not actually be destroyed until at least three thousand years after the cross. Likewise, the Body of Christ was potentially formed at the time of the cross, but it was not actually brought into being historically until the revelation of it through the Apostle Paul. Neither was the practice of the ordinances abolished historically at the cross, for we see the Spirit-filled Apostles at Jerusalem continuing in these things throughout the Book of Acts.

Israel as a nation was near to God by reason of the covenants of promise. We read, ¹⁷*And he came and preached peace to them that were far off (the Gentiles), and to them that were nigh (Israel):* ¹⁸*for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.* Access is the means or the right to approach. In Old Testament times access to the presence of God was limited to the high-priest, and he alone could go into the holy of holies only once a year, and that, not without the blood of an animal ([Heb. 9:7-10](#)). But now through Christ both individual Jews and Gentiles have the right to approach in one Spirit into the presence of the Father. We are bidden to come "boldly" unto the throne of grace ([Heb. 4:16](#)).

¹⁹*So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* - This is the conclusion of our new situation. We are no longer strangers (cf. vs. 12) and sojourners (paroikoi). The word means "dwelling near the house but not in the house." The word "Paroikoi" is used in the Septuagint to describe one who is sojourning away from home. It is used here in the sense that we are no longer sojourners in relation to God, but it is also applied to believers who are sojourners in relation to this world ([1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11](#)). Believers are not at home in this evil world. Some day we are going to be at home with the Lord.

In considering the uniqueness of the Body of Christ and its distinction from the Messianic Kingdom, it must be remembered that the saints in the Body have a close relationship with all of God's family, both of past and coming dispensations. All of the saints have citizenship in God's all inclusive Kingdom. We in the Body have become fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. A household includes more than one person. The Body of Christ is just one of the several members of that household.

V. THE FOUNDATION - 2:19-22

As the household (oikeioi) of God we are ²⁰*being built (epioikodomethentes) on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.*

Since Paul's apostleship was separate from that of the Twelve, some dispensationalists believe that Paul was here referring to other men whom he called apostles and not to the Twelve. (cf. [Rom. 16:7; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25](#), where "apostolos" is translated "messenger"). This seems unlikely, however, since in all of his other references to apostles he undoubtedly means the Twelve. Whether Paul meant the Twelve or his own associates whom he called apostles, one thing is certain. Jesus Christ is the Chief Corner Stone of this building. The only other occurrence of this word is in 1 Peter 2:6, which also refers to Christ. The chief corner stone in an ancient building was placed at the extreme angle of the proposed building, and every other part of the building was lined up with it. The word is made up of "akron" (cf. the city in Ohio), meaning the extremity or highest point, plus "gonia" meaning corner or angle. Christ is the one and only foundation in God's redemptive program, whether it be in the Body dispensation or the Kingdom. There were foundational truths about Christ and His work

which were laid down by the Twelve, as well as by Paul. The prophets in this passage were New Testament prophets, being mentioned after apostles. See also *1 Corinthians* 3:9-11 on God's building and foundation. Paul laid a particular part of that foundation which concerns saints in this present dispensation, but the whole foundation is Jesus Christ.

Notice that in the A.S.V., instead of saying, "In whom all the building," says, ²¹*in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;* ²²*in whom ye also are builded for an habitation of God in the Spirit.* It is unclear whether Paul is talking about the whole building being joined together, or each several building; whether he lumps all of the redeemed into one great building, or considers several buildings expertly fitted together. The only other place this word "fitted together" is found is in chapter four, verse sixteen.

"Growing" is in the present tense, showing that the building is in a state of growth. It is growing into a holy temple in the Lord (Christ). Temple (naos) is the inner shrine, the Holy of holies, where in the Old Testament tabernacle and temple the Shekinah glory dwelt. The Body of Christ is the temple of God, and our individual bodies are temples of God ([1 Cor. 6:19](#)). If the "heaven of the heavens" cannot contain God, much less an earthly temple ([1 Kgs. 8:27](#)), how can He dwell in our bodies? But the Scripture tells us that He does dwell in us by His Spirit, and that means that our bodies should be respected as being holy unto the Lord. There should not be any little idols there in competition with Christ. One should read Ezekiel 8 to 12, to see how Israel defiled the temple of the Lord and how God's glory departed and the building was finally destroyed. Paul warned the Corinthians against sexual immorality ([1 Cor. 3:16-18](#)) stating that if any man defiles God's temple, God will destroy him. Paul would have committed the incestuous man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh ([1 Cor. 5:5](#)). This man was a believer, a saved man, but he defiled the temple of God.

VI. THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD: 3:1-13

Chapter 1 gives us the Purpose of God in Himself concerning Christ personally. Chapter 3 gives us the Purpose of God in Christ concerning the Christ (3:4, 11). There are two aspects of the word Christ: Christ personally, and Christ mystically, the head and the Body considered together. In chapter 1 it is the Mystery of God: in chapter 3 it is the Mystery of Christ. After each of these statements concerning the Purpose of God is a prayer, the first for enlightenment of the inner man, and the second for the strengthening of the inner man.

Those who see nothing distinctive concerning the revelation of the Mystery given to Paul interpret this section to mean that the Mystery is simply that Gentiles have been admitted to the Covenant. They teach that the Twelve Apostles began this ministry at Pentecost. We need to place more emphasis upon the truth of the Mystery; showing the difference between the Gospel of Salvation and the Mystery. Paul preached salvation according to the Scriptures ([1 Cor. 15:3, 4](#)), but he preached the Mystery according to a special revelation given to him by Jesus Christ personally from heaven.

The Mystery was not a subject of any Scriptures which had been written before Paul's epistles. The Epistle to the Romans begins with "the Gospel of God which He had promised before by the prophets in the holy scriptures" (1: 1, 2), and ends with "my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (16:25). It was no mystery or secret that God was going to bless the Gentiles. Beginning with the promise to Abraham ([Gen. 12:3](#)) the Old Testament is full of the promise of Gentile blessing. They were to be blessed through the fulness of Israel ([Rom. 11:12](#)), and they will be thus blessed in the Millennial Kingdom. But this verse tells us that Gentiles are being blessed today through the diminishing of Israel. The subject of the Mystery is not salvation from sin, although that is presupposed: the subject of the Mystery deals with what God is doing with people whom He is saving in this present dispensation. As we learned in the previous chapter of Ephesians, He is making out of believing Jews and Gentiles one New Man, the Church which is His Body. This Church is distinct from Israel's Kingdom promised in the Old Testament. With these facts in mind, let us consider the verses in this next section.

A. The Revelation of the Mystery. 3:1-6

For this cause, seeing that you Gentiles are joined together with believing Israelites to form the one New Man, *I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles* - "I Paul" is very emphatic. This is coming straight from the one whom Christ appointed to be the apostle of the Gentiles and to whom this new message was entrusted. He further identifies himself as the prisoner of Jesus Christ. The cause of his imprisonment was his faithfulness to God's message for the Gentiles. If he had preached the Jewish message of circumcision and the law he would not have been arrested and thrown into prison (cf. [Acts 22:21, 22](#)). Although he was a prisoner of Rome, he considered himself to be the prisoner of Jesus Christ.

At the end of verse 1 we have to put a dash. In verse 2 he begins a digression that continues as one long sentence through verse 13. This is almost as long as his one sentence in 1:3-14 . ²*If so be*, taking it for granted, that ye have heard of the dispensation, that is, the administration or stewardship, *of the grace of God which was given me to youward*. Paul does not say that this new dispensation "was given to me, after it was given to the other apostles." "I Paul ... it was given me." If we don't get this point, we will get confused in our dispensational teaching. Very many dispensationalists teach that this dispensation was given to the Twelve Apostles at Pentecost, but is it not strange that not one of the Apostles said anything about it, either in the Book of Acts or in their epistles? ³*how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery* - Paul did not have, what he calls the mystery, or secret, made known to him simply by spiritual enlightenment, but by direct revelation from Jesus Christ personally. Paul was the last one to see Jesus Christ ([1 Cor. 15:8](#)). He appeared to Paul on several occasions ([Acts 22:11; 23:11; 26:16](#)). Others received and understood this truth through Paul's teaching and the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing mysterious about the Mystery. The word comes from the verb "muo," to shut the mouth. It was a truth about which God kept His mouth shut until He revealed it to Paul. as /

wrote before in few words - He had mentioned this truth briefly in the chapter before this one. ⁴whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of (the) Christ. His insight into the mystery was the result of the revelation he had received. It was not due to any super-intelligence of his own. In the original the definite article is used before Christ, as it is in 1 Corinthians 12:12. This indicates that the Body of Christ, and not Christ personally, is the subject of the mystery, ⁵which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.

The interpretation of this verse hinges upon the meaning of the little word "as." Does Paul mean that the mystery was not revealed to as great a degree as it is now revealed? Or does he mean that it was not revealed at all, as it is now revealed? For example, if we should say, "Men in ancient time did not fly in outer space, as they do today," we would not mean that they flew a little in outer space, but not as much as they do today. Or if we should say, "Paul did not use the King James Version, as we use it today," we would surely not mean that Paul used it to some degree. The "as" in this verse is plainly used in contrast, not in the sense of comparative degree. There are obvious reasons why this is true. Paul elsewhere states positively that the mystery was never before made known without any qualifications (Col. 1:26). His statement here would be false if it had in any degree been made known before. Then there is the fact that no writer in the Bible before Paul ever mentioned the mystery, or its subject, the Body of Christ. The fact that Paul emphasizes the fact that it was made known to him by a special revelation, and that he did not get it from any human source or teaching certainly implies that it was a distinctive truth. If the Twelve had received the knowledge of the mystery before Paul was even saved, what was the need of a special revelation to Paul. Why was Paul not told to go up to Jerusalem and receive instruction from the other apostles? In making this sharp contrast concerning the mystery, we must be careful not to confuse the mystery with the gospel of salvation. We have previously pointed out that the gospel of God was promised afore by the prophets (Rom. 1:1,2), but that what Paul calls "my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery," was never before made known, but "was kept secret since the world began." Paul's gospel included not only the message of personal salvation from sin, but also membership in the Body of Christ with all of its blessings in heavenly places.

The latter half of verse 5 states that the mystery has now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in or by the Spirit. How did these apostles and prophets have the mystery revealed to them? Paul received it by the personal appearance of Jesus Christ from heaven. The others received it by the enlightenment of the Spirit, much the same as we receive it today. The only difference is that Paul communicated it verbally to them, whereas today we get it from his writings. In any case, it is the Spirit who gives the understanding of the Mystery.

Continuing on in verse 6, Paul explains what the mystery is: ⁶to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel - This joint relationship of Jews and Gentiles as

members of the Body of Christ, the One New Man, is unique. This is in sharp contrast to Old Testament prophecy and promises. To adapt and reformulate those promises to make them apply to the Church today is, of necessity, to deny that they will ever be fulfilled upon Israel. That is what Amillennialism does. Note the difference between Israel and the Church. Israel is a nation, with King Messiah sitting upon David's throne here upon the earth, and with Jerusalem its capitol, reigning over all of the other nations of the earth ([Jer. 31:36](#); [Lk. 1:32, 33](#); [Zech. 14:16-21](#)). The Church is a Body with Christ as the Head, sitting at the right hand of God with its blessings in the heavenly places, composed of all nationalities. Christ will return to earth to deliver Israel at the end of the Tribulation and to establish the Millennial Kingdom. Christ will come in the air before the Tribulation, to catch up the Church from the earth to heaven. These distinctions, and many more which could be cited, serve to show the uniqueness of the Church of this dispensation. That Jews and Gentiles should be jointsharers of the promise in Christ through the gospel was truly a revolutionary arrangement for the Jews. In the Kingdom promises Israel is always separate and distinct from the Gentiles.

B. Ministration of the Mystery.- 3:7-13

What Paul calls, "my gospel," was no different from that of the Twelve in regard to personal salvation through faith in Christ, but it was different in its administration entirely apart from Jewish ceremonialism and earthly Kingdom promises. It was concerned with the Mystery. Paul begins this section by speaking of the ministration of that gospel ⁷*whereof I was made a minister* - Paul did not make himself a minister of the gospel. We sometimes wonder about some ministers whether God made them or whether they made themselves. There was no question about Paul. God had separated him from his mother's womb ([Gal. 1:15](#)). He had great boldness and confidence because God had made him a minister. And his ministry was *according to the gift of the grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power*. "What God calls men to he fits them for, and does it with almighty power." Paul's office as Apostle of the Gentiles was given to him as a gift of grace and that ministry was according to the working of God's power. Paul continues to speak about this gift that was given ⁸*unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given* - "for I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; yet I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:9, 10). Paul was personally a very humble man, but if any one denied his apostleship, as did some of the Corinthians, which would call in question the truth of the mystery, he was quick to defend himself. (cf. [1 Cor. 9:1-2](#); [2 Cor. 11:5](#)). To me, says Paul, was this grace given *to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ* - "unsearchable" is a compound word which means literally, "that which cannot be traced out." It does not refer to illimitable riches, but to the formerly hidden riches of the Mystery. The Mystery left no footprints in the Old Testament, so it cannot be traced out.

⁹*And, says Paul, to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages bath been hid in God who created all things.* Paul's great burden was to

enlighten all men, Jews and Gentiles, concerning God's great secret which for all the ages past had been hidden in God (not hidden in the Scriptures). It is sad to read in Paul's last epistle, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia (and that is where Ephesus is located) be turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15). As he awaited his execution, all had left him in the lurch; only Luke was with him, but the Lord stood with him and strengthened him (2 Tim. 4:16, 17). Many today (even Fundamentalists) have turned away from Paul's Mystery of the gospel for which he was in bonds (Eph. 6:19, 20). Tradition has so long neglected this aspect of Paul's reaching that it is considered heresy when it is resurrected.

Paul adds, " ... God who created all things," because He created the ages, and He had had the secret of the Body of Christ in His plan before He created the ages. The word translated "worlds," in Hebrews 1:2 is "ages" in the original. If He made the ages, then He made everything that is in all of the ages, and so most modern speech versions translate it by "universe."

God did all of this ¹⁰*to the intent that now (in contrast to all the past ages) unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God.* The angelic hosts knew nothing about the mystery because God had kept it hidden in Himself. They did know about His purpose to establish a kingdom of righteousness on the earth through the nation of Israel, and when they saw that Israel rejected God's Son and had Him crucified, and then further rejected Him after the Holy Spirit had been given at Pentecost, they may have thought that God's purpose had failed, or that He would surely destroy the world. They knew very little, if any, about the grace of God. The angels who sinned were cast down to the pit without mercy (2 Pet. 2:4). So God is now teaching them through the Church of this dispensation about His grace. Instead of condemning man to the lake of fire, where mankind should have gone in justice, God is using the cross as the means of saving all who will believe.

This has all been accomplished ¹¹*according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord* - literally, "the purpose of the ages." The word "purpose" (prothesis) means a setting forth, and is the word used in Greek for the "shewbread" (Ex. 25:30 - translated "bread of the Presence" in N.I.V. and N.A.S.B.). Here it means "God's thesis for the ages." The verb "purposed" should be translated "made or accomplished." It is "according to the plan for the ages which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord," ¹²*in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him* - Boldness does not mean rashness or flippancy, but freedom and courage through Christ to open our minds to God, and we have the right of access to God's presence through Christ our Mediator. Religion almost always bars direct access to God. Roman and Greek religions had their minor deities, but God was unknown and unknowable to them. Romanism exalts Mary, the mother of Jesus, to the office of Mediator. Paul knew only one Mediator, and that was Christ Himself (1 Tim. 2:5). Under the Mosaic system, no one could approach the presence of God in the Holy of holies, except the high priest, and that only once a year with the sprinkling of sacrificial blood. But through Christ we have the right of direct approach through Christ,

and that, with confidence, through our faith in Him ([Heb. 9:6-8](#)).

The prisoner of the Lord concludes this section with the words, ¹³*Wherefore I ask that ye may not faint (lose heart, be discouraged, lose confidence) at my tribulations for you, (his suffering imprisonment in behalf of the Gentiles) which are your glory.* Paul wrote the same thing to the Colossians, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (1:24).

VII. PRAYER FOR FILLING - 3:14-19.

Paul started this prayer in verse one, but then broke off for the next twelve verses to further enlarge upon the truth of the mystery. He began "for this cause," and now he comes back to his prayer. ¹⁴*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father* ¹⁵*from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named* - Some ancient manuscripts read, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Bowing the knees may be literal or figurative. It is a sign of complete surrender and of submission. We may bow the knee in any physical position of the body. Even a paraplegic can bow the knee. Verse fifteen does not mean that God is the spiritual Father of every family in heaven and on earth. Fatherhood originated in God. He is the eternal Father of the eternal Son. God is here addressed as the "Patera" of every "patria". It is difficult to express in English the connection between these two words. Every "patria", family or group, having a common "patera," is so named. In Israel the populace was divided into tribes "phulai," families "patria," and house, "oikos." Every patria on earth is named from its common father, but God is the great prototype of all paternal relationships. It is uncertain what Paul means by every family in heaven, or why he addresses God in this manner. Since there is no marriage between angels, they do not reproduce and form families as human beings do. Angels are spirits, and God is called the Father of spirits, and there seems to be numerous families of spirits. The title by which Paul addressed God is surely one that exalts His Fatherhood over all intelligent creatures.

Paul has just one petition, which may be broken down into several parts. ¹⁶*that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man.* In chapter one Paul prayed "that the Father of glory may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." Now he prays that in the measure of the riches of the Father's glory they may be made strong with dynamic power in their own spirit through His Spirit, in order ¹⁷*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith* - Christ does dwell in the hearts of all believers, but the word used here means to be or feel at home. The simple word "oikeo" (from oikos - house) is used to describe how the Spirit dwells in us ([1 Cor. 3:16](#)), but here the word is "katoikeo," which means "to settle down and permanently dwell." Another compound of "oikeo" meaning "a sojourner," "a temporary dweller," is "paroikeo," used in Eph. 2:19 and translated "foreigners". Paul's prayer is that Christ may have complete possession and access to every part of our house, that He can feel at home in entering any part of it at any time. This request is *to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,* ¹⁸*may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length*

and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.

Paul's sentences are so long and involved that it is difficult to know where to break in and inject a word of comment. "Rooted and grounded" is a mixed metaphor: deeply rooted as a tree, and solidly built as a house on a firm foundation. The idea presented is that of stability and permanency in the love of God. Paul then gives the dimensions of that which he wants us to be strong to apprehend, but he does not specifically say what it is. Most commentators take it to be the love of Christ, although the love of Christ seems to be something in addition to the dimensions - "and to know the love of Christ." It would seem that it is the grandeur, the immensity of God's eternal purpose, based upon the love of Christ, that he wants us to grasp. Vincent points out that the definite article is used only before the first dimension, "the intention being to exhibit the love of Christ in its entire dimension, and not to fix the mind on its constituent parts."⁶

It seems impossible that a human being could be filled with all the fulness of God, and that is not exactly what Paul says. The Greek reads, "that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God." The N.I.V. translates this, "filled to the measure of all the fulness of God."⁷ Paul places great stress upon spiritual knowledge: "to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." In these first three chapters Paul has set forth our perfect and complete standing in Christ, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and now at the end of this section he is praying that we may experience this fulness in our daily lives.

VIII. DOXOLOGY: 3:20,21

²⁰*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us* - The word translated "above," is "huper" (English, "hyper") meaning over, above, more than normal, excessive. We speak of hyper-Calvinists, hyperdispensationalists. Paul attaches this prefix to some twenty different words in his epistles. Here he uses "huper" by itself and then prefixes it, along with another prefix, to the word "perissou" - "abundant," making the word "huper-ek-perissou". What a reassuring thing it is to know that our God is superabundantly able to do beyond that which we could ask or think!

Surely we must join with Paul in saying ²¹*unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations for ever and ever, Amen.* The church here is not the local church at Ephesus, but the church which is the Body of Christ, of which the local church should be representative. Again, Paul stacks words upon words to extend this glory into the remotest realm of eternity. He says, "unto all of the generations of the ages of the ages." Usually the word Age or ages stands for eternity. Ages are made up of generations, and our only way of conceiving eternity is as an unending series of ages. There will never come a time when everything will be frozen into an eternal now. There will always be the ability to continue praising God.

⁶ Vincent, *ibid.* p. 385.

⁷ N..I.V. *op. cit.*, Eph. 3:19.

PRACTICAL SECTION - Ch. 4-6

IX. WALK AND MINISTRY: 4:1 - 5:16

A. *Walking Worthily - 4:1, 2*

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, ²with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.

The word "walk" tells us that we are entering the practical portion of the epistle. The first three chapters affirm what God has done for us, and the last three explain what we are to do for God. God does not issue harsh commands, "Thou shalt walk worthily" In grace He beseeches us. He does this through Paul, the prisoner in the Lord, which makes the appeal all the stronger. If Paul has sacrificed his own liberty in bringing God's good news to us, how much more willing we should be to live in a manner worthy of the high calling of that message.

It should be noted that Paul does not say that he was a prisoner "of" the Lord, but rather a prisoner "in" the Lord. Paul was not a prisoner of the Lord, as though the Lord had arrested him and put him behind bars. In that event, believers might have been ashamed of Paul and thought him guilty of having strayed from the Lord's will. It was for the cause of Christ he was a prisoner. His imprisonment was "in the Lord", in its "element and sphere," and thus to be regarded as a further inducement to comply with his beseeching. We see how that his imprisonment, instead of hindering the gospel, had resulted in the furtherance of it, "So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. 1:13, 14 - R.K.J.)

A worthy walk requires humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance with the views of other believers. All too often there is a domineering attitude, a harshness and a brashness, and an intolerance. Converts of "brow-beaters" follow in the same path. They find it difficult to believe that God wants us to propagate the grace of God through graciousness.

B. *Walking Unitedly – 4:3-6.*

³Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.

This passage is often taken to mean that Christians should unite, form some kind of union, become ecumenical. But God is not asking us to form some kind of unity: He is

asking us to recognize the unity which He Himself has formed. Paul, in the two previous verses tells us how we should behave ourselves; he is now telling us the essentials of the unity which all believers share in common. It is this unity which the Holy Spirit has formed by baptizing us into the Body of Christ. We are to keep this unity in the sense of keeping it safely, of guarding and protecting and preserving it.

What is the unity of the Spirit? If we keep in mind the context of the previous chapters, we will understand that Paul is still talking about the fact that God by His Spirit has made out of the diversity of Jews and Gentiles, one new man. This is the unity. Paul is not telling Christians to try to act unified: he is contending for the central truth of the Mystery which was revealed to him, that there is no longer any difference between Jew and Gentile. All have become one in Christ. The truth of this revealed mystery which was committed to him, and which he wanted all men to see, is that which he wants us to guard and keep. Regardless of race or color, position in society, degree of education, sex, tenure or rank as a Christian, all have been made one in the Body and all share in this unity!

This unity is expressed in a seven-fold way. There are seven "ones" which are true of all believers. In 1 Corinthians 12:13-27 Paul makes it plain that *all* believers have been baptized by one Spirit into one body and *all* have been given one Spirit to drink. Therefore the basic essence of this unity is the One Body. "There is one Body." That one Body is composed of all who have believed the gospel that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and arose from the dead. There are many human denominations and organizations, but there is only one spiritual organism.

Further, "there is one Spirit." There is no doubt but that Paul is speaking of the Holy Spirit. He is not merely stating the fact that there is one Holy Spirit. If we do not have the Holy Spirit indwelling us we do not belong to Christ ([Rom. 8:9](#)). It is impossible to be a Christian without possessing the Holy Spirit. It is "upon believing" that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit ([Eph. 1:13](#)). Since the Holy Spirit is a Person, we either have Him or we don't. We cannot possess just a part of Him, for we cannot split up a person into parts. We may manifest His presence in our lives in varying degrees, but all believers receive the Holy Spirit at the moment they believe.

The third aspect of the Spirit's unity is the "one hope of our calling." There are various ways of viewing this hope. Christ Himself is called our hope ([1 Tim. 1:1](#)). Our hope is eternal life ([Tit. 3:7](#)). Christ's coming for us at the Rapture is called our blessed hope ([Tit. 2:13](#)). And the glory of God is called our hope in Romans 5:2. These are not several hopes, but simply different aspects of the one hope. Every believer will realize this hope at the time of the Rapture, whether he is a pre-tribulationist or a post-tribulationist, or even if he is ignorant of the Rapture. It is then that we will see Christ and for ever be with Him in glory.

Fourthly, "there is one Lord." It is the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said it all in 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the

Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him. " When we confess Jesus as Lord, and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we become saved (Rom. 10:9).

The next aspect is "one faith". Here faith refers to that which is believed, that is, the gospel of salvation. We may go through various experiences in getting saved, and some may seem to have stronger faith than others but we are not saved on the basis of our experiences or the strength of our faith. We are saved by believing the Gospel, but we must be sure our believing is not "vain" or empty, that is, merely asserting that Christ died for our sins without the element of trust and committal (cf. [1 Cor. 15:2](#)). There is a vast difference in saying, "I believe there is a God," and in saying, "I have faith in God" (cf. [James 2:19](#) and [Heb. 11:6](#)).

The sixth part of the unity which *all* believers share is "one baptism." There are many, or divers, baptisms in the Bible. But there is only one that is shared by all saved persons. One cannot be saved without this baptism. The Spirit administers this baptism the moment we believe the Gospel. This one Baptism places us in, unites us with, makes us a member of the One Body. Regardless of whether we believe in much, little, or no water concerning ceremonial baptism, the fact remains that there is only one baptism that is common to each and every believer in this dispensation. This is a divine baptism made without hands ([Col. 2:11, 12](#)). Apart from sacramentalists who believe that baptismal water actually regenerates spiritually, most Christians who practice baptism hold that a person must first be saved in order to be a candidate for baptism. Christians have been much divided over the meaning and modes of water baptism, but there should be no question about this one baptism which characterizes every member of the Body of Christ. Whether other baptisms should be added to this one baptism is a matter for each believer to decide. One thing is certain, no humanly performed ceremony has the power to make us members of the Body.

Finally, this wonderful unity is wrapped up in the statement, "There is one God and Father of all (that is, of all believers or members of the Body), who is above all, and through all, and in all." It is apparent that God is not the Father of unbelievers, for Jesus told the Scribes and the Pharisees that they were of their father, the Devil ([John 8:44](#)). Surely God is not the Father of the Devil and his angels. The all of which Paul speaks is the all of this great unity, the Body of Christ. And He works through *all* of the members of the Body of Christ, and He is in *all* of the members. There is but one God, who has revealed Himself as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in the believer; Christ is in the believer, and the Father is in the believer. Thus *all* believers share in common these seven essential aspects of the unity of the Spirit.

1. Gifts to the Church - 4:7-11.

⁷*But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* ⁸*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* ⁹*Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth?* ¹⁰*(He that descended is the same also that ascended far*

above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) "And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

We turn now from the corporate Body of Christ, to the individual member. Unto each one is given "the grace of God, " which as a unity manifests itself in a variety of gifts. The degree in which these gifts are given is "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Sixteen times in Ephesians Paul uses this measure, "according to" (cf. 1:4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 19; 2:2,2; 3:7, 11, 16, 20; 4:7, 16, 22; 6:5) '

Verse 8, quoted from Psalm 68, may sound a little out of place in speaking about the gifts which Christ gave to the Church, since the Church was a secret as yet unrevealed to the Psalmist. Paul, as he often does, adapts an Old Testament passage by changing the wording to fit the truth he is expounding. Psalm 68:17, 18 reads: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Paul changes the wording from, "He received gifts for men," to "He gave gifts unto men." The Psalm is Messianic and will be fulfilled in the Kingdom. There is a similarity between what Israel's Messiah will do for them in gaining victory over their enemies, and what Christ has accomplished for the Church. Having ascended far above all heavens, Christ gave certain ministry gifts to the Church.

These gifts are to be distinguished from Israel's sign gifts which are included in the list in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. The gifts to the church are people who are empowered for various ministries. The first gifts are those of Apostles and Prophets. If these gifts were given after He ascended into heaven, then the Twelve Apostles are excluded, as they were given at least three years prior to His ascension. There are eight other men whom Paul calls apostles, who seem to be more closely related to the Body of Christ than the Twelve. Paul may have had these men in mind. At least, Paul was not the only apostle for the Body of Christ, but he was certainly the chief one. We do not believe that the gifts of Apostles or Prophets have continued to the present, but ceased with the completion of the canon of Scripture. Their ministries continue in the written Word. The gifts of evangelists, pastors and teachers are continuing gifts to the Church. Evangelists are what we might call missionaries. The omission of the article before "teachers" indicates that pastors and teachers belong to the same class, teaching pastors. A pastor must be able to teach, and a teacher should be able to shepherd the flock.

Verses 9 and 10 are parenthetical. Paul asks, what does this statement imply, that He ascended? It implies that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth. The lower parts of the world refers to Hades, the netherworld: not to His incarnation. The One who thus descended to the depths is the same One who also ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. In ch. 1:23 the Body is said to be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The word "pleroma," translated "fulness," means the complement, that which fills up to the full, one of two parts which completes the whole. This is a favorite word in Ephesians and Colossians, appearing in the noun form in

Ephesians 1:10, 23; 3:19; 4:13; Col. 1:19; 2:9, and in the verb form in Ephesians 1:23; 3:19; 4:10; 5:18; Col. 1:9, 25; 2:10; 4:12, 17.

2. The Purpose of the Gifts - 4:12-16

¹²For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: ¹³till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of all the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; ¹⁶from whom all the body, fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.

"Perfecting" (katarismon) is a word used for mending nets, setting of broken bones and refitting a ship. Here it has the idea of bringing the saints into adjustment for their work of ministering. Due to the change of dispensation there was quite a bit of adjustment that the Jewish believers had to make. But the idea goes beyond that to all of the members, each of which had a part and a function in causing the Body of Christ to grow. Edification or building up has a two-fold significance. First of all it means the development of the spiritual life. No doubt this is the primary idea in all twenty of its occurrences in Paul's epistles. However, in vs. 16, the word seems to be used in the sense of a growth in size of the Body of Christ, for the Body is a living, growing organism.

Actually the work of ministering belongs to the laity, that is, the common members of the church. The job of what might be called the professional teacher-pastors is to keep the members properly adjusted to carrying on the Christian ministry. And the purpose of this laity ministry is to build up the Body of Christ. Vs. 13 tells us how long this ministry will last: "until we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." No doubt we will not attain unto this unity until the return of Christ, although it is the goal we should be pursuing. There are three stages of this unity mentioned: 1. Its Creation; the making of the One New Man (ch. 2:14-18); 2. The Continuation, (4:3-6); and, 3. The Consummation, (4:13).

The unity of the Spirit emphasizes our manner of life, of walking worthily. The unity of the faith is more associated with knowledge, especially the full-knowledge of the Son of God. The context has the idea of a teacher who educates the believers so that they will grow up in knowledge and no longer be children, growing up into the perfect or mature man, reaching to the height of Christ's full stature.

The Living Bible gives a good paraphrase of vs. 14: "Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told

us something different, or has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth."⁸ Paul employs one of his rare uses of nautical figures of speech: like the froth or foam tossed back and forth by the waves and blown about by the winds. Such is an untaught Christian. Sleight, the skillful use of the hands in magic or trickery, is a translation of the Greek word "kubēia" from "kubos," a cube or a die: literally, "diceplaying.

"Speaking the truth in love," is literally, "truthing in love." The expression would seem to include both speaking and acting in love. Speaking and living in this manner, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. "It is from the Head that all the Body makes increase unto the building up of itself in love." "Fitly framed and knit together," gives the idea of harmony and solidity. A similar figure of the physiology of the Body is given in Colossians 2:19. It is evident from these analogies and from the fact that the two participles for *framed* and *knit* are in the present tense, indicating continuous action, that the Body of Christ is a living, growing organism, but of course, spiritual in nature.

C. Walking Differently. 4:17-32

1. Not as the Gentiles: 4:17-19

¹⁷This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; ¹⁹who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

What a description of the worldling's manner of life! For a more complete catalogue of the natural man's lifestyle, read Romans 1:21-32 and 3:9-18. At one time the Gentile world knew God, but they did not glorify Him, but instead made gods of their own and became morally corrupt. For this reason God gave them up to uncleanness, to sexual immorality, and to a depraved mind to do unmentionable deeds. They not only practice these sinful acts, for which sake the wrath of God will be poured out, but they approve and encourage others to do the same thing.

In the past the Bible had a great impact upon the moral life of America. But then came atheistic evolution, which portrayed man simply as an animal without spiritual life. Then came the banning of the Bible from the public schools and laws against the mention of God or religion or morality, which has resulted in permissiveness and lack of discipline. Pornography has become a billion dollar industry, and over a million unborn babies are aborted each year. Crime and international terrorism is on the increase. Drugs and alcohol have filtered down to the grade school level. At the present rate, it will not be long before society can see itself accurately portrayed in the passages of Romans to which we have referred.

The first thing that Paul mentions here about the Gentile manner of life is "the vanity

⁸ *Living Bible* (Wheaton, Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), Eph. 4:14.

of their minds." Vanity is emptiness, profitlessness. The Jews used this word in referring to idolatry (Acts 14:15), "turn from these vanities unto the living God." When the living God is excluded from the mind, whatever fills it is vanity. This exclusion of God, who is Light, leaves men in darkness of understanding. This refers to moral understanding, not intellectual understanding. Man may excel in scientific understanding, but at the same time he may be completely in the dark in moral and spiritual understanding. Ignorance is the cause of alienation and is the effect of the darkness. Alienation is also caused by the hardening of the heart. "Past feeling" is insensitivity, apathy, a seared conscience. In this state of moral unconsciousness man gives himself up, completely surrenders himself to sensuality, vice, and sexual excesses, so as to indulge in every kind of impurity without restraint. The veneer of Christianity has covered up much of the foul sin that is in man's heart by nature, but as the moral fiber of our society deteriorates, we see more and more open manifestation of indecency.

2. Putting Off and Putting On: 4.20-24

²⁰But ye did not so learn Christ. ²¹If so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: ²²that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; ²³and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

"Learn" is in the aorist tense, indicating that the learning was a definite past act at the time of conversion. It is not learning about Christ, but learning Christ, who is the Subject of the gospel.

The "if" clause of verse 21 is not in the subjunctive, but the indicative mood, showing that the supposition is true: If you heard Him, as you surely did. Salvation is not just receiving a truth or philosophy: it is receiving a Person. We were taught, not "by Him," as in the A.V., but "in Him," in fellowship with Him, even as truth is in Jesus. He is not only true; He is the Truth (John 14:6). This is one of the few times that Paul refers to Christ simply as "Jesus." Jesus is the earthly, historical name of the Son of God. His official name is "Christ," the Anointed One. Most often Paul gives Him His full title, "the Lord Jesus Christ." This passage is sometimes misquoted as, "the truth as it is in Jesus." This would imply that there is some truth that is not in Jesus. In saying that all truth is in Jesus we do not mean that we find the truths of mathematics and science expressed in Jesus, although He, as the Creator, surely placed all of these principles in the natural world. The truth with which Paul is concerned is moral and spiritual truth.

The verbs, "putting away or putting off the old man," and "the putting on of the new man," are in the aorist tense, both here and in Colossians 3:9, 10, where similar statements occur. The aorist tense indicates that these are past, finished actions, not actions that we are continually trying to do. Since we (our old selves) were crucified with Christ imputatively, it must have been at the time of His death that our old man was put away. And since He was raised to newness of life, and we were raised with Him, it

must have been in that great transaction that we put on the new man. This all became effective to us when we believed the gospel. When we accept Christ, if we have read the fine print, we know that all of this identification with Christ is involved. Unfortunately, many Christians never discover this truth and they go through life struggling with sin and the old man, not knowing that God put the old man to death at the cross. Entering salvation is analogous to taking the marriage vows. The vows are taken only once and from that point onward the two are man and wife. The vows are not repeated. The couple do not continue to wrestle with the problem of getting married. But at the time of taking the vows they understood the duties and obligations into which each was entering, and it is these duties and obligations that occupy them for the remainder of life.

While the putting off of the old man is a past finished action, the corruption of the old man is put in the present tense, showing it is in the process of corruption. Likewise, now being saved, the renewing in the spirit of the mind is in the present tense, showing it is also a process. The new man, which is put on in salvation, is created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Notice that it is not the "renewing" of the mind, but the "renewing of the spirit of the mind." The human spirit is that which gives mind both its inclinations and materials of thought. However, the renewing of the mind itself is stated in Romans 12:2. There are two words for "new" in Greek. "Kainos", the word used for the new man, means primarily new in quality, whereas neos means new in reference to time, the young, the recent. "Kainos" is used of the New Testament, the New Creation, the New Jerusalem. It is possible that a thing can be both kainos and neos. An interesting combination occurs in Colossians 3:10; "And have put on the new (neos) man, which is renewed (anakainoumenon) in knowledge."

3. Dos and Don't's..... 4:25-32

²⁵Wherefore putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. ²⁶Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷neither give place to the devil. ²⁸Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need. ²⁹Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear. ³⁰And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: ³²and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.

The fact that our old man was crucified with Christ as a past, finished, once for all action does not mean that we no longer have problems with sin. We are still in the flesh and the flesh is still in us. Before we were saved we possessed only the flesh, the fallen human nature, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so that they that are in the flesh cannot please God ([Rom. 8:7, 8](#)). When we become saved through belief of the Gospel we receive the Holy Spirit who has power to deliver us from the flesh. However, the flesh constantly desires things

which are just the opposite of what the Spirit desires, so we must walk or live by means of the Spirit ([Gal. 5:16, 17](#)), if we are to be victorious.

In this section of Ephesians Paul uses ten verbs in the present imperative tense which are commands of what we should or should not do. He begins by saying, "Wherefore, having put away (aorist) falsehood, speak truth, be angry, sin not, let not the sun go down on your wrath, neither give place to the devil, steal no more, labor with your hands, let no corrupt speech proceed from your mouth, grieve not the Holy Spirit, and be kind one to another." We have heard Bible teachers say that there are no commands under grace, and it is true that God often beseeches us, but here we have ten imperatives within eight verses of an epistle that is generally considered to be the epistle of grace *par excellence*. These are not imperatives for salvation. This is evident from the fact that Paul had to tell saved people to stop lying and stealing and using foul language. They are imperatives for a spiritual life which does not grieve the Holy Spirit.

We should speak the truth, not only because it is right, but because we are members one of another. What if the eye lied to the foot and the whole body plunged over the precipice?

"Be angry and sin not." This is a quotation from the Septuagint of Psalm 4:4. The Hebrew reads, "stand in awe and sin not." This is not a command to be angry. Paul did not want to have a lot of angry Christians to deal with. There is such a thing as righteous indignation. God's anger against sin is mentioned dozens of times in the Bible. God is altogether righteous in His anger, but we usually are not. We should be angry with injustice and wrongdoing, but we have to be very careful about being angry with people. We are instructed to love our enemies. When anger is vented against people it becomes vengeful and therefore wrong. The "and sin not," must never be separated from "Be ye angry." There is the further command, "Don't let the sun set upon your wrath." The word for "wrath" is a compound noun that appears only once in the New Testament, although the verb form is used in Romans 10:19 and Ephesians 6:4. The lexicon defines the word as "indignation, exasperation, wrath." We are to get rid of feelings of anger as quickly as possible; otherwise the devil can easily trap us. "Don't take your grudges to bed, for once invited they will become permanent bed-fellows."

Stealing, like gambling, is trying to get something without working for it. Paul's work ethic is, "If a man will not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thes. 3:7-12). Paul was an example of everything he expected of others. Not only should we support ourselves, but there are those who are truly needy through no fault of their own, and we should be able to share with them.

The word used to describe "corrupt speech" means "putrid, rotten, the stench of rotting flesh." Speech is one of the greatest natural gifts of God. How wonderful it is to be able to communicate intelligibly with others and even with God, and God with us through His Word. And yet, how greatly man has debased this gift. As one listens to the average conversation in the shop or on the street he feels he is standing in an open

sewer. And even the blessed names of Jesus Christ and of God are made the brunt of man's foul talk. If we can't say something to encourage, strengthen, or build up others, we would do well to keep silent. Writing to the Colossians, Paul admonished, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (4:6). Whatever comes out of the mouth originates in the heart (Mk. 7:21) and is therefore a barometer of the condition of the soul.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." This word is more often translated "make sorrowful." It may have the sense of "offend." Only persons can be, grieved or offended: therefore the Holy Spirit is a Person. He is the One who has sealed us unto the future day of redemption of the body, as we learned earlier in ch. 1:13 and 14. It is difficult to understand how the infinitely holy One can dwell in human hearts, even in the most consecrated ones. How saddened, how offended He must feel when His temple is defiled. No wonder Paul exclaims, "let all bitterness ([Acts 8:23](#); [Rom. 3:14](#); [Heb. 12:15](#)), and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice."

Anger is personal and usually selfish. It is sharp, sudden, and, like all violent passions, brief. Wrath is deeper, more pervasive and enduring, and may be vengeful. Either of these emotions may result in rage, where behavior is driven beyond the bounds of prudence, or fury, which sweeps one away in uncontrollable violence. Clamor means "loud shouting and noise." The word translated "railing" in the A.S.V. and "evil speaking" in the A.V. is actually the Greek word "blasphemia." Blasphemy means "railing, reviling, slander, speech injurious to another's good name." We usually think of blasphemy only as an act against God, but this sin can also be committed against our fellow-man as well. Malice (kakia) means "malignity, ill-will, desire to injure." James 1:21 uses this word, being translated in the A.V. "superfluity of naughtiness." The A.S.V. translates, "Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

Finally, Paul turns from the negative to the positive: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other as God also in Christ forgave you." There are two main words in the New Testament for forgiveness, *aphiemi*, "to send away or remit," and *charizomai*, "to engrace, to freely forgive." Paul uses the first word in relation to sins only once ([Rom. 4:7](#)). His favorite word is the latter, for it is from the root word meaning "grace." In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matt. 6:14). This was not a forgiveness to make them children of God, for they already had that relation with God as their Father. But since Christ has freely provided forgiveness through His death, there is a shift in emphasis. We are to forgive others, not in order to be forgiven, but because we have been forgiven. However, if we, as children of God, have an unforgiving spirit, this is displeasing to our Father and needs to be confessed and corrected. Our motivation now in forgiving, as in everything else we do, is the love of Christ ([2 Cor. 5:14](#)).

D. Walking Lovingly – 5:1-7

¹*Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children;* ²*and walk in love, even as*

Christ also loved us and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell. ³But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints, ⁴nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Be not ye therefore partakers with them;

We are to be imitators of God as dear children. It is a characteristic of children that they get many of their behavior patterns from their parents. "Like father, like son," although not a statement of Scripture, is generally true, especially if the father is loving and caring. How much more, then, should we strive to be like our heavenly Father! The Greek word for imitators is "mimetai" from which we get our word "mimic," and from which comes the trade name, "Mimeograph," a machine which turns out exact copies of the original. We are to be imitators of God, not imitations. We are to be the real thing, not a counterfeit.

Our whole manner of life should be characterized by love. It is the greatest of all virtues. Our example of this love is the Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us (while we were yet sinners, Rom. 5:8), as an offering and a sacrifice for an odor of a sweet smell. There were five great Levitical offerings. Three were called sweet-savour and two non-sweet savour offerings (Lev. 1:5). The latter were the sin offering and the trespass offering. The former were the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering. These were voluntary: "he shall offer it of his own voluntary will." The meaning of all of these offerings is comprehended in the once for all offering of Jesus Christ. The aspect of Christ offering Himself voluntarily in obedience to God is emphasized here, since Paul wants us to imitate Christ in this way.

As in the previous section, Paul now lists a catalog of sins that we should not even talk about, they are so repulsive: illicit sex, all kinds of impurity, covetousness which is idolatry, obscenity, foolish talking, and coarse and suggestive joking. None of these things are befitting to the Christian life. How much better it is to give thanks unto God for rescuing us from these things, because of which the wrath of God will some day fall upon the sons of disobedience. Paul says there is one thing we can be sure of, and that is that no person who practices the above sins has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.

These words raise the question of eternal security. If a Christian does get trapped in one or more of these sins, does he forfeit his inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ? It is evident, both from Scripture and experience, that truly saved people may at times commit some of these sins, and that no one is one hundred percent obedient in all matters. To argue the case for insecurity of salvation, a gradation of sins would have to be made with a cut-off point, beyond which salvation would be lost. Nothing of this nature is suggested in Scripture. The Scripture plainly teaches justification by faith apart from works; all of which would be meaningless if justification could be reversed.

Scripture teaches that God, as the Father of the believer, corrects His child when he gets into sin, and if one does not receive correction it is proof he is not really a child of God ([Heb. 12:5-11](#)). Paul teaches that if one who sins judges that sin himself he will not be judged by the Lord. But if the believer doesn't judge his sin, then God will judge it. This divine judgment comes in the form of chastening or correction, to the end that we should not be condemned with the world ([1 Cor. 11:31, 32](#)).

We must be very careful that we do not intimate that the Bible gives permission for the Christian to sin, or that the Christian can live in sin all he wants to and still be saved. Sin *is never* acceptable with God! The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are his, And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). Only God knows who are professors and who are possessors. Security in Christ is no excuse for sinning. It is only by their fruits that we know them ([Matt. 7:20](#)). Jude 12 says that one who bears no fruit as evidence of being a believer is "twice dead, plucked up by the roots."

Verse 7 should be translated, "Therefore do not become partakers with them." This is a warning against the possibility of the Christian lapsing back into old ways and habits.

E. *Walking as Children of Light – 5:8-14.*

⁸For ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰proving what is well pleasing to the Lord; ¹¹and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; ¹²for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of. ¹³But all things when they are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light. ¹⁴Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee.

Light that we see with our eyes has been analyzed by scientists as an electromagnetic wave radiation vibrating between 375 and 750 trillion times per second. We cannot see light itself. We can see luminous bodies, such as the sun. We can see non-luminous bodies only when light is reflected from them. Darkness is the absence of light, or if light is present, it is the absence of anything to reflect the light to our eyes.

From ancient times the word light has been used figuratively to represent intellectual and spiritual knowledge. Anything that causes us to see truth is light. God's Word, said the Psalmist, "Is a lamp to my feet and a light to my pathway" (Ps. 119:105). Verse 130 says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). He beams His light into our minds and hearts through His Word ([Eph. 1:18](#)). "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Paul does not point us to the things that are seen, such as the great temples and architecture of the Greek and Roman worlds. We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not

seen: for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18).

In the section before us Paul tells us that before God shined into our hearts with the knowledge of salvation we were not only in the dark: we were darkness personified, but now we are light, not in ourselves, but in the Lord. Therefore we should walk as children of light. We find this appeal stated in very many different ways. In Romans 13:11-14, for example, he says, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day (light); not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

The parenthetical statement in vs. 9 means that the fruit, harvest, or result of light consists in all goodness, right behavior, and truth.

The subject of "proving" (vs. 10) is "walk." Walk as children of light, proving what is well pleasing (euareston) to the Lord. The final test of every act is, Does it please the Lord? Compare this with Romans 12:2: "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable (euareston), and perfect will of God."

Compare the fruit of light with the unfruitful works of darkness. There can be no fellowship with such works. Paul expresses this truth to the church at Corinth in these words: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14). The believer is to reprove, expose, turn the light on these works of darkness, so that people will be able to see their true nature.

Paul does not describe these immoral and unclean acts of darkness, for he states that it would be a shame to put them in writing. Many of the sexual sins in particular are done in secret, but it seems that in the new culture which is developing in our society, there is more and more openness, and less and less disapproval. Shame has become a forgotten word. What would have been a shame and even unlawful to present on television in its early days is now discussed and portrayed openly. Our purpose in exposing these immoral sins is to reveal their rotten character, whereas the exposing of them in the media is simply to gratify the lust of the flesh.

Vs. 13 explains that everything that is exposed by the light becomes visible, because it is the light that makes everything visible.

Vs. 14 is not a quotation of Scripture. It may be that Paul loosely quotes Isaiah 60:1, 2, and then adds, "and Christ shall shine on you." Since Paul was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit caused him to write these words apart from any reference to an Old Testament source.

F. Walking Carefully – 5:15-17

¹⁵Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise but as wise: ¹⁶redeeming the time for the days are evil. ¹⁷Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Some Greek manuscripts read, "Look therefore how carefully ye walk," but the better ones place the "how" after "carefully:"

Look carefully how ye walk. The word "carefully" is derived from "akron," - the farthest point (a Greek scholar must have named the city in Ohio). From this the word gets the meaning of *exactly, accurately*. A soldier walking through a mine-field had better be very careful how he walks. And we too must be careful, for Satan has placed many booby-traps along our pathway. If we are walking in the light we will be able to see these dangers and avoid them. However, we must pay strict attention: we must look, as Paul says: keep our eyes open, as a motorist must in heavy traffic. The wise motorist watches not only the car immediately ahead of him, but keeps his eye on all of the traffic ahead so that he can anticipate any emergency. So also the wise Christian looks ahead to anticipate what moves he should make and what will be the consequences. Most actions are irreversible. "If I had only looked ahead," we often say regretfully.

We are to redeem the time. What does this mean? Redeem means "to buy up" or "buy out". We are to buy up the time or the opportunity. Time presents us with opportunities to serve God, to help others, to glorify Jesus Christ. But these opportunities have to be purchased. That means we have to pay something. Someone has said, "The favorable opportunity becomes ours at the price of duty."

There are two words for time in the New Testament. "Chronos" means "time as a succession of moments, minutes, hours, days;" "the succession of events." "*Kairos*," the word used here, is often translated "season" and "opportunity" and means a definite portion of time to which something belongs. Paul uses this word twice in Galatians 6:9 and 10: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in *due season* we shall reap if we faint not. As we therefore have *opportunity*, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." The two words for time appear in the expression, "times and seasons" ([Acts 1:7](#); [1 Thes. 5:1](#)).

The Preacher in the Old Testament reminds us, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted," and he continues for eight verses listing times for doing various things ([Eccl. 3:1-8](#)). A season for doing a certain thing includes time as a time means more than succession of moments. Redeeming the hold of making the best use of each moment: it means laying the special significance of life as a whole. Paul does not say, "Redeeming the times," but "Redeeming the time." The whole of life is one great opportunity which God has given

us in which to glorify Him. Our span of life is broken down into many special opportunities from day to day and we have to be careful to buy them up, exchanging the selfish and wasteful use of time for that which brings the greatest honor and glory to our Savior. Paul also adds that we should do this because these days of our lives are evil days. This time is called "the present evil age" ([Gal. 1:4](#)). Were the days all good there would be no need to buy them up.

One who does not understand what is the will of the Lord is foolish. How can we know what is the will of the Lord? The Bible tells us very plainly what is the will of God in such passages as [1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:18; Rom. 12:2](#). We cannot go to the Bible to find out whether it is God's will for us to buy this house or that, or to make other such decisions, but if we are doing all of the will of God which is revealed in His Word, we can rest assured that as we commit these daily decisions to Him in prayer, He will lead us to make the right choices.

G. Walking Spiritually – 5:18-21

¹⁸And be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹Subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ (out of reverence for Christ).

Paul draws a contrast between receiving stimulation from wine (which would include drugs) and from the Holy Spirit. Being filled with wine leads to drunkenness and debauchery. Being filled with the Spirit results in a God-honoring life of righteousness and peace. The word translated riot or excess is the negative form of salvation. It is literally *unsavingness*. The Bible does not forbid the drinking of wine, for Paul told Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach's sake and his oft infirmities ([1 Tim. 5:23](#)). But notice that he said "a little." The Bible is full of warnings about addiction to wine. "Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). The first mention of wine in the Bible is in Genesis 9:21 where Noah "drank of the wine and was drunken." Drunkenness is listed along with adultery, fornication, murder, and such like, as works of the flesh, and they that practice such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God ([Gal. 5:19-21](#)). Modern social workers call alcoholism a disease. If it is a disease it is a self-inflicted disease for which the alcoholic is responsible.

One would think that Paul would mention the result of being filled with the Spirit as doing mighty acts of service, perhaps of suffering martyrdom. But instead, "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things." The Spirit-filled life appears to be what God intended life to be: peaceful, joyous, harmonious, God-centered; that is, as far as relationships between God's people are concerned. Conflict comes from the world, the flesh, and the Devil, but Christ has won the victory over these enemies.

When one knows and believes that God is working all things together for good for His called ones, one can give thanks for all things, even though they may bring adversity and pain. When men turned away from God in the beginning, they became unthankful ([Rom. 1:21](#)). One is an ingrate who is not thankful when all goes well. Even the unsaved will celebrate Thanksgiving Day when their tables are loaded with turkey and all the trimmings. But only truly saved persons can be thankful when things are not going well. That is the true test of a thankful heart.

But how does one get filled with the Spirit? There are charismatic groups which teach, on the basis of Luke 24:49, that one must tarry and go through all kinds of agonizings and laying on of hands until finally the Spirit strikes him down and then he speaks with tongues and is filled with the Spirit. This type of experience is wholly unscriptural. The disciples were told to tarry in Jerusalem until the time came for the sending of the Holy Spirit into the world. Parents wait for the baby to come, but it would be unthinkable to wait after the child is born. It is upon believing that we receive the Holy Spirit and are sealed, as we learned in chapter one of this epistle. Furthermore, there is no scriptural evidence that the Holy Spirit smites or strikes believers to the floor in unconsciousness. The only believers who were thus smitten were Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Spirit (Acts 5:1-10).

Being filled with the Spirit is not a once for all experience. The very is in the present tense, meaning "be getting filled." It is akin to eating: we have to eat our meals regularly. Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16). One thing is sure: whatever else may be required for the filling of the Spirit, the being filled with the Word of God is of foremost importance. "The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12 N.I.V.).⁹ It is not sufficient merely to read the Word. It must be masticated, swallowed and allowed to become a living part of our being.

Being filled with the Spirit results in (1) speaking to one another as described in verse 19, (2) giving thanks always for all things, verse 20, and (3) submitting one to another in the fear of God. The word "submit" is used again in the next verse, where wives are to submit to their own husbands, but here the reference is to all believers in general. All should manifest a spirit of humility, even as Paul says in Romans 12:10: "Be kindly affectioned to another in brotherly love, in honor preferring one another."

The fleshly nature of man rebels against any idea of being subject to another. Sin might be defined as "a refusal to be subject to God and to His will." Romans 8:7 states, "Because the fleshly mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Therefore it is useless to expect unbelievers to live according to this standard of the Christian life.

This general exhortation to submission is followed by several specific areas where

⁹ N.I.V. *op. cit.* Heb. 4:12.

submission is needed: submission of the Church to Christ, the Head, submission of the wife to husband, the head; submission of children to parents; and submission of servants to masters.

X. SPIRIT FILLED RELATIONS 5:22-6:9.

A. Husbands and Wives – 5:22-33.

²²Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the savior of the body. ²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; ²⁶that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: ²⁹for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church; ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. ³²This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church. ³³Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she fear her husband.

This extended passage on husband-wife relationships in Christian marriage is addressed to believing husbands and believing wives. Paul deals elsewhere with mixed marriages where one partner is a believer and the other an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:12-17). According to God's decree believing wives are to submit to their own husbands "as unto the Lord." The word "submit" is not in the best Greek texts, but it is clearly inferred from the previous verse. This willing submission means that the husband becomes the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church. The common result of the marriage relationship is the bringing forth of children, so that the husband becomes the head of the family.

The headship of the husband in no way disfranchises the wife. Spiritually the wife is the equal of her husband, "for there is neither male nor female ... in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). It is only in the area of authority that the husband is to be the head. Every business organization must have a head in order to function properly, and the family organization is no exception. But this does not mean that there cannot be mutual working together in making decisions. Peter tells us that Sarah but he also was submissive to Abraham and called him lord, tells us that husbands and wives are "joint heirs of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:1-7). In modern society there is a movement for complete independence of wives from their husbands. What God calls for is interdependence between husband and wife, and complete dependence of both upon Him.

In the last clause of vs. 23 Christ is said to be the Savior of the Body (of Christ). The

comparison between Christ and the husband is true only in regard to headship. There is no sense in which the husband is the savior of the wife. The A.S.V. makes this clear by properly beginning the clause, "being Himself the Savior of the Body," instead of "and He is the Savior of the Body," as in the A.V., and by properly translating the first word of vs. 24 as "But" instead of "Therefore," as in the A.V. The wife's submission is to be balanced by the husband's love, "even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it.

Christ gave Himself for the Church, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word. The common explanation of this washing of water is the ritual of water baptism, but the A.S.V. is correct in translating the aorist participle as "having cleansed it," as a past finished action. Therefore this cleansing could not refer to a ceremony performed at some later date. The word "washed" is "laver". The laver was a vessel containing water, located in the courtyard of the Jewish tabernacle and temple, where the priests washed before going into the holy place to minister. Paul is not telling us to go back to the Jewish temple to practice ceremonial baptism. The laver of which Paul speaks is the antitype of the Old Testament cleansing by literal water. Paul uses the word "laver" again in Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. " We are not saved by the laver of water baptism; we are saved by the laver of regeneration. Regeneration is the Spirit's working through the Word. Jesus said, "Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). The Holy Spirit works through the Word.

Christ has sanctified and cleansed the Church in order that He might present it to Himself as a glorious, radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle, or any such imperfection, holy and without blame. This presentation will take place when the last member is added to the Body and Christ returns in the air to catch up the saints ([1 Thes. 4:13-18](#)).

There follows in vs. 28 to 31 a very interesting statement concerning the oneness, not only of Christ and the Body, but also of man and wife. First, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. Therefore he who loves his own wife, loves himself. Since no man ever hated his own flesh, he will nourish and cherish, not only his own flesh, but also his wife, for she is now a part of himself. Then Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh," thus giving Scriptural evidence for his statement about their oneness.

In an article entitled, "Adam and Eve Called Adam," J.C. O'Hair wrote:

"In Genesis 5:2 we read, 'Male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called THEIR name Adam, in the day when they were created.' In Genesis 5:1, 'God created man, in the likeness of God made he HIM.' Which did God create, THEM or HIM? Here let us read Genesis 2:21-24 ... More than 4,000 years later, after Paul had written in Ephesians, that the Church, which is Christ's Body, was chosen in Christ before Adam, that is, before the foundation of the world, and after he had described that

Body, he wrote in Ephesians 5:31 and 32: 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and THE TWO SHALL BE ONE FLESH: this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.' And let us remember concerning Christ and the Church, that God called their name CHRIST (1 Cor. 12:12). And God called THEIR NAME ADAM (Gen. 5:2). So we have Adam without Eve, and both Adam and Eve as ADAM. We have Christ without the Church, and Christ and the Church as CHRIST ... Remember, Christ loved the Church, and on the cross He too was in a deep sleep when He gave Himself for that Church, having left His Father and His mother that He might be joined to the Church, and the two might be ONE FLESH. As we read in Colossians 1:24-26, concerning the Church of the Mystery, that this wonderful truth was not made known to other ages and generations, we may be sure that Adam knew nothing of the Church and Christ as ONE FLESH."¹⁰

The word God uses for the husband "cleaving" to his own wife is very forceful. It is a compound word made up of "pros," indicating "nearness to," and "kollao," meaning "to glue." The husband and wife are to be glued together with a bond that will last as long as life lasts. When we understand God's unrevealed purpose at the time marriage was instituted, that it should be a figure of the eternal bond between Christ and the Church, we can understand why God hates adultery and divorce and all kinds of sexual sins.

Many commentators use this passage as a proof that the Church is the Bride of Christ. However, Paul does not depict the Church as a Bride, but as a Body. And he does not depict Christ as a Bridegroom, but as the Head. All of God's relations in every dispensation are based upon love, but that does not make the Church to be the Bride of Revelation 21:9. The idea that the Church of the Mystery is a great city with the names of the Twelve Apostles on the foundation, and the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel upon its gates, is completely foreign to Paul's teaching about the Body. Such an interpretation robs Israel of its final salvation and glory by giving it to the Church, and it negates all of Paul's teaching about the Mystery, and about the Church being separate and distinct from Israel.

B. Children and Parents – 6:1-4

¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. ²Honor thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise), ³that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. ⁴And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.

The word "*children*" covers a wide age-span. Since these words are addressed to children they must be old enough to understand the instruction. The problem arises in determining the age at which the child is no longer under the authority of the parents. While there is no Scripture which states a specific age, it is certain that marriage removes the children from parental authority, and they then become authorities over their own children. It would seem logical to conclude that as long as a son or daughter lives in the home with their parents they are under obligation to obey the rules of the

¹⁰ J.C. O'Hair, *The Most Wonderful Truth in the Bible* (Chicago, n.d.), p. 48, 49.

home. In Biblical times there was the practice of adoption, when the child was of sufficient age and maturity to be given the full rights of sonship, which certainly freed him from the discipline of his minority. But in any case, regardless of age, the child was to love his parents, honor them and please them. It should be noted that there is a qualifying phrase concerning the parents: "in the Lord." Does this mean that the child is not to obey if the parents are not in the Lord, or that they should obey because the parents are in the Lord? It would seem that the latter is intended, since these words are addressed only to Christian parents. If children ask why they should obey, the answer is that by the very nature of their relationship to their parents, obedience is the right and correct thing to do.

To back up his claim that obedience is right, Paul quotes from the Ten Commandments: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Honor expresses the attitude of mind from which obedience proceeds. This is the first of the commandments to be accompanied with a promise. The promise, as stated in Exodus 20:12 is, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord God giveth thee." The land, of course, was Canaan and the promise was to Israel. Paul changes the wording to, "upon the earth," since Canaan has not been promised to the Body of Christ. The principle is still present: children who honor and obey their parents will mature to enjoy, in general, a better and longer life than those who are disobedient. Disobedience to parents usually results in disobedience to civil law, which eventuates in crime, violence, imprisonment, and premature death. This promise which is associated with the command, is another reason for obedience, besides its rightness.

Fathers must be careful in correcting their children so that they do not do it in a way that produces anger, resentment, or exasperation in the children. Correction must be done so that the child can understand that it is being done in love; otherwise it will produce rebellion. When the parent loses control of self and becomes angry, a like result will be produced in the child.

Instead, parents are to nurture their children, that is, feed them not only physically, but also emotionally and spiritually, so that there will be a well-rounded growth. This is to be done in "chastening" (*paideia*) - corrective education and "admonition" (*nouthesia*) - correction by word of mouth. *Paideia* is usually translated "chastening." The word does not necessarily mean to apply physical punishment. The word is used in Acts 7:22, "And Moses *was learned* in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Punishment and discipline differ, in that punishment is "meting out a penalty for law-breaking," whereas discipline is "training that develops self-control or character." Although the English word discipline is from the same root word disciple, in Greek they are from different roots. Disciple is "mathetes," meaning a student or learner.

C. Slaves and Masters – 6:5-9.

⁵*Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; ⁶not in the way of eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the*

heart; ⁷with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men: ⁸knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether he be bond or free. ⁹And ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him.

The word "servants" is *doulos*, from a root which means to bind, to be in bonds. A better translation would be "bondslave." Slavery was universal in Bible times. Victorious nations made slaves of their captives. Even under the Law of Moses slavery was permitted, but only of foreigners, not of Israelites. See Leviticus 25:45, 46. It may be that this was one of the ways in which God punished the Canaanites, whose iniquity had come to the full and God commanded Israel to exterminate them, as God had done in the Noahic flood (cf. Gen. 15:16). However, it should be noted that the Law permitted the selling of Hebrews as servants, but at the end of seven years they were to go free and be bountifully supplied with goods by their master (Deut. 15:12-15). If the servant came to love his master and did not want to leave, he could go through a ceremony which would make him a perpetual servant (vs. 16, 17). This ceremony is a beautiful picture of the believer becoming a perpetual bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul did not become an activist and lead protest marches against slave owners. We learn what he did when a runaway slave became one of his converts. He sent the slave back to his Christian master with this word: "For perhaps he departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever, not now as a bondman, but above a bondman, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?" (Phile. 15, 16). Although Paul had the authority to command Philemon to do this, he did not, because he wanted Philemon to do it freely and willingly, not out of necessity.

Although Paul is writing to bond-slaves in vs. 5-8, the principles can apply to labor-management relationships today. If a slave were to serve his fleshly master with the same diligence and faithfulness as he would in serving his heavenly Master, several things would happen. First, the forced labor which was such a drudgery, would be changed into a spiritual service. His whole attitude to life would change and he would become a happy person. Second, the master would doubtless notice the changed attitude, and might begin to treat his slave more kindly. And thirdly, if there were other slaves and they were unsaved, they would probably persecute the Christian slave for putting them on the spot by willingly turning out more work.

The bond-slave was to be obedient to his master, "with fear and trembling." There is a quotation from Wardlaw on this expression, cited by Vincent, which is worth repeating.

"This fear is self-distrust; it is tenderness of conscience; it is vigilance against temptation; it is the fear which inspiration opposes to high-mindedness in the admonition, 'be not high-minded but fear.' It is 'taking heed lest we fall', it is a constant apprehension of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the insidiousness and power of inward corruption. It is the caution and circumspection which timidly shrinks from

whatever would offend and dishonor God and the Savior. And these the child of God will feel and exercise the more he rises above the enfeebling, disheartening, distressing influence of the fear which hath torment. Well might Solomon say of such fear, 'happy is the man that feareth alway.' " ¹¹

"Singleness of heart" means a heart that is not divided in its allegiance. This expression is used again in Colossians 3:22, and in Acts 2:46, where a different Greek word is used. "Eye service" means getting real busy and working well while the master is watching, but doing the opposite when he is absent.

Servants are not to be "men-pleasers." Paul may seem to contradict himself when he says in Galatians 1:10, "For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ," and in 1 Corinthians 10:33, "Even as I please all men in all things." In Galatians he is talking about pleasing men by compromising the Gospel. In Corinthians he is talking about doing nothing to offend people through selfish interests and thus turn them away from accepting the gospel. The greatest question in life after getting saved is, "What can I do to please God the most?"

Perhaps our motivation in serving God should not be to receive a reward, but vs. 8, along with many other passages, informs us that we cannot outgive God. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered unto the saints, and do minister" (Heb. 6:10).

Paul also has a word for masters, or that matter, for any one who is in a position of authority over others. They are reminded that they too have a Master who is in heaven, and He is not a respecter of persons. He has no favorites. The only thing that masters have which those who are under them do not have is a much greater responsibility than those who are subserviant. Those who have been favored with wealth and power will be held all the more accountable before God. The slave is accountable for only fulfilling his little job: the master is accountable for the lives of all those under his authority. James gives a word of warning to masters:

"Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you" (James 5:1-6 - N.I.V.)

XI. SPIRITUAL WARFARE - 6:10-20

A. *The Enemy* – 6:10-12

¹¹ Vincent, *op. cit.* p. 473, quotation from Wardlaw.

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, ¹²for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the worldrulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Paul's final instruction is to be strong, for we are engaged in a spiritual warfare. This warfare begins the moment we become Christians. But how can a weak person, especially as compared with the strength of the enemy, make himself strong? We cannot make ourselves strong, but we can stand in the power (dynamite) of the Lord and in the strength of His might. Paul has used three of the strongest Greek words for power and might, that of the Omnipotent God, as the strength that is available to the believer. We are to be endued with power.

In order to realize this mighty power we must "put on" the whole armor of God. This power does not come automatically. And notice that it is the "whole" armor of God. If we fail to put on all of the armor provided, our enemy will see the weak spot where he can defeat us. And if we put on all of the armor we are assured that we will be able to stand against the "wiles" of the devil. The Greek word is "methodia," and was used before in ch. 4:14. The word means trickery, stratagem. Paul says elsewhere, "for we are not ignorant of his (Satan's) devices" (2 Cor. 2:11).

The Devil does not appear as an enemy, but as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). He would have us think that people are the cause of all of our trouble, and have us waging a warfare with our fellowmen in the fleshly realm. But Paul says, "No." Our warfare is in the spiritual realm and our enemies are described as worldrulers (cosmocrats), spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places. The heavenly places are where all of our spiritual blessings lie, and that is the area where our enemies are entrenched. There is surely a parallel here between Israel's physical blessing and their physical enemies. God gave them the land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, but it was a land of walled cities and enemy giants. Israel had to trust God for strength and in His strength possess the land. Canaan is not a type of heaven to which the saints will go, as so many gospel songs suggest. If anything, it is a type of the present spiritual sphere in which the Christian lives and conducts his conflict with the enemy.

B. The Armor – 6:13-17.

¹³Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness: ¹⁵and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Before we can "put on" the armor we must "take it up." Paul, as a Roman prisoner,

chained to a Roman legionary, painted his word-picture of the virtues of the spiritual life with the soldier sitting as his model. How often he had observed these weapons of physical protection and potential destruction as the guards were changed. In his imagination he translated the girdle or belt into "truth," the breastplate into "righteousness," the shoes into "the gospel ministry," the shield into "faith," the helmet into "salvation," and the sword into "the Word of God."

The girdle was not a weapon. It was a belt which kept all of the other parts of a soldier's equipment in place. The A.V. translation, "having your loins girded," might give the impression that some one else did the girding for the soldier. The R.V. shows that it was the soldier's own responsibility, "having girded your loins."

The girdle of truth no doubt includes the truth of the gospel, but it goes beyond that to truthfulness in every area. Unless our lives are girded with sincere truthfulness, all of the other parts of our armor will slip out of place.

The breastplate which protects the vital organs of the body is said to represent righteousness. All Christians have a standing of perfect righteousness before God as a result of the act of justification, but that is not the righteousness of which Paul speaks. He is speaking, not of imputed, but of imparted righteousness, of righteous living. When the breastplate slips down, the heart is exposed to Satan's fiery darts.

The feet, of course, speak of the walk of the believer. Where do our feet carry us and what do we carry as we go. The feet that carry the Gospel are beautiful feet. "How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom. 10:15). It is quite striking that this part of the panoply for war is "the gospel of peace." We must have peace with God. When we have peace with God, we then have war against Satan. If we are at peace with the Devil, then we have war against God.

There were two kinds of shields. One was a small shield worn on the arm, which could be moved to protect various parts of the body. The shield referred to was a large oblong shaped one behind which the soldier could protect his whole body. The word "thureon" is from "thura" meaning a door. The shield was shaped like a door. In ancient warfare arrows with lighted tow were shot to ignite any combustible material in the enemy's camp. Confidence in the flesh is combustible material. The shield of faith does away with dependence upon self and thus destroys fuel for Satan's darts.

The word for "taking" the helmet of salvation is a different word from that used in vs. 13 and 16. It means to receive. *Today's English Version* gives the correct idea, "And accept salvation for a helmet."¹² Paul here makes application of Isaiah 59:16, 17: "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke." This passage refers to Christ, and the garments of vengeance are yet to be put on when He

¹² *Today's English Bible* (New York, America, Bible Society, 1971) Eph. 6:17.

returns in judgment, but Paul applies the breastplate and helmet to the believer.

The sword of the Spirit is the only offensive weapon in the armory. The sword is "the word of God." "The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12, N. I. V.).

Alexander Maclaren has a very good summary statement on the armor of God. "We may, perhaps, trace a certain progress in the enumeration of the various pieces of the Christian armor in this context. Roughly speaking, they are in three divisions. There are first our graces of truth, righteousness, preparedness, which, though they are all conceived as given by God, are yet the exercises of our own powers. There is next, standing alone, as befits its allcomprehensive character, faith which is able to ward against and overcome not merely this and that temptation, but all forms of evil. That faith is the root of the three preceding graces, and makes the transition to the two which follow, because it is the hand by which we lay hold of God's gifts. The two final parts of the Christian armor are God's gifts, pure and simple - salvation and the word of God. So the progress is from the circumference to the center, from man to God. From the central faith we have on one hand that which it produces in u s; on the other, that which it lays hold of from God. And these two last pieces of armor, being wholly God's gift, we are bidden with especial emphasis which is shown by a change in construction, to take or receive these."¹³

C. Communication – 6:18-20

¹⁸*with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,* ¹⁹*and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,* ²⁰*for which I am an ambassador in chains; in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

In warfare lines of communication are very important. It is essential that troops keep in close touch with the commander-in-chief. The Christian's communication system is that of prayer. And the marvellous thing about this system is that every individual soldier has direct access to the Commander-in-chief.

Paul uses the word "all" four times in vs. 18: "all prayer, at all seasons, in all perseverance, for all saints." Prayer is a general term; supplication is more specific. "With" means "through the medium of" prayer. There are various types of prayer: secret, silent, public, intercessory, group. We are to pray at all seasons through the medium of all kinds of prayer in the Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is essential in our prayer life. "Likewise also the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the

¹³ Alexander Maclaren, *Exposition* (Chicago, W.P. Blessing Co., n.d.) Ephesians, p. 367, 368.

will of God" (Rom. 8:26, 27).

"Watching" is associated with prayer (cf. Mk. 13:38; Lk. 21:36; Col. 4:2; 1 Pet. 4:7). Watch for opportunities to pray, watch for things that need our prayers, watch to maintain prayerfulness, and watch for and recognize answers to prayer. The word "watch" is the negative form of hypnos, "deep sleep" or "torpor" (hypnotism). It means "to be wide awake." "Perseverance" means "to continue," "to be constantly diligent," "to be persistent."

Prayer is requested for all saints. There is a bond that binds all Christians everywhere together, even though we have never known them personally. We can pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who live under atheistic, totalitarian governments. Part of watchfulness would be to get informed of specific needs of such people. We need to pray that God's people everywhere get their spiritual and mental eyes opened to the truth of the Mystery and get adjusted to God's program for the Body of Christ. There are countless such things for which we can pray.

But Paul asks special prayer for himself. What is he asking for? To be delivered from prison? To receive more money from the churches? No, his only request is that utterance might be given to him in opening his mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, that is, the revelation of the secret truth which is now associated with the gospel of salvation. It is because of his proclamation of the Mystery that he is now an ambassador in chains. The word for "chains" refers to the coupling chain by which he was bound to the hand of his guard. Ambassadors are supposed to have immunity. In America ambassadors and their families from foreign countries can rob, steal, and even murder without fear of nothing worse than deportation. But who knows how many ambassadors of heaven have suffered imprisonments, beatings, and even death at the hands of this world's governments.

XII. BENEDICTION - 6:21-24

²¹But that ye also may know my affairs, how I do, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: ²²whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts. ²³Peace be to the brethren and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible.

Paul wanted his friends to be informed about his state of affairs, so that they could pray for him more specifically. In the preceding verses he had made the general request that he might open his mouth to boldly proclaim the Mystery. Now he sends Tychicus, not only as a messenger to carry the letter, but also to give all of the details of his ministry and hardships as a Roman prisoner. Paul refers to Tychicus as THE beloved brother, the definite article emphasizing the fact that he was a well-known and faithful brother. Tychicus also carried with him a letter to the church at Colosse and a personal note to one of the members at Colosse, Philemon, for he was sending back

with Tychicus a run-away slave to his master, after Paul had led him to the Lord in Rome (Col. 4:7-9). The name of the slave, Onesimus, means useful or profitable. He had been a useless servant, but, now that he is saved, Paul is sure that he will become very useful to both Paul and Philemon.

Tychicus was not only to bring news about Paul but he was "to comfort their hearts." What Paul meant was, "that he may encourage You," or, "that he may bring courage to your hearts, by the news of the progress and power of the Gospel.

Paul concludes this letter which has lifted us up into the heavenlies in Christ with a benediction of Peace and Love with Faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And he extends Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with "a love incorruptible." The A.V. rendering, "in sincerity," is better translated "undying love." The word is translated "incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:42, 50, 53, 54) and "immortality" (Rom. 2:7).

In conclusion, it should be noted what a prominent place the Holy Spirit has in this dispensation of the Mystery. The believer is sealed by the Spirit at conversion; he has access by the Spirit in worship; He becomes a temple of the Spirit; he is taught of the Spirit; he receives the might of the Spirit in the inner man; he is given the unity of the Spirit to keep; he is warned not to grieve the Spirit; he is to be filled with the Spirit; his weapon is the sword of the Spirit; and he is to pray in the Spirit.

Philippians

EMPHASIS ON THE MIND OF CHRIST

Introduction

The Roman Republic fell and the Roman Empire was born as a result of a battle that was fought on the plains of Philippi in 42 B.C., in which Octavius and Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius. Its name was originally Crenides, but was renamed Philippi in honor of Philip II of Macedon, who fortified it to protect the neighboring gold mines. It was declared a Roman Colony by Augustus. Its inhabitants thus had the rights of Roman citizenship. This fact should be kept in mind when reading of the Heavenly Citizenship in ch. 3:20.

The church at Philippi was the first of Paul's churches in Europe. It was established as a result of a divine vision ([Acts 16:6-11](#)). It seems to have been one of the most spiritual of Paul's churches. It also seems that Luke, the writer of the Gospel and of Acts, was a resident of Philippi. He joined Paul's party at Troas when Paul sailed for Philippi, and he remained there when Paul and Silas continued on their missionary journey. This is evident from Luke's use of "they" and "we" in the Acts narrative. (cf. Acts 16:7, 11, and 17:1). Luke may have remained with the church at Philippi until Acts 20:6 when he again joined Paul's party at Philippi.

Most commentaries on Paul's epistle to the Philippians emphasize the theme of Joy and Rejoicing, and rightly so, since these expressions are used frequently in the epistle. However, there is a theme that runs deeper than these manifestations, and that theme is the *Mind of Christ* which indwells every member of the Body of Christ and is the source of the joy and rejoicing in which the epistle abounds.

While both Ephesians and Colossians speak of the Body of Christ and of His Headship over the Body, the emphasis in Ephesians seems to be on the Body, and the emphasis in Colossians is on the Headship. Ephesians gives the foundational doctrine of the Church; Philippians has in it reproof for failure in the outliving of Body truth; while Colossians corrects those who are not properly holding the Headship of Christ.

Although these three prison epistles were not written in the order in which they appear in our Bibles, as is true of most of the other books of the Bible, it would seem that God in preserving His written Word also guided men in the order in which the various books were placed. The three prison epistles were all written from Rome during Paul's first Roman imprisonment of some two years, and all three deal with what may be called "Body Truth". The Transition Period is over and the normal course and program for the Church, the Body of Christ, is here revealed. The transitory things have passed away and that which is mature, full-grown, or perfect remains ([1 Cor. 13:10](#)).

The Headship of Christ, so prominent in Ephesians and Colossians, describes His

preeminence and authority over the universe and in particular over the Church, the Body. (note especially [Eph. 1:20-23](#) and [Col. 1:18](#) and [2:10](#)). But in Philippians the Headship of Christ is not mentioned. Instead, it is the Mind of Christ which is emphasized. There are two Greek words used for mind in Philippians. In 4:7 the word is "*nous*," which "denotes, generally speaking, the seat of reflective consciousness, comprising the faculties of perception and understanding, and those of feeling, judging, and determining." The other Greek word is "*phroneo*," and occurs in 2:2, 3, 5; 3:15, 16, 19; 4:2. It signifies "to think, to be minded in a certain way, to think of, be mindful of. It implies moral interest or reflection, not mere unreasoning opinion."

Paul likens the Body of Christ to the human body ([1 Cor. 12](#)), and individual believers to members of the body, such as hands, feet, ears and eyes. None of these members can say to the others, "I have no need of you." That is another way of saying that no member of the body has a mind of its own. There is only one mind in a person, which, through the instrumentality of the brain and the nervous system, is present in every member of the body. Applying this truth to the Philippian letter, we see the significance of "the mind of Christ" which is to be in every member of the Body of Christ. "The mind of the flesh" (Rom. 8:6, 7) is stir in the believer, but this mind is supposed to have been crucified with Christ, and the believer is now supposed to be controlled entirely by the mind of Christ. Philippians tells us what is meant by the mind of Christ and demonstrates the kind of life which is produced in the believer when he is controlled by that Mind.

Christ is preeminent in this epistle. The progression of thought can be seen in the subject matter of its four chapters.

Chapter 1 - Christ Our Life: "For to me to live is Christ."

Chapter 2 - Christ Our Mind: "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Chapter 3 - Christ Our Goal: "That I may know him."

Chapter 4 - Christ Our Strength: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."

Williams Commentary presents a similar summary: ¹⁴

- I. The Believer's Purpose: 1:21
- II. The Believer's Pattern: 2:5.
- III. The Believer's Prize: 3:14.
- IV. The Believer's Provision: 4:19.

The Companion Bible offers this structural outline (an inversion). ¹⁵

- A. 1:1, 2. Epistolary, and Salutation. "Grace" to them.
- B. 1:3-26. Paul's Solicitude for the Philippians.
- C. 1:27-2:18. Exhortation and Example of Christ.
- D. 2:19-24. The Example of Timothy.
- D. 2:25-30. The Example of Epaphroditus.
- C. 3:1-4:9 Exhortation and Example of Paul.

¹⁴ Williams, *The Student's Commentary of Holy Scripture*, (Grand Rapids, 1949), p. 929.

¹⁵ *The Companion Bible* (London, Oxford University Press, n.d.) p. 1772.

- B. 4:10-20. The Philippian's Solitude for Paul.
- A. 4:21-23, Epistolary, and Doxology. "Grace" to them.

OUTLINE

- I. CHRIST OUR LIFE - Chapter 1 (Key Verse, 21)
 - A. SALUTATION - 1:1-2
 - B. FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL - 1:3-8
 - C. PRAYER FOR ABOUNDING LOVE - 1:9-11
 - D. ADVANCE OF THE GOSPEL - 1:12-18
 - E. CHRIST MAGNIFIED IN LIFE OR DEATH - 1:19, 20
 - F. PAUL IN A STRAIT - 1:21-26
 - G. GRACE GIVEN TO BELIEVE AND TO SUFFER - 1:27-30
- II. CHRIST OUR MIND - Chapter 2 (Key Verse, 5)
 - A. LIKE-MINDEDNESS 2:1-4
 - B. CHRIST-MINDEDNESS - 2:5-18
 - 1. HUMILIATION OF Christ - 2:5-8
 - 2. EXALTATION OF Christ - 2:9-11
 - 3. EXHORTATION: WORK OUT SALVATION - 2:12-18
 - C. EXAMPLES OF CHRIST-MINDEDNESS - 2:19-30
 - 1. TIMOTHY - 2:19-24
 - 2. EPAPHRODITUS - 2:25-30
- III. CHRIST OUR GOAL - Chapter 3 (Key Verse, 14)
 - A. WARNING AGAINST LEGALISM - 3:1-6
 - B. LOSSES AND GAINS - 3:7-9
 - C. PRESSING TOWARDS THE GOAL - 3:10-14
 - D. WALKING BY THE SAME RULE - 3:15,16
 - E. FOLLOWING PAUL - 3:17-19
 - F. HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP - 3:20, 21
- IV. CHRIST OUR STRENGTH - Chapter 4 (Key Verse, 13)
 - A. STANDING FAST IN THE LORD - 4:1-3
 - B. RECIPE FOR PEACE - 4:4-7
 - C. THINGS TO THINK UPON - 4:8, 9

- D. LEARNING THE SECRET - 4:10-13
- E. GIVING AND RECEIVING - 4:14-20
- F. FINAL GREETING - 4:21-23

EXPOSITION

I. CHRIST OUR LIFE - Chapter 1 (Key Verse, 21)

A. *Salutation* - 1:1, 2

¹Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Timothy had been with Paul when the church at Philippi was first established ([Acts 16:1, 12-15](#)). He was still with Paul in Rome and it seems especially fitting that Paul should include his name in the salutation. The word for "servants" is literally "bond slaves." A bond-slave in the Old Testament was a slave who had gained his freedom, but because he loved his master he went through a certain ceremony making himself a willing slave to his master for the remainder of his life ([Deut. 15:16, 17](#)). In this word "bond-slave" we see at the very beginning of the epistle an example of having "the mind of Christ." Paul and Timothy were men who were controlled by the mind of Christ. Their minds were in perfect tune with that of Christ.

All true believers are saints; they have been set apart from sin and the world and unto the service of Christ. They are saints by calling: (Rom. 1:7). They are not called "to be" saints. The "to be" is in italics, indicating that these words are not in the original. Many professing Christians get the idea that they cannot become saints until they get to heaven. In the meantime they live unsaintly lives. Saints is the favorite biblical name for Christians.

The word bishop is "episcopus," meaning "overseer." It is synonymous with "elder" in other writings of Paul. Paul gives the qualifications for such officers in the church in 1 Timothy 3:1-13. The episcopal forms of church government make the office of bishop to be much higher than that of elder or pastor, giving him jurisdiction over all of the churches in a certain diocese. The Presbyterian form of government is a rule by elders, each church being equally represented in a General Assembly. The Congregational form of government is purely democratic, each church governing completely its own congregation.

B. *Fellowship in the Gospel* - 1:3-8

³I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every supplication of mine in behalf of you all, making my supplication with joy, ⁵for your fellowship in

furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now; ⁶being confident of this very thing, that he w¹ho began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ: ⁷even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace. ⁸For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus.

How wonderful it is when a pastor can truthfully say of certain people, "I thank God for every remembrance of you. There are many Christians, it seems, who always cause the pastor grief. They have a critical, fault-finding spirit; they oppose any changes in program the pastor may suggest, and as someone has put it, they have preacher every Sunday for dinner. The Philippians were not that sort of people. They loved Paul; they appreciated his sufferings and labors in bringing them the glad tidings, and from the first day Paul set foot in Philippi, some ten years earlier, down to the present, they had been loyal in supporting Paul and his ministry in the furtherance of the Gospel. As we shall see in 4:15, the church at Philippi was the only church which had fellowship with Paul in the matter of giving and receiving. Many times they had sent offerings to meet his needs. No wonder Paul gave thanks to God whenever he thought of these Philippians. And he must have thought of them often, for it was always in every prayer of his that he made mention of them at the throne of grace. His supplication for them was one of joy. Often it is with deep grief and sorrow that we pray for people because of their waywardness and failure to manifest the fruit of the Spirit. Their fellowship with Paul was not that of having a social event with tea and cookies and games, as very many people understand fellowship. It was a sharing with Paul of their financial means and in their intercessory prayer for him that they were able to spread the gospel a little farther in the world. Fellowship, (koinonia) means sharing things in common. Of course, we can share tea and cookies in common, and there may be a place for that, but that was not Paul's idea of koinonia.

Paul's reference to "the first day until now," is important in indicating that there had been no change in dispensation from Acts 16 to the end of the book. There are a few dispensationalists who hold the extreme view that the Body of Christ of the prison epistles is an entirely new and different Body from that which existed during the Acts period. But for Paul the church at Philippi at the end of Acts was exactly the same church as he had established in Acts 16. The next verse reinforces this fact.

Here we have the first occurrence of the word "mind:" "It is right (righteous) of me to be thus minded on behalf of you all." Paul here demonstrates the truth of Galatians 2:20, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He was manifesting the mind of Christ in his attitude toward these Philippians. As another has put it, "The apostle had got so near to the very heart of his Lord that he could hear its throb, detect its beating; nay, it seemed as though the tender mercies of Jesus to these Philippians were throbbing in his own heart." What an enlarged heart this man Paul had. He had them *all* in his heart, and no doubt many others of his converts elsewhere. Paul was not given to sentimentality, nor did he exaggerate his devotion for them, for he says, "For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus." We are prone to

write to people that we are remembering them in our prayers, when as a matter of fact, we have not even thought about them since we wrote six months ago. The tender mercies of Christ Jesus (rendered "bowels" in the A.V.), is the word "splanchnois" and means in the literal sense "intestines" (cf. Acts 1:18). Just as the heart was thought to be the seat of man's entire mental and moral activity, both rationally and emotionally, so the bowels were thought to be the seat of the feelings of affection and compassion. Various emotions produce physical sensations in various organs of the body. Paul had the Philippians in his heart and he yearned for them in the bowels of Christ. A study of the many occurrences of heart and bowels in the Bible will indicate the wide range of figurative meaning of these words.

Thus the work God began in these people when they were saved ten years earlier, is still being carried on and Paul is persuaded that God will bring that work to perfection in the day of Jesus Christ, that is, the day when Jesus Christ returns to catch away the members of the Body to glory. God never begins something He cannot finish. He does not say, I began the work; now it is up to you to finish it. He who began it will also finish it.

C. Prayer for Abounding Love - 1:9-11

⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; ¹⁰so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ, ¹¹being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Although Paul is confident that it was God who had begun the work of salvation in these Philippians because of their perseverance in the defense and confirmation and furtherance of the gospel, he nevertheless feels the need to pray for them. Even though he is sure that God will bring this work of salvation to completion in the day of Christ he is still careful to watch over them in constant supplication. Confidence in our eternal security may beget carelessness, and that in turn begets prayerlessness.

Paul not only wants their love to abound more and more: he wants it to abound in knowledge and all discernment. It is possible for love to act ignorantly and foolishly, just as it is possible for a parent to love his child and yet spoil the child by giving it every kind of luxury. Knowledge and discernment of the will of God is stressed by Paul (cf. [1 Cor. 2:14](#); [Heb. 5:14](#); [Eph. 1:17, 18](#); [Col. 1:9-11](#)). Discernment results in approving the things that are excellent, or as some translate this phrase, distinguish between the things that differ. The same expression occurs in [Romans 2:18](#). The Christian needs to discern between evil and good, and sometimes between the better and the best. He also needs to discern the distinctions in God's dispensational dealings with Israel and the Church. The word sincere is "heile" (sun's ray) - "krines" (tested or judged by). It is said that dealers in pottery often filled the cracks in a defective vessel with wax and that a wise buyer would hold the vessel up in the sunlight which would penetrate the wax and reveal the flaw. We can often hide the flaws in our characters from other people, but not from God's penetrating light. Paul wanted to be able to present every one of his

converts perfect in the day of Christ ([Col. 1:28](#)), and so he prayed fervently for them to that end.

D. Advance of the Gospel - 1:12-18.

¹²Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather for the progress of the gospel; ¹³so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; ¹⁴and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bond, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear. ¹⁵Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will: ¹⁶the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds. ¹⁸What then? only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Here is another illustration of Romans 8:28: God working all things together for good. There are those who claim that Paul was disobedient in going to Jerusalem in Acts 21, and that God put him out of circulation by having him arrested and put in prison. They suppose that Paul was hindered in his missionary work by being put into prison, but Paul discovered that it had all resulted in the furtherance or progress of the gospel. This good had come about in several ways. First, the whole praetorian guard had heard the gospel. In his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul had a degree of freedom. He was allowed to live in his own hired house, but he was chained to a Roman guard. We have no idea how many hundreds of guards might have been assigned to Paul during those two years of imprisonment. They were a captive audience, being chained to Paul, and we can be very sure that Paul witnessed to each one of them, and doubtless some became true believers. Paul also was allowed to have visitors and all who came under his roof heard the glad news about Jesus Christ. Second, most of the other believers in Rome had their confidence strengthened through Paul's witness to the Roman guards and became very bold to speak the word of God without fear. Imprisonment of a preacher would ordinarily strike fear in the hearts of the congregation and make them reluctant to open their mouths about their faith. But Paul's boldness in speaking the word was contagious, and caused the others to become bold. It was only through his imprisonment that Paul could have had the opportunity of witnessing to not only the whole Praetorian guard, but finally to Caesar himself. Paul was told at his conversion he would witness not only to the children of Israel and the Gentiles, but also to kings ([Acts 9:15](#)). Paul could never have arranged an audience with King Agrippa, Felix, Festus, or Nero, but through his imprisonment he had all of the arrangements made for him and the Roman government even paid for his transportation.

Although Paul had many faithful friends in Rome ([Acts 28:15](#); [Rom. 16](#)), some believers were very hostile. There was an anti-Pauline faction, just as there had been at Jerusalem and elsewhere. His opponents may have been Judaizers who thought Paul had gone too far in departing from the Mosaic Law and customs. It may be that they were ashamed to acknowledge a prisoner as one of their true leaders. It may be

that some, while acknowledging Jesus as the true Messiah and Savior did not go along with Paul's claim of a distinctive new revelation of truth from the ascended Christ. We have similar situations today. There are truly saved people who just can't understand Pauline dispensationalism and in their preaching of Christ they do everything possible to belittle the testimony of those who hold literally to Paul's dispensational principles. Such opposition is hard to take and the natural tendency is to fight back. But Paul rejoiced that Christ was being preached, whether in pretense or in truth. Here is another example of the mind of Christ controlling Paul. "For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me" (Rom. 15:3). Paul would surely not have rejoiced in any false doctrine being preached, but as long as Christ was preached as the Savior, regardless of the secondary motive, he could rejoice.

E. Christ Magnified by Life or by Death - 1:19, 20.

¹⁹For I know that this shall turn out for my salvation, through your supplication and supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall be put to shame, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death.

It must be remembered that Paul was a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar. Is the salvation of which here he speaks the salvation or deliverance from prison, or the salvation of his soul? It is certain that the salvation of Paul's soul did not depend upon the prayers of the Philippians; therefore it seems certain that Paul is referring to his deliverance from prison.

What does Paul mean when he says that he knows "this" will turn out for salvation? Apparently he means all of the circumstances which presently surrounded him, including the care and the prayer of the Philippians for him. He is not talking exclusively about his deliverance from prison, but he surely must have included it, for he goes on in the following verses to speak about the possible outcome of his trial before Caesar.

We remember how Paul chided the disciples at Caesarea when they tried to turn him back from going to Jerusalem: "What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). Here he expresses his desire that above all else Christ shall be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. In nothing did he want to be ashamed. John admonished his readers, "And now, my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28). Also we are to be workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

F. Paul in a Strait - 1:21-26

²¹For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²But if to live in the flesh, - if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I know not. ²³But I am in a strait

betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: ²⁴yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake. ²⁵And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide, yea, and abide with you ail, for your progress and joy in the faith; ²⁶that your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again.

It is as though someone had asked Paul, "What does it mean to you to be alive in the body?" His answer is, "For to me to live is Christ." Christ was Paul's main reason for living. Christ occupied the central position in his every activity of life. Christ was living in him, Christ was his life (Col. 3:4). Then Paul is asked, "What will death mean to you?" And his reply, "To die is gain." Gain, because death means even more to Christ; for to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). These are the views of a man who was completely submitted to Christ.

But what about our attitudes toward life and death? Why do we want to live? And why should we have any desire to die? It seems that most people want to live in order to enjoy all of the pleasures the world has to offer, including riches and fame. When they fail to achieve these objectives, when their health fails, when the bottom drops out of the stock market, when adversity strikes, they have nothing left for which to live. Many then seek to escape life by suicide. Here we are speaking of unsaved people. However, it is also true that many saved people are living primarily for the temporal enjoyments of this world. They want to go to heaven at last, but they would like to have that day postponed until they could get all that the world had to offer in the meantime.

Life is a sacred and precious possession. But it does not consist in the things that a man possesses (Lk. 12:15). Satan was almost right when he said "All that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2:4). Even in Bible times a woman spent all of her life savings on doctors to prolong her life, and today many rich people have exhausted their fortunes in medical bills to try to preserve their lives for a few more days. We get the impression from such passages as 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 that Paul had an intense desire to live and not to die, but his only motive for living was to preach the gospel and thereby glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He was exposed to death almost daily, but when death came, it had to be for the glory of God, and not merely to escape sufferings or trouble.

It is my personal conviction that the greatest crisis in the Christian life is when we come to the place that we sincerely commit our all to Christ and tell Him that we desire only His glory, whether it be by life or by death.

In the present case of Paul as a prisoner in Rome, he was in a strait; he was torn between that which would be of the greatest enjoyment for himself, to depart and to be with Christ in glory, and that which would be for the good of others, to remain alive in order to preach the gospel and bring salvation and blessing to others. Actually he did not have the power to decide what thing would happen to him when he stood trial before Nero. Nero would decide that issue, but Paul knew that Nero could not decide anything that was contrary to God's will for him. It seems that Paul was confident at this point that he would be spared and would again have further ministry to the Philippians. In his

letter to Philemon, written about the same time, he asked that lodgings be provided for him, for he was trusting that through the prayers of the saints he would be given back to them (Phile. 22).

G. Grace Given to Believe and to Suffer – 1:27-30.

²⁷Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸and in nothing affrighted by the adversaries; which for them is an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation, and that from God; ²⁹because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf: ³⁰having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

The word translated "manner of life," ("conversation" in the A.V.) is the word for citizenship. "Be citizens worthy of the Gospel," is what Paul actually said. Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12). That meant that the Philippians were granted Roman citizenship with all of its legal privileges and rights, just as if they lived in Rome itself. Roman citizenship was a thing to be coveted. See Acts 22:26-29 for the value of citizenship. The chief captain paid a great sum of money to obtain his citizenship, but Paul was free-born. Citizenship brought privileges but also responsibilities. Paul told these Philippians that they not only had Roman citizenship, but also Heavenly Citizenship. The word "only" at the beginning of this passage is very emphatic. This one thing and this one thing only is necessary. As citizens of heaven you must live worthy of that position, whether I am with you or not. One who claims gospel privileges must assume gospel responsibilities.

There are three exhortations given: live worthily, stand fast, and be united. Compare this passage with Ephesians 4:1-6. Worthily has to do with the moral and spiritual life. We must walk and talk as ambassadors representing Jesus Christ to the world. Stand fast means to hold firm your position against the enemy. Do not retreat; do not give in; do not compromise. Paul had suffered persecution and imprisonment in Philippi and had set the example of standing fast. But standing fast is not merely an individual responsibility, but is a corporate responsibility of the whole church. And for that to take place there must be unity. A divided church can never stand fast. It is occupied with conflict between its members instead of with the world. Standing fast in one spirit does not necessarily mean being united. A church can be united in a thing which is contrary to the will of God. It must be a standing fast in one Spirit: it must be the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3). "With one soul" ("one mind" in the A.V.), is the word "psyche." This word describes the complex of the heart, mind, and will. One commentator states that this word is best expressed by "unanimity," a oneness of emotion, decision, and ambition. The unity was not to be simply a cold and formal agreement on what the Spirit teaches in the Word, but a wholehearted, warm, interacting type of unity. Such a unity will produce a unity in action, a striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Why is it that so much of gospel preaching produces so little spiritual conviction

among the unsaved? There may be many reasons, but Paul indicates here that when a church stands united and unafraid against its adversaries, when the conduct of its members is consistent with the message proclaimed from the pulpit, when Christ is truly honored and glorified as Lord, this will be an evident token of perdition to the unsaved. When the unconverted see members of a church living inconsistent lives, fighting among themselves, showing little concern for those they claim are on the road to perdition, the message from the pulpit will have little impact and will produce little conviction upon the unsaved.

Not only will the testimony of a united, consistently Christ-honoring church be a token of perdition to the unsaved, it will be a token to the members of the church of their own salvation, and that of God. Such a church has full and complete assurance.

All too often Christians think that the gift of God's grace consists only in believing on Him, but Paul says it has also been granted to us to suffer for His sake. The word "granted" is the basic expression for the gift of grace. A part of the gift of grace when we were saved was to suffer for His sake. Appended to Paul's commission were the words: "For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" Acts 9:16). And Paul tells us, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). The emphasis in much of so-called evangelistic preaching today is that if one becomes a Christian God will deliver him from physical ills and suffering; God will solve his financial problems and make him a success in the financial world. God promised such material blessings to Israel back in Deuteronomy 28, but Christ has promised His followers the fellowship of His sufferings. It may sound ironic to inject the idea of suffering in an epistle which overflows with joy and rejoicing, but suffering for Christ's sake is a source of deep joy. Peter says, "Happy are they who suffer for righteousness' sake" (1 Pet. 3:14), and his latter half of chapter four throws a great deal of light upon the meaning and purpose of Christian suffering.

Chapter 2

II. CHRIST OUR MIND - Chapter II (Key verse 2:5)

A. *Likemindedness* – 2:1-4

¹If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, ²make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind: ³doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself: ⁴not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.

The "if" here is not the "if" of doubt, but the "if" of argument. There was no doubt in Paul's mind but that the four things he mentions were in Christ. The usage is similar to that in Colossians 3:1. Paul had made it clear that these Colossian believers had been identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and yet he says to them, "If

ye then be risen with Christ." We might better say, "Since ye have been raised with Christ, seek those things that are above." Since these four things mentioned by Paul are to be found in Christ, then bring them to full expression in your lives.

The "therefore" takes us back to 1:27 where he is appealing for oneness of mind. He now resumes this topic after his digression concerning their firm stand against the enemies of the gospel. In the earlier portion he appealed for unity: here he describes what that unity is. The unity, that of being of one mind, consists in having the mind of Christ. Later in this chapter he gives examples of that mind, first in the supreme example of Christ, and then in Timothy and Epaphroditus.

The first two items he mentions are individual in character, which have very similar meanings. "Paraklesis" is translated elsewhere: comfort, consolation, exhortation, and intreaty. The second word "paramuthion": comfort and consolation. The first word means to call one near in order to comfort or exhort. It is the same root word of the Holy Spirit as our comforter or paraclete ([John 14:16; 16:7](#)). The second word denotes speaking closely to anyone, giving encouragement and consolation with a greater degree of tenderness than in the first word.

The last two items are corporate: fellowship of the Spirit and tender mercies and compassions. The saints have fellowship with one another, but as John points out our chief fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ ([1 John 1:3](#)). The ancients have made the seat of feelings of mercy and compassion to be the bowels or intestines. Modern man uses a somewhat coarser expression, "gut feelings." More often we attribute such emotions to the heart. Now since all four of these things are to be found in Christ, Paul's greatest joy would be to see a complete manifestation of these virtues in the Philippian believers. Paul exhorts them to be like-minded or think the same thing. This general plea for concord is defined in the following clauses: unity of affection, "Having the same love," and unity of sentiment, "being of one accord." Then the general plea is repeated in a stronger form "of one mind," thinking the one thing.

On the negative side Paul commands that nothing be done through faction. The A.V. rendering "strife" is incorrect. The word means "self-seeking, rivalry, ambition." It is possible for a church to be split into factions, without there being any particular disagreement in doctrine. Factions are caused by jealousy and problems with personalities. It results in following some man instead of following Christ. At Corinth some were following Paul, some were following Apollos, others were following Cephas (cf. [1 Cor. 1:10-13](#)).

The Greek word translated "vainglory" appears only in this passage in the New Testament. An adjective akin to this word occurs in Galatians 5:26 and is rendered "desirous of vain glory" in the A.V. and "vainglorious" in the A.S.V. The word means praise or glory which is empty, hollow, shallow. When man seeks glory for himself it is like a bubble or an empty shell. Man's little bubble of glory will burst when he stands in the presence of God, for God has decreed that "no flesh should glory in his presence" ([1 Cor. 1:29](#)).

We have to be careful how we interpret the words, "in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself." This does not mean that we should have an inferiority complex; afraid to undertake a task because we feel someone else could do it better. Paul says later on in this epistle, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (4:13). Paul is talking about a true attitude of humility which springs from the recognition of the fact that we are what we are only by the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10); we have nothing but what we have received (1 Cor. 4:7); therefore we really have nothing in which we can boast. We should be more ready to praise others than ourselves. And when he says, "not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others," he does not mean that we should not take care of our own things; neglect our responsibilities to our own family or business affairs, and instead be running the affairs of others. The word "also" in the second clause shows that he means we should not be concerned ONLY with our own things, but also with the welfare of others. We should show in practical ways that we care for others and their needs.

B. Christ-Mindedness 2:5-18

1. Humiliation of Christ: 2:5-8

⁵Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; ⁸and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

In reading instructions on how to do a certain task, it is always helpful when the writer says, "For example," and then proceeds with a concrete illustration. Paul has been giving us many exhortations on how we should live the Christian life, how we should be loving and caring, sharing the same mind, and now he proceeds to give us some concrete examples of what he means. The first example is that of Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul's purpose here is not to digress from the subject at hand and to go into a deep doctrinal discussion of the eternal Deity of Christ. Very often this passage is considered apart from its context and is used only as a proof text of the Deity of Christ. It is indeed such a proof-text, but Paul's purpose here is not to prove the Deity of Christ, but to tell us what characterized the mind of Christ: how He thought when it came to God's redemptive purpose in the incarnation. How He thought is the supreme example of how we should think.

An example becomes all the more forceful when the person involved is one of great importance. If we are looking for an example of great condescension, humility, self-effacement, abnegation, looking out for the good of others while sacrificing his own wellbeing, what better example could we find but that of the Son of God? Before the

incarnation, He existed in the form of God. The verb "existed" ("being" in the A.V.) is not the usual copulative "to be," but is the word "huparcheo." "Arche" is the word for beginning or commencement (cf. John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word). In the beginning the Word already existed. In the beginning Christ already existed in the form of God. We are not to think of "form" (morphe) as meaning shape. Morphe is identified with the essence of a thing or person. Thus Christ, before the incarnation, existed on an equality with God: He was essentially God in His nature.

There is much diversity of opinion as to the meaning of the phrase: "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (A.V.) - "counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped" (A.S.V.) - Paul is saying that Christ did not consider the holding on to the display of His divine attributes as existing in the form of God a prize to be grasped and held at any price. But instead, "He emptied himself" - "made Himself of no reputation" (A.V.). The word "empty" (kenosis) has been used by certain theologians to teach that Christ divested Himself of His Deity when He became man.

While there is a true doctrine of Kenosis in the Bible, there is a view held by some theologians which is called the Kenosis Theory. It holds that before the Incarnation the Son of God existed as a result of the communication of divine life from the Father. At the moment of the Incarnation that communication of divine life was suspended and the Son was no longer God but a purely human infant in which the Logos took the place of the human soul. It is argued that if God is all powerful, then he must have power to cease to be God. Thus, this theory teaches that The Son divested or emptied Himself of His Deity, and that the child Jesus as a person had no knowledge of his special relationship to God. It was only as the Father gradually communicated this knowledge to him that he finally became aware that He was the Messiah, and it was only as the Father communicated power to him that he was enabled to perform miracles. Finally after His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, it is said, He became truly and forever divine, existing as an infinite man, possessed of all of the perfections of the Godhead.

The Biblical view of the Kenosis is that the Son of God divested Himself of the independent exercise of His divine attributes, which constituted His equality with God. He laid aside the form of God and took upon Himself the form of a servant. He gave up His independence and became a dependent. He never ministered to His own needs by His divine power, but only to the needs of others. He was completely submissive to the Father's will. The one thing that the Church universally has agreed upon is that Christ Jesus is the God-man, possessing a complete Divine nature and a complete human nature. He is and always has been one Person, but since the incarnation He has two natures. The universal testimony of Scripture is that His Person did not change. He was still God. He was "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). He was and is "the God-man."

Christ exchanged the form of God for that of a servant or slave, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself. The word "fashion" (schema) described "that which comprises the manner of life, actions, language, etc., of humanity in general."

These words, "morphe" and "schema" appear together again in this epistle in 3:2 1: The Lord will fashion anew (change outwardly) our body of humiliation and conform it in its inner nature (summorphos) to His body of glory.

We must not forget Paul's reason for stating these facts about the incarnation. It is to reveal Christ's way of thinking. We are to think as Christ thought. If we are tempted to assert our rights or to defend our reputation (in which we really have nothing in which to boast), how much more could Christ have used His divine attributes to further His self-interests? But He laid all of that aside in becoming man. This is the mind of Christ.

But Paul takes us one step further. The depth of His selfabnegation is seen in the fact that He became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. The death of the Cross entailed not only the most excruciating physical suffering, but the horror of bearing the penalty of the sins of the world, of being shut out of the presence of His Father, of being forsaken by God, of hanging naked in shame before the multitudes, of being made a curse in being hanged on a tree. If only a smidgen of that kind of mind controlled our lives as Christians, what a vastly different impact we would make upon the world.

2. Exaltation of Christ – 2:9-11

⁹Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave him the name which is above every name; ¹⁰that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, ¹¹and that, every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We have previously seen Christ's exaltation far above all heavens as head of all principalities and powers, and especially as Head of the Church which is His Body ([Eph. 1:20-23](#)). Here the name of Jesus has been exalted above every name, so that at the Name of Jesus every knee in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth must bow. This is a favorite text of Universalists who claim that this bowing of every knee in the universe means that every one will eventually be saved, for they will all confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. However, this passage says nothing about every one being saved. It says that every one will have to confess the Lordship of Jesus. Those, who do so today are truly saved, but even God's enemies will be forced to admit that Jesus is Lord of the Universe. Defeated enemies in battle have to confess the superiority of their captors, but such a confession does not pardon them and restore them as first-class citizens.

Besides teaching that as a result of Christ's humiliation He has now been exalted, there is the inference that those who humble themselves in the service of Christ will also be exalted some day. "If we suffer with Him we shall also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:17). The whole point of Christ's subjection, humiliation, and suffering is that it was selfimposed. Suffering or humiliation which results from our mistakes and sins is no guarantee of future reward. It is only that kind of suffering which comes as a result of having the mind of Christ that will result in future exaltation.

3. Exhortation: Outworking of Salvation – 2:12-18

¹²So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his own good pleasure. ¹⁴Do all things without murmurings and questionings: ¹⁵that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding forth the word of life: that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither did labor in vain. ¹⁷Yea, and if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all: ¹⁸and in the same manner do you also joy and rejoice with me.

It is a commendable thing when children behave themselves in the presence of their parents, but it is even more commendable when they behave away from their parents. If the Apostle Paul were to visit our church, every member would be present at every meeting and every one would be on his best behavior. Paul would appreciate this, but he would no doubt believe that some of this good behavior was merely acting, in order to make a good impression. But if Paul got word that every one was being obedient in his absence, then his joy was fulfilled. Probably the source of greatest joy to a pastor or missionary is to learn that his converts are truly living the Christian life out in the world, away from his immediate presence. From the way Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, it would seem that it would have literally killed him if the word came back that persecution had caused them to fall away from the faith, for he says, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thes. 3:8).

When Paul speaks of working out your own salvation, he is simply saying, fully developing your Christian life. There is nothing in this statement about working for one's salvation. God works salvation in us and it is our responsibility to work it out, develop it, put it into action, carry it out to the goal. Notice that Paul makes this very personal, "work out *your own* salvation." This is an individual responsibility. No one else can do it for you. God imparts a new moral power to work when He saves us by His grace. We begin the Christian life as "new born babes" (1 Pet. 2:2); we then must progress to maturity. Since Paul has been admonishing us to manifest the same attitude which characterized Christ's mind, he no doubt has in mind especially the outworking of that mind in the development of our salvation.

Paul emphasizes the "fear and trembling," by placing it first in the clause: "with fear and trembling your own salvation work out fully." Paul uses this expression in 1 Corinthians 2:3; 2 Corinthians 7:15; and Ephesians 6:5. Paul does not take the Christian life lightly. He never speaks flippantly. Doing God's work is serious business. Fear is used in Scripture in two different senses. It may mean dread, terror, seared, as in Luke 21:26, "men fainting for fear and for expectation of things which are coming upon the world." Or it may mean a reverential fear which inspires carefulness and a wholesome dread of displeasing God. An electrical engineer knows the lethal power of

high voltage electricity, but he goes about his work, not in terrifying fear, but in due respect and carefulness to observe all safety precautions. The careless Christian who fails to show that kind of reverence for God and His work will undoubtedly injure himself and others and bring reproach upon the name of Christ.

The reassuring thing about working out our own salvation is the knowledge that God is the One who works in us both the willing and the doing of it. The laborer works with his hands, but there is a force and an energy in the body as a whole which guides and works in and through the hands. As members of Christ's Body, Christ wills and works through us.

If we follow Paul's advice we will not be like the children of Israel in the wilderness who continually murmured against God, questioning His love and goodness (cf. [Num. 14:26-35](#); [1 Cor. 10:10](#)). Someone has said, "Murmuring is the moral, and questioning or doubting is the intellectual, rebellion against God." The word "harmless" does not mean, "not physically harming others." The word means literally, "unmixed, pure, guileless." We are to be guileless in ourselves and unblameable to others. God is going to present the Church to Christ "without blemish" ([Eph. 5:27](#)), but God wants us to be without blemish now in this present crooked and perverse generation, shining as lights in the world. We become luminaries in the dark world as we hold forth the word of life. The idea in the word "holding forth" is that of "holding out to, presenting." In classical Greek it was used of offering wine to a guest, or of a mother offering her breast to her infant.

Paul always had his eye fixed on the day of Christ. He wanted everything he did to result in joy at that day. No sacrifice was too great; no labor too difficult, if only it stood the test at the judgment seat of Christ. Paul may sound a little egotistical when he says, "that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ," but this is just another way of saying, "that I did not run in vain, neither labored in vain." There is a sense in which no labor for the Lord is in vain ([1 Cor. 15:58](#)), but it is possible that some of our labor for the Lord is in vain in that it does not produce conversions or results in those to whom we minister. See [Galatians 2:2; 3:4; 4:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:1; 3:5](#). Paul wanted to see every one of his converts developing and maturing and reproducing.

Paul expresses his willingness to die, to be offered as a sacrifice, to be poured out as a libation, if it would further the progress of the Philippian church. From the human standpoint Christ's death was the execution of a criminal: from God's viewpoint it was a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Paul was awaiting trial in Rome in which he might receive the death penalty, but Paul thinks of his impending death as a sacrifice to God. If such a sacrifice would bring glory to God and result in the furtherance of the gospel he would joy and rejoice. "If I am offered," means literally, "If I am poured out as a drink offering." Paul no doubt alludes to the burnt offering and the wine as a drink offering, an offering of a sweet savor, as described in [Exodus 29:40, 41](#). Later in the epistle Paul speaks of the financial offering they had sent him, as "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Paul thinks of their sacrifice and service of their faith as an offering, upon which he was willing to pour out his life as the drink-

offering to complement their offering. Paul could not initiate Christ as an offering for sin, but he could and did give up his life as a sweet-savor offering to God.

C. Examples of Christ-Mindedness: 2:19-30

1. Example of Timothy 2:19-24.

¹⁹But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. ²⁰For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. ²¹For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. ²²But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel. ²³Him therefore I hope to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me: ²⁴but I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly.

Paul cannot be sure at this point how his trial before Caesar will turn out but he seems optimistic that he will be acquitted so that he can visit Philippi again. Just as soon as he learns more about the outcome, he hopes to send Timothy to them for a double purpose, to learn first-hand the spiritual state of the church for his own comfort, and to have Timothy minister to their needs. As a prisoner in Rome Paul no doubt needed a man like Timothy to help him, but he was willing to forego that help if he could send blessing to those at Philippi. This is just another indication that Paul was motivated by the mind of Christ.

Paul was not given to flattery, but he always gave honor and praise where it was due (cf. [Rom. 13:7](#)). He recommends Timothy most highly ([1 Tim. 1:2](#)). He says that he has no man likeminded. What does he mean by this word which more literally means "like-souled?" He apparently means that of all of his fellow-workers none had quite the same qualities of soul which he shared with Timothy. Timothy had the greatest of loyalty both to the Lord and to Paul. Not all believers were friendly or supportive of Paul (cf. [1 Cor. 1:12](#); [2 Cor. 10:2](#); [2 Tim. 1:15](#); [4:16](#)). Some of the Jewish believers in particular denied his apostleship and rejected his teachings of the new dispensation of the Mystery; some believers, like those at Corinth, belonged to factions which based their loyalty to a preacher upon his oratorical ability; some Christians deserted Paul because they were not willing to suffer for the cross of Christ; some did not want to acknowledge a "jail-bird" as their spiritual leader. Paul did have a small group of faithful co-workers, but it seemed that Timothy shared more in common with Paul than any other.

Paul says further that Timothy will care truly for your state. The word "care" is the same Greek word used in [4:6](#), "be careful for nothing." The word is used of both anxious, worrisome care and loving, solicitous care. Timothy cared; he had real concern for the welfare of these people. The adverb qualifying care actually means "legitimately born." Paul elsewhere calls Timothy "his son in the faith" ([1 Tim. 1:2](#)). He was truly, genuinely a son, and Paul says the proof of this is "as a son serveth his father, so he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel." It seems that Paul had more of a father-son relationship with Timothy than with any other fellow-worker.

In contrast to Timothy Paul has to say, "For they all see their own, not the things of Jesus Christ." The "all" cannot mean all without exception, for in the next few verses he will be voicing the praises of Epaphroditus, and then there was the beloved physician Luke who had stuck with him through the riot in Jerusalem and imprisonment in Caesaria, and the shipwreck on the way to Rome. All in general are busy looking after their own affairs, and have little time for the things of Christ. That was Paul's basis for celibacy. "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife" (1 Cor. 7:32, 33). There is no record that Timothy was married, and perhaps this is why he was so like-souled with Paul. There is no doubt but that both Paul and Timothy were examples of men who were controlled by the mind of Christ. In his final epistle Paul turns over his ministry to Timothy, as he anticipated his coming execution (2 Tim. 2:2).

2. Example of Epaphroditus – 2:25-30

²⁵But I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need; ²⁶since he longed after you all, and was sore troubled, because ye had heard that he was sick: for indeed he was sick nigh unto death: ²⁷but God had mercy on him; and not to him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸I have sent him therefore the more diligently, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. ²⁹Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy; and hold such in honor: ³⁰because that for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me.

We come now to the second example of what it means to have the mind of Christ. Because liberal Christians see nothing in Christ but an example of how we should live, many conservative Christians over-react and practically deny that Christ is set forth in Scripture as an example (See [1 Peter 2:21](#)). Christ is first of all a Savior and must be accepted as such before He can become our example. Example is a powerful teaching aid. We need to teach the Word by preaching, and we need to demonstrate the Word by example of life. The New Testament has quite a bit to say about examples. See [John 13:15](#); [1 Tim. 4:12](#); [1 Cor. 10:6](#); [Phil. 3:17](#); [1 Thes. 1:7](#); [1 Pet. 5:3](#); [2 Thes. 3:9](#).

Epaphroditus was chosen by the members of the Philippian church to carry their offering to Paul. Their entrusting this sum of money to him shows that the church had high regard for his honesty and trustworthiness. As a result of the carrying out of his mission he became critically ill. Whether he suffered exposure or fell victim to some disease, we are not told, but his illness was a result of his service for Christ, and for Paul, and for the church. His sickness was so severe that he came near to dying, but God had mercy both on him and Paul, and restored him to health. It might be asked, Why did not Paul lay his hands on him and heal him instantaneously, as he did to the cripple at Lystra ([Acts 14:8-10](#))? It seems that the Pentecostal age of "sign gifts" was passing away, even as Paul had said it would ([1 Cor. 13:8-11](#)). What we might call the

mature state of the dispensation of the Mystery was coming to pass. The transition from the Kingdom Program was ending. Surely if the gift of healing was still in operation, Paul would have healed this most faithful fellow-servant, just as he would not have left Trophimus sick at Miletum (2 Tim. 4:20). God still heals people, not through the miraculous gift of healing bestowed upon a preacher, but through what we might call "elective healing." By elective healing we mean healing which God in His sovereign chooses to do, whether it be in answer to our prayers or not. It is a matter of God's will for each individual life. Elect means to choose, and it may be God's choice for His own purpose for one person to endure sickness while another is healed. Paul prayed three times for God to heal him of his "thorn in the flesh," but God did not choose to heal him, but instead gave him the grace to bear it. So Paul accepted God's will and then glorified in his weakness (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Many Christians would brag about how much they have suffered in order to have every one feeling sorry for them and honoring them for their great work. But here we see something of the self-effacement of Epaphroditus. The word translated "heaviness" in the A.V. and "sore troubled" in the A.S.V. is the same word used to describe the Lord's state of mind in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37). Epaphroditus was literally in mental anguish when he found out that the folks back at Philippi were anxious about him, and that he had become a cause of worry to them. There were no heroics with Epaphroditus: only the mind of Christ. Again, Paul might have asked this fellow-soldier to remain with him in Rome during this critical time, but he says, "I counted or reckoned (not "supposed" as in the A.V.) it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus." We are not told why Paul judged it necessary, but it may have been to carry this letter back to Philippi, as Paul felt an urgency to correct some problems in the church, as we shall see in the final two chapters. At any rate, Paul was more concerned for the welfare of the church than he was in retaining this valuable worker for his own advantage: just another expression of the mind of Christ.

III. CHRIST OUR GOAL - Chapter III (Key Verse 14)

A. Warning Against Legalism: 3:1-6

¹Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe. ²Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision; ³for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh; ⁴though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I more: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.

The word "finally" sounds as if Paul was ready to end his letter. Some think that he was ready to conclude but was urged by the Spirit to warn the Philippians of dangers which they must avoid, somewhat like Jude was led in writing his epistle. Jude had

planned to write about the common salvation, but according to vs. 3, 4 of his epistle he indicates instead that it was needful for him to warn them to contend for the faith because of errors in doctrine to which they were exposed. Others think that the word "finally" as used here has the meaning of "henceforth," as in 2 Timothy 4:8, or "to proceed." Paul, having digressed from his main theme to speak about plans for Timothy and Epaphroditus, returns to his theme: "To proceed then, brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Whatever the meaning, it is evident that Paul's tone of voice changes dramatically. His meek, submissive, humble tone changes to one of anger, as he warns about people he calls dogs and evil workers.

To what does Paul refer when he speaks of writing "the same things" to them? He could be talking about the things mentioned in the first two chapters. But the subject matter of what follows is so different from that, that it appears more likely he is talking about things he had written to them previously. We have no record that Paul had written a letter to Philippi before, but it is surely possible and even probable that he had. We must not suppose that every word that Paul ever wrote after his conversion was inspired Scripture. We know he wrote a letter to the Corinthians which is not in the canon of inspired Scripture (2 Cor. 10:10, 11; 1 Cor. 5:9). If we had everything that Paul wrote during his lifetime it would probably fill several volumes. If every thing that Jesus said and did had been written down, the world could not contain the books that should be written (John 21:25).

We need to hear and read the same things many times. Paul says it was no trouble for him to write the same things to them again, and for them it was a safeguard. Peter says much the same thing (2 Peter 1:12-15). There are Christians who can rattle off the names of all of the top ball-players in the athletic arena, but can't recite the names of the books of the New Testament or tell you whether Moses lived before or after David. That is not to condemn athletics, but rather the lack of emphasis upon the Word of God. After all, we do not live just on physical things, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).

Apparently Paul had learned from Epaphroditus that false teachers were making inroads at Philippi, so he issues warnings against those he calls dogs, evil workers, and the concision. Since no conjunctions are used between these words, the same men are in view in each clause. Dogs were considered unclean (cf. Matt. 7:6; 2 Pet. 2:22). The Gentiles who crucified Jesus are called dogs in Psalm 22:16, 20. Even Jesus referred to Gentiles as dogs (Mk. 7:27). Circumcision (peritome) as practiced by the Judaizers had degenerated into concision: (katatome) flesh-cutting or butchering.

Circumcision was the seal of a covenant made with Abraham and his descendants, the nation of Israel. It had been practiced for almost two thousand years. But when Israel fell (Rom. 11:11, 12), after their rejection of the Kingdom, the Law Dispensation came to an end, as did the practice of circumcision in God's plan. The "cutting off" of the flesh outwardly was simply a ceremony, which was supposed to represent something that had taken place internally and spiritually. Paul says, "But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter;

whose praise is not of men, but of God ([Rom. 2:29](#)). Even the Old Testament taught this truth ([Deut. 30:6](#)).

Some Jewish Christians used the same argument for circumcision that many modern Christians use for baptism. Jesus was circumcised, and since He is our example, surely we should be circumcised. Likewise, Jesus was baptized, so surely we must be baptized. If this were a legitimate argument, then Christians should be both circumcised and baptized. But Paul shows us in Colossians 2:11, 12 that in Christ we have been circumcised with a circumcision and baptized with a baptism made without hands. Christ's death was both a circumcision, a cutting off of the flesh, and a baptism, a baptism into death ([Lk. 12:50](#)), so that the believer is complete in Christ, apart from any ritualism. To practice circumcision now is to indulge in mere flesh-cutting, or as the N.I.V. translates, "mutilators of the flesh."

Therefore Paul can say, "We who are in Christ are the true circumcision, who worship, not by ritualistic ceremonies, but by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, not in our own religious observances, and have no confidence in the flesh," for, "we have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" ([Gal. 5:24](#)).

Paul is not only an example of the believer as exhibiting the mind of Christ: he is also an example of one who was best qualified to obtain righteousness by his own good works. If any man could boast about his strict observance of religion, it was Paul. He was educated at the feet of the greatest rabbi in Israel. He could boast that he advanced in the Jew's religion beyond many of his own age, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers ([Gal. 1:14](#)). He proceeds to state a five-fold basis for his superiority.

First, he was not only circumcised, but he had been circumcised on the eighth day, according to the Law of Moses. While most Jews were circumcised on the eighth day, some of Paul's Judaizing critics may have been circumcised as adults. All of those we call proselytes to the Jewish party were adults when they received this rite but Paul was started out in life in strict accordance with the Law.

Second, Paul could trace his genealogy back to prove that he belonged to the pure stock of Israel, God's chosen people. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, the only tribe which, along with Judah, had stood true to the temple as God's appointed place of worship and sacrifice. His tribe had not split off with those tribes which had set up a false worship in Samaria. Further, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. The name Hebrew is often connected with speech, those Jews who spoke the Hebrew language in contrast to those who spoke Greek, who were called Hellenists or Grecians ([Acts 6:1](#)). Paul was a scholar of the Hebrew language and could speak it fluently (cf. [Acts 21:40](#)). He could also speak Aramaic and Greek. In Philippians, however, Paul apparently uses Hebrew to refer to his pure Hebrew lineage. There was no Gentile blood in his lineal descent.

Third, he was a Pharisee, the strictest observer of the Mosaic Law. He was

orthodox to the core. He was not a liberal in theology like the Sadducees. There was no compromise in his theology.

Fourth, he was an activist. He was not a passive religionist who lived in an ivory tower, simply studying and speculating about the truth. He put his belief into action. His zeal knew no bounds. He took it upon himself to go to the high priest and get orders to arrest and even put to death those who declared that Jesus was the Son of God and had been raised from the dead. He was the outstanding defender of the Jewish faith of his day.

And fifth, he could boast that he was blameless as touching the righteousness which is in the Law. Outwardly he was punctilious in his observance of every ritual and requirement of the Mosaic Law. Thus, if any man supposed that he could make himself right with God by the outworking of the flesh or what we call human nature, Paul had more reason to do so.

B. Losses and Gains – 3:7-9

⁷Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

After Paul met with Christ on the Damascus road he came to understand the vast gulf that lay between his own righteousness and the righteousness of God. Whereas Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, had had confidence in rites, race, religion, and rectitude, he now placed all of these personal supposed gains on the refuse pile in exchange for Christ. He discovered what every man has discovered who has had a personal meeting with God. When Isaiah came face to face with God in the temple he cried out, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). He came to see that all of his own righteousnesses were but filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). It is doubtful if anyone was ever truly converted apart from the recognition that all of his own good works can never recommend him to God. Salvation is from sin, and until one sees even his best efforts as sinful in God's sight, he will never see his need of salvation. The reason the good works of an unsaved man are sinful in God's sight is that the unsaved man himself is at enmity with God. Feeding the poor may be considered a good work, but when man rejects the good work Christ has done for him, and substitutes his own work as more meritorious than that of Christ, his work must be rejected by God.

Paul not only counted the five things he once boasted of as loss for Christ: he verily counted ALL things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He gave up every worldly and earthly comfort and pleasure, as well as sacrificing many human relationships which could have been to his advantage. He had the right to

have a wife and family and home, the same as the other apostles had (1 Cor. 9:5), but these relationships would occupy his time and attention and keep him from giving every ounce of his energy to propagating the gospel (1 Cor. 7:32, 33). He could have demanded financial support from the churches, but instead he supported himself by tent-making, lest his motives for serving Christ should be misinterpreted (1 Cor. 9:6-23). Paul could truly have sung, "All on the altar of sacrifice laid," a song we often sing but with little reality.

We must not get the impression that Paul obtained the righteousness of God by his sacrificing and giving up of all things. That would be going back to boasting of one's own works. He completely gave up any merit for his own righteousness based upon law principle, and received as a free gift the righteousness of God which was based entirely upon the faith principle in Christ. It was Paul's deep appreciation of Christ's work of salvation that produced his great love for Christ and which caused him to sacrifice all for Christ. The more we realize how much we have been forgiven, the more we will love Christ. Jesus said of the woman in Luke 7:47: "Her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little *is* forgiven, the same loveth little."

C. Pressing Toward the Goal – 3:10-14

¹⁰that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed unto his death: ¹¹if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things that are before, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

There are different ways of knowing Christ. Paul surely knew Christ as his Savior. He knew Him as the Son of God. He knew Him as his Lord. Such knowledge was factual. But there was another way of knowing Christ, and Paul expresses the desire to know Him in a very intimate and experiential way. A person either knows Christ as Savior or he doesn't know Him. But there are degrees of knowing Christ experientially, and Paul felt that he still had room to grow in this area.

This knowledge evolved out of the experiencing of the power of His resurrection and the fellowship or sharing of His sufferings. The greatest demonstration of the power of God was not in the creation of the universe, but in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (cf. Eph. 1:19, 20), where Paul prays that we might know what it is to experience that power of resurrection life here and now in our lives.

Paul also wanted to know Christ more through fellowship in His sufferings. This knowledge no doubt involves an understanding and an empathy in what Christ actually suffered under the wrath of both man and God in order to save us from our sins, but it also involves an experience of the personal suffering of one who is true in proclaiming

the message of the Cross. It is what we might call "bearing His Cross." Paul states: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24). The sufferings of the Church, the members of His Body, are the sufferings of Christ. Paul wanted to fill up in his own body those sufferings which were lacking. He wanted to be made conformable unto His death. He says that he wants to have this experience "if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead. " What does he mean by this?

On the surface it sounds as if he were predicating resurrection from the dead upon attaining a certain degree of spirituality. We know, of course, from Paul's teaching elsewhere, that this is not what he means. Everybody, saved and unsaved, will experience resurrection. The Lord spoke of the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust ([John 5:29](#)). We can't escape resurrection any more than we can escape death. Paul uses a very unique expression here which the translators have rendered "the resurrection of the dead." The Greek reads, "ten exanastasin ten ek nekron," which is literally, "the outresurrection, the one out from among the dead." This expression occurs no place else in the New Testament. The resurrection "out from among the dead" occurs numerous times, and speaks of a resurrection of a special group of the dead, the remainder of which are left in their graves. There will be a resurrection in connection with the rapture in which members of the Body of Christ will be raised. ([1 Thes. 4:13-18](#)). There will be a resurrection of the Old Testament saints at the end of the tribulation period, and finally the resurrection of the unsaved dead at the end of the millennium ([Rev. 20:4-6](#)). But what is meant by "an outresurrection out from among the dead?" It was apparently something to which Paul could attain. Various suggestions have been made. Some think that Paul is here referring to the rapture and that he is expressing the hope that he will attain unto that event, that he will live until the rapture and will not have to experience death. No doubt all true believers would like to be alive at that day, but it is difficult to see how Paul's devotedness to Christ could help him live unto that day. Another writer thinks that the uncertainty expressed by the "if" is not the uncertainty of the goal, which is resurrection, but uncertainty of the way, that is, the route by which we will reach the goal. Still others, because Paul expresses in this passage the ambition of pressing on toward the goal for the prize, think that he is speaking of "the Exanastasis" as a group singled out from those who are resurrected, having attained a special place of honor or reward. Sometimes it is easier to say what a statement does not mean than to declare what it does mean. It surely does not mean that Paul had any doubt or uncertainty about being resurrected at the time of the rapture.

Neither is Paul expressing doubt of his salvation when he says that he had not yet obtained or were already made perfect. Although he was perhaps the most Christlike man of his day, he was still a human being, subject to the weaknesses and frailties of human nature. There was still room for growth and maturity in his life; and if that were true, how much greater must be the room in our lives.

The word "perfect" in the Bible is a much misunderstood word. Our English word

means "that which is absolutely without flaw or error: that upon which no improvement is possible." There are several Greek words translated "perfect" in the New Testament. The most frequently used one is some form of the word "telos," which means "end." We see this word as a prefix to many English words: telescope, telephone, television - vision or voice from the other end. When the catechism states "the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever," it means that this is God's main purpose for man. The word "telos" is translated "full age" in Hebrews 5:14, and "men" in contrast to children in 1 Corinthians 14:20. It has the idea of maturity or fulfilling the ideal for which a thing was designed. In certain contexts the end in view is the kind of perfection which our English word suggests, such as when we read, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). But in other contexts "perfect" means mature behavior. When Paul says that he has not yet been made perfect, he is thinking of the perfection which will come at the resurrection. But in vs. 15 he uses the word in reference to spiritual maturity at the then present time. He had not attained the perfection of vs. 12 but he and others of the Philippian church had attained the perfection of vs. 15: "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded."

Paul was never satisfied with his progress in the Christian life. He knew there were higher heights to reach, and as a mountain climber he continued to press on. He wanted to lay hold upon that for which Christ had laid hold upon him. Christ has a purpose or reason for laying hold upon sinners and saving them by His grace. That purpose is not merely to get them to heaven at last, but to render a specific service for Him in the gospel. It should be our desire to fulfill that purpose.

Although Paul did not feel that he had completely laid hold, there was one thing he did: he put out of his mind that which was behind, and stretching forward to that which was before him, he pressed on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Paul's vocabulary in this section is drawn from the athletic track. Earlier, when he spoke of being "made perfect," he was thinking of the runner being "crowned as victor." When he addressed those who were "perfect" in vs. 15 he means those who were fit or qualified to run in the race. Now we see him as a runner, not looking back, but stretching every muscle and fiber forward with his eye fixed upon the goal for the prize. As a lad, I remember when my brother, whom I idolized, competed in the state championship bicycle race. My brother took the lead with the present champion a close second. He maintained the lead almost to the end, when he looked back to see how far he was ahead. The more experienced racer put on an extra spurt as my brother lost some of his momentum in turning to look back, and my hopes were dashed as the champion crossed the finish line just a few feet ahead of my brother. Paul, no doubt, had seen the same thing happen many times in the foot races of the Greek games.

What were the things which were behind? He apparently does not mean that he never recalls or thinks about his past experiences, for he relates many of them in such passages as [2 Corinthians 11:23-30](#); [Galatians 2:1](#); and even here in [Philippians 4:15, 16](#). He even instructs us to remember what we were in times past ([Eph. 2:11, 12](#)). There are many things stated in the Bible that we should remember. Paul apparently means that he did not dwell upon past experiences and blessings, as though he had

attained the ultimate, but he instead concentrated on the higher things which were before him.

It is interesting to note that Paul uses the same Greek word in vs. 6, translated "persecuted," as he does in vs. 12 and 14, translated "press." The word means "to pursue." Paul now pursues the Christian race with the same vigor and determination with which he once pursued the early believers in Jesus and haled them to prison and to death.

D. Walking by the Same Rule – 3:15, 16

¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also will God reveal unto you. ¹⁶only, whereunto we have attained, by that same rule let us walk.

Once more we are brought back to the subject of the mind. To be "thus minded" is to have the mind of Christ, the mind that was in Paul. Mature believers were to have this mind that Paul had, but if some had a different opinion Paul was sure that God would reveal this unto them. He implies that if they are otherwise minded, God will correct their thinking, so that they will be like-minded.

In vs. 16 the "let us walk by the same rule," is omitted by the best Greek texts. This verse is a little difficult to translate. The N.I.V. reads: "Only let us live up to what we have already attained."

E. Following Paul – 3:17-19

¹⁷Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an example. ¹⁸For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Christ so laid hold of the Apostle Paul that he became the example for all believers in this dispensation to follow. Paul told the Corinthians, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). We do not become Paulites in following Paul, as some critics charge. We follow Christ as He revealed Himself in Paul. At least five times Paul tells us to follow him. Paul tells Timothy: "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life" (1 Tim. 1:16). The word "ensample" is the Greek "tupos" or type. Paul is the typical Christian, the mold into which every Christian should fit.

At the beginning of this chapter Paul warned of dogs, evil workers, and the flesh-cutters. Now again he sounds another warning. Paul does not identify by name those he calls enemies of the cross of Christ. Some speculate he was speaking of the Judaizers, while others think he was referring to an antinomian group which may have

formed at Philippi. It seems very evident, if we believe in the eternal security of the believer, that these people, though professing Christians, were never regenerated. They are not only enemies of the Cross, their final end is destruction or perdition. It is possible for truly saved persons to get mixed up in legalism and antinomianism, and they therefore need to be warned that these systems are basically anti-Christian, and that those who foster such teachings have never understood or accepted the work of Christ upon the Cross.

Even in his condemnation of false teachers Paul is an example for us. All too often Christians take a hateful, belligerent, militant attitude toward false teachers, but Paul weeps over these people. How tragic that people should spurn the grace of God or turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, or become enemies of the One who gave His life for them! Tears are more apt to win such people over to the truth than acrimonious accusations.

Three descriptive phrases mark these enemies of the cross whose end is perdition. The first is, "whose god is the belly." The belly is used here, not only in the sense of appetite for physical food, gormandizers, but also for all kinds of selfgratification. It means devotion to self-indulgence. Their appetites and emotions are no longer subject to their control, but have become gods whom they worship. This is the philosophy or religion of those who deny the resurrection and the existence of life after death. They say, "Let us eat and drink (and be merry), for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32). It was also the philosophy of the Gnostics who taught that matter is evil, and therefore the body can never be holy. It is the rationale also of antinomianism, which turns grace into licentiousness, which says, "Let us do evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8), or "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound" (Rom. 6:1).

The second descriptive phrase is "whose glory is in their shame." They not only do evil but glory in doing that for which they ought to be ashamed. Paul describes the apostasy of the human race in Romans 1:21-32, and ends with these words, "Who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they which practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practice them." Paul says "it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret" (Eph. 5:12), and yet it is in such shameful things that they glory. What a contrast is Paul. He gloried only in the cross of Christ, by which he had been crucified to all of these sinful activities and pleasures of the world.

The third characteristic of these enemies of the cross is, "who mind earthly things." They are blind to anything beyond the earthly horizon. They are completely occupied with material and physical things. All they think about is getting wealth or fame, of enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. Their mind is set like concrete upon earthly things. How different is the renewed Christian mind: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on these things that are above, not upon the things that are upon the earth" (Col. 3:1-2).

In summary, these who are enemies of the Cross render their devotion to self-indulgence, they overthrow and reverse moral standards, and the root of their trouble is that they mind only earthly things. We have pointed out before the importance which Paul attaches to the mind in Philippians, and the great contrast of the mind of Christ to that of the world. In fact, Paul stresses the importance of the mind in all of his epistles. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds ([Rom. 12:2](#)). We are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds ([Eph. 4:23](#)). One would do well to make a concordant study of this most important word.

F. Heavenly Citizenship – 3:20, 21

²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: ²¹who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself.

The Philippians were citizens of Rome, even though they lived so far away. We likewise, are citizens of heaven, even though we live so far away. Paul has just told us of the end of those who are enemies of the cross. Now in contrast he tells us of our end. We are eagerly awaiting (ap-ek-dekoma) the Savior who will come out of heaven. One reason we should be eagerly awaiting is that we will actually see the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His glory for the very first time. We have all experienced the expectation of waiting at the depot or airport for the arrival of a loved one: how much more eagerly we should be waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe in the possibility of His coming for us at any moment. We do not believe that we must first go through the prophesied tribulation and the appearance of the anti-christ before we can begin awaiting. The word Paul used for awaiting has in it the sense of momentary expectation, not some far off event at the end of the world.

Another reason for eagerly awaiting His coming is that our present weak, sickly, dying bodies will be instantly changed to immortality without having to go through the experience of death. ([1 Cor. 15:51, 52](#)). God has not told us very much about the resurrection or glorified body, but we know it will be like the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ. To know that fact is perhaps better than a description of it. Whatever it will be like, it couldn't be any better. It will be fitted to live in an entirely new and different environment.

And, of course, there is another reason. We are going to be reunited with our loved ones who have died in Christ. How great it will be to meet Paul, and Timothy and others we have read so much about in the Scriptures.

This change from humiliation to glory is going to be accomplished by the power that enables Him to bring all things under His control. Those who have died in Christ will first be raised bodily and then those who are still alive at the time will be changed into the same glorious body. Salvation includes the whole man, body, soul, and spirit. We have the redemption of our souls already: We await the redemption of our bodies ([Rom.](#)

8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30).

Until the Lord comes the death rate will be one apiece. Some of the charismatic people who preach that it is God's will for all Christians to have perfect health, that there is physical healing in the atonement for the present dispensation, must, to be logical, teach that nothing but a violent accident could cause the death of a true child of God. While an increasing number of people die of accidents, the great majority succumb to disease of one kind or another. We should not be waiting for death, but for the blessed hope, the return of Christ, when He will change us and catch us up to glory with Himself, to forever be with the Lord.

IV. CHRIST OUR STRENGTH - Chapter IV (Key Verse, 13)

A. *Standing Fast in The Lord - 4:1-3*

¹Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved. ²I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yea, I beseech thee also, true-yokefellow, help these women, for they labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Paul addresses the Philippians in the tenderest and most loving terms. Twice he repeats the word "beloved" in this one verse, and adds to it another term of endearment, "longed for," and then, "my joy and crown." He is still thinking of the Lord's coming, for he writes to the Thessalonians, "For what is our hope or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at His coming?" (1 Thes. 2:19). Paul's greatest reward and joy would be to see all of his converts richly rewarded at the Lord's coming. The joy of any teacher is to see his students excel in the final contest. How discouraging for a music teacher to have her pupils strike the wrong notes, or forget and make other mistakes at the recital. What grief pastors suffer when they see members of their flock go astray.

There was an apparent danger at Philippi. Paul had warned them of those who were enemies of the cross, and now he tells them to stand fast. This exhortation recalls his concluding words to the Ephesians: to stand against the wiles of the devil, and having done all, to stand.

But there was not only the danger from the enemies on the outside, there were problems within. There were two women who had been a great help to Paul in the gospel ministry, but they had had a falling out of some kind, and this was disrupting the unity of the Spirit in the church. Oftentimes, those who play a prominent part in the spiritual ministry of the church may be the cause of division. It doesn't seem that the problem was over doctrine, but possibly over personality differences. One may be unyielding, always insisting things be done according to his way. One may feel that he or she is the most experienced and therefore should always be in charge of a project. There are a hundred and one such little flies that get into the ointment and spoil it:

things not sinful in themselves, but wedges, nevertheless, which can separate the brethren. Paul tells Euodia and Syntyche to patch up their differences. It is too bad that these two dear ladies got their names in the public record, for millions of people in centuries to come to hear sermons preached about their short-comings, but they had good qualities too, and are the only ones Paul mentions by name who labored with him in the Philippian church.

Paul addresses "his true yoke-fellow" in vs. 3 although he does not identify him by name. He may be referring to Epaphroditus (cf. 2:25), who was to carry this letter back to Philippi. Some think "yoke-fellow" is a proper name, "Synzygus," who was true to his name. He is to help these women get back into good fellowship again, and also to minister to Clement and others of his fellow-workers, "whose names are written in the book of life." This is the only mention of the book of life in Paul's epistles. It is mentioned only in [Revelation 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27](#). Christ spoke of those whose names are written in heaven ([Lk. 10:20](#)). It is difficult to know why Paul referred to the book of life, other than to assure his readers that these two women, who needed to be corrected, along with all of the others, were truly saved people.

B. Recipe for Peace - 4:4-7

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. ⁶In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God ⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

When there is disharmony and disagreement, it is difficult or impossible to rejoice. If all members of a church were manifesting the mind of Christ, there would be continual rejoicing. That is the reason Paul instructed Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord, thus again carrying out what we believe to be the real theme of the book. Rejoicing is a prominent word in the epistle, but true rejoicing is impossible apart from the mind of Christ. Paul is emphatic: "I will say it again, Rejoice!" Christians can rejoice when there is pressure and opposition from the outside. In fact, Peter says to count it all joy when we suffer for Christ's sake ([1 Pet. 4:13, 16](#)). But where there is internal conflict the joy evaporates.

Along with the constant rejoicing there is to be a display of moderation, or forbearance. This attitude of mind is to be shown, not only to Christians, but to all men. Christians should be true gentle people, forbearing to others: not overbearing. This is a manifestation of the mind of Christ. Why does Paul follow up this exhortation with the statement, "The Lord is at hand?" Does Paul mean by this expression that the Lord is near to us in a spiritual sense, or does he mean that the coming of the Lord is near? It would appear that he has the latter thought in mind, but which ever is meant, the effect would be similar. There is a certain motivation, when we know that the boss is very near or that he might pop in at any moment, to be busy, doing our work as we should. Our Lord told some parables illustrating this fact (cf. [Lk. 12:43-47](#)). If the wicked servant

had been expecting his master to appear at any moment, he would have shown more forbearance to his fellow servants. The constant expectation of the Lord's coming is a purifying hope. "Every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:3).

The fact that the Lord is near is also related to the prayer promise which follows. If the Lord is near at hand there is no reason for anxiety and worry. The Greek word translated "careful" in the A.V. should be "anxious." It is the same word used of Martha: "thou art careful and troubled about many things," (Lk. 10:41), showing that the word really means worried or anxious. There are many things in which we should be very careful. In fact, Paul commended the Philippians for being careful of his needs (4:10), and he insists that those who have believed in God must be careful to maintain good works (Tit. 3:8). But in both of these places Paul uses entirely different Greek words, which are related to the key-word of the epistle, "the mind." Actually he said to the Philippians, "Ye did take thought of me," and in Titus he says, "they must be thoughtful or mindful to maintain good works." The word in Philippians 4:6 means to draw in different directions, distract, corroding anxiety. When a loved one is seriously ill we show them every care possible. We are deeply concerned for their welfare, but that concern need not turn into anxiety. If we follow Paul's recipe of making this a matter of prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, the result will be the peace of God placing a garrison around our hearts and minds, protecting us from worry and anxiety, giving us the peace of God which is beyond human comprehension. God does not answer every prayer in the way we ask it, and we can often be thankful for that, but He always grants this surpassing peace of mind when we pray as here directed. Even in prayer the emphasis is upon the mind.

There are numerous words used in Scripture for prayer. In this passage Paul uses three: "prayer" (proseuche), supplication" (deesis), and "request" (aitema). The words "erotao" (to ask) and "deomai" (to desire) are also used for prayer in the New Testament. "Proseuche" occurs most frequently.

C. Things to Think Upon - 4.8, 9

⁸Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. ⁹The things ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you.

Here is a further analysis of the mind of Christ. If we have the mind of Christ, these are things which will characterize our thinking. There is very little commentary we can add to the meaning of these six categories of virtue mentioned by Paul. We all know what true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and good report mean. Our thought life is not limited to these six things. We have to think about our daily employment. The mechanic or engineer has to concentrate on his work. The business man must keep track of his inventory and make sure his workers are producing. The housewife has to

think about the needs of her family and the preparation of meals. But in all of these varied activities we must be true and just. We must be pure in our motives and actions. We must promote the finer things of life and avoid the base and ugly. We must strive for excellence and praiseworthiness and not be content with mediocrity. Everything is to be done as unto the Lord. Even the slave was told to obey his master according to the flesh in singleness of heart, just as though he was doing it personally for the Lord Jesus Christ ([Col. 3:22, 23](#)). What a revolution in society, in management, in labor, and in industry, if all were Christians, and all had the mind of Christ dictating their attitudes and activities!

Again in vs. 9 Paul sets forth himself as an example to follow. This sounds like egotism on the surface, but we must remember that God was the one who chose Paul and separated him, even from his mother's womb ([Gal. 1:15](#)), to reveal His Son in him and to make him the example of what a true believer should be. The Philippians had learned much through Paul's preaching and teaching; they had professed to receive and accept these teachings as their very own; they had heard these things, not second-hand, but directly from Paul; and they had seen these things in action in Paul's life. They had had a complete demonstration in the life of Paul of the mind of Christ. They knew that such a life was possible. They and we are exhorted to so live, and the promise is made that the God of peace shall be with us. God has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us, but that does not necessarily mean that He is with us as *the God of peace*. We will not be experiencing the peace of God which only the God of peace can bring, if the Spirit of God is grieved by the kind of life we are living ([Eph. 4:30](#)).

D. Learning the Secret – 4:10-13

¹⁰*But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity.* ¹¹*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.* ¹²*I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want.* ¹³*I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.*

Paul here uses the figure of a tree that once bore luscious fruit, but which had experienced a period of dormancy due to inclement weather, but now again is sending forth new shoots bearing fruit. The Philippians had ministered faithfully to his needs, but there was a period when he had not heard from them. He says that he is sure he was in their thoughts, but they lacked opportunity. What it was that produced this lack of opportunity we do not know. Circumstances often hold us back from doing the things we would like to do. But Paul rejoices that now at length their thought for him had revived and they had sent the gift by the hand of Epaphroditus. It is interesting to note that the word for "mind" (*phronein*) appears twice in this verse, being translated "thought." This is another indication of the theme of the epistle, the mind of Christ controlling the thought life of the believer.

Contentment is not something that comes automatically. It is something that must be learned through experience. Paul does not say simply, "I am content," but "I have LEARNED, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." "I have learned the secret," says Paul. The "I am instructed" of the A.V. and the "I have learned the secret" of the A.S.V. is a translation of a word referring to the initiatory rites of the mystery religions. Paul uses this metaphor to indicate that he had learned the secret of life in Christ. Candidates for the mystery religions worked their way up through the various lower degrees and were finally admitted into the full possession of the mystery itself. Paul says, "I have worked my way up through the various degrees of detachment from worldly things, its plusses and minuses, and have finally reached maturity. I know how to be content, regardless of outward circumstances.

The word "content" (autarkes) was a word used by the Stoics meaning "self-sufficiency." They believed man should be sufficient to himself for all things which come in life, so that by the power of his own will he could resist the shock of circumstances. Paul's self-sufficiency, however, lay not in himself, but in Christ who indwelt his new man. Sometimes Paul had an abundance of supplies; sometimes he was hungry; sometimes he was highly honored: at other times he was abased. Sometimes he was in good health: at other times sick; but in whatsoever state he found himself, he had learned to be content, or sufficient.

The opposite of this kind of contentment is covetousness, the desire for more and more. The covetous man, even though he is rich, is never satisfied with his riches but must have more. The poor man who envies the rich and would himself be rich, is likewise a prey to covetousness (1 Tim. 6:9). Actually covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5). See what Paul has to say about covetousness (Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:10, 11; 6:10; Eph. 5:3, 5; 1 Tim. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:2). Our Lord told us to beware and take heed of covetousness (Lk. 12:15). Someone has said, "there is a discipline of self whereby one does not need more than one has." Paul says, "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8), and "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).

Obviously covetousness does not mean that a person should not work hard, try to better his station in life, earn and use money wisely, since the Bible commends such practices. The question is, Why do these things? What is our motivation? Do we want money to consume it on our own lusts, or to do good with it that we may give to him that is in need (Eph. 4:28)?

When Paul says, "I can do all things," he is not claiming some kind of omnipotence, even if it came through Christ Himself. There were many things which were physically impossible for Paul to do. This statement has to be taken in its context. The "all things" are those things he has been talking about. The rendition of this verse in *Today's English Version* gives the proper sense: "I have the strength to face all conditions by the power Christ gives me."¹⁶

¹⁶ *Today's English, op. cit.*, Phil. 4:13.

We must be careful how we interpret God's promises. Some promises have to be interpreted dispensationally, such as God's promises to Israel in Deuteronomy 28:1-13, while other promises must be interpreted contextually. A very sincere Christian who lifted this promise out of its context could very quickly become disillusioned about his faith or about God's faithfulness when he discovered there were many things he could not do. In reality, Philippians 4:13 is not a promise, but a statement of Paul's spiritual maturity. He had come to the place where he had the strength through Christ to be content regardless of his outward circumstances. The "all" in vs. 13 refers to the two "all's" in vs. 12: the *every* and the *all* circumstances in which Paul had learned to be content.

E. Giving and Receiving – 4:14-20

¹⁴*Howbeit ye did well that ye had fellowship with my afflictions* ¹⁵*And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only;* ¹⁶*for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need.* ¹⁷*Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account.* ¹⁸*But I have all things and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.* ¹⁹*And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* ²⁰*Now unto our God and Father be the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

The handling of gifts was a very delicate matter with Paul. On the one hand he wanted to make it plain that he was not soliciting money for his own needs. He did solicit money for the benefit of others, as is plain from 2 Corinthians 8:11. But as far as raising money for himself, Paul says that although the Lord had ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel, he had used none of these things, neither had he written these things that it might be done unto him, for he says: "It were better for me to die, than that any man should make void his glorying in preaching the gospel without pay." (1 Cor. 9:15).

While Paul greatly appreciated the gift from the Philippian Church, his main source of joy was that the gift was an indication of fruit being borne in the lives of these believers. Just as a gardener rejoices to see an abundance of fruit being produced by his plants, so a pastor rejoices when he sees his people manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul calls their gift, "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God." This is no doubt an allusion to the sweet-savor offerings of the Old Testament. The gift became, as it were, a sweet perfume in God's nostrils. It was a sacrifice which they had made freely out of the love of their own hearts, not one that had been solicited.

We never make ourselves poor by giving to God. A person ignorant of agriculture might think the farmer was making himself poor by putting all of his grain in the ground, but actually he is making himself richer. "He that sows sparingly shall reap sparingly,

and he that sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). The Philippians had supplied Paul's needs, and Paul tells them that God will supply their every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

A problem arises here about what we understand to be our needs. For example, Paul says, "And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content (1 Tim. 6:8). How many of us would think that our needs were supplied with only food and raiment? The question of what one's needs are is a very subjective one. Where do we draw the line between needs and wants? Paul had just said in vs. 12 of our chapter that he had learned how to suffer need. Apparently there were times when he was in need of things, as when he was hungry and had no food. But then Epaphroditus showed up with a gift from the church at Philippi, and he had a big, satisfying meal. If we reap as we sow, then we can't expect God to be liberal with us if we are not liberal with Him. Note how God applied this principle to Israel in Deuteronomy 15:7-11. The Preacher said, "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 11:1). Proverbs 19:17 states, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." And Hebrews 6:10 tells us, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward his name, in that you have ministered unto the saints, and do minister." From experience we must confess that God always gives more generously to us than we ever give to Him. He gives back with high interest compounded momentarily.

F. Final Greeting – 4:21-23

²¹Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren that are with me salute you. ²²All the saints salute you, especial they that are of Caesar's household. ²³The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Just as the epistle begins with a salutation, so it ends with one. Examples from the papyri show that the absence of a greeting or salutation in a letter were very keenly felt. Paul seems to send greeting from three groups. He speaks of the brothers who are with me, then all of the saints, and finally especially those of Caesar's household. There have been various speculations about the identity of these saints in Caesar's household, but it is generally supposed that they were domestics who had come into contact with Paul and who had been saved through Paul's influence. Thus the gospel had invaded the highest realm in the Roman world, and when Paul finally came to trial, no doubt Caesar himself had heard God's message of salvation by grace.

In ending our study of this epistle we would cry with Paul, "Now unto our God and Father be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Colossians

EMPHASIS ON THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

Introduction

Philippians and Colossians are both corrective epistles. Some of the Philippians were failing to manifest the mind of Christ in the outworking of their life in the Church. The error at Colosse was doctrinal in nature. Their key fault is stated in chapter two, verse nineteen: "Not holding fast the Head. " Thus, the Headship of Christ, which is clearly declared in Ephesians and represented as the Mind in Philippians, is given special emphasis in Colossians.

Strange to say, Paul writes this letter to a church which he had not founded and one he had not even visited. This fact seems evident from ch. 2:1 where he says that Colossians and the Laodiceans "have not seen my face in the flesh." The church was probably founded by Epaphras (cf. 1:7; 4:12), who was with Paul in Rome, as Paul was writing this letter, and who had informed Paul of the spiritual problems in the church at Colosse.

Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were Graeco-Phrygian cities located within a few miles of each other in the valley of the Lycus River in the west-central part of Asia Minor, which is now modern Turkey. They were a little over a hundred miles inland from Ephesus. Epaphras may have been converted by Paul in Ephesus. We know there was a mighty work of the Spirit through Paul's ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19:20, "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed"). And verse 27 tells us that it was not only in Ephesus, "but almost throughout all Asia," which included the three cities we have just mentioned.

We have stated negatively the error at Colosse, "Not holding fast the Head." But to what were they holding? Paul describes it as "philosophy and vain deceit, the traditions of men, following the rudiments of the world," (ch. 2:8), "a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels," (ch. 2:18), and "subjection to ordinances" (ch. 2:20). This was a strange mixture indeed. It included ideas from Oriental mysticism, Greek philosophy, and Jewish ceremonialism. These things were being substituted for Christ, displacing Him as the Head. As a philosophy it had "a show of wisdom in will worship;" it upheld traditions, thus appealing to those who revered the past; and it practiced asceticism, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," thus giving it the appearance of humility and superior sanctity. These few facts about the Colossian error should suffice to give us a general impression of the problems with which Paul is confronted in this epistle. In our exposition of the text we shall go into more detail about each of these heretical ideas.

OUTLINE

I. APOSTOLIC GREETING: 1:1, 2

- II. THANKSGIVING: 1:3-8
- III. PRAYER FOR SPIRIT OF WISDOM: 1:9-14
- IV. DOCTRINAL - THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST: 1:15-2:7
 - A. THE UNCREATED CREATOR: 1:15-17
 - B. PREEMINENCE OF THE HEAD: 1:18
 - C. PEACE AND RECONCILIATION ACCOMPLISHED: 1:19, 20
 - D. ALIEN ENEMIES RECONCILED: 1:21-23
 - E. THE DISPENSATION THAT FULFILLS THE WORD OF GOD: 1:24-27
 - F. WARNING AND TEACHING EVERY MAN: 1:28, 29
 - G. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE MYSTERY: 2:1-3
 - H. ROOTED, BUILT UP, AND ESTABLISHED: 2:4-7
- V. WARNING AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINE: 2:8-23
 - A. WARNING AGAINST PHILOSOPHY AND TRADITION: 2:8-15
 - B. WARNING AGAINST ANGELIC WORSHIP: 2:16-19
 - C. WARNING AGAINST ASCETICISM: 2:20-23
- VI. SPIRITUAL LIVING: 3:1-17
 - A. DEAD BUT RISEN WITH CHRIST: 3:1-4
 - B. PUTTING OFF THE OLD AND PUTTING ON THE NEW: 3:5-11
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 - D. DOING ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS: 3:16, 17
- VII. PRACTICAL LIVING: 3:18-4:6
 - A. FAMILY DUTIES: 3:18-21
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 - C. PRAYER, WALK, AND SPEECH: 4:2-6
- VIII. GREETINGS AND SALUTATIONS: 4:7-18
 - A. MISSION OF TYCHICUS AND ONESIMUS: 4:7-9
 - B. SALUTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS: 4:10-14
 - C. SALUTATION TO THE LAODICEANS: 4:15-17
 - D. PAUL'S OWN SALUTATION: 4:18

EXPOSITION

I. APOSTOLIC GREETING - 1:1, 2

¹*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother,*
¹²*to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ that are at Colosse; Grace to you and peace from God our Father.*

Paul's apostolic authority had been denied by some who claimed to be believers (1 Cor. 9:1, 2; Gal. 1:1), and so Paul emphasizes the fact that he was an apostle through the will of God.

It is interesting to note that in Paul's earlier epistles he addresses "the church," or "the churches," but beginning with Romans and through the prison epistles he addresses "the saints," the separated or consecrated ones. One reason for this shift might be that many heresies were creeping into the churches, and Paul wants it to be known that he is addressing the truly saved people.

We are not to understand two separate classes by "saints and faithful brethren." Instead, Paul wants it understood that when he speaks of "saints" he means true and steadfast brothers. "Saints" must be understood as a noun, not an adjective modifying "brethren."

II. THANKSGIVING - 1:3-8

³We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have toward all the saints, ⁵because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel ⁶which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth; ⁷even as ye learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Paul's psychology, if we may call it that, is always to commend the saints for their good points, before bringing up any weaknesses or failures on their part. When we begin by attacking people whom we feel are going astray, we immediately set up a blockage which is very difficult to overcome, and which at the same time creates a spirit of antagonism, closing the mind of the listener to what we have to say. Paul does not use insincere flattery, but he is truly thankful to God for all who manifest faith in Christ and show their love to the saints.

Paul had heard of their faith through Epaphras, who was a member of Paul's evangelistic team that went out from Ephesus and evangelized the whole of Asia. The expression in v. 7, "who is a faithful minister of Christ *on our behalf*," indicates that Epaphras was commissioned and set out by Paul to preach the gospel.

The A.V. has Paul giving thanks (v. 3) for the hope which is laid up in heaven (v. 5). It is better to connect the hope with that which immediately precedes it: your faith and

love. Thus the hope describes the motive of the Colossians for well-doing, rather than the cause of Paul's thanks. Maclaren states, "The hope laid up in heaven is not the deepest reason or motive for faith and love, but both are made more vivid when it is strong." The triad, "faith, hope, and love,"¹⁷ is a favorite one with Paul (see [1 Thes. 1:3](#); [1 Cor. 13:13](#); [Rom. 5:1-5](#); [12:6-12](#)).

The word translated "ye heard before," occurs only here in the New Testament. It does not occur in the Septuagint. It has been interpreted to mean before the fulfillment of the hope, before Paul had written to them, and as a contrast of the true gospel which they had heard at the beginning with the false gospel which was now being preached. Since Paul does not even intimate there was heresy at Colosse until ch. 2:4 or 8, it seems unlikely that the latter explanation is correct. It is more natural to understand "before" to mean that the Colossians had already heard about the hope contained in the word of truth of the gospel.

Note the difference between the A.V. and the A.S.V. in v. 6. The A.V. has Paul saying that the gospel has come into all the world and is bearing fruit, whereas the A.S.V. states that the gospel is bearing fruit in all the world. We know that the gospel had not yet reached all the world, but it was bearing fruit in all the world where it had been preached. There is something wrong with the preaching if the gospel does not bear fruit and if it does not continue to grow. On "increasing," Lightfoot comments that the gospel is "Not like those plants which exhaust themselves in bearing fruit, but the growth keeps pace with the reproductive energy."¹⁸ It not only bears fruit but makes wood as well.

The last half of v. 7 concerning Epaphras, rendered in the A.V., "who is for you a faithful minister of Christ," should be rendered as in the A.S.V. and other revisions, "who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf." This indicates that Epaphras was commissioned by Paul and was officially a part of Paul's evangelistic team.

III. PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL WISDOM - 1:9-14

⁹For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy; ¹²giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins."

Having heard from Epaphras that the Colossian Christians were abounding in works of faith and love, Paul is led to pray that they might abound even more. He prayed that

¹⁷ Alexander Maclaren, quoted by Vincent *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 463.

¹⁸ Bishop Lightfoot, quoted by Vincent, *ibid.* p. 464.

they might be filled (ple-ro-o). The verb, "to fill," and the noun, "fulness," are favorite words of Paul in his prison epistles. These words are used eight times in Ephesians, four times in Philippians, and seven times in Colossians. "Filled with the knowledge of his will." Paul does not use the simple word for knowledge, but the intensive form (epignosis), which means "full and complete knowledge." He uses this word in the opening prayer in all of his first imprisonment epistles ([Eph. 1:17](#); [Phil. 1:9](#); [Col. 1:9](#); and [Phile. 6](#)). The fact that Paul was in prison and had more time to contemplate the deep truths of the gospel may explain why he places so much emphasis upon knowledge. Another reason may be the incipient error of Gnosticism which was creeping in. The Gnostics claimed to have secret knowledge possessed only by the initiated, and thus Paul had to show the superior knowledge of the gospel. This complete knowledge of God's will was to be in all spiritual wisdom (*sophia*) and understanding (*sunesei*). In his prayer in Ephesians he prayed for wisdom and prudence (*phronesis*). Lightfoot¹⁹ points out that "sophia" is mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense. "Sunesis" is intelligence, and "*Phronesis*" is prudence: both being applications of "*sophia*" to details. "*Sunesis*" is critical, apprehending the bearings of things. "Pronesis" is practical, suggesting lines of action. The word "spiritual" is emphatic by reason of its position grammatically. The gnostics and other mystics also spoke of "sophia" but their wisdom had only a "show of wisdom" (Col. 2:23). Paul elsewhere describes it as the wisdom of the world, the wisdom of man, the wisdom of the flesh. See especially [1 Corinthians 1:18-2:8](#).

The consequence of this spiritual knowledge is "to walk worthily of the Lord (Christ) unto all pleasing." The end result of spiritual knowledge is conduct. If a person's conduct is not changed by his knowledge, it is not true, spiritual knowledge. Again Paul uses the intensive form of the word knowledge. The knowledge of God is like the refreshing shower which nurtures the growth of the garden.

Here we have a great contrast: "strengthened with all power" and "the might of his glory" (vs. 11), contrasted with "all patience and longsuffering." The world often looks upon the latter two things as weakness, but not so. It requires great power to exercise patience and longsuffering. People sometimes ask, If there is a God, why doesn't He do something about all of the crime and injustice in the world? Peter tells us why ([2 Pet. 3:9](#)). God is longsuffering to sinful mankind, not willing that any should perish. Had it not been for His longsuffering and patience, mankind would have been destroyed in God's judgment long ago. Notice that our longsuffering is to be "with joy," not complainingly putting up with things.

Thanksgiving always produces joy (vs. 12). Therefore we are to give thanks to the Father, who has made us meet, that is, competent, able, worthy, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Paul is probably here using the inheritance of Canaan and the allotment of different parcels of the land to the various tribes as an analogy to our inheritance in Christ. Similar language is used by Paul in Acts 26:18 concerning his ministry to the Gentiles: "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and

¹⁹ *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (London, Macmillan and Co., 1890), p. 169.

inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

The word for "power" in this verse is similar to the English word "license," which means "to be permitted." It has a double meaning. You may purchase a license to operate your automobile. But one may also take license, that is, act licentiously, contrary to constituted rules or authority. The Greek word also has this meaning. It may be a delegated power or a tyrannical lawless power. Here "the power of darkness" has this latter meaning. Jesus spoke of "the power of darkness" in Luke 22:53. We have been translated out of this tyrannical, disordered power into the well-ordered kingdom of the Son of His love. Whereas v. 13 represents God as a mighty warrior delivering us from the power of darkness, v. 14 presents Him as a Philanthropist who releases us from slavery by paying a ransom. Redemption is defined as the forgiveness of sins.

IV. DOCTRINAL - THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST: 1:15-2:7

A. *The Uncreated Creator. 1:15-17*

¹⁵Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: ¹⁶for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities; or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; ¹⁷and he is before all things, and in him all things consist.

The Gnostics taught that there was a series of emanations from God, the final one being the creator of the world. They used the word "redemption" in their baptismal formula, but it was not a redemption from sin, but from that which was inherent in the constitution of nature and therefore due to its creator. Paul claims that the redemption of which he speaks is from sin, and was accomplished, not by some intermediary, but by One who is the very image of God, the firstborn of all creation. The term "firstborn" does not mean that Christ came into existence at some point in time, as the next verse indicates. Firstborn is a term that means "heir". He, Christ, is Heir of the Universe. Paul first relates Christ to God: He is the visible representation of the invisible God. He then relates Christ to creation: He existed prior to every created thing and is therefore the Heir of all creation.

The A. V. has, "For by him," whereas the R.V. has, "For in him." While it is true that the universe was created by Him, the idea here is not that of instrumentality, but that in Christ resides the creative power and act. Paul makes it plain that all things means everything that is in heaven or earth, no matter what they may be called. Thus the most exalted of angelic beings as well as a speck of dust, was created in and through Christ, as well as for Him. The fact that He is before all things is evidence that He is not a part of creation. There are numerous New Testament passages which clearly teach the Creatorhood of Christ. John 1:1-3 is an outstanding example. Not only were all things created in Christ, but in Him all things consist or hold together. Unimaginable force and power is required to keep all matter from disintegrating. The power is in Him that holds the universe together.

B. Preeminence of the Head - 1:18

¹⁸*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

In the two preceding verses Paul speaks of Christ as the Head of all creation. In this verse he presents Christ as Head of the Church which is His Body. While Paul uses the human body as an illustration of the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, we must be careful not to think of the Body of Christ looking like an immense human body, or of anything about that Body as having physical characteristics. Theologians sometimes call it the *mystical* Body. Just as the human body has many members joined together by joints and tendons (cf. Eph. 4:15, 16), just so are all believers joined together spiritually in a spiritual body of which Christ is the Head, or as we saw in Philippians, Christ is the Mind that is in every member and is supposed to control every member. We generally think of the head as the skull that sits above our shoulders. But the skull contains many members: ears, eyes, mouth, tongue, various glands, etc. The real head is that which controls every member.

In the previous verses Christ is presented as the firstborn of all creation. Now He is called the firstborn from the dead. Thus there is a parallelism between His Headship over Creation and over the Church. There were resuscitations of the dead before Christ's resurrection, but no resurrections, in the sense that Christ was raised. In His resurrection He is the beginning of a new spiritual life. The words, "that in all things he might have the preeminence," read in the Greek text, "that in all things he might become being first." There is thus a contrast between the verb "is" in v. 17 and "become" in v. 18. He is, in the sense of always having been, Head of all creation, but He became Head over all things to the Church by the resurrection from the dead. The same idea is expressed in Philippians 2:6, 7, where He always existed in the form of God but became (not simply was) in the form of man historically through the Incarnation.

If Christ became Head of the Body through resurrection, then it would seem logical to say that the Body of Christ, the Church, began with His resurrection from the dead. However, Paul indicates that the Body was formed by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, and many commentators teach that this took place at Pentecost, almost two months after the resurrection. We have pointed out previously that the baptism which took place at Pentecost was not that of the Holy Spirit doing the baptizing but of Christ doing the baptizing with the Holy Spirit. We believe, therefore, that the work of the Spirit in forming the Body of Christ took place subsequent to Pentecost under the ministry of the Apostle to whom this new and heretofore unannounced truth was made known. It is true that the Body began potentially with Christ's resurrection, but not historically with it. There are many things which potentially reside in the death and resurrection of Christ, which did not occur historically at that time. For example, Hebrews 2:14, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil." But the Devil was not actually destroyed historically at the time of Christ's death. That will take place at the end of the millennium. There was the potential in His death to destroy the Devil,

and that potential will one day be manifested. The same principle is true in the salvation of sinners today. We are saved today, almost twenty centuries after Christ died, by His death. There was potential in that death to save all sinners who ever lived, either before or after His death. Just so, there was potential in His rising from the dead, not only to become Head of the Church, but to become Head of all new life in the ages to come.

C. Peace and Reconciliation - 1:19, 20

¹⁹*For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell;*
²⁰*and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.*

Here we have the climaxing statement concerning the eternal Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was God the Father's good pleasure that in Christ should all the plenitude of Deity dwell. "The fulness" is a technical theological term which means the totality of divine powers and attributes. In ch. 2:9 the statement is repeated with added words which make this fact self-evident: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." This statement is the grand climax to all that Paul has been saying about Christ: image of God, firstborn of all creation, firstborn from the dead, Creator, the preexistent One, Head of the Church, Head of all things, first in all things. The false teachers at Colosse gave Christ an exalted position, but a position far below absolute Deity; just as modern Jehovah Witnesses do in making Christ the mightiest of angels, but not Deity.

It should be noted that the word Paul uses for "dwell" means permanent dwelling (katoikia). There is a word for transitory dwelling (paroikia). This was another error of some of the false teachers who held that the divine Spirit came upon Jesus during His earthly ministry, but left Him at His death. But Paul states that all of the fulness of Deity permanently dwells in Him.

Verse 20 has become a very controversial passage. What is meant by "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself?" There are those who claim that this verse means that every created intelligence in the universe will some day be brought back into a saving relationship with God. Those who hold this view are generally known as *Universal Reconciliationists*. There are various schools of Universalism, all the way from liberals who believe that no one is lost or that there is such a place as hell, to some who follow a form of dispensationalism. It seems evident from a number of scriptural facts that this passage does not teach universal salvation.

First, if this is the meaning of the gospel, it seems strange that there is only this one verse out of dozens which state this fact. If Satan and his angels, along with all of the wicked Christ-rejectors, are going to be saved, we would expect this fact to be emphasized.

Second, since the same word "everlasting," is used to describe the future of the

saved and the unsaved ([John 3:16](#); [1 Tim. 1:16](#) with [Matt. 25:46](#) and [2 Thes. 1:9](#)), it is apparent that the punishment of the unsaved lasts as long as the everlasting life of the saved.

Third, this passage does not speak about the reconciliation of people only, but of "all things." Somewhat the same thing is stated in Acts 3:21, "the times of the restoration of all things"; but it should be noted that in the context it is "all things which had been spoken by the mouth of the prophets. They never spoke about the Devil and all of the wicked being restored in a saving relationship with God.

A fourth observation is that the expression "all things," (ta panta), does not necessarily mean the Universe. For example, try reading "the universe" into the following passages in which "ta panta" occurs: [2 Corinthians 4:15](#); [12:19](#); [Ephesians 4:15](#); [5:13](#); [Philippians 3:8, 21](#); [Colossians 3:8](#). The "all things" in these passages is determined by the context. They do not mean all universally.

In keeping with the above argument is the fact that the "all things" in our text are limited to "all things in heaven and upon the earth." Paul recognizes three spheres of habitation: "things in heaven, in the earth, and under the earth" (Phil. 2:10). The unsaved, those under the earth, will in that future day, have to admit that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God. They will be put under His feet. That does not mean that they are saved. God's enemies are going to be put under His feet.

There are two other very important passages on "ta panta."

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things (panta) under His feet. But when He saith: all things (panta) are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things (ta panta) under Him, And when all things (ta panta) shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things (ta panta) under Him, that God may be all in all (panta en pasin)" (1 Cor. 15:26-28).

There is no doubt but that the "ta panta" in this passage is universal, for it names the last enemy to be destroyed, which means that there will be no more rebels or powers running loose to disrupt God's eternal kingdom of righteousness and peace. This passage does not say that every intelligent being shall be saved, but that everything shall be subdued under His feet. Enemies in this passage are destroyed, but this word (katargeo) does not mean "to annihilate," but "to render idle, inactive, inoperative." There is a graphic picture of this in Isaiah 14 concerning Lucifer (secondary reference to the king of Babylon), who excelled in power over all nations of the earth. He is seen here in the pit of sheol, and the other great ones ask, "Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like us?" Satan and the ungodly are still in existence, but all strength has been taken from them; they are weak; they can no longer operate.

The other passage with "ta panta" is Hebrews 2:8: "Thou hast put all things (panta) in subjection under His feet. For in that He put all (ta panta) in subjection under Him,

He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see not yet all things (ta panta) put under Him." Here again "ta panta" refers to the grand consummation when all chaos will be removed from God's universe, and all things will be reconciled, or brought back to order and peace.

The blood of Christ has brought peace and has provided the means of reconciliation. The blood was a propitiation towards God, and a reconciliation towards man. But man must receive that reconciliation by faith. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). And Paul writes to the Romans, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." (5:10, 11).

D. Alien Enemies Reconciled – 1:21-23

²¹"And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works,
²²yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him: ²³if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister.

There is quite a similarity between this passage and Ephesians 2:11-19, where the relationship of Gentiles to God in past dispensations is described. The Gentile word was alienated, estranged, enemies of God in their mind in the outward sphere of their evil works (see [Eph. 2:12; 4:18; Rom. 5:10; Jas. 4:4](#)). The apostasy of the Gentile world is set forth in detail in Romans 1:18-32. The mind is the spiritual seat of man's enmity towards God. In Luke 1:51 this word "mind" is translated "imagination" of their hearts. Very often in Scripture the word "heart" is used as synonymous with "mind." (cf. [Rom. 1:21](#) with [Eph. 4:18](#) where "understanding" is the word "mind").

"Yet now hath He reconciled." "Reconciled" is in the aorist tense, which speaks of past finished action. How then can it be "now"? The "now" does not mean the immediate present, but in the present dispensation. There are numerous uses of now in this sense, as in Romans 3:21, "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested."

The word "body" in Paul's epistles refers sometimes to the human body of flesh and sometimes to the spiritual body, the Church. Paul makes it plain which body he means. Christ had to have a real, human body of flesh in order to die and thus effect the reconciliation. Marcion, a gnostic heretic who came to Rome around 140 A.D. and became the leader of a Christian sect, omitted the words, "of his flesh," as inconsistent with his gnostic views, and taught that the "body" here was the spiritual body, the Church. No doubt the Spirit of God anticipated the rise of gnosticism which denied either that Christ had a body of flesh, or that he accomplished reconciliation through

death in His body of flesh. The Apostle John states: "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:3). Hebrews 2:14 states that since the ones saved are partakers of flesh and blood, He himself likewise took part of the same. There is the tendency on the part of some to slight or minimize the true humanity of Jesus Christ in order to defend His Deity. He is the God-man: truly man and at the same time, truly God.

The purpose of the reconciliation is to present us holy and without blemish, and unreprouvable in His sight. *Holy* means separated unto God for His possession and use. *Without blemish* is a more accurate rendering than the "unblamable" of the A.V. The same thing is true in Ephesians 1:4, where the same Greek word is used. *Unreprouvable*: not only without blemish, but free from any charge or consequence of blemish. It is interesting to note that the A.V. translates this Greek word, "*blameless*:" "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8).

Here we are confronted by an "if": "IF ye continue in the faith." This verse is not an argument against the eternal security of the believer. The Scripture never contradicts itself, and there are many more positive statements about security in Christ than there are "ifs". The fact is, that the Scripture never gives us the right to judge that a person who is living in sin is saved, simply because he says he believes. Truly saved persons may and do commit sins; otherwise there would be no need for the work of Christ at God's right hand as advocate and intercessor (1 John 2:1; Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34). True Christian faith is a continuing or abiding faith. It is not a matter of doing meritorious works in order to keep saved. The fact that the "if" (eige) is followed by the indicative and not the subjunctive mood shows that Paul is not doubting the Colossian's continuance in the faith. Trench says that this grammatical construction "converts a hypothesis into a hope." (ibid p. 161)

The word "grounded" means built on a foundation and therefore firmly established. "Be not moved away" has the sense of not constantly shifting. "The hope of the gospel" is the hope which the Gospel gives us.

Paul's statement that the gospel was preached to all creation does not mean that it had been preached to every person who was then alive. It means that the gospel had been offered to all mankind without reservation or distinction. Paul uses hyperbole frequently (see [ch. 1:6](#); [1:28](#); [1 Thes. 1:8](#)).

Paul is not showing egotism when he says, "I Paul". Compare especially [Ephesians 3:1-9](#), where he asserts the same thing, but ends with the statement that he was less than the least of all saints. He is magnifying his office as the Apostle of the Gentiles, to whom was given by direct revelations from the lips of Jesus Christ the dispensing of the Mystery. None of the false teachers could make or substantiate such a claim.

E. *The Dispensation that Fulfills the Word of God – 1:24-27*

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; ²⁵whereof I was made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which was given me to you-ward, to fulfill the word of God, ²⁶even the mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations; but now hath it been manifested to his saints, ²⁷to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Paul was not rejoicing because he was suffering; rather he was rejoicing in the midst of his suffering as a Roman prisoner. It was not only for the sake of the Colossians that Paul endured such sufferings, but for ours also. Had he not been faithful and willing to lay down his life daily (Rom. 8:36), we would not have the gospel of the grace of God, humanly speaking. So we too are indebted to Paul. Paul rejoiced that he was privileged to fulfill this mission for the glory of Christ. No one goes through suffering for the gospel's sake without a sense of joy. Turn to [1 Peter 4:13, 14](#) to see what Peter says about rejoicing in the midst of suffering for Christ's sake.

"To fill up" is a double compound word which means literally, "to fill up by adding." What was he filling up? On his own part he was filling up that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ. The afflictions of Christ do not describe Christ's sufferings on the Cross to pay the penalty of sin. The Greek word used here for sufferings (tribulations) is never used to describe His death. The afflictions of Christ are those that He suffered in His earthly ministry. Christ told His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," the same word as in our text, (John 16:33). Paul told the Philippians, "Because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf." (Phil. 1:29). And he told Timothy, "but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God," and "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 1:8; 2:10). He also told Timothy, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). These verses speak of that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ. The part lacking is the part that Christ did not endure in His earthly ministry, but which is to be endured by members of His Body, the Church. The church at Pentecost, or the church mentioned in the Gospels, or that mentioned in the Old Testament is never called the Body. The Church which is His Body is the subject of the new revelation given to Paul, which we shall see in the next two verses.

The phrase, "which was given me to you-ward to fulfill the word of God," is parenthetical. This phrase separates the word "dispensation" from "the mystery". The name of the dispensation of which Paul was made a minister is "the mystery". As in Ephesians 3, Paul declares two things: it was given to him, no other apostle makes such a claim, and it is a truth that was hidden from all previous ages and generations. There is no trace of this truth about the Church which is Christ's Body in God's revelation before it was given to Paul. This fact in no way puts Paul on a pedestal or gives undue glory to him. It is simply a fact that God chose to reveal this mystery to Paul, just as He chose to reveal the Law through Moses.

The Mystery is not something mysterious or hard to understand. It was, before Paul, a secret that only God knew about, but this secret has now been made manifest to His saints. Christ personally, as the Son of God, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, was made known through type and prophecy from the very beginning of time. But the fact that God would constitute a group of His saints into a church called the Body of Christ was not made known prior to Paul. Paul's epistles are full of truth for members of the Body.

Most Bible expositors make the Mystery to be simply Gentile admission to salvation. But this was no mystery or secret. The prophets are replete with promises of Gentile salvation. Paul quotes some of those prophets in Romans 15:9-12, not to indicate that his special ministry was a fulfillment of the prophets, but to make plain to his Jewish antagonists that God had predicted Gentile salvation; so why would they become angry or accuse him of heresy in preaching to the Gentiles. It is impossible to make "that which was never before made known," to be the same as that which had been made known. And yet this is what the majority of Bible expositors unconsciously do. They fail to see the distinctiveness and uniqueness of Paul's revelation.

God was pleased to, or more literally, He willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among or in the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. The Body of Christ is a joint-body of Jews and Gentiles, but it is evident that the Gentile nations of the world far outnumber the small Jewish nation. Therefore, the Church is largely Gentile and the Mystery is described as the mystery among the Gentiles. Halley's *Bible Handbook* gives the total World population as 2,400,000,000 and Jewish population as 101,000,000,²⁰ making about one out of every 220 people to be a Jew. Since Paul was called to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, he magnified his office as such.

The mystery is described as Christ's Body, the Church. The riches of the glory of this mystery is described as Christ in you Gentiles, the hope of glory. In contrast to the false teachers at Colosse who taught that Christ was merely one of the emanations or intermediaries between God and man, Paul teaches that ALL is in Christ. In Christ the whole fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell. The Cross of Christ has not only a worldwide comprehensiveness, but a universal one. And in this present section, the mystery comprehends all of the ages.

Paul says that it was given to him, Paul, to fulfill the word of God. The Mystery is that which fills up to the full God's Word. It fulfills in the sense of completing it. This does not mean that Paul was the last one to write Scripture, for John apparently wrote Revelation after Paul's death, but John did not add any new body of truth to the Word, as Paul did. The book of Revelation concerns the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

F. *Warning and Teaching Every Man – 1:28, 29*

²⁰ Henry H. Halley, *Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing Co. 1957) P. 908.

²⁸ *whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ* ²⁹ *whereunto I labor also, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

The preacher has a two-fold ministry: admonishing and teaching. On the word "admonition" see Acts 20:31; Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 4:14; 10:11; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:15. The word is sometimes translated "warning" in the A.V.

The expression, "every man" is repeated three times in vs. 28. No doubt Paul's purpose was to counteract the false teachers who taught an intellectual exclusiveness for those who had been inducted into the deepest mysteries. Paul's ministry was for every man. And the teaching was to be *in all* wisdom. Again, the false teachers held that full knowledge was only for those who understood philosophy, whereas the common man had to accept blind faith. Paul taught that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are open to every Christian (ch. 2:3). Paul's objective was to be able to present every man perfect in Christ. Concerning the word "perfect" (*teleios*), Lightfoot states: "While employing the favourite Gnostic term, the Apostle strikes at the root of the Gnostic doctrine. The language descriptive of the heathen mysteries is transferred by him to the Christian dispensation, that he may thus more effectively contrast the things signified. The true Gospel also has its mysteries, its hierophants, its initiation: but these are open to all alike. In Christ every believer is *teleios*, for he has been admitted as *epoptes* (eye-witnesses) of its most profound, most awful secrets."²¹ To the above end Paul "labored." This word was used for strict discipline and exercise in preparing for an athletic contest. The word "striving" (agonizing) describes the effort put forth by the wrestler in the ring. And "his working which worketh in me mightily" is His energizing which energizes in me with dynamite. The Gospel is the very power of God.

G. Acknowledgement of the Mystery.- 2:1-3

¹ *For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;* ² *that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ,* ³ *in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.*

Paul continues with the metaphor of the preceding verse. The word "strive" is "agona." Paul no doubt means that he was striving or wrestling in prayer for them, for he uses the same word in ch. 4:12: "striving for you in his prayers." The special reason for Paul's striving so hard in prayer for them was the danger of the false teaching to which they were exposed. His striving was for all who, like the Colossians and the Laodiceans, had not seen his face in the flesh. It is evident from this statement that Paul had never personally visited these two cities.

²¹ Bishop Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (London, Macmillan and Co., 1890), p. 169.

The word "comforted" is the same word as used for the Holy Spirit in John 14:16, and means "one called alongside to help." The meaning here is not that of tranquilizing, but of bracing or strengthening, as a result of their hearts being knit together in love.

The verb, "being knit together," has the meaning of "being instructed" in the LXX, but here, as in Ephesians 4:16, it has the sense of being united or compacted.

"Face" and "heart" are put in opposition. They had not met Paul face to face, but they had met him heart to heart. Somewhat the same idea is seen in 1 Thessalonians 2:17: "But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence (face), not in heart. . ."

Lightfoot gives the following expanded paraphrase of vs. 2 and 3: "I am constantly wrestling in spirit that the hearts of all such may be confirmed and strengthened in the faith; that they may be united in love; that they may attain to all the unspeakable wealth which comes from the firm conviction of an understanding mind, may be brought to the perfect knowledge of God's mystery, which is nothing else than Christ - Christ containing in Himself all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden away."²²

Love is the cement of the Gospel. Paul calls Love the *bond* of perfectness (ch. 3:14). Truly Christian hearts are knit together, bonded, cemented, glued together in love. There is a great deal of practical truth in this statement.

If these verses say anything, they say that believers must be associated with other believers and be bound together in the bonds of love. There are doubtless many Christians who, for one reason or another, have isolated themselves from other believers. Some simply stop assembling with others as a church. Some find a teacher they like and they sit at home listening to his tapes, and think thereby they are becoming more spiritual. There are churches today like that at Corinth, where there is division and immorality, or like that in Galatia where there is controversy, or where emotionalism runs wild, and such churches no doubt are the cause of the isolation of many Christians. But such isolationists may be no more spiritual than the churches which drove them away.

From the very beginning of the human race God has said that it is not good for man to be alone. That statement has its primary application to marriage, but it applies as well to Christian fellowship. The isolationist dismembers the Body of Christ. What good is a hand or foot or eye or ear, if it is isolated, cut off, disjoined from the other members of the body? And what good is a church where there is bickering and division instead of fellowship in love?

We often think of Paul, not as a pastor but as a missionary. He was a missionary indeed, but he was a super-pastor over all the churches he had founded, and even over those like Colosse and Laodicea where Paul had never been. Paul enumerates all of the things he had suffered for the gospel's sake, and then he says, "Besides those

²² Lightfoot, *ibid.*, p. 169, 170.

things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). He really cared for all of those in all of the churches. He was troubled by anything that threatened to break the bond of fellowship, just as he was troubled by the threat of Gnosticism at Colosse. The words "save" and "salvation" are often translated "heal, be made whole, health." Salvation includes more than the forgiveness of sins, or of getting to heaven at last. Salvation is healing the sin-sick soul. It is a restoration of the proper relationships between body, soul, spirit, and mind, all of which have been thrown out of adjustment by sin. In fact, in Ephesians 4:12 Paul uses the word translated "for the perfecting of the saints," which was used for the setting of broken bones. God's love shed abroad in the believers' lives is a therapeutic agent. R.E.O. White, in his study on Colossians says:

"Paul makes mutual edification one main purpose of church life - meaning that each Christian circle should be ready to throw around the man or woman under pressure of temptation, persecution, or doubt, and around every new convert, the strong shield of intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual support and friendship. To Paul, each local church was a nursery, a school for saints."²³

We need pastors and leaders of churches with big hearts like that of Paul, filled with the love of Christ, caring for and healing the souls of Christians who, in the complex maize of modern life, become discouraged, emotionally upset, and feel that they just cannot keep up with the *rat race*. Such people need empathy, help, encouragement, not simply censure. They need a little *gospel glue* to reintegrate them into a wholeness of life.

H. Rooted, Built Up, and Established – 2:4-7

⁴*This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech. ⁵For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. ⁶As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and builded up in him, and established in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

False teachers usually have persuasiveness of speech, otherwise they would not win so many converts. If what they were teaching were made clear and plain, people would not be deluded. Many such teachers are simply high-pressure salesmen who succeed in selling a poor product at an exorbitant price.

Paul's greatest joy was in seeing other believers living lives worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians he was afraid that the severe persecution they were enduring might cause them to defect from the gospel. He therefore sent Timothy back to Thessalonica, when he could no longer forbear, to learn of their welfare. When Timothy returned with good tidings, Paul wrote to them, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thes. 3:8). To state it another way, Paul was saying, "It would kill us to learn that you had renounced Christ."

²³ R.E.O. White, *To Him the Fulness* (Old Tappan, N.J., Fleming H. Revell Co., 1978) p. 69.

There are two military metaphors in this verse. "Your order" is a military term to describe the orderly array of soldiers marching in step in straight lines or columns. The word steadfastness" means "solid front" or "solid phalanx." It has been suggested that Paul's use of military metaphors as here and in Ephesians 6, came naturally from his association with the praetorian guard during his imprisonment.

Paul does not say, "As ye have received the gospel," as we might have expected, but because the false teachers had perverted the truth concerning Christ's person, he says, "As ye have received the Christ, even Jesus, the Lord." Jesus is the true Christ, and He is Lord.

Paul changes from the military metaphor to that of the tree and the building. Some trees have shallow roots and are easily toppled by a storm. Others have a deep taproot. Paul's word means "firmly rooted once for all." "Being built up" is a present participle, meaning that this process is to continue day by day. Sometimes Christ is presented as the foundation upon which we are to build, as in 1 Corinthians 3:11, 12. But here we are builded up IN Him. Christ is the sphere within which the building up takes place. Most versions translate, "established in the faith," but others understand "faith" to be a dative of instrument, and translate, as does the Jerusalem Bible, "held firm BY the faith you have been taught." Of course, we should be established in THE faith, that is, in the gospel, but here it seems to refer to being established by your personal faith.

"Abounding in thanksgiving." Paul lays great stress on thanksgiving. The Greek word has as its root the word "grace" (charis). It has the prefix "eu" which means "well": "wellgraced." That is why our prayer before meals is called "saying grace." Paul is the great Apostle of grace. To him was committed the gospel of the grace of God and the dispensation of the grace of God, and the believer is to express his wellgraced condition and position in Christ.

V. WARNING AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINE: 2:8-23

A. Warning Against Philosophy and Tradition: 2:8-15

⁸Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ;

The A.V. is ambiguous leaving the impression of spoiling or corrupting you. The Greek word means "taking captive," or "making booty of you." The false teachers were doing this through their philosophy and vain deceit. Paul is not making a wholesale condemnation of philosophy, for the word means love of wisdom, and surely Paul says a great deal about gaining wisdom in this epistle. It was the false teacher's philosophy he was condemning. This philosophy was based on speculations and traditions of men, not upon the written revealed word of God. It was also after the rudiments of the world.

Paul uses this word "rudiments" in Galatians 4:3, "So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world." The word is also used in Hebrews 5:12, "ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God." Rudiments refer to ceremonialism: meats and drinks, baptisms, asceticism, new moon feasts, whether Jewish or pagan. Such things only detract from Christ, although at one time they may have been shadows of things to come (Heb. 10:1).

⁹for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, ¹⁰and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power.

The word *Godhead* is used only this one time in the New Testament. The word "Godhead" in Romans 1:20 in the A.V. is a different word which means "divinity" or "Godhood." The pagans knew God, not personally, but only through His attributes. We know God in a personal way through Christ, for in Christ dwells all of the fulness of the essential being and nature of God. The Gnostics taught that Jesus was simply one of many spirit emanations from God. But the Bible teaches that the plenitude of Deity is to be found in Jesus Christ. It is not just an attribute of God, but the fulness of the Godhead which dwells in Him, and in Him we are made full or complete. What a contrast is Christ and the position of the believer in Christ to the theosophical teachings of the Gnostics. And Paul makes it plain that this fulness of the Godhead dwells "bodily" in Christ. As the second Person of the Trinity the fulness dwelt in Him before His incarnation. Then He came in a body of flesh in incarnation and the fulness still dwells in Him bodily. He arose from the dead and ascended to heaven in a glorified human body and the fulness continues to dwell in Him bodily. Paul does not say that the fulness once dwelt in Him, but that it dwells (continues to dwell) in Him.

¹¹in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ;

The Judaizers insisted that salvation was impossible apart from physical circumcision (Acts 15:1). They were ignorant of the meaning of circumcision. They should have known from Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6 that physical circumcision was just a shadow of a spiritual work which was necessary. They had physical circumcision, but God said that they needed something more than that. God said that in a coming day He would circumcise their hearts, that they might live. And Paul says, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter (law); whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28, 29). Here in Colossians Paul declares that we, by virtue of being in Christ, are circumcised with a circumcision made without human hands. Circumcision was a cutting off of the flesh. Christ was circumcised as an infant according to the Mosaic Law. He was again circumcised when His flesh was cut off in death. By virtue of our union with Christ His circumcision becomes our circumcision, in the putting off of the body of flesh. Fleshly circumcision removed only a small part of the body, but spiritual circumcision puts off the whole corrupt carnal nature. *The body of the flesh* is used here in its moral sense as

being the seat of sin: "the flesh with its passions and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

¹²*having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

It is strange how commentators can be so inconsistent on certain subjects. For example, Bishop Lightfoot states that the circumcising work of vs. 11 is that of the Holy Spirit, and then he says of the baptizing work of vs. 12, "This circumcision ye have, because ye were buried with Christ to your old selves beneath the baptismal waters, and were raised with Him from those same waters to a new and regenerate life".²⁴ If we have this spiritual circumcision because we were physically baptized in water, then we cannot be regenerated apart from water baptism. How strange for Paul, in the midst of fighting against any kind of ceremonialism and human work having anything to do with salvation, to have him say we get all of these spiritual riches through going through a ritual in the flesh!! If the circumcision is spiritual, the baptism must also be spiritual.

Just as Christ's death was a circumcision, so also was His death a baptism. Paul asks, "Or are ye ignorant that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"

We were buried therefore with him through the baptism into the death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3, 4). The idea of being buried in water is entirely foreign to the Bible. The word for "buried" means "to inter," and inter means "to put into the earth; to bury in the ground." Christ's ministry began with water baptism and ended with death baptism. Christ Himself called His death a baptism: "But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Lk. 12:50).

¹³*And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses: ¹⁴having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross; ¹⁵having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

These verses tell us what Christ has done through His death and resurrection for us who were spiritually dead through our trespasses and the uncircumcision of our flesh. First, He made us alive. He regenerated us together with Himself. He forgave us all of our trespasses. He blotted out the bond written in ordinances (that is, the Law of God), which was against us and contrary to us. The Law is God's holy standard, which is against us because we have broken it. Williams states that "in the East bonds were cancelled by nailing them to a post."²⁵ Christ cancelled this bond, this debt that was against us, and thus took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. He was nailed to the cross, but in His death He nailed the Law to the cross, and thus became the end of the

²⁴ Lightfoot, *op. cit.* p. 175.

²⁵ Williams *op. cit.* p. 938.

law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4). In His death He also despoiled the evil satanic principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in the cross, having publicly exhibited them as far inferior to Himself. Angels assisted in the giving of the Law (Gal. 3:19), and from this fact there arose the idea of angelic mediators. This teaching was part of the Colossian heresy. But this ministry of angelic mediation ended at the cross, and Christ is now revealed as the one and only Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). The Law was an indirect way to God. Only the high priest could enter the presence of God, and that but once a year with the blood of a sacrifice. The gospel is a direct way into the very presence of God (Heb. 9:25; 10:20), for every believer. We can come boldly, with confidence to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

B. Warning Against Angelic Worship – 2:16-19

¹⁶Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: ¹⁷which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's. ¹⁸Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.

There are two warnings in these verses: Don't let anyone pass judgment on you for not observing their ceremonialism, and, Don't let anyone rob you of your prize, worshipping angels instead of holding to the Head, which is Christ.

The Apostle enumerates a number of the ceremonials associated with Mosaic Law: rules about which animal flesh it is unlawful to eat, the keeping of certain feast days, or the observance of new moons and the sabbath day. All of these observances were merely shadows cast by Christ before he arrived on the scene. A shadow has no reality or substance; yet millions of people are still trying to grasp the shadows, instead of seeing that the reality is in Christ. Their action is akin to that of a man who marries a beautiful and gracious woman, but never looks at her, never speaks to her, never embraces her, but instead sits before a dim picture of her, talking to it and kissing it. Don't let such a fellow as this criticize you for holding to your wife and enjoying her fellowship and love. That is what Paul is saying. See Romans 14:14-17; Hebrews 10:1 and 9:9, 10.

The first warning just considered was against ritualism and asceticism. The second warning was against theological error, the worship of angelic mediators. The first was practical; the second doctrinal. The first substituted shadows for the reality, and the second preferred an inferior being to the Head. The "things which he hath seen," refers to imagined or professed supernatural visions. The A.V. is wrong here.

By the mention of "your prize" Paul is saying, "Look, the race is almost won, the goal is in sight. Don't let anyone distract you with a false humility, thus taking your eyes off the Goal, which is Christ, and getting them fixed on some lesser person. These false

teachers may appear to have great humility by saying that we are too sinful to come directly to God; we must come through some lower angelic mediator. But that is a false humility. God has opened up a new and living way into His presence through Christ for everyone, and any other route to God is a false one. These false teachers like to dwell on visions they have seen. They are vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds.”

Paul speaks of the prize in 1 Corinthians 9:24 and Philippians 3:14. Lightfoot²⁶ and others are wrong in making the prize to be eternal life. Eternal life is the gift of God, not a reward for something we do. The Colossian believers already had eternal life. Paul did not want them to miss getting the prize at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:14).

The Head as the source of supply for the growth of the body is presented in more detail in Ephesians 4:15, 16.

In trying to distinguish between the Head and the Body, we must be careful not to identify the Head as that part of the Body which occupies the space above the shoulders. The human skull contains several members of the body: eyes, ears, nose, mouth; but that is not the kind of head of which Paul speaks. Christ is not the Skull of the body: He is the Head of the body as being the source of all spiritual life and energy. As we saw in Philippians, He is the Mind of the body, which is in communication with every member of the body, much as the brain through the nervous system in the physical body has two-way communication with every member. We must hold fast to the Head if we are to experience spiritual life and growth.

C. Warning Against Asceticism: 2:20-23

²⁰If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, ²¹Handle not, nor taste, nor touch ²²(all which things are to perish with the using) after the precepts and doctrines of men? ²³Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.

After showing the shallowness, the emptiness, the deceptiveness of philosophic speculation, of ceremonialism, of asceticism, of angel worship, all of which were mixed together in the heretical teachings at Colosse, and after showing the reality and the substance which resides in Christ, the Head, it is only natural to ask, Why would anyone choose the former and reject the latter? That form of the question should be addressed to an unsaved person. But when addressing a saved person, Paul puts the question a bit differently. He asks, "If you died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world do you subject yourselves to these things?" Paul has just told us that the believer had been identified with Christ in His death baptism, so that he died with Christ. This was a death, not only to the world, but to the sinful flesh also, for the believer was also circumcised with Christ, in putting off the body of the flesh. There is the paradox here of being dead and alive at the same time. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that have, but Christ liveth

²⁶ Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 193

in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." If we died to all of these rudimentary things of the worldsystem, how or why can we be in subjection to those things from which we are dead? How could dead people handle this, or taste that, or touch something else? And besides, all of these things are temporary: they perish with the using. They are nothing but the precepts and doctrines of men. They have no abiding value.

All of this religious ceremonialism and asceticism being practiced by the false teachers had indeed a show of wisdom in self-imposed worship, and humility, and self-discipline, but it was only a show put on by the fleshly nature and it had absolutely no value against the indulgence of the flesh (vs. 23). It was, in fact, an indulgence of the flesh, even when it went to extreme in excessive severity to the body. Religious people boast in their works, just as the Pharisee did when he went to the temple to pray. How he thanked God he was not sinful like that despised tax-collector over there, and how he congratulated himself on all of the ritual and religious exercises he had done. One looking on from the outside would say, " Why, there is a really good and godly man." But he left the temple unjustified before God. He made the mistake of praying to himself, instead of to God. Just so, these Judeo-gnostic teachers appeared outwardly to be true worshippers. Why, they were so humble that they didn't think they could come directly to God, but must approach Him through an endless line of eons or angelic mediators between God and man. And look at their self-discipline. They rigorously and severely suppressed the bodily appetites. This too appeared to be praise-worthy. But this form of asceticism was a very dangerous teaching. They held that all matter, the whole creation, was evil; that God had no connection with creation, for He was pure spirit. Between this pure Spirit and evil¹ matter lay a long line of spirit beings of less and less spirituality, the last of which was Jesus. This doctrine of matter being inherently evil denies God as Creator, denies Jesus Christ as being a member of the Godhead, makes marriage, sex, and the pleasures and joys of life to be inherently evil. If one believes that the human body is in itself inherently evil, and if that person is sincere, then he will try rigorously to suppress the body. But as Paul shows, while these things have a show of religiosity, they are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

VI. SPIRITUAL LIVING: 3:18-4:6

A. *Dead But Risen With Christ* – 3:1-4

¹If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. ³For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.

In the last section Paul based his teaching on the identification of the believer with Christ in His death. In this section the emphasis is upon identification in His resurrection. It is mind-boggling to realize that the millions of saved people of all ages

were buried in that tomb of Joseph's. And that these millions also arose victorious over death when Christ arose three days later. But that is what God asks us to believe when we believe the gospel.

In these last two chapters of Colossians Paul deals with the more practical matters of life and behavior. This is Paul's plan in most of his epistles. He lays the foundation doctrinally first, and then builds the life upon that foundation. Many people try to build their life without a foundation, with no assurance of the source of their strength or of the end which awaits them.

The A.V. has two mistakes in translation in vs. 1. "If ye then be risen with Christ," should be, "If then ye were raised together with Christ." And, "where Christ is seated on the right hand of God," should be, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God." "Seated" is a secondary predicate.

The "if" of this verse is not the "if" of doubt, but the "if" of argument. Every believer was raised together with Christ when He was raised. This took place two thousand years ago, and therefore could have nothing to do with any ceremony through which the believer might go today.

Life consists largely in seeking, looking for this and that. The natural man sets his mind on earthly things (Phil. 3:19, cf. Jas. 3:15), for that is all he knows about. The Christian knows about a much more wonderful place and he seeks for the better things above. Heaven is always presented as being above the earth. Doubters might ask, How could heaven be above, when for people on the opposite side of the earth it would be in the opposite direction. To begin with, the stellar heaven is always up, no matter where one might be located on earth. And further, "above" is not necessarily a direction, but a position of superiority. Christ has been given a name that is above every name that is named (Eph. 1:21).

"Set your mind:" the dictionary definition for "set one's mind on" is "to be determinedly desirous of. " Quoting Vincent: "*Seek marks the practical striving,- set your mind, the inward impulse and disposition.* Both must be directed at things above. 'You must not only seek heaven, you must think heaven.'²⁷ Vincent later quotes the statement from Lightfoot.

The reason we should not seek earthly things and not have a mind-set on earthly things is because "we died" in Christ's death. The reason why we should seek things above and set our minds on heavenly things is because "our life is hid with Christ in God." The new life which we receive in regeneration does not function in the sphere of the fleshly and the sensual. It is hidden in the sphere of God Himself. We are in the world but we are not of the world (See John 17, where the Lord mentions the world and His and our relation to it 19 times in His prayer).

Mention was made before of Bishop Lightfoot's inconsistency in reading water

²⁷ Vincent, *op. cit.* P. 501.

baptism into ch. 2:12. In commenting on the present verse he makes a grand statement which is true of Spirit baptism into Christ's death, but again he applies it to water baptism, which is a ritual ordinance. His statement is worth quoting:

"The change involved in baptism, if truly realized, must pervade a man's whole nature. It affects not only his practical conduct, but his intellectual conceptions also. It is nothing less than a removal into a new sphere of being. He is translated from earth to heaven; and with this translation his point of view is altered, his standard of judgment is wholly changed. Matter is to him no longer the great enemy; his position towards it is one of absolute neutrality. Ascetic rule, ritual ordinances, have ceased to have any absolute value, irrespective of their effects. All these things are of the earth, earthy. The material, the transitory, the mundane, has given place to the moral, the eternal, the heavenly."²⁸

It is difficult to understand how a man can begin a short paragraph by saying that a ritual ordinance produces all of these wonderful results, and at the end of the paragraph say that ritual ordinances have ceased to have any absolute value. And yet, this inconsistency pervades much of the Christian world.

It seems it must have come to Paul's mind, as he dictated these words about our wonderful, heavenly position, that he realized we are still upon the earth, surrounded by all of its sin and corruption and death, and even though we have the firstfruit of the Spirit, we groan along with the remainder of creation. So he hastens to point forward to the day when all of these glories shall be our actual experience.

"When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." Christ not only gives life (John 10:28), but He is Life. He has life in Himself (John 5:26).

When will Christ be manifested in glory, at the Rapture of the Church, or at His second coming back to earth? We believe that these are two separate events, and that the Rapture is a part of the truth of the Mystery which was never before made known to the sons of men in other ages or generations. The Church which is His Body and redeemed Israel are distinct entities. And yet God, in His eternal plan and purpose, placed these two events very close together in time. It is our conviction that at the Rapture we will be manifested with Christ in His glory in the heavenly sphere, and then as He comes back to earth we will be manifested in glory in the earthly sphere. The whole universe will blaze with His glory, so that every created intelligence will know that He is Lord of all. Surely the Body of Christ, even though distinct from Israel, will be manifested in glory with the Head, when He is displayed in the glory of His Kingdom as King of kings and Lord of lords.

B. Putting Off the Old and Putting on the New – 3:5-11

⁵*Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication,*

²⁸ Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; ⁶for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: ⁷Wherein also ye once walked, when ye lived in these things; ⁸but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: ⁹lie not to one another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings; ¹⁰and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: ¹¹where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.

Just what does Paul mean by putting to death the members of our body? We are reminded of Christ's words in Matthew 5:29, 30. Did He advocate actually cutting off a hand or foot or any other member of the human body which was involved in committing a sin? Or was He speaking symbolically? Mutilation of the body was strictly forbidden by God's Law, and besides, such chopping off of members of the body would probably lead to death from bleeding. When Paul enumerates the members which are upon the earth, he does not speak of hands, or feet, or eyes, but of evil practices in which the members of the body participate, such as uncleanness, passion, evil desires and covetousness. These are the things that are to be killed, not the physical members of the body. The human body is not evil in itself. In fact, Paul was warning against this gnostic error that matter is evil. Matter (the body) is neutral. The very same feet that were once swift to shed blood (Rom. 3:15), may now become beautiful feet that preach the gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15). So it is not the physical nature of man that is evil, but the moral nature. It is this old nature or "old man" that must be put to death, because the wrath of God will fall upon those who practice these evil things: those who are called the sons of disobedience. Before we were saved we all walked in these things when we lived in them. "Lived in" and "walked in" distinguish between the condition of their life and their practice. Their conduct conformed to their circumstances. But now that we are saved we must put away *all* of these works of the flesh; not only sins of the type just mentioned, but also anger, wrath, malice, railing, foul or abusive speaking, and lying. For a more complete catalog of the works of the flesh, see Galatians 5:19-21. All of these doings belong to the old man, and since faith has reckoned the old man to have been put to death in identification with Christ's death, there is no longer place for such practices.

The verb, "to put off, " in vs. 9, is used only here and in ch. 2:11 and 15. It means "to strip off from one's self, to get out of one's clothing," and a prefix which is added gives it the meaning of "getting away from them." Strip them off and leave them alone. It should be pointed out that the verbs, "put to death" (vs. 5), "Put them all away" (vs. 8), "ye have put off" (vs. 9), and "have put on" (vs. 10), are all in the aorist tense, which means past finished action. Paul is not talking about a long progression of putting off or putting away these evils, but to do it as a once for all act. The same idea is true in Romans 12:1, "present your bodies a living sacrifice." Would it have been acceptable for an Israelite to present a sacrificial animal to the priest, and then take it away and come every day presenting the same animal? Yet this is what many Christians do, or try to do, but the sacrifice can be offered only once. This does not mean that the person who has presented his body once for all as a living sacrifice is from that moment perfect

in behavior, for on occasions he may still lose his temper, or slip backwards in some other way, but when this happens he needs, not to go through the offering of himself as a sacrifice, but to confess the sin to God for what it is, and thus maintain his fellowship with God.

Once the "new man" has been put on, there is no place for taking him off and putting on the "old man" again. But after the once for all putting on of the new man, there is something that is not once for all, but a process. Now the present tense is used: the new man "*is being renewed* unto knowledge after the image of him that created him." The new man needs a constant renewing.

There are two Greek words for new: "neon" and "kainon." The former means "new in time, or young;" the latter "new in quality, fresh." The former is used in this passage, while the latter is used to describe the new man in Ephesians 4:24. However, the participle in Colossians, "is being renewed," is the verbal form of "kainon" and the "be renewed" of Ephesians 4:23 is the verbal form of "neon", so that both passages give the sense of new in time and new in quality. One is reminded of Old Testament passages, such as Isaiah 40:31: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

The new man is a creation of God. it is created in the image of God. It is being renewed unto the "epignosis" the full knowledge of God.

In verse 11 the A.V. is weak in stating simply that in Christ "there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman," etc. The verb used means, "there cannot be." All such distinctions belong to the earthly sphere. "Barbarian" (barbaros) means "a person rude in speech, one hard to be understood." The repetition of the syllable "bar bar" gives it a sort of onomatopoeic sound, as of one stuttering. It came to mean any one who didn't speak Greek fluently. Scythian was an inhabitant of Scythia, which is modern Russia. The Scythians were considered by the Greeks to be the wildest of all of the barbarians. The barbarians on the Island of Malta, Acts 28:2, were a very kind and friendly people. Luke called them barbarians because they didn't speak Greek, but not as a derogatory term.

All of these outward differences in the flesh have no meaning in Christ. The cultured Greek who believed had no better standing in Christ than the wildest Scythian who believed. Christ is all that matters and He is in all believers.

C. Results of Putting on the New Man – 3:12-15

¹²Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering: ¹³forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: ¹⁴and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness, ¹⁵and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one

body, and be ye thankful.

Christians have a name of honor which they must live up to. Before telling us what it means to put on the new man, we are reminded that we are God's elect. We are God's specially chosen ones. We must uphold the honor of our Father and of our family. Every time Christians sin they bring dishonor upon God. Five Christian virtues are named in this verse. "Compassion" means "entering into the sufferings of others, having pity upon those in distress." "Kindness" describes "an attitude of generousness and benevolence to others." "Lowliness" describes "a humble estimate of self." "Meekness" is just "the opposite of rashness and rudeness." "Longsuffering" is "the opposite of quick-tempered."

"Forbearing" means "putting up with people, or reflexively, controlling one's self." "Forgiving" is the Greek word for "showing grace." It means to give freely without cost or charge; hence, to forgive. The wrong of not forgiving others when God has forgiven us is reflected in the parable of the wicked servant in Matthew 18:21-35. But see also Luke 17:3, 4.

Love is the greatest of Christian virtues (1 Cor. 13:13). It is the super-glue, the bond of perfection, which holds every virtue together.

The word "rule" means "to umpire". Since the activities of the new man are at odds with those of the old man; since the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:17), the metaphor of a referee or umpire is appropriate, as keeping things under control.

D. *Doing All in the Name of the Lord Jesus – 3:16, 17*

¹⁶*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God.* ¹⁷*And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

Red-letter editions of the Bible give the impression that the words of Christ are to be found only in the four Gospels. What many people do not understand is that Christ spoke through the Apostle Paul also (2 Cor. 13:3). Christ spoke a number of things in His Kingdom ministry which are not for our obedience as members of the Body of Christ. For example, we are not to limit our ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:5, 6); we are not forbidden to provide finances and materials for the ministry (Matt. 10:9, 10); our message is not the Kingdom of heaven is at hand and our ministry is not healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, and raising the dead (Matt. 10:7, 8); we are not to be obedient to those who sit in Moses' seat (Matt. 23:2, 3). Many of the words Christ spoke in His earthly ministry are compatible with those He spoke through Paul and can be included in Paul's exhortation. Since Paul's Gentile churches did not as yet have the Four Gospels it is evident that the words of Christ are those contained in Paul's personal ministry and epistles. Paul makes only two references to

words which Christ spoke while on earth: (Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 11:24-26).

The A.S.V. correctly punctuates vs. 16 by placing the semicolon after richly, instead of after wisdom, as in the A.V. We are to teach and admonish in all wisdom. Wisdom is more than knowledge. It is good judgment based upon knowledge.

"Teaching" and "admonishing" refer to the positive and the negative sides of instruction: what to do and what not to do. The rendering of both the A.V. and the A.S.V. makes the teaching and admonishing to be by means of music. Most modern versions punctuate as in the N.I.V., "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and counsel one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual psalms with gratitude in your hearts to God." We must guard against formality and professionalism in our church music. We may become so familiar with the hymns we sing that the words come out automatically without any thought of their meaning. On the other hand, music may be professionalized to the point it becomes a means of entertainment instead of worship.

In the foregoing verses of this chapter Paul has begun to deal with the practical aspects of our moral and spiritual life, of things we should not be doing and of things we should be doing. Now in vs. 17 he sums up all of these by saying that we should do all of these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Two questions arise in our minds. What are the all things we are to do, and what does it mean to do them in the name of Christ?

When a science teacher teaches his student to do everything in the textbook in performing an experiment, the everything may include only three or four things out of thousands of things the student might do. When Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13), or more accurately, "I am sufficient for all things through Christ who strengthens me," he did not mean that he could jump over the moon or fly like a bird. The all things of which Paul was speaking were limited to those things he was speaking about: enduring hunger, thirst, privation, or any other adversity he might face in life. Thus we understand Paul to be saying in Colossians 3:17, "Do all of these things which I have just stated in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

In the parallel passage in Ephesians 5:20 Paul says, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Does the "all things" of this verse include acts of rape and murder of loved ones, or the high-handed actions of a brother who splits the church and drives people away from Christ? We can thank God that He will some day judge all of these sinful acts in righteousness, but that is far different from thanking Him that the acts were committed, whether by ourselves or others.

The other question concerns the meaning of doing a thing in another person's name. We cannot sign checks, enter into contracts or make promises in another person's name unless we have legal authority, such as power of attorney. If doing things in Christ's name has this legal significance, then it is evident that the "all things" we do is

limited to those things which He has specifically given us the authority to do in His word. We cannot say, "I am going to cheat on my income tax in the name of Christ." That should be obvious. But what about the hundreds of mundane things we do every day? Some Christians defend their actions by saying, "The Lord told me to do it." We have to be very careful about making God responsible for our acts. We may pray and hope we have made the right decision in a business venture, and we may have done it with the desire to glorify the Lord, but that is no proof that God authorized our action. Paul knew nothing against himself, but that did not justify his actions (1 Cor. 4:4). We all have to wait for the judgment seat of Christ when God will make manifest the counsels of the heart and bring to light the hidden things of darkness.

Paul uses the expression "in the name of Christ" five times (here and 1 Cor. 5:4; 6:11; Eph. 5:20 and 2 Thes. 3:6). He also used it in casting out the demon from the young woman at Philippi (Acts 16:18). Christ gave the apostles the authority to cast out demons and to cure diseases (Lk. 9:1), and they exercised this authority in His name (Mk. 16:17, 18). Paul had the authority in the name of Christ to commit a sinning brother to Satan for the destruction of his body (1 Cor. 5:4, 5), but God has not committed this apostolic power to us today as members of the Body of Christ. A judge is a person of authority. The Twelve Apostles are going to sit as judges over the Twelve Tribes of Israel in the coming Kingdom (Matt. 19:28). We as members of the Body of Christ will some day judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3), but that authority has not yet been committed to us.

Thus it would seem that doing all things in the name of Christ includes only those things which He has commanded us or has given us authority to do. Doing all things for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31) includes also all of the mundane things which we do, such as eating and drinking. God has not authorized or commanded what and how much we must eat and drink or how many meals we should eat each day. These and many other daily activities are left up to our own judgment. But we can do all of these things with the motive of glorifying God. God has promised to direct our paths if we commit our ways unto Him, but our trouble is that we are not always fully committed to Him.

VII. PRACTICAL LIVING: 3:18-4:6

A. Family Duties of the New Life – 3:18-21

¹⁸*Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.* ¹⁹*Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.* ²⁰*Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord.* ²¹*Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged.*

These four brief admonitions to wives, husbands, children, and fathers are dealt with in much more detail in Ephesians 5:22-6:4. The suggestion has been made that what we called the epistle to the Ephesians is what Paul called the epistle to the Laodiceans, and since Paul asked the Colossians to also read the Laodicean epistle, it is suggested

that you do the same on our notes on that epistle.

The subjection shown by the wife is balanced by the love of the husband, which is to be of the same kind and quality as that with which Christ loves the Church. Love is the positive quality of the husband's attitude, and gentleness, or lack of bitterness or harshness is the negative aspect.

Children are to obey their parents in all things. The word obey" is a compound of "to hear" and "under," to hear under, to hear submissively. The first step in obedience is to hear. Unless a child hears and understands what the parent commands, he cannot obey. Parents are sometimes poor communicators, and they take it out on their children. If children can read it might be a good idea to write out the chores for which they are responsible, or demonstrate so that they will be sure to understand.

The Father as head of the family has the ultimate responsibility for the discipline of the children. The father is not to provoke, stir up, irritate the child in administering discipline. This does not mean throwing away the rod, but using it justly and judiciously. The child should be informed beforehand of the nature of the discipline for disobedience, and the severity of the penalty should be commensurate with the act of disobedience. When overly harsh discipline is meted out, Paul says they become discouraged. This word conveys the idea of losing heart, giving up, becoming despondent. If a child tries to obey but has not been made to understand exactly what is required of him, and he is constantly reprimanded, he will probably give up trying, or develop a complex that he can never do anything right. Discipline is mostly a negative process. There should also be the positive aspect of recognition of obedience for the encouragement of the child. And, of course, there must be no partiality shown to one child over another. There is no partiality or respect of persons with God (Deut. 1:17; Acts 10:34).

We need to understand the difference between punishment as a penalty and as a discipline. The purpose of punishment is to inflict a penalty upon the lawbreaker. The biblical word for discipline or chastening means "child training." It is administered for the good of the child, not for his hurt. A judge metes out a penalty on the criminal; a father administers correction. The judge acts on the basis of legal justice; the father on the basis of love.

B. Servants and Masters – 3:22-4:1

²²*Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord: ²³whatsoever ye do, work heartedly, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; ²⁴knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵For he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. ^{4:1}Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*

The words "slaves" and "masters," have no place in our modern vocabulary. Today it is "labor" and "management". But the principles expressed in these verses apply equally to our modern culture. Of course, in communist countries and other dictatorships, the government is the master and the plebeian is the slave.

It is instructive to note that Paul did not head up an activist movement of slaves to rebel against their masters. He seemingly does not speak one word against slavery. We know that some of Paul's converts owned slaves. Paul's weapon against slavery was the same as against all other wrongs, the Gospel. We see this weapon in action in the case of Philemon and Onesimus. Paul sends the runaway slave back to his master, but he writes a letter to the master:

"I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus, who once was unprofitable to thee, but now is profitable to thee and to me: whom I have sent back to thee in his own person, that is, my very heart: whom I fain would have kept with me, that in thy behalf he might minister unto me in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as necessity, but of free will. For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever; no longer as a bond-servant, but more than a bond-servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord."

Christian slaves were to serve their masters as though they were serving Christ Himself. They were to obey, not only when their master was watching them, but in the secret of their own hearts. What a testimony these Christian slaves must have been to their masters, and no doubt they received much persecution from their unsaved fellow-slaves, whose poor service was cast in such sharp contrast to that of the believers. These believing slaves were not only to obey in all things from the heart; they were to do it heartily, for they were assured that they would receive the recompense of the inheritance; that is, they would receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward for their service.

The one who does wrong will be requited for his wrong doing. While this applies primarily to the slave, it also applies to the master, for Paul goes on to say that the Lord is no respecter of persons and masters are to deal justly and equitably with their slaves. No matter how great a master is here on earth, he must always remember that he has a Master in heaven. Greek philosophers taught and Roman law assumed that slaves were mere chattels, and therefore had no rights. But before God the slave had as many rights as did the master. Slave owners in the early history of the United States tried to justify their practice either by claiming that the black man had no soul and was therefore not human, or that he was under the curse pronounced upon Canaan by Noah (Gen. 9:25).

C. Prayer, Walk, and Speech – 4:2-6

²Continue steadfast in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; ³withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word to speak the mystery of

Christ, for which I also am in bonds; ⁴that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. ⁶Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each man.

Paul's first instruction in prayer is to be steadfast, persevering, devoted to, making everything the subject of prayer. Next to be watching in prayer. Some take this to mean to keep watching for answers to prayer and to be thankful when they come, as expressed in the *Living Bible*. However, the grammatical construction favors the idea of keeping awake, staying mentally alert in prayer. There is the tendency when praying silently for the mind to wander, especially if one prays for any length of time, and it is possible even to go to sleep while thus praying. Circumstances do not always permit audible prayer, but it is certainly a fact that when one prays *out loud* he keeps mentally alert and frames his petitions more clearly and accurately. Whether this text says so, it is surely true that we should watch for the answers to prayer, recognize them, and give thanks for them. It is also true that in the act of praying our requests should be made with thanksgiving.

Paul desired that he and his fellow-workers be included in their prayers. His main concern as an evangelist was that God would open doors where it would be possible for him to preach the Word, to speak the mystery of *the* Christ. The definite article before Christ seems to indicate that Paul had in mind the special revelation of the mystery concerning the Body of Christ, not simply the Person of Christ. The same construction occurs in 1 Corinthians 12:12: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body being many, are one body; so also is THE Christ." All of the versions consulted omit the definite article which is in the Greek. The *Living Bible* gives the sense of the definite article by inserting the word *body*: "So it is with the 'body' of Christ." There are really two Christs: Christ personal, and Christ corporate: the Head together with all of the members. This corporate Christ is the special subject of the revelation given to Paul, which is called the Mystery.

Paul expresses a similar request to that of Colossians in Ephesians 6:19, "that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

A well-balanced Christian life includes prayer, speaking the truth in love, especially the truth of the gospel, and in practical conduct. The speech must always be gracious in character, seasoned with salt. It is interesting to note some Old Testament references to salt. "And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt" (Lev. 2:13). The enemies of the Jews wrote a letter to the king of Persia in which they stated: "Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace (eat the salt of the palace), and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonor, therefore we have sent and certified the king" (Ezra 4:14). Job asked, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt, or is there any taste in

the white of an egg? (Job 6:6). Christ called His disciples "the salt of the earth," (Matt. 5:13), and in Mark 9:47-50 Christ spoke of hell fire, or gehenna, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith shall ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Salt is a seasoning for food to keep it from tasting insipid. It is also a preservative for food. It protects food from corruption. Salt was also used by the Jews as a metaphor for instruction in wisdom: "The Torah (Law) is like salt." All of these ideas may be read into Paul's use here, let your speech "be seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each man." The idea of wisdom is surely associated with salt in this verse. And there is also the idea of seasoning, making your speech palatable, enjoyable, pleasing, as food is made by proper use of salt. And although the word is not used here, elsewhere Paul says, "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29), and salt is that which preserves from corruption.

VIII. GREETINGS AND SALUTATIONS: 4:7-18

A. Mission of Tychicus and Onesimus – 4:7-9

⁷All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: ⁸whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts; ⁹together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that are done here.

In the closing verses of this epistle we are introduced to Paul's fellow-workers who were with him and ministered to him in his Roman imprisonment. First we are introduced to Tychicus, who was commissioned to carry this letter to the Colossians, as well as the one to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21), and also the brief letter to Philemon. According to Acts 20:4, Tychicus was a representative of the church at Thessalonica who accompanied Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem to carry the gift of Paul's churches to the poor Jewish saints. Apparently after Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment, we read of Tychicus again in Titus 3:12, where Paul proposes to send either Artemas or Tychicus to the island of Crete. And finally, in Paul's last epistle during his final imprisonment he mentions the fact that he has sent Tychicus to Ephesus. We might almost think of Tychicus as being Paul's *mail man*.

Paul gives a three-fold commendation of Tychicus. He was a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow-servant in the Lord.

Onesimus is the next person named. He was a slave who was owned by Philemon, a member of the Colossian church. Onesimus had run away from his master, had made his way to Rome, and through some fortuitous circumstance had come in contact with Paul and had been converted. His name means "profitable," a name often given to nameless slaves, in hope that they would prove to be profitable to their masters. But

this Onesimus had in the past proved to be unprofitable, but now as a new man in Christ, Paul states that he is profitable to both him and Philemon (Phile. 11). Paul even asks that Philemon receive this runaway slave as though he were Paul himself, and he even offers to repay Philemon for anything Onesimus had stolen when he ran away. What a gracious, generous, Christ-like spirit Paul manifested!

B. Salutations to the Colossians - 4:10-14

¹⁰*Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him), ¹¹and Jesus that is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me. ¹²Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³For I bear him witness that he hath much labor for YOU, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis. ¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you.*

Tychicus and Onesimus were to bring their greetings personally when they arrived in Colosse. Now Paul mentions some of his other fellow-workers who wanted to be remembered to the Colossians. Aristarcus, Paul's fellow-prisoner, sent his greetings. He, as Tychicus, was from the church in Thessalonica. He apparently had become a believer when Paul was in his home town in Acts 17, and we find him with Paul at Ephesus, when the silversmiths started a riot against Paul (Acts 19:29; "And the city was filled with the confusion; and they rushed with one accord into the theater, having seized Gaius and Aristarcus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel." After the riot he accompanied Paul back into Macedonia and then returned with Paul as far as Asia (Acts 20:4). He accompanied Paul all the way to Jerusalem, for Luke tells us that he was on shipboard when Paul, as a prisoner, sailed from Caesaria (Acts 27:2). Although Paul calls him a fellow-prisoner, there is no indication that he was actually made a prisoner. In the letter written at the same time to Philemon, Epaphras is called a fellow-prisoner, and Aristarcus is listed as a fellow-laborer (vs. 23, 24). Epaphras was the one who had come from Colosse to Rome to carry the good tidings of the progress of the church at Colosse, so he could not have been an actual prisoner. Apparently these men were so committed to Paul and boldly shared his lot as a prisoner, that Paul thought of them as fellow-prisoners.

The next one to send greetings was John Mark. He was the fellow who deserted Paul on his first missionary journey, and it was because of him that Paul and Barnabas had a falling out and went their separate ways (Acts 15:36-40). We do not know how Mark got back into the good graces of Paul, but no doubt Paul practiced what he preached. We have already heard him say in this epistle, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye" (3:13). No doubt the members of Paul's churches knew about the trouble Mark had caused, and would have been hesitant to receive him as a brother, had not Paul sent special word to receive him. There is no positive commendation of Mark here, but in Paul's last letter written during his second imprisonment he tells

Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering" (2 Tim. 4:11). Such come-backs and reconciliations are very encouraging, in showing the power resident in the gospel to change lives.

Jesus was a common name among the Jews. It is the same as the Hebrew "Joshua." Therefore Paul gives us his other name, "Justus." But with the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the name Jesus became a hated name among the Jews. Paul states that these three men: Aristarcus, Mark, and Jesus Justus, were of the circumcision. By that he means they were Jewish believers. These three were the only Jewish believers who were his fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. Apparently, then, the others mentioned in these salutations, Epaphras, Luke and Demas, were Gentile believers. These Jewish fellow-workers had been a special comfort (Gr. *paregoria*) to Paul, since so few of his own countrymen had supported his ministry. The Greek word for "comfort" sounds much like "paregoric" a medication used especially with children.

Epaphras, who had just come from Colosse to Rome, would naturally want to send greetings to his own people, and they would be encouraged to know that he was continually striving (agonizing) in prayer for them that they might stand in complete assurance of the will of God. This Epaphras is to be distinguished from the Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25, who was from Philippi. Paul gave honor where honor was due. He highly praised this man for his labor in behalf, not only of the Colossians, but of those in the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Apparently Epaphras had done evangelistic work in both of these cities. They were located about six miles apart on the north and south sides of the Lycus valley, with Colosse about ten miles up stream. Hierapolis was the center of worship of the Phrygian goddess, Cybele. The city's name means "sacred city". Hierapolis is mentioned only here in the New Testament, and Laodicea is mentioned twice by Paul in this epistle and twice by John in Revelation 1:11; 3:14.

C. Salutations to the Laodicians - 4:15-17

¹⁵Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house: ¹⁶And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea. ¹⁷And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

We have suggested earlier that the epistle we call Ephesians may have been originally the one Paul wrote to the Laodiceans; that it was circulated not only to the Colossian Christians, but to churches throughout the area and finally ended up at Ephesus. At least, we know that the letters to Colosse and Laodicea were to be interchanged. It is possible, of course, that the letter to the Laodiceans became lost, and that God did not intend for it to be a part of the canon. It is no doubt true that Paul wrote many notes and letters which have not been preserved.

There is much evidence that the early churches assembled in homes. We know that the church met in Philemon's house in Colosse (Phile. 1:2). Apparently the saints at Philippi met in Lydia's house (Acts 16:15, 40). Priscilla and Aquila opened their house for church meetings (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19). It was not until about the third century that churches began to acquire real estate and build buildings. There are certain advantages in small congregations, advantages which are lost in very large congregations. But small churches should be continually growing in size. When a church grows so large that the sense of close fellowship among its members is lost, it would seem wise to divide and begin a new assembly in another section of the city.

In vs. 17, after having greeted the Laodiceans, Paul returns his thoughts to Colosse and gives a personal message to Archippus: "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it." We know from Phile. 1:2 that Apphia and Archippus were beloved fellow-soldiers in the Lord and that he was probably the leader or pastor of the flock. Were it not for this word of commendation, we might suppose from the tone of Paul's admonition at the close of his letter that Archippus was not fulfilling his ministry. It may be that Paul was especially concerned because of the incipient heresy which was getting a foothold in that area, and especially because a man like Epaphras was on his mission to Rome, that he felt led to give him a public prod to see to it that he carried through with the task given to him. We have no way of knowing what specific ministry had been committed to him, but apparently Archippus knew, and when these words were read publicly every one knew, and knew that the Apostle himself had given him the authority to fulfill this ministry.

D. Paul's Own Salutation: 4:18

¹⁸*The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.*

Paul apparently dictated his letters to a scribe (Rom. 16:22), and then he signed them. He states at the end of 2 Thessalonians, "This salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." He no doubt signed his letters to make them more personal, but the main reason was to make them authentic. False teachers had circulated letters claimed to have been written by Paul (2 Thess. 2:2). Only letters with Paul's own signature were to be accepted as scripture.

As students of the Word, we often wonder what happened to those original letters bearing Paul's name in his own handwriting. The last scribe to copy that original before it became so tattered and worn as to be unreadable, must have destroyed it with a deep feeling of regret. From that point on we were to have only copies, but copies that were very carefully made.

Paul's only request for himself was, "Remember my bonds." There are various ways of remembering. They could have remembered by praying for his needs and privations as a Roman prisoner. They could have remembered him as the Philippians had done, by sending a messenger with a gift to help supply his physical needs. They could have

remembered how much Paul had suffered in order to bring the gospel to them, and thus by his example, be willing to suffer in order to bring the gospel to their neighbors.

We too can remember Paul. We do this by studying his epistles, and appreciating his defense of the gospel of the grace of God, for humanly speaking it was only because he stood firm that we have that message today. As we remember this great Apostle of the Gentiles, we must also remember that he said, "But by the grace of God, I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not found in vain; for I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). We do not exalt Paul in the flesh. We are not Paulites. But we do honor him for what he was in Christ, "a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1:16). May our remembering of him imbue us with the same grace of God to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.